

Take steps globally to protect Bangladesh environment: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina has called for taking bold steps internationally to protect the environment of Bangladesh.

She said internal steps would not be enough to protect the Bangladesh environment because of worldwide deforestation, air and water pollution and global warming.

"We'll have to play strong role in international negotiations and efforts on the protection of environment," Hasina told an international conference here yesterday.

The Awami League president was the chief guest in the concluding ceremony of the 2nd International Conference on Bangladesh Environment at the Osmani Memorial Hall.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon organised the conference with assistance from Department of Geography & Environment of Dhaka University, BUET and Bangladesh Environment Network.

Hasina said protection of environment is essential for Bangladesh, which is a densely populated country and has suffered serious environmental degradation in last few decades.

Explaining the urgency of protecting environment, she said the negative effects of environment pollution could quickly affect huge number of people in a populous country like Bangladesh.

Besides, she said, the country does not have vast tracts of barren land that can be used as shelter for the people affected by environmental hazards.

She mentioned that arsenic poisoning in groundwater, air pollution in the cities, industrial wastage and gradual squeezing of forest area have posed a serious challenge.

Expressing her solidarity with the movement of the environmentalists, the former prime minister narrated the steps taken during her rule to protect environment.

The three-day conference ended with the Dhaka declaration calling for action at the international, regional and national level to protect the country's endangered environment.

It has made recommendations on arsenic poisoning, air pollution, household, industrial and medical waste, deforestation and protection

of natural resources.

The conference with the slogan "Environment under threat: Save Bangladesh" also suggested for proper management of marine and coastal environment for protecting and improving environment.

The Dhaka Declaration also called upon communities to take up programmes for managing their own environment without looking for any assistance from the government or the municipality.

Chairing the concluding session, Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said world's best principles and rules are available in Bangladesh but there is lack of effective implementation.

He urged the government to implement the existing rules to fight against environmental degradation.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Prof Saleh Ahmed Tanvir of Ohio University, Prof Amanat Ullah Khan, Abu Naser Khan and Prof Nazrul Islam, among others, spoke in the closing session.

Chief guest Sheikh Hasina also distributed prizes among the winners in the art and photography competitions on environmental themes.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hands the sword of honour to the best midshipman during the commissioning ceremony at the Patenga Naval Academy in Chittagong yesterday. (Story on Page 10)

US military in Gulf

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border with Iraq. The deployment will include tens of thousands of reservists and give Bush the option to start combat operations against Iraq in late January or early February, said the official, who emphasised that it was for Bush to decide if and when conflict will be started.

"We want to be ready, but of course, it's up to the president to decide about a war and he has not made a decision," the official said under condition of anonymity.

The head of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, speaking during an inspection visit to the 4,000 US troops in Qatar, said Friday the US military build-up in the Gulf was "to reinforce diplomacy" in the standoff with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Bush, who on Friday postponed a planned trip to Africa in January, said Iraq has failed "those who long for peace" with its arms report.

"We're serious about keeping the peace, we're serious about working

with our friends in the United Nations" to disarm Iraq, said Bush. Iraq's weapons declaration to the United Nations was "not encouraging," he added a day after the United States declared Iraq in "material breach" of UN disarmament demands because of omissions in the report.

Thursday "was a disappointing day for those who long for peace", said Bush, who has vowed to lead a coalition to end Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programmes.

The White House said Bush had called off his planned trip to Africa "due to a combination of domestic and international considerations". The visit was to have been from January 10-17.

Bush's strongest coalition ally, Britain, also appears to be moving closer to a conflict, that Foreign Secretary Jack Straw insisted Thursday is not yet inevitable.

Prime Minister Blair said in a message to the military: "The key thing at the moment is to make all

the preparations necessary, and to make sure that we are building up the capacity in the region."

"At the moment we simply don't know whether the (UN weapons) inspectors will find the breach or not," Blair said.

"We will be prepared to use force in order to ensure that they (the Iraqi regime) are disarmed of all chemical, biological and potentially nuclear weapons," he said.

The Times newspaper of London said Britain would seek UN approval for war on Iraq in a second resolution at the end of January if arms inspections showed Saddam was in breach of UN Security Council resolution 1441.

Following the first evaluation of the 12,000-page Iraqi declaration to the security council on Thursday by the main UN weapons inspectors, the US Secretary of State Colin Powell said Iraq was in "material breach" of its commitments.

Action against 2 cops

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New Year's Day. Fireworks are the only means of their living, they said.

The crackers and other materials seized by the army were stockpiled for the Luxmi Puja, but they were not sold due to the ongoing anticrime operation.

Residents of the house were trading in fireworks for long. Many like them in the Narsingdi town deal in fireworks. Even there is a road crossing named Bazimor in the town where all types of crackers sell.

Retailers stopped buying from the wholesalers since the army drive began and huge fireworks were in stock. As the wholesalers could not sell the products, they stopped manufacturing, the local people added.

Joint forces had raided the house of one Abu Bakar Siddique in Narsingdi Sadar for four hours from 9:00pm Thursday and seized huge fireworks and other materials. They also recovered three knives from the house.

The army claimed that they recovered explosives, gunpowder and yellow phosphorus and some explosives were powerful enough to blow up buildings and bridges. The joint forces

arrested Hena Begum, wife of Abu Bakar Siddique, and Hasna Begum, a housemaid.

The arrestees were charged under the Explosives Act, as they had no licence.

Sources said the father of Abu Bakar had a licence for manufacturing fireworks. After his death, his son took over the business without any licence.

Abu Bakar and Shamsu Mia, another resident of the house, have been absconding since the recovery of fireworks.

The locals said they had no bad intention behind stockpiling of fireworks.

The joint forces recovered 30 packets of hawai crackers, 469 packets of maricha crackers, 140 packets of patkaraji, 21 packets of tarabati, 15 packets of chocolate bombs, 220 packets of middle-sized chocolate bombs, 50 packets of chocolate crackers, 75 packets open chocolate crackers, 700 packets of bamboo stick hawai crackers, 400 packets of pencil crackers, 150 packets of small crackers covered in colourful paper, 10 packets of snake crackers, 350 packets of onion-shaped chocolate crackers, 75 packets of eight-inch chocolate crackers, 40 kilograms of loose powder, 2,000 pieces of wrapping paper and four screwdrivers.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Narsingdi Kazi Akher Hossain told that The Daily Star investigation was on. He said the arrested women were in police custody for interrogation. When queried, he said, "It's an issue of experts."

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) arrested 'Freedom' Shaheen, a notorious criminal from Rajbari, along with three accomplices—Ajay, Azim and Anwar—in the Asia Hotel at Tophkhana Road Friday night.

They were taken to the Basundhara army camp. Shaheen is accused in as many as 12 cases, including murder, said police. The arrestees were handed over to Rajbari police yesterday.

Textbooks

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would increase the government's revenue," the state minister said.

After the decision, printers sought printing orders for 1.5 crore books against the previous year's 60 lakh books, he said.

"The printers have increased orders as they would not be able to sell their old stocks," he said.

The state minister said the government earnings would increase because of increased order, but the students would not have to pay extra for new books.

Teenage boy

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He said that Kamal used to visit Lipi's residence often.

Kamal worked as a peon at a money exchange shop at Bijoy Nagar.

Arjina Begum, 15, the teenage housemaid from Gopalganj, had worked at Mostafa Zaman Fakir's rented flat in Central Badda for five months, said sources.

Neighbours found the body of Arjina lying, throat tied with a scarf, on the third floor of the building in the morning.

On information, Badda police recovered the body with marks of injury on the head at 11:35am yesterday.

Police found neither Zaman nor his wife Monira Begum during the recovery of the body.

Later, police picked up Monira at 2:30pm for interrogation. Police, however, declined to disclose the information extracted from Monira.

A case was filed with Badda Police Station.

NGOs

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make NGO activities dynamic," he said.

According to meeting sources, the proposed policy would enable the government to guide the mode of NGO activities, select their areas of operation, monitor their funding by donors and their micro credit schemes.

"The policy would restrict NGOs from being politically influenced. It has suggested actions against any political bias," said a source in the committee.

Chaired by the LGRD minister, the meeting was also attended by Information Minister Tariqul Islam, Industries Minister KM Anwar and Director General of NGO Affairs Bureau AHM Abul Quasem.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia formed the seven-member cabinet committee in November last year to look into activities of NGOs.

Villagers clash in Kushtia: One killed, 20 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

One person was killed and 20 others injured in a clash between two rival groups of villagers at village Gobindaganj under Mirpur upazila Friday night.

According to police, the clash began at about 9 pm when a group of villagers led by one Zaker Ali, a UP member, attacked the house of one Ferat Ali as a sequel to previous enmity over establishing supremacy at the village.

Ferat Ali and his relatives resisted the attackers, resulting in a violent clash between the two groups.

Both sides used lethal weapons during the clash, leaving one Aslam Ali, 35, of Ferat Ali group dead and 20 others injured.

Pricilla

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The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka refused her bail petition three before the High Court finally granted it.

Meantime, Professor Muntasir Mamun has been sent from Dhaka to Dinajpur jail on Friday night.

Shahriar Kabir was sent to Kashimpur jail in Gazipur, Shafi Ahmed to Rangpur jail and Mukul Bose to Rajshahi jail.

Muntasir, Shahriar and Shafi were arrested on December 8 and Mukul the next day under Section 54. Each of them was put under one month's detention under special powers Act.

Never-ending wait

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did not get pillow and mosquito nets. Ten patients said they had to pay tips for getting bed sheets.

At the Outdoor Patients Department (OPD), the patients face tremendous difficulties in getting services. They have to stand in the queue for long to get a ticket and again for hours to get treatment.

Some patients who bought ticket before 10:00am had to wait till 2:30pm for getting treatment at the surgery department. Around 200 patients come to the OPD for treatment every day and around 110 of them get admission and 90 get primary treatment.

The emergency department reflects the scenario of any public hospital. The cleanliness at the emergency department is far from satisfactory. The auditors found blood, cotton and used bandage lying on the floor.

Patients find difficult to access the X-ray machine kept at the corner of the second floor of the building. The female patients' observation room has no window and lacks adequate ventilation.

Patients do not get supply of emergency life-saving medicines from the hospitals after admission.

They have to wait for several hours for get first advice from a doctor or an intern and supply of medicine and other services in the hospital. In most cases the patients would buy medicine on their own and start preliminary treatment with their own equipment. It takes almost a day to get medicine and other equipment supply from the hospital.

The supplies are also very inadequate.

The auditors however found some initiative taken up by specialists and interns who have created a fund to supply medicine to the distressed and poor.

According to the doctors, the standard of services by the nurses has declined because of frequent transfer, lack of training and increasing number of patients.

Treatment of patients has also been hampered due to lack of professional respect among a section of doctors and nurses, the audit report observed.

Mondal murder

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with Sutrapur thana against four people the same day.

But Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, the then officer-in-charge of the Sutrapur police station and investigation officer of the case, submitted a "final report" on June 6 last year as the allegation against the accused was not proved.

Bhuiyan, the complainant, filed a 'naraji petition' (no-confidence) with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka on June 19 last year, seeking further investigation by CID.

After hearing, the then CMM Shailendra Kumer Adhiker took the petition into cognizance and ordered the CID to reinvestigate the case.

Special public prosecutor Abdul Latif Talukder appeared for the state while Advocate Mahub Ahmed and Saidur Rahman Manik for the accused.

Express train derails in India: 20 killed

AFP, Hyderabad

At least 20 passengers were feared dead and 90 injured after an overnight express train derailed in southern India early yesterday, a senior railway official said.

The official, who was at the site, said at least 20 people were killed when the express train from the southern city of Hyderabad derailed in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh state about 1.15 am.

Ten bodies were recovered from one carriage alone, he said, adding that 90 people had been injured, some of them seriously.

The district superintendent of police in Kurnool said 17 bodies had been taken out from the nine coaches that derailed, while Railway Minister Nitish Kumar said earlier that at least 18 people had died.

"So far we have 18 dead. I asked my officials at the site about the cause of the mishap, they said they are still ascertaining it," Kumar told

reporters in New Delhi.

"Right now, the first priority is treating the injured and other victims. I am deeply saddened by this unfortunate accident."

Kumar then left for the site of the accident to see the scene for himself.

Officials said the death toll could rise as two of the affected coaches were still to be cut open.

Nine carriages of the train rolled over and two came off the track completely when the train, bound for Bangalore, was moving at around 80 to 100 km per hour, officials said.

The 7685 Bangalore express had left Kachiguda station in Hyderabad at 7pm on Friday and most of the passengers had settled down for the night and were asleep when the accident happened.

Fourteen coaches that had not derailed were taken to the nearby Guntoor station with the injured on board, a railway official in Delhi said.

A special train left from

Bangalore to take relatives of the victims to the accident site, about 300 km away.

The accident has highlighted India's poor record in railway safety.

In September, 120 people were killed when a high-speed luxury passenger train veered off the tracks in eastern Bihar state as it was travelling over a bridge around 130 km per hour. Part of the train fell into a river.

Last year, there were 253 major and minor train crashes in India, with the loss of 120 lives and in the past five years around 2,400 people have died in train accidents.

Collisions, mainly caused by signalling faults, are the major cause of deaths.

Ramna cops

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4:00 pm on December 12. It was organised to protest the arrest of Awami League (AL) leaders including Tofail Ahmed, serial bomb blasts in Mymensingh and 'false allegations' against AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

Led by Mahabubur Rahman, the accused police personnel cordoned the procession and suddenly attacked the participants without any provocation. They beat up the agitators with batons and rifle butt, leaving 11 persons including Sabina seriously injured, the complaint said.

The police personnel were also accused of using abusive language about the agitators, attempting to strip them and making indecent remarks about Sheikh Hasina.

The complainant mentioned that on the following day, police filed a case against 50 people including herself on charge of unlawful assembly to divert public attention from the incident.

Magistrate Emdadul Haq recorded the complainant's statement and fixed today for order on the issue.

Advocate Sahara Khatun, Abdulal Abu and Abdur Rahman Howlader represented the complainant.

4 Bangladeshis

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earlier on criminal allegations.

Hossain said the high commission would wait until next week to visit Arman and Liaquat in jail, since it received the permission on the weekend.

The hearing of the case for the two will come up again on January 2, 2003.

Directors' loans

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has Tk 7.73 crore, Pubali Bank has Tk 18.40 crore, UCBL has Tk 53 lakh with Tk 44 lakh in defaulted loans, City Bank has Tk 2.62 crore, Eastern Bank Ltd. has Tk 41 lakh, Dhaka Bank has Tk 48 lakh, Uttara Bank has Tk 45 lakh, Al-Arafah Islami Bank Tk 12.70 crore, Social Investment Bank Tk 7.36 crore with Tk 5.55 crore in defaulted loans, AB Bank Tk 42 lakh, Dutch Bangla Bank Tk 26 lakh, Prime Bank Tk 37 lakh, EXIM Bank Tk 50 Lakh, Standard Bank Tk 3.56 crore, One Bank Tk 3 crore, Mutual Trust Bank Tk 1.24 crore, Premier Bank Tk 75 lakh, Bank Asia Tk 64 lakh, Shahjalal Bank Tk 1.37 crore, Brac Bank Tk 1.46 crore and Jamuna

Directors' loans

The decision was taken at a flag meeting held between the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Border Security Force (BSF) on Thursday.

The intruders were identified as Chanchal Paul, 16, Hritik Das, 1, Popy Das, 19, Deep Das, 7, Nitai Paul, 57, Neel Kamal Das, 49, Bipul Das, 26, Jatin Paul, 16, Lakshmi Paul, 50, and Kabita Das, 26.

The 10 Indians, who had identified themselves as residents of Balurgharea under West Dinajpur district of the neighbouring Indian state of West Bengal, were held by a BDR patrol team at 3:00pm on December 19 while trying to enter India from Bangladesh territory.



Firemen at the scene of a massive gas explosion in Halle's Stephanustrasse, just north of the city centre yesterday. Three buildings were totally destroyed in the blast that caused major destruction in a 400-square-metre area, several people were injured.

Kaikobad murder

Bail petition for Tofail rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, yesterday rejected the bail petition of former Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, an accused in Jubo Dal leader Morshed Alam Kaikobad murder case.

Magistrate Khondakar Atiar Rahman passed the order upon a bail petition submitted by the defence lawyers on behalf of the accused.

In the petition, the defence lawyers Advocate Sahara Khatun, Abdullah Abu and Abdur Rahman Howlader told the court that Tofail Ahmed was not an FIR-named accused in the case. He was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him politically.

The prosecution side opposed the bail petition. After hearing both sides, the court rejected the bail petition.

Tofail Ahmed was shown arrested in the case on December 11.

Kaikobad, 32, was an independent candidate in the last parliamentary election from Bhola-2 constituency. He was shot at Motijheel in the city on June 18, and succumbed to his injuries at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) on June 29.

Later, a murder case was filed with the Motijheel police station accusing five people.

Tofail was arrested from the Zia

International Airport on his return from Singapore on December 8 in connection with a murder case in Bhola.

In the case filed with Bhola Sadar thana, it has been alleged that Anwar Hossain, a BNP activist, was killed during a clash at Bhola on June 8, 1996 and a case was filed accusing 13 people including Tofail Ahmed.

Road accident kills 3 in Sonargaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three people were killed in a road accident on Madanpur-Barodi road under Sonargaon upazila yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Barodi-bound autorickshaw from Madanpur was hit by a speeding minibus on Kathalpara Bridge at around 4-30 pm.

The autorickshaw fell into a roadside ditch, killing its passengers Shaifiquil Islam, 18, Delwar Hossain, 25 and Masukur Mia, 18, on the spot.

The minibus driver fled with the vehicle.

No case was filed in connection with the accident till 7:00 pm yesterday.

Dawn fog

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could land or take off before 11:18 am, sources at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) said.

As the flights were delayed, people waiting to receive their relatives and friends became worried and thronged the information wing of the Civil Aviation Authorities. A large number of people were waiting at the ZIA from the early hours of Saturday to receive their near and dear ones.

The first international flight that landed at the ZIA at 11:18am was an Emirates flight from Dubai via Karachi. And a Biman flight was the first to take off at 11:35 am for Kolkata, the sources said.

Arrival of six international flights -- three of the Biman and one each of Gulf Air, British Airways and Saudia -- were rescheduled 14 to 16 hours behind their original schedule. And consequently, their departure schedules were also revised.

These flights from Kathmandu, Singapore, Mascot, London and Abu Dhabi were rescheduled to reach Dhaka in the evening and last night, the sources said.

Buses and launches to and from Dhaka were also delayed by five to 10 hours and passengers were stranded at different places. Ferry service at Daulatdia was suspended for about 10 hours due to thick fog, according to BIWTA sources.

Passengers of night coaches coming to the capital or leaving it were stranded at different ferry ghats for hours and had to spend the night there, reports said.

4 killed as tribal groups clash in Bandarban

UNB, Bandarban

Four people were killed and seven others injured in a bloody clash between two tribal groups at a remote village in Roangchori upazila here Wednesday.

According to a delayed report, the clash erupted between Jubo group and Poribar group in Raikhong area over establishing supremacy in the area and share of toll money.

Locals said the members of Jubo group also set fire to some houses of Poribar group but none could say what happened to the women and children staying in those houses. Tension was prevailing in the area.

Officials could not confirm the incident.</