



Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan saw Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong off at Zia International Airport in the city yesterday.

## Nat'l biodiversity action plan likely in 3 months

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is likely to be finalised by next three months, speakers said at a workshop yesterday.

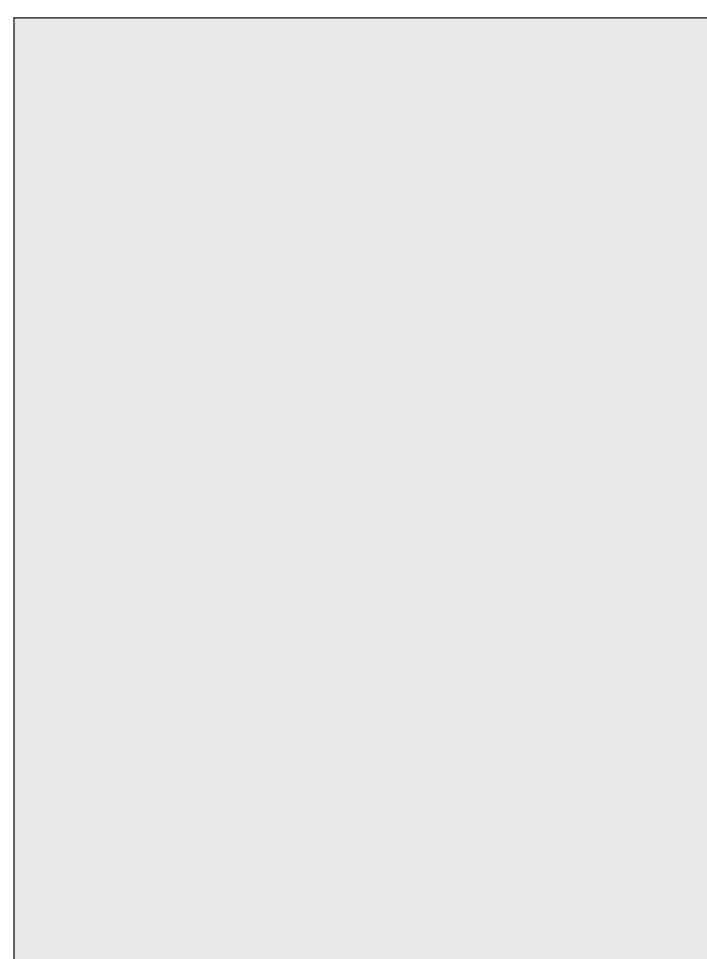
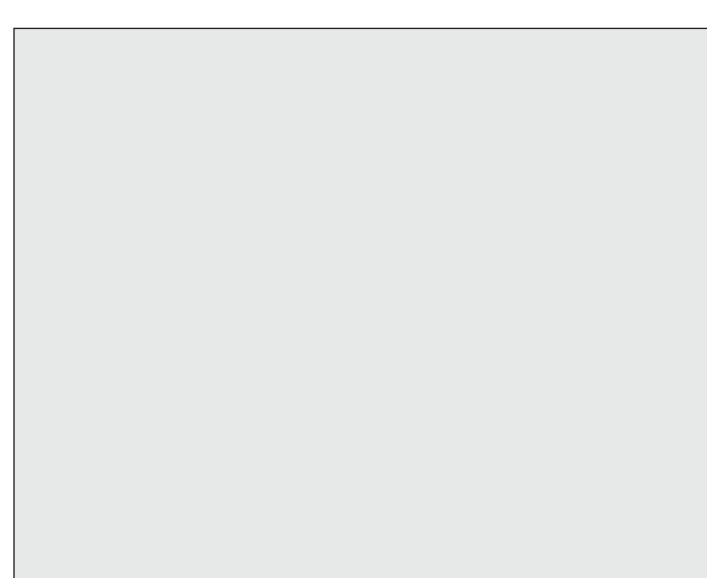
The plan will have a complete list of the country's biological resources and the guidelines to use them in a sustainable way.

IUCN - The World Conservation Union is preparing the plan with the logistics support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Speaking at the workshop, Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj sought support from all to protect the country's biodiversity.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia distributes cheques among the families of the victims of Benin plane crash at a simple ceremony at the Armed Forces Division in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.



## Two Myanmar nationals held

### OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday arrested two Myanmar nationals from Balibazar of Thanchi upazila.

On receiving information that a gang of criminals equipped with heavy firearms entered Sualock area crossing the Shanka River, the BDR cordoned off the area Tuesday night.

On suspicion, the BDR challenged Lah Thoai and U Cha Sing and arrested them after recovering some Myanmar and Bangladeshi currency from them yesterday. The BDR later handed them over to police for interrogation.

Meanwhile, indigenous people of Tarachha, Baghmaria, Sualock and traders of Ruma Bazar received letters demanding toll from extortions to better education.

Sources said criminals, having been paid ransom after the abduction of hotelier Hasan Mahmud Babul last month, have become desperate. The criminals are now trying to establish supremacy in the area, they added.

In another incident, members of the armed forces arrested two indigenous youths from Madham Para of the town.

When contacted, an official of Bandarban Cantonment said they arrested the youths on the basis of secret information and released them after questioning.

### Release of PCJ leaders demanded

#### DU CORRESPONDENT

Protagishil Chhatra Jote (PCJ), a combine of the left leaning student organisation, at a rally yesterday demanded immediate release of its leaders including President Khaleduzzaman Lipon.

The PCJ held a rally in front of the Central Public Library as police intercepted its procession there when it tried to proceed to lay siege to prime minister's office.

The PCJ leaders at the rally also demanded immediate arrest of the culprits responsible for the attack on prominent writer Prof Humayun Azad, withdrawal of cases filed against its leaders and punishment of the police and the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal workers for the attack on demonstrating students.

### BENIN PLANE CRASH Families of 15 army officers receive Tk 30 lakh each

#### UNB, Dhaka

Families of the 15 army officers, killed in a tragic plane crash in Benin last year, received Tk 30 lakh each from the United Nations yesterday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia distributed cheques among the heirs of the victims at a simple ceremony at the Armed Forces Division in Dhaka Cantonment.

The United Nations provided 50,000 US dollars each of the families of the victims as compensation.

Directed by Prime Minister Khaleda, who is also in charge of Defence Ministry, the Armed Forces Division and Army Headquarters had taken initiatives for quick collection of the compensation.

Family members of the martyred army officers, Army Chief Lt Gen Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, Navy Chief Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Murtaza and Air Force Chief Air Vice Marshal Fakhru Azam, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Mohammad Mosaddeq Ali, PSO Armed Force Division (AFD) Major General AIM Mustafa Reza Noor and other army high officials were present.

In a brief address on the occasion, Khaleda said their supreme sacrifice in establishing world peace would remain written in history in golden letters.

Paying rich tributes to the memories of the 15 martyred army officers, she conveyed her heart-felt sympathy to their family members and said they had enhanced the dignity of Bangladesh by their admirable performance in the UN Peacekeeping mission.

"Their untimely death is an irreparable loss to our national life and this loss cannot be compensated in any way," she said.

The army officers working in UN Peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone and two officers working in Liberia peacekeeping mission were killed on December 25 last year in a plane crash at the airport of Benin's capital on their way back home.

Those killed in the accident were Lt Col Syed Mohammad Shamsul Arefin, Maj Mohammad Abdur Rahim Mia, Maj Mirza Mohammad Abdul Baten, Maj Mohammad Rownak Akhter, Maj Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman, Maj Mohammad Imtiazuddin Ahmed, Maj Mohammad Mosharraf Hossain.

Capt Arifur Rahman Talukdar, Capt Farid Uddin Ahmed, Capt Mohammad Alauddin Sardar, Capt Mohammad Raquib Hasan, Capt Mohammad Zafidul Islam, Capt Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Capt Mohammad Abdul Mabud and senior warrant officer Mohammad Shafiqul Islam.

The government had announced December 31 as National Mourning Day to pay respect to the martyred army officers.

On December 31, bodies of the army officers were flown in to Dhaka by a special flight of the UN. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia formally received the bodies at the airport.

### Photo and wood carving exhibition

Shilpangan has arranged a nine-day joint exhibition of photographs by architect Enamul Karim Nirjhar and wood carving by artisan Sri Roy Chand Shadhu. Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed will inaugurate the exhibition titled 'Two'. Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, Dharmundi. Time: 6.00pm. The show will remain open from 10.00am to 9.00pm daily till April 2.

### Soft Fair - 2004

The North South University Computer Club will open a three-day 'Soft Fair - 2004'. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 9.30am. The fair will remain open from 10.00am to 7.00pm daily.

### UODA programme

The University of Development Alternative (UODA) will hold a night-long programme to commemorate the martyrs of the liberation War. The programme includes discussion, songs and film show. Venue: Manik Mia Avenue and Dharmundi campus of the university. Time: 6.00pm.

### Freedom fighters' rally

The Muktijoddha Samannaya Parishad

## Ensure ideal academic atmosphere to raise quality of education

### Speakers tell roundtable

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called for ensuring an ideal atmosphere in the educational institutions to improve the quality of education.

Only massive spending could not prevent the slide in the standard of education, they said.

Expressing concern over the declining standard of education, they identified lack of political will and corruption as the major obstacles to better education.

An ideal academic atmosphere and inculcation of appropriate social values are a must to enhance the quality of education, they said.

The Better Education Movement, a platform of the civil society, organised the roundtable on 'Amara Kemon School Chai' (what type of school we want) at the Cirdap auditorium in the city, with Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder of Biswa Sahitya Kendro, in the chair.

A cross-section of people, including educationists, experts, teachers, students and officials of education department, took part in the discussion.

Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed said the standard of education remained in an alarming state and was deteriorating day by day despite huge spending on infrastructure.

"We have got everything, including buildings, teachers and students, but we could not produce educated and skilled manpower equipped with appropriate social values."

Dr Masud-U-Zaman of Dhaka University blamed the lack of motivation among teachers and better environment in classrooms for poor quality of education.

The spending, however, is not enough for a country with 14 crore population, he added.

Quoting an Education Watch survey, Dr Ahmed said there is only one teacher for 72 students in government schools while the

teacher-student ratio in non-government schools stands at 1:55.

He said about 40 percent students could not complete their study at primary level and only two percent students could attain the required competency rate.

A student of an underprivileged school said, "We want that there should be a playground and enough space in the school and teachers should be affectionate towards us."

The speakers identified low salary for teachers and lack of motivation as the biggest obstacles to raising the standard of education.

"Guardians are reluctant to send their wards to schools as they are aware of the fact that there is no job even for the graduates," said Ahmedullah Miah, a former teacher of Dhaka University.

Tasneem Athar of Campaign for Popular Education, Ahmed Kamal,

Selina Akhtar, headmistress of Shibalay High School, Jannatul Ferdous, assistant upazila education officer, Ismat Sultana of Aroni School, Yasmin Habib of Sunny Dale School and Shah-e-Mobin Zinnah, an NGO official, also spoke.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, coordinator of the Better Education Movement, moderated the discussion.



Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder of Biswa Sahitya Kendro, speaks at a roundtable on 'Amara Kemon School Chai' (what type of school we want) at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday.

### Obituary



DF Ahmed, retired postmaster general of the Bangladesh Post Office, died of cardiac arrest at the Samarita Hospital in the city on Tuesday at the age of 84, says a press release.

He left behind his three daughters and four sons.

His quirkly will be held at his residence at R-1 Nurjahan Road, Mohammadpur in the city after Zohr prayers.

Ahmed Iqbal Hasan, son of DF Ahmed, is his son.

### Jahanara Begum

Jahanara Begum, wife of Narayanganj Awami League leader and former member of parliament Alhaj Md Emdadul Haque Bhuiyan, died at the BirDEM Hospital in the city on Tuesday at the age of 58, says a press release.

She is survived by her two sons and two daughters.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil expressed deep shock at the death of Jahanara Begum.

### Death anniversary

Today is the first death anniversary of Sadegue Samad, wife of late Azizur Samad, founder chairman of the Dhaka Fisheries, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at the residence of her son Tawfiq Samad at Gulshan in the city.

### Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of Lecturer Masudur Rahman of Jagan Nath University College will be held at T-29 Nurjahan Road, Mohammadpur in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow, says a press release.

## 'Extortionist' beaten to death in Mirpur

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mob yesterday beat an unidentified youth to death, suspecting him an extortionist, at West Kazipara in Mirpur.

Mirpur police rescued the youth from a frenzied crowd at about 11:30am and admitted him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead, police said.

The man went to Bikrampur Meat Shop at around 10:30am and demanded toll from its employee Humayun Kabir, police said.

The alleged extortionist wanted to make a call over Kabir's cell phone as he refused to pay the man saying the shop owner was away. Making the call, the youth later tried to leave the shop with the phone set, police added.

Kabir raised a cry for help. Hearing it, Zafar, a staff of nearby Janoni Departmental Shop, came out and stopped the alleged extortionist. The man hit Zafar in the head with a pistol.

Catching the man after a chase later, enraged locals pounded him till police recovered him with a pistol, locals said.

Meanwhile, two or three of his gang members, waiting outside the shop, fled the scene after the mob held him, they added.

Zafar was also admitted to the DMCH with head injury, police said.

Later, local traders brought out a procession in the area and protested routine attack by muggers, extortionists and hoodlums.