

PM seeks regional, int'l cooperation to maintain environmental balance

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought regional and international cooperation as a requisite for success in maintaining environmental balance through a national initiative.

proportion will be more than 60 percent by 2030, the function was informed. Khaleda said the government has undertaken a long-term 20-year plan titled "Dhaka Environment Programme" to check pollution in Buriganga and other rivers around Dhaka and for overall management of environment.

Chittagong soon, she said. Laws will also be framed for keeping the discharge of vehicular pollutants within tolerable limits to improve the quality of public health. Khaleda also told the function that a draft rule for controlling noise pollution has been prepared that would be finalised after consultations with mass people.

everybody who came to visit this country in recent times, including foreign guests and expatriate Bangladeshis, said so. Shesaid they viewed that environment consciousness of citizens, their initiatives and creativity would play a vital role in building beautiful, clean and green cities and believed that they would be successful in environmental management and building green cities in future involving all sections of people.

"If we look at the records of the past few years, it would appear that the extremes of nature like heat waves, cold waves, floods and other types of natural disaster are on the rise throughout the globe," she told the function. Ministers, MPs, diplomats, representatives of various development-partner organisations, environment experts, NGO personalities and senior government officials were present on the occasion.

The PM said it will not be enough to observe Environment Day only once a year. Environment has to be taken care of on all 365 days of the year, which is imperative not only for present but also for the future generations.

"This claim is not merely ours. The government will not be able to prevent the movement through repression by the Rab. Students, youths and mass people are uniting to oust the government through a mass movement," Razzak told the rally.

The rally also protested the 'extra-judicial killings' by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). AL Presidium member Abdur Razzak MP presided over the rally where city AL leader Omar Ali, Juba League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanok, Sheekhasebok League President AFM Bahauddin Nasim, Chhatra League General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu, Mahila League General Secretary Fazilatun Nesa Indira and Juba Mahila League President Nazma Akhter spoke.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks at the national function yesterday in observance of the World Environment Day 2005 at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

Thriving sex

FROM PAGE 1

Crisis Centre (OCC), told The Daily Star last Sunday. Layla's story, narrated on Sunday night from a hospital bed at DMCH, provides a rare glimpse inside the underground sex trade, revealing both the horrendous conditions young prostitutes are made to endure, as well as the public health dangers festering behind closed doors.

A time bomb may be ticking in the dark rooms and hidden hallways of the city's residential hotels, which number between 1,500 and 2,000 in Dhaka City, many of them in Maghbazar. Among them, sources confirm that 320 are fully dedicated to the sex trade. About 1,000 more have dual purposes, serving as legitimate hotels but also at times as brothels. In most cases, sources say, little or no precautions are taken to stop the spread of the STDs.

Trapped inside the Hotel Capetown of Maghbazar, Layla was forced to service 20 to 25 'customers' every 24 hours. "The customers were mostly police, hoodlums, people of other professions and many foreigners [mostly Mongoloids]," she said. Around 25 girls, most of them young, typically come to the hotel during office hours and work all day as prostitutes, Layla narrated. They leave at the end of the working day, as if they work in an office, she described.

Business was brisk, with some 50 pimps, located only 100 yards from the local police station, 'pulling' customers off the street around the clock. Layla was hardly able to rest, and was forced to serve all day and all night. "The hoteliers used to provide us [the girls] some kind of medicine for arousal to work a couple of times," she added.

Sources say many girls like Layla are cheated into the sex trade, lured by false promises of jobs, and kept in conditions of captivity. In Layla's case, her stepmother's sister-in-law brought her to the capital from Jhenidah and sold her to Hotel Capetown at Maghbazar in the city on May 1.

Male clients frequenting such hotels have a dangerously lax attitude toward the health risks involved, sources confirm. A self-employed microbus driver at DMCH, who has slept with prostitutes at residential hotels in Maghbazar several times, recently told The Daily Star, "When I go there all I care about is pleasure. I don't give a damn about those diseases."

Layla described that the hotel owner took Tk 250 from each customer, while the girls received Tk 80. Layla, who was kept under surveillance, was never paid for her work, however. "I heard from the hotel manager that my aunt, who sold me here, comes often and takes the money."

The young girl was lucky to escape, but only after her physical condition took a turn for the worse. "A customer came to my room in the hotel on Sunday at noon, but seeing my genital parts, he refused to have sex," Layla said. "When the manager asked why he refused, he reported my sickness and the manager sent me to get medicine from a nearby shop," she described. "I took the first chance and ran to the DMCH."

Doctors at the DMCH's OCC say Layla's condition has improved in the days since her escape. The Ramna police, meanwhile, have arrested 10 staff of the Hotel Capetown as well as Layla's stepmother. The hotel has also been shut down. Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Ramna Police Station, said Layla's complaint is currently under investigation. "The story is still under investigation. We are verifying the statements she made. We are in favour of prosecution, and after the completion of the whole investigation, we can determine where she is right and where she is wrong," he said.

8 killed, 33 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Eight people were killed and 33 others injured in separate road accidents in Dhaka, Khulna, Bhola, Pabna and Habiganj yesterday. Our staff correspondent reports: A school student of class six was killed in a bus accident at the Jatrabari intersection in the city at about 9:30am.

The accident occurred when the Dhaka-bound bus from Ruppaganj ran over Mitu Akhtar, 13, while she, along with her uncle Abdur Rahim, was crossing the Jatrabari circle in front of Demra Police Station.

She was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where the doctor on-duty declared her dead. Abdur Rahim said Mitu had come to visit his house at Uttar Jatrabari 10 days back from her village home at Laksam, Comilla. He was taking his niece to show the city.

Demra police arrested Mamun, bus driver, and seized the bus. Our staff correspondent from Khulna adds: Two people were killed and four others severely injured in a road accident at Kathaltala under Dumuria upazila of the district at 5:30pm.

The dead were identified as Dr Faruque Ahmed of Khulna General Hospital, and Alamgir Hossain, 40, a technician of the hospital. The injured are Civil Surgeon of Khulna Dr Hame Jamal, Deputy Civil Surgeon Daud Ali Mir, and Shamsu, driver of the civil surgeon's official jeep.

They are undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College and Hospital (KMCH). Condition of Dr Hame Jamal is critical as he sustained severe injuries in his head, legs and hands, KMCH sources said.

The accident occurred when a Satkhira-bound passenger bus collided head-on with Khulna civil surgeon's jeep while they were returning to Khulna from Satkhira. The jeep has been smashed, while the killer bus managed to flee.

BDNEWS from Bhola reports: Three people were killed, including an army man, and 10 others injured when a truck hit a tempo in Bhola early yesterday. The injured were rushed to Bhola Sadar Hospital.

The speeding truck hit a Borhanuddin-bound tempo from Bhola Kheyghat near Komoruddin Bazar killing two on the spot at about 5:30am. One of the victims was identified as Md Hanif, 45, of Baramanika union of Borhanuddin.

Critically injured army personnel Belayet Hossain died in the hospital at 8:00am. Police seized the truck. BDNEWS from Pabna adds: Two persons, including a woman, were killed and five others injured in a road accident on Sunday at Bera C&B crossing on the Nagarbari-Bogra highway causing two hours traffic suspension.

Police said, a Dhaka-bound truck rammed into a passenger van at about 12:00 noon leaving van driver Monsur Ali, 45, dead on the spot. An unknown woman also died while being taken to hospital in a critical state. The injured were admitted to Bera Hospital.

After the accident, people went on rampage and put a barricade on the Nagarbari-Bogra highway that caused all vehicular movement to a halt for two hours. A case was filed with Bera thana in this connection, but police failed to seize the killer truck.

Unb from Habiganj adds, At least 15 people were injured, two critically, in a road accident on Habiganj-Baniachang road at Ratna in Sadar upazila yesterday. Police and locals said the accident took place in the afternoon as a Habiganj-bound Jeep overturned on the road after hitting a bus, injuring its 15 passengers.

Two of the injured - Badal Barmon, 40, and Rekha Khatun, 26, - were rushed to Pangu Hospital in Dhaka while six others to Sadar Hospital. On the occasion, Qurankhani and milad mahfil held and foods will be distributed among the poor.

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People uniting for oust-govt movement

Razzak tells AL rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) leaders yesterday said a unified movement of students; youths and mass people would oust the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government from the power for its misrule and repression on the opposition leaders and activists across the country.

The leaders were speaking at a protest rally in front of its Bangabandhu Avenue office in the city. AL organised the rally protesting the attack of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of the ruling BNP, on general students and Chhatra League activists during the protest after killing of the Dhaka University student Sharmee Akhter (Happy) in a road accident.

The rally also protested the 'extra-judicial killings' by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). AL Presidium member Abdur Razzak MP presided over the rally where city AL leader Omar Ali, Juba League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanok, Sheekhasebok League President AFM Bahauddin Nasim, Chhatra League General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu, Mahila League General Secretary Fazilatun Nesa Indira and Juba Mahila League President Nazma Akhter spoke.

"The government will not be able to prevent the movement through repression by the Rab. Students, youths and mass people are uniting to oust the government through a mass movement," Razzak told the rally.

City AL General Secretary Mofazzol Hossain Chowdhury Maya conducted the rally.

Noted economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmed yesterday said concentration of political and commercial power is threatening the environment as well as social peace in the country. The political parties are also marginalised in contributing to the process of good governance, which has been a setback for development, he said. He was speaking at the concluding seminar on "Environment for Peace" organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) in association with Bangladesh Peace Council (BPC) at the city's WVA auditorium marking the World Environment Day yesterday.

Bapa, in association with some other NGOs, organised the 5-day programme, including seminars and discussions, on various environmental issues. "The concentration of power, even in the UN (United Nations) and the multinational companies, also violates the world norms hampering the peace and development process," Prof Muzaffer, also the president of Bapa, said.

Referring to the recent tense at the Dhaka University, he said political links in the university has worsened the atmosphere of education. "If



Prof Muzaffer Ahmed speaking at a seminar.

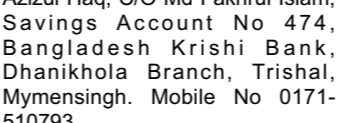
Appeal for help

A poor hotel employee has been suffering from heart disease for one and a half years, says a press release. A valve of the heart of Md Azizul Haq has been damaged completely. He is now under treatment at Suhrawardy Hospital in the city where the doctors have suggested an urgent operation to save his life. It will cost about Tk 3 lakh.

Being the only earning member of a 5-member family, he is not in a position to afford the cost of his treatment. So he has appealed to the generous people for financial assistance. Contributions can be sent to Md Azizul Haq, C/O Md Fakhru Islam, Savings Account No 474, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Dhanikhola Branch, Trishal, Mymensingh. Mobile No 0171-510793.

Obituary

Sk Hasan Moinuddin Parvez (Rubens), a member of Dhaka Club, died in United States on May 22 at the age of 31, says a press release. Members of Dhaka Club have been requested to pray for the eternal peace of his soul.



Portrait of Sk Hasan Moinuddin Parvez.

Nafisi Khanam

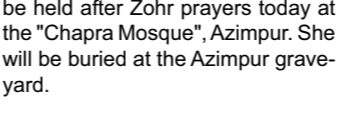
BSS, Dhaka

Nafisi Khanam, wife of late advocate Moslemuddin Ahmed, passed away due to prolonged illness at the Lab Aid hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 78. She left behind her three sons and four daughters.

Her namaz-e-janaza today will be held after Zohr prayers today at the "Chapra Mosque", Azimpur. She will be buried at the Azimpur graveyard. Her funeral will be held at the Azimpur graveyard.

Chehlum

Chehlum of Abdus Samad, founding president of Extra M o h r a Association, will be held at his son's residence at Amlapara after Zohr prayers today, says a press release. On the occasion, Qurankhani and milad mahfil held and foods will be distributed among the poor.



Portrait of Abdus Samad.



Opposition Awami League forms a human chain near Osmani Udyan in the city yesterday demanding protection of environment.

Concentration of power a threat to environment, peace

Prof Muzaffer tells Bapa seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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Referring to the recent tense at the Dhaka University, he said political links in the university has worsened the atmosphere of education. "If

student politics is to remain, the government has to rethink of its interface. "We have to sacrifice some self interests for greater national gains," he urged. Speaking on the occasion, Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Abdur Razzak MP expressed deep concerns over the fast exhausting of underground water in the city. "Surface level of Dhaka might soon subside unless proper measures are taken to preserve underground water," the former Water Resources minister said. Filling up of the wetlands is decreasing the water absorbing capacity of the soil, he reasoned.

Presiding over the seminar, Razzak said the conflict over water and trade issues between India and Bangladesh has to be settled through a friendly discussion. He suggested that Bapa point out several specific and critical proposals on environment issues and submit to all the political parties and social organisations for strengthening its movement.

Abdur Razzak, also the vice president of World Peace Council, observed that the use of atomic bombs and production of arms worldwide, especially in some developed countries, are threatening the world peace for their commercial and political interest. Chairman of Center for Urban Studies, Professor Nazrul Islam suggested formation of a policy for the floating people, especially for those living in the urban slums, who are the key sources of environment pollution.

"If the politicians do not extend their helping hands to settle the problem, it would remain as it is and degrade the situation," he observed. Bapa Vice President Kazi Md Sheesh criticised the US for its monopolistic attitude in signing the Kyoto Protocol, destroying the historical museum of Iraq through Iraq invasion and its involvement in global warming.

"Environment is not an issue of a single country, but of global, so we must think from global perspective and move towards that direction," Sheesh, also former chief engineer of Wasa, said. BPC General Secretary Kamal Haider presented the keynote paper, while Bapa General Secretary Mohidul Hoque Khan, member Sultana Alam, Colonel Shawkat Ali MP and former MP Meher Afroz Chumki also addressed the seminar.

Help restore eyesight of poor children

British actress appeals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

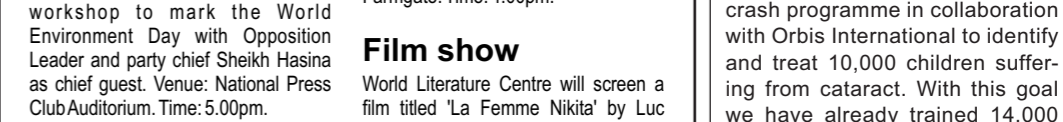
Generous donation can help restore the eyesight of a child who cannot afford to pay for a simple surgery which costs as little as Tk 5000, said Joanna Lumley, a British actress. In her first ever visit to Sight Savers' campaign in a developing country Joanna said, "My role is to raise money for the unfortunate people who cannot afford to pay for the surgeries and other costs associated with it. On my return I will hold similar campaigns hopefully to persuade British citizens to donate for such causes."

During her stay since three days ago, she visited several places outside the capital to see the activities of the Sight Savers. "There are approximately 40,000 blind children in Bangladesh of which one third are due to cataract which is surgically treatable. A further one third of the blind could have been prevented through simple public health interventions like vitamin A supplementation, immunisation, good practices in nutrition and breast feeding," said M Enamul Kabir, country representative of Sight Savers International in Bangladesh, at the press conference.

Quoting surveys he said in Bangladesh about 1.53 percent of the population above 30 years of age or 7.5 lakh people suffer from blindness, 80 percent of which are for needless reasons. "Since last July, we have launched a four and a half years crash programme in collaboration with Orbis International to identify and treat 10,000 children suffering from cataract. With this goal we have already trained 14,000 people in the districts to give primary eye care and identify people suffering from low vision," Kabir said.

The new childhood cataract campaign also aims at covering substantial numbers of 20 lakh children who suffer from refractive blindness and require magnifier to correct the illness. It is estimated to cost two million British pounds to do surgeries for the targeted 10,000 blind children. Zahidul Hassan, resource mobilisation manager, and Dr Alamgir Hossain of Sight Savers also spoke at the conference held at the Brac Inn in the afternoon.

Addressing a press conference in the city yesterday she said, "Every minute one adult while every five minutes one child go blind globally. Seventy percent of this blindness are unnecessary and preventable." The urgency is to identify those blind children before they reach seven years of their sightless life and treat them accordingly, she added. Joanna is now in Bangladesh to support the campaigns of Sight Savers International, the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind.



British actress Joanna Lumley speaks at the 'Meet the Press' in the city yesterday.

Weather Today Thundershowers likely UNB, Dhaka Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6:00pm today. Day temperature may fall slightly over the country, Met Office said. Highest temperature 37.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 21.2 degree Celsius at Srimongal. The sun sets in the capital at 6:44pm today and rises at 5:10am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: City/Town Temperature in Celsius Humidity in percentage Max Min Morning Evening Dhaka 35.7 25.6 66 98 Chittagong 33.7 24.8 72 67 Rajshahi 36.2 24.3 71 61 Khulna 36.3 26.5 73 98 Barisal 32.5 24.6 77 95 Sylhet 34.6 23.8 67 59 Cox's Bazar 33.5 24.0 72 80

DHAKA TODAY AL workshop Bangladesh Awami League organises a workshop to mark the World Environment Day with Opposition Leader and party chief Sheikh Hasina as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club Auditorium. Time: 5:00pm. Film show World Literature Centre will screen a film titled 'La Femme Nikita' by Luc Besson. Venue: Film Circle Auditorium, Bangla Motor. Time: 6:00pm. Roundtable A roundtable on 'Budget for children', organised by Samunoy in cooperation with the daily Sangbad, will be held. Venue: VIP Auditorium of the National Press Club. Time: 10:00am. Seminar Medical College for Women and Hospital organises a seminar on 'Thyroid Cancer.' Venue: MCWH Campus, Uttara. Time: 12:00 noon. Discussion Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal will hold a discussion to mark the 24th death anniversary of former president Ziaur Rahman. Venue: Bark Auditorium, Farmgate. Time: 4:00pm. Film show World Literature Centre will screen a film titled 'La Femme Nikita' by Luc Besson. Venue: Film Circle Auditorium, Bangla Motor. Time: 6:00pm. Academy film show Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'Chocolate.' Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6:30pm. DHAKA TOMORROW Film show Academy Film Society will screen a German thriller titled 'Journey to Kafirstan.' Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6:30pm.