

## DHAKA WORKSHOP 2005 ENDS

# Govt plans to restore Buriganga river

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to restore the Buriganga river, the lifeline of Dhaka, through a project which will bring in fresh water from the Jamuna by cutting canals, said Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed yesterday.

At present, the Buriganga is highly polluted and becoming narrower due to illegal encroachment.

"We have already submitted the project and it is now at the planning ministry. The project will be implemented if we get funds from any donor agency," he told reporters at the closing ceremony of Dhaka Workshop 2005 on 'Sustainable Solutions for the Management of Urban Wetlands'.

The minister said the plan, prepared by the engineers of Water

Development Board, calls for river dredging and excavation and re-excavation of several canals to bring in water from the Jamuna using Dhaleshari and other river system.

The closing ceremony of the weeklong Dhaka workshop was held at a local hotel, organised by the Urban Water, Wastelands Society and Design Alliance (UW2SDA), the Centre for Excellence in Professional Development, Presidency University, and the Interface Bangla Ltd.

Experts from home and abroad put forward some recommendations, including mapping of wetlands in and around Dhaka city, revitalising built-up areas and adjacent water bodies, shifting large scale industries from the city centre and allowing green industries to grow around wetlands.

"The proposals are very encouraging but also very challenging as Dhaka city lacks adequate space," said environmentalist Atiq Rahman of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

Former environment secretary Syed Tanvir Hossain, workshop co-ordinator Tanya Karim and Pro-Vice Chancellor of Presidency University Prof Baqui Khalily also spoke while Elizabeth Dean Hermann of UW2SDA presented the recommendations.



PHOTO: STAR

Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed speaks at the closing ceremony of Dhaka Workshop 2005 on 'Sustainable Solutions for the Management of Urban Wetlands' at a city hotel yesterday.

## AL founding anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League, one of the oldest and major political parties in the country, will celebrate its 56th founding anniversary today.

Established in 1949, the party led the nation during the independence movement and the War of Liberation in 1971.

The AL has drawn up elaborate programmes, including discussion, rallies and cultural programmes, to mark the day.

In a message on the eve of the day, AL President Sheikh Hasina said the party led all the major movements, including language movement, autonomy movement and the liberation war.

"And all the big achievements came under the great leadership of Bangabandhu," she added.

The AL is still fighting against the misrule of the alliance government braving massive repression, Hasina said and called on the countrymen to join the ongoing movement to unseat the government.

As part of the anniversary programmes, party leaders and workers will place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city at 7:00am.

The central AL leaders will also visit the mazar of Bangabandhu at Tungipara to pay homage to him.

The party will also take out a colourful procession from Suhrawardy Udyan in the city at 3:00pm, which will end in front of the Bangabandhu Bhaban.

A discussion and cultural programme will be held at the Engineers' Institute auditorium on

Saturday.

At a press briefing yesterday, AL presidium member Zillur Rahman said the country's independence movement began with the launching of AL on June 23 in 1949.

"The Awami League was formed with a view to achieving independence and presently it is working for the people's welfare," he said.

## International SOS Children's Village Day today

UNB, Dhaka

International SOS Children's Village Day will be observed in 132 countries including Bangladesh today marking the birth anniversary of its founder Prof Hermann Gmeiner.

On the occasion, SOS Children's Village Dhaka has chalked out an elaborate programmes, including discussion, prize giving ceremony and cultural function.

Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid will attend the programme as chief guest at its Shyamoli office in the city at 9:00am.

The world's largest humanitarian organisation, SOS Children's Village, has been working in Bangladesh since January 1972 and 866 children and youths have been enjoying long-term benefits from the organisation.

# 60,000 Bangladeshis to perform Hajj next year

BSS, Dhaka

About 60,000 ballotee and non-ballotee Bangladeshis will be able to perform holy Hajj in Saudi Arabia next year, 10,000 more than that of 2005.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan, who returned home from Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, told this to newsmen at his secretariat office in the city yesterday.

Shahjahan said Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have signed a Hajj agreement in this regard on June 7.

During his stay in Saudi Arabia, he also signed four separate supplementary agreements at Jeddha, Makkah

and Medina in this connection.

He expressed the hope that the facilities, including security, food and accommodation, will be better for the Bangladeshi pilgrims this time. He said the Saudi authorities have also assured of providing better care to the pilgrims.

"We have also discussed the matters relating to the overall management of the Bangladeshi pilgrims during the Hajj," he said. The Hajj policy is expected to be approved by the cabinet next week.

He said residential accommodations will be hired soon for the pilgrims close to the Kaaba Sharif for

the convenience of the pilgrims. The Saudi government also agreed to provide 50 per cent Bangla speaking Muslims to look after the Bangladeshi pilgrims during the Hajj, he added.

He said the allegation of overstay by some Hajjis in Saudi Arabia after performing Hajj is not true. Instead, he said Saudi Arabia has alleged that Hajjis of Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines have been overstaying after Hajj.

Shahjahan said Bangladesh has never supported the tendency of illegal overstay by its citizens in Saudi Arabia after the holy Hajj.

## 1,666 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,666 people, including a listed criminal, on various charges during their country-wide drive in the last 24 hours as of 6:00am yesterday.

During the period, the law enforcers recovered five firearms and 301 bullets, says a police headquarters press release.