

Dhaka for equal share of waters of common rivers to promote peace

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday called for sharing the flows of common rivers among the co-riparian states on an equitable basis to promote peace and harmony between the neighbours.

"In this age of mutual inter-dependence and collective responsibility, there is no scope for a unilateral action," Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury told a seminar marking the World Water Day at the Cirdap auditorium.

On the Tipamukh dam planned by India, he said Dhaka has been assured that New Delhi would not unilaterally divert water at Tipamukh or at any other point. "We have also been assured that the proposed inter-linkage of rivers would adversely affect Bangladesh and its environment."

Calling for serious discussion on the sharing of the Tista waters,

which is long over due, the adviser said Bangladesh and India are committed to working closely to ensure equitable sharing of the flows of all rivers.

Opposing the "single basin" approach to sharing the waters of the common rivers, he said the single-basin approach could only work in theory. It assumes that shortage of flow in one river system can be offset by surpluses in other rivers.

"We are talking about human habitation and real human beings, not an artificial arrangement. Bangladesh believes that the sharing of our common rivers must not be contingent on a hypothetical solution," said the diplomat-turned-adviser of the caretaker government.

On choices for meeting a growing demand for energy in South Asia, the adviser called for strengthening collaboration at the regional

level to harness the vast potential of generating hydropower in the region.

This, he said, is perhaps the most viable option to meet the growing energy demand in the region.

Stressing the sharing of information on rainfalls, flood forecasts and early warnings, he suggested an effective bilateral and regional framework for sharing water resources of the region—an imperative for all.

The United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) organised the seminar chaired by Prof Muzaffer Ahmed. Prof Nazrul Islam read out the keynote paper while International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Country Representative Finnruuda and UNAB General Secretary Dr Syed Mohammad Shahed also spoke at the seminar.

Ashtami Snan begins amid tight security

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Hundreds of Hindu pilgrims from home and abroad thronged Langalbandh to have a dip in the river Brahmaputra on the occasion of Ashtami Snan amid tight security yesterday.

The religious festival of the Hindus began yesterday afternoon and will continue till this afternoon.

More pilgrims are supposed to join the festival this morning that is taking place covering three kilometres of area that has 13 ghats and 11 temples, sources said.

Members of the armed forces have constructed the snan ghats to facilitate the holy dip.

A sculpture of Swami Vivekananda was unveiled at Raj Ghat to preserve his memory. It is said that Swami Vivekananda came to Raj Ghat with his mother for Ashtami Snan in 1901.

More than one hundred religious and social organisation, including Ramakrishna Mission, Ison, Sadhu Nag Mohashoyer Ashram, Sri Guru Sangha, Red Crescent Society, Rotary and Lions Club had been providing pure drinking water, shelter, baby food and primary treatment for the pilgrims.

A three-day-long Basanti fair has also been organised on this occasion.



PHOTO: STAR

Former managing director of Oriental Bank Limited Chowdhury Koyes Sami is being taken to Dhaka Central Jail as his petitions for bail were rejected after he surrendered before a Dhaka court yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Independence day today

FROM PAGE 1

paved the way for the massive victory of the Awami League led by Bangabandhu in the 1970 Pakistan national elections.

The Pakistani junta in the then West Pakistan, however, refused to hand over power to the then East Pakistanis. They stalled installation of the newly elected parliament and started ethnic genocide aimed at extinguishing all signs of Bangalee nationalist movement.

In the face of this, the inevitable declaration of independence came on March 26, 1971.

PROGRAMMES

A 31-gunshot salute at dawn will mark the beginning of today's celebrations. National flags will be hoisted atop government buildings, while important public buildings will be illuminated tonight to give them a festive look. It is a public holiday today.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will lead the nation in paying tributes to the martyrs of the Liberation War by placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar at sunrise.

Leaders of different political parties, socio-political organisations, freedom fighters and people of all lifestyles will then place wreaths at the memorial.

The president will take salute at a ceremonial march past by contingents of freedom fighters, armed forces, Bangladesh Rifles, police, BNCC and Ansar-VDP at the National Parade Ground in the capital at 10:00am. The chief adviser will also attend the programme.

Armed forces' music bands will play patriotic songs at different venues in the city to entertain the public. The venues are Rajdhani School premises (Manik Miah Avenue), Farmgate and Mirpur

Stadium from 3:30pm to 5:30pm.

A number of navy ships will remain open for people's visits at Sadarghat in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Khulna, Mongla port and Barisal from 2:00pm to 5:30pm.

Bangladesh contingent deployed in UN mission in Liberia will celebrate the Independence Day with due respect and solemnity, and the programmes include special prayers, reception of local guests, cultural session and sports.

The Awami League (AL) will hold a discussion at the Engineers Institute Auditorium where party's senior leaders will speak.

Other political parties, social and cultural organisations have chalked out separate programmes to mark the day.

MESSAGES

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and AL President Sheikh Hasina in separate messages have paid tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

President Iajuddin Ahmed called upon all Bangladeshis citizens, living at home and abroad, to work united with continued efforts to expedite overall development, economic self-reliance and democratic progress.

The president said one of the prime objectives of the independence was to establish a happy, prosperous and self-reliant country.

"Keeping that in mind, Bangladesh has already achieved significant progress in the fields of education, healthcare services, family planning, food production, micro-credit, telecommunication, rural infrastructure, sanitation and empowerment of women," he said.

"We have to go a long way to realise a self-respectful and self-reliant Bangladesh, which was the desired goal of our independence,"

he said.

The president expressed his firm conviction that progress and prosperity in all areas of national life will be achieved if we devote ourselves to nation building and keep national interest above everything.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in his message urged all citizens, regardless of their class, creed or political affiliation, to stand united in the spirit of 1971 to achieve the goals of the Liberation War together and fulfil the dreams of the martyrs.

"Through the combined efforts of our citizens, we can fulfil the dream of a modern, prosperous and democratic Bangladesh," the head of the caretaker government said.

"I also recall with deep admiration and gratitude the sacrifices, forbearance and contributions of our freedom-seeking people living at home and abroad, as well as the unflinching support and cooperation of the governments and peoples of the friendly countries," the chief adviser said.

The chief adviser said the present government is carrying out a number of fundamental reforms to strengthen democracy and establish good governance.

He also mentioned an "all-out drive" to curb corruption and crime and establish the rule of law, undertake initiatives to infuse dynamism into the economy, increase public welfare and uphold people's interests.

"Through the continued support and cooperation of the people, we can unite as a nation in making these programmes stronger and more sustainable," he added.

CARJACKING CASE AGAINST PABAN

Casse transferred to metropolitan court for trial

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka yesterday transferred the carjacking case against Akter Hamid Paban, son of former chief whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain, and three others to a court of metropolitan magistrate for trial.

CMM Jalal Ahmed sent it to the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mohammad Mojibul Haque for its quick disposal.

Three others are Paban's accomplice Zahur Islam Robin, 24, Abdul Halim, 23, and Masum, 26. Of them, Paban, Robin and Halim are on bail while Masum is still at large.

Sub-Inspector of Detective Branch of police Syed Selim Masud, also the investigation officer of the case, pressed charges against the four on December 28 last year showing 10 people as prosecution witnesses.

During the investigation, Robin gave a confessional statement to a magistrate admitting his and others involvement with the incident.

According to the prosecution, three criminals hijacked the vehicle from the owner at Motijheel in the city at gunpoint on October 13 in 2005.

Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Paban at Bailey Road with a stolen Toyota Premio on June 7 last year.

SCBA polls halted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday halted the annual election of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), slated for March 28-29.

In a letter sent to the SCBA Secretary AM Aminuddin, the DMP said approval for the polls given on March 21 was withdrawn for "some special reasons" without specifying any reason.

Aminuddin told The Daily Star that after receiving the order, it was sent to SCBA Election Commission for necessary action.

The DMP commissioner also asked law enforcers to take necessary steps to enforce the order of cancellation.

Sources said the order had come after Awami League-backed lawyers held a meeting in a city hotel on Saturday violating the emergency rules that bans the political activities.

Earlier BGMEA election was held during the emergency in February.



PHOTO: STAR

Eminent journalist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury administers the oath of 32 young reporters of ETV's Mukta Khobor at ETV Bhaban in the city yesterday. On his left is eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain.

ETV MUKTA KHOBOR Reporters pledge to uphold spirit of Liberation War

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The young reporters of ETV's Mukta Khobor yesterday took oath for upholding the spirit of the Liberation War on the eve of the Independence Day.

Noted journalist and columnist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury administered the oath as a special guest at a function at ETV's office in the city.

A total of 32 reporters took pledge to work for the well being of the country preserving the glory of independence.

Speaking as chief guest eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said the war is still on and urged the young reporters to play an active role in this war through their work.

Editor of the daily Samakal Abed Khan told the young journalists to help materialise the vision of the Liberation War by bringing out the truth.

ETV Programme Head Atiqul Haq Chowdhury and ETV Programme General Manager Aminul Islam also spoke.

He told The Daily Star that the Mukta Khobor will go on air on the first day of ETV's re-transmission.

A documentary highlighting the activities of the young reporters was also shown on this occasion.

A total 105 episodes were broadcasted as of August 29, 2002, the day of cancellation of ETV's transmission.

Death anniversary



Today is the 1st death anniversary of Khondkar Abdus Samir, former additional secretary of Ministry of Information, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at Sector 4 Jame Masjid at Uttara in the city after Asr prayers today.

Afsar Uddin Sheikh



Today is the fourth death anniversary of Afsar Uddin Sheikh, says a press release said.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his house at Farashganj road in the city after Asr prayers today.

Relatives and admirers have been requested to join the milad.

881 prisoners released on Independence Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday released 881 prisoners, who were imprisoned for minor offenses, to mark the Independence and National Day.

Of them, 41 were released from Dhaka Central Jail.

The government expressed hope that they would act as good citizens and contribute in the country's socio-economic development.



PHOTO: STAR

Guests have a glimpse of the submitted designs at the 7th International Student Design Competition 2006 that began at the University of Asia Pacific (UAP) in the city yesterday. Buet VC Dr ANM Safiullah, NSU VC Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi and UAP VC Dr A Matin Patwari jointly inaugurated the competition. Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) organised the event.

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind at one or two places over Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met office said. Highest temperature 34.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Patuakhali and lowest 17.0 degree Celsius at Rangpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:12pm today and rises at 5:56am 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	34.0	24.4	40	27
Chittagong	32.5	24.0	86	83
Rajshahi	33.5	17.2	42	36
Khulna	33.0	25.5	55	48
Barisal	33.8	25.0	76	34
Sylhet	32.9	22.7	89	35
Cox's Bazar	32.0	24.2	78	74

Greenherald celebrates independence anniversary

Students and teachers of St Francis Xavier Greenherald School celebrated the anniversary of Independence and National Day through a colourful programme on the school premises in the city yesterday, says a press release.

The programme started with a minute of silence in memory of the martyrs of the War of Liberation, followed by a rendering of the national anthem by the students.

Speaking at a discussion organised on the occasion, Syed Badrul Ahsan, editor of Current Affairs of The Daily Star, outlined the history of the political struggle of the Bengali nation between the language movement of 1952 and the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Sister Asha, principal of Greenherald, reminisced on her own experiences of the war and emphasised the need for the young to study history as a way of understanding their cultural and political legacy.

Sister Michelle also narrated her own experiences of the war.

Saber Hussain, a senior teacher, recited a self-composed poem in memory of the martyrs.

A musical soiree, based on patriotic songs, was choreographed by Timir Nandy, a freedom fighter and teacher of the school.

Trader robbed of Tk 17.96 lakh in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Muggers yesterday took away Tk 17.96 lakh from a trader on Dhaka-Gazipur highway in Gazipur.

Gazipur police said Rafel Sarwar Tony left home at Jurapukurpur to deposit the money in Gazipur branch of a bank at around 10:00am on board a motorbike.

As soon as he reached near District Fisheries office, a yellow colour taxicab waylaid his motorbike and he fell down from it. Then a group of five to six people snatched away the money, police said adding that the criminals then sped away towards Joydevpur.

A case has been filed in this connection.

FAQs on bird flu

FROM PAGE 1

Bird flu is caused by different subtypes of influenza A virus affecting chickens, ducks and other birds. Viruses which cause mild disease can mutate into viruses that can cause serious disease (highly pathogenic).

To date, all outbreaks of the highly pathogenic form have been caused by Influenza A/H5N1 virus, the only subtype that cause severe disease in humans.

3. How is bird flu transmitted in chickens and other birds?

- Direct contact with discharges from infected birds, especially feces and respiratory secretions
- Contaminated feed, water, cages equipment, vehicles and clothing
- Clinically normal waterfowl and sea birds may introduce the virus into flocks
- Eggs from infected hens can break and contaminate incubators

Birds that survive infection excrete virus for at least 10 days, orally and in feces. Highly pathogenic viruses can survive for long periods in tissue, water and the environment, especially when temperatures are low.

4. How do outbreaks of bird flu spread within the country?

- Domestic birds can get the infection when they:
 - roam freely
 - share water supply with wild birds
 - use a water supply that might be contaminated by infected droppings
- Contaminated equipment, vehicles, feeds, cages, or clothing, especially shoes can carry the virus from farm to farm
- Wet markets where live chickens and other birds are sold under crowded and sometimes unsanitary conditions

5. How is bird flu transmitted to humans?

Bird flu is transmitted to humans from direct or indirect contact with infected wild ducks and chickens through infected aerosols, discharges and surfaces.

A person handling or taking care infected chickens or came near or inside a poultry or market where there are sick chickens can inhale the particles from dried discharges or feces with the bird flu virus.

Discharges can get in contact with the nose or eyes of a person handling infected chickens.

There is no reported case of bird flu in humans after handling dressed chicken. Since the virus is easily inactivated by heat, one does not

get bird flu from thoroughly cooked chicken meat.

There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission.

6. Why are we concerned with bird flu?

There are a number of reasons why we are concerned with bird flu:

- Bird flu or Avian influenza (AI) causes serious illness and death in humans
- Avian and human influenza viruses can recombine to form a totally new influenza A virus which is capable of spreading from person to person and from which the human population do not have protection
- AI causes severe epidemics and mass death of chickens affecting the poultry industry.

7. What are the signs and symptoms of bird flu in chickens?

Infection causes a wide spectrum of symptoms in birds, ranging from mild illness to a highly contagious and rapidly fatal disease resulting in severe epidemics.

- Decrease in activity
- Drastic decline in egg production
- Facial swelling with swollen and bluish-violet colored combs and wattles
- Hemorrhages on internal membrane surfaces
- Virus isolation needed for definitive diagnosis
- Gasping for breath
- Muscle
- Weakness/paralysis
- Diarrhea
- Sudden deaths (mortality that can reach 100%)

8. What are the signs and symptoms of bird flu in humans?

Bird flu is very similar to other influenza viruses. Initial symptoms are:

- Fever
- Muscle weakness and/or pain
- Sore throat and cough
- Sore eyes (conjunctivitis) is seen in some patients
- Causes of death and complications are:
 - Severe viral pneumonia
 - Respiratory distress syndrome
 - Multi-organ failure

9. Since there are so many cases of influenza, pneumonia or any other respiratory illness, when does one suspect that the patient is a case of bird flu?

One suspects that a patient with influenza or pneumonia or any other respiratory illness is a case of bird flu avian influenza if the patient has had direct or indirect contact through handling or having taken

care or getting near sick chickens or other birds.

A laboratory confirmation of the bird flu infection and epidemiologic link with unusual death or epidemics of chickens will support the diagnosis of bird flu.

10. What is the treatment of bird flu?

Treatment for H5N1 infection is essentially the same as for other influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs, some of which can be used for both treatment and prevention, are clinically effective against influenza A virus strains in otherwise healthy adults and children, but have some limitations. Some of these drugs are also expensive and supplies are limited.

11. Is there a vaccine against bird flu?

No. The vaccine currently available against the circulating strains in humans will not protect from the disease caused by H5N1. However, it is recommended for individuals who are potentially exposed to bird flu like poultry handlers, workers and breeders to prevent recombination of avian with the human influenza virus.

12. How do we prevent bird flu?

The ban on importation of live chickens and other poultry products from countries affected with bird flu is a critical step to prevent the entry of bird flu into the country.

For poultry caretakers and handlers of chickens and other birds:

- Avoid contact of poultry with wild birds, in particular waterfowl
- Control human traffic into poultry
- Practice proper hand washing and cleaning and disinfection procedures in poultry
- Report to authorities any unusual death or illness of chickens and other birds
- Report to authorities any illness among the workers in poultry farms
- For the general public:**
 - Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water before and after handling chicken meat
 - Clean kitchen surfaces and utensils before and after use
 - Cook chicken well by seeing to it that the boiling temperature is reached
 - Do not sell live chickens in the market while there is a threat of bird flu.
 - Do not let chickens roam freely. Keep them in cages or pens.
 - Do not place chickens, ducks and pigs together in one area, cage

or pen.

Do not catch, get near or keep in captivity wild birds.

Report to authorities any unusual death or illness of chickens and other birds

Report to authorities any case of respiratory illness with history of exposure to sick or dead chickens and other birds

13. What should Local Government Officials do?

- Monitor and apprehend smuggling activities and illegal trading of poultry like game fowl, breeders and wild birds coming from countries affected by bird flu.
- Pass and enforce local ordinances on the ff:
 - prohibition of live chickens in the market while there is a threat of bird flu
 - not allowing chickens to roam freely

prohibition of placing chickens, ducks and pigs together in one area, cages or pens

Provide correct information to the community.

- Advise public not to catch, get near or keep in captivity wild birds
- Coordinate with the local agricultural office for any unusual death or sickness of chicken and other fowl.

Coordinate with the nearest health worker for any suspected case of bird flu.

Coordinate with Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) on smuggling, trading or capture of wild birds by an individual.

14. Is it safe to travel to countries affected with bird flu?

Bird flu is not transmitted from one person to another. Individuals at risk are those are directly or indirectly exposed to sick chickens and other fowl. The government thereby advises travelers to countries affected with bird flu not to go to bird parks (aviaries), poultry farms or market where live poultry is sold.

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