

# Be more people-sensitive than to give primacy to trade

## Saarc Peoples' Forum urges Saarc leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 5th Saarc Peoples Forum (SPF) yesterday urged the leaders of Saarc summit scheduled to be held in New Delhi this week to be more people-sensitive than to give primacy to trade and economic issues.

In a press statement titled 'Peoples Sovereignty Declaration', the Forum expressed deep concern over the systematic erosion of peoples' sovereignty in South Asia.

The statement also urged South Asian governments to adopt effective measures to eliminate all forms of violation of human rights.

The statement was prepared following a three-day programme which ended at Delduar in Tangail on Friday. A total of 75 participants from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka took part in it.

"The participants at the forum pledged in a spirit of cooperation to continue to work together across the borders and build peace in the region," said the statement read out by Shalini Bhutani at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city.

"Peoples' sovereignty must have

to be ensured for their security... and we think peoples' sovereignty would be ensured if security of peoples' life, livelihood and movement is ensured," said Farhad Mazhar, an organiser of SPF, while replying to queries of the journalists.

The statement said corporate control of natural heritage, biological resources and peoples' knowledge is becoming the major cause of instability and violence in the region.

"The region already faced unprecedented natural disaster since last Saarc summit. Any disaster management plan will be artificial and unreal if it is not designed to address the depletion of biodiversity. The loss of biodiversity itself needs to be seen and dealt with as a disaster," it added.

The Forum in its statement also said, "Growing corporate control through increasing economic concentration and the resultant shift and consolidation of power into private hands is a severe threat to peoples' freedom and sovereignty, and the South Asian governments are increasingly using security paradigms to take away people's fundamental rights."

"We are always against the privatisation of biological resources and traditional knowledge through intellectual property rights (IPR) such as patents and plant variety protection rights," the participants of the Forum said, adding farm-saved seeds are at the centre of farming in South Asia and these are now threatened by IPR.

Referring to recent movements at Nandigram of India and Fulbari in Bangladesh, the SPF strongly condemned such acts of the state in the name of economic development.

The Forum urged all South Asian countries to ratify the UN Convention on Migrants saying, "Migration is a human right, and security of movement for livelihood must be ensured."

Shree Ram Shrestha of Nepal, Ranjit de Silva of Sri Lanka, Krishna Kumar, Samuel Alexander, Ramesh Prasad Adhikari and Bhaskar Goswami of India, Qamar Mohiuddin of Pakistan, Farida Akhter, SM Altaf, Nasiruddin Elan and Palash Baral of Bangladesh were present at the press conference.



CPD Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan speaks at the inaugural session of the seventh meeting of the Forum for Regional Cooperation among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) at Brac Centre in the city yesterday. On his right are Finance and Planning Adviser Dr AB Mirza Azizul Islam and Ambassador Eric Gonsalves while on his left is Deputy Secretary General of Yunnan Provincial Government of China Che Zhimin.

# 'Ease restrictions on labour movements'

## Developed countries urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday urged the developed nations to ease the restrictions on labour movements and suggested special emphasis on poverty alleviation to reduce human trafficking and modern slave trading worldwide.

It also termed poverty, unemployment and social injustice as the root causes of human trafficking, urging the developed nations to provide more foreign aids to the developing nations as part of poverty reduction programme.

The observations came at the launching ceremony of 'Training Programme for the Lawyers on Combating Trafficking in Persons' jointly organised by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Ministry of Home Affairs in association with Legal Education and Training Institute of Bangladesh Bar Council.

"The illegal trade of human beings is encouraged by defying job opportunities legally available in the rich countries, which are the beneficiaries of human trafficking," said Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Barrister Mainul Hossain who was speaking as the chief guest.

"We talk about prosecution, protection, but not the key issue, poverty alleviation. Within Bangladesh, we have to give more efforts to alleviate poverty through inclusion of the poor and the unemployed into the development process," added Barrister Mainul.

Rich countries are the main destinations of human trafficking where cheap human labour and services are exploited humiliating the illegal immigrants who undergo tremendous sufferings, he said.

"This dark and inhumane side should also be considered while making the policies," Mainul said, seeking international cooperation in this regard.

Referring to a UN report, he said human trafficking broke out like an epidemic in the last decade and some 2.5 million people throughout the world are, at any given moment, the victims of human trafficking.

"We celebrated the 2000th anniversary of eliminating slave trade, but a new form of slave trade still exists," the adviser said and added that lakhs of illegal immigrants are working unpaid or low-paid and living an inhumane life just because they are illegal.

The developed world is allowing free movement of goods, but not human beings, who can move for economic reasons to the developed countries from the developing ones, Abdul Karim, secretary to the ministry of home affairs, said.

The World Bank suggested the developing nations to provide 7 percent of their GNP (Gross National Production) to the developing nations, but they only provide 2.2 percent, he said urging the rich nations to increase foreign aids.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Barrister Amir-ul Islam suggested creation of employment opportunities for the unemployed, specially for women, in a view to eliminating human trafficking.

Termining the social menace a global phenomenon, he said there must be a holistic and multi-lateral approach where all stakeholders governments, donors, NGOs, lawyers and law enforcers would work together to bring an end to social sufferings caused by human trafficking.

Attorney General Fida M Kamal asked the lawyers to ensure human dignity while dealing with the cases of human trafficking.

Bangladesh Bar Council Vice Chairman Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud termed the collaboration between the IOM and Bar Council a positive beginning. There will be a series of training programmes for the lawyers, which will really help understand and deal with such cases, he noted.

IOM Head of Counter-Trafficking Division Richard Danziger in his keynote speech said the training programme will help the law enforcers, immigration officials and others to better identify the victims, which usually has been a difficult job.

He also urged the government to sign and ratify the Trafficking Protocol.

IOM South Asian Regional Representative Shahidul Haque and Dr Mizanur Rahman of Dhaka University also spoke.



Shalini Bhutani speaks at a press conference organised by the 5th Saarc Peoples Forum (SPF) at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her right is Shree Ram Shrestha while on her left are Krishna Kumar and Farhad Mazhar.

# 5 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed and 25 injured in separate road accidents in Manikganj, Satkhira and Rajshahi in the last two days.

Our correspondent in Manikganj reports: A man was killed and 25 injured, including two sons of a former lawmaker and a professor of Khulna Medical College, in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha highway at Pukuria in Manikganj.

The dead was identified as Sayed Morshed Kamal Happy, 44.

Sources said the accident occurred at around 1:00am when a Khulna-bound bus of Eagle Paribahan from Dhaka skidded off the road. The bus hit a roadside tree and turned upside down, injuring 26 people.

Happy died while he was being taken to Manikganj Sadar Hospital.

One of the injured sons of former lawmaker Ali Reza Razu is Hasan Zaman Litu, 30, while the name of the other son could not be known immediately.

Another injured Dr Dhiraj Mohon Biswas is a professor at Khulna Medical College.

Police seized the bus but the driver and the helper managed to escape.

Our Correspondent from Satkhira adds: Two people were killed in separate road accidents in the district yesterday.

The dead were identified as Raja Kha, 67, and Abul Hossain Shikari, 40.

Quoting locals, police said Raja Kha was knocked down by a motor-cycle yesterday morning while he was standing in front of his house at Hajipur.

He was rushed to a Satkhira hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

In the other incident, Shikari fell from a loaded speeding truck in

which he was coming to his village home at Deanipara bazar in Tala upazila last night.

He was rushed to a Khulna hospital where he succumbed to his injuries early morning yesterday.

On contact, Assistant Police Super (ASP) Fazlur Rahman confirmed the incidents.

Our RU Correspondent adds: A truck driver and his helper were killed in a collision between a train and a truck at the outskirts of Rajshahi city on Friday evening.

The victims were identified as Abdul Jalil, 42, the truck driver, hailing from Shyampur village and Abdul Latif, 25, the helper, of Dasmari area.

The helper died on the spot

while the driver succumbed to his injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), locals said.

The truck was totally damaged, they added.

Sources said a Dhaka-bound inter-city train knocked a speeding truck at Meherchandi railway level crossing.

The speeding truck did not follow the signal at the crossing where there was no barrier, locals added, alleging the crossing is highly risky as many speedy vehicles pass the crossing without following the signals.

Locals claimed they had been demanding a rail barricade at the crossing for long yet the railway authorities turned a deaf year to the problem.

## Seminar on 'Rethinking political dev' tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

A daylong regional seminar on 'Rethinking political development: Security and democracy' will be held at Sheraton Hotel in the city tomorrow.

Army Chief Lt. General Moeen U Ahmed will present the keynote paper focusing on a changed paradigm in politics.

President Iajuddin Ahmed will inaugurate the programme where specialists in politics, democracy and security, from home and abroad, will present their thoughts on various aspects of the theme.

Law, Justice and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain will be present as the special guest at the seminar, organised by Bangladesh Political Science Association.

Professor of Washington University and chairman of the International Political Science Association Dr Jilur R Khan, among others, will take part in discourse.

## Withdrawal of increased fees demanded at RU

Agitating residential students of four female dormitories of Rajshahi University (RU) demanded withdrawal of increased seat rent, examination and certificate fees imposed last month.

Under the banner of 'Additional Fees Resistance Committee', the female students on Friday night staged a demonstration inside their halls and announced that they would launch a tougher movement if their demands were not met.

According to sources, hall seat rent has increased from Tk 55 to Tk 105 per month while the certificate issuance and examination fees also increased manifolds.

## Book on martyred intellectual published

The publication ceremony of the 2nd edition of 'Martyred Intellectual Selina Parvin Memorial Book' (in Bangla) was held at city's Liberation War Museum on Friday.

The function was held marking the 76th birth anniversary of Selina Parvin who was the editor and publisher of 'Shilalipi'.

Pratiti Dutta, daughter-in-law of martyred Dhirendranath Dutta, Alia Amin, mother of martyred freedom fighter Alauddin Md Jahin (Chinku) and sculptor Ferdousi Priyovashini jointly unveiled the cover of the book.

Artist Hashem Khan, Dr Razia Khan, Delwar Hossain and Md Sumon Jahid, son of Selina, discussed various aspects of the struggling life of Selina on the occasion, says a press release.



Relief, Power and Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury speaks at the silver jubilee celebration of AG Church School on the school campus in the city yesterday.

# 65,000 households connected to power supply by solar power

BSS, Dhaka

Over 65,000 households got connected with power supply under a programme backed by the World Bank and administered by the Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL).

This has brought the benefit of electric supply to families in the off-grid remote areas across the country.

Grameen Shakti (GS) has accounted for the lion's share of the system under the programme using micro-credit to make the solar home system affordable to ordinary households.

Rahimafrooz also plays a key role to the success of solar power programme as a system integrator. Rahimafrooz has supplied and installed almost 25,000 solar home systems -- the majority via

Participating Organisations (POs) of IDCOL taking part in the programme. Rahimafrooz is also the main source of batteries for the 65,000 systems installed by the GS.

According to the GS sources, nearly 75 percent of Bangladeshi households and vast majority of its rural population, do not have access to main power grid and depend largely on kerosene for lighting with the exception of a small minority who can afford diesel generators.

With the rising price of kerosene, the best hope of bringing electricity to the majority lies with solar power. A typical 'solar home system' (SHS) can provide electricity to four to six low energy lights, plus a socket for TV, radio or battery recharging and a mobile (cell) phone-charging unit.

A major expansion of solar power system in the country is now under-

way, largely under the auspices of the World Bank-backed and IDCOL administered Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development Project, which provides a diminishing subsidy.

In their efforts to spread the technology and make it yet more affordable, Grameen Shakti has come up with a new and innovative way of making solar power affordable to families. This method known as micro-utility model has become very popular in rural market places because it allows a number of people to share the cost and benefit of a solar home system.

Under the system, one individual is responsible for paying the installments which he collects by renting lights to neighbours. Once the installments are paid, he becomes the owner.

## 'Ghandhi harmonises spirits of all religions'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahatma Ghandhi's Satyagraha Andolon harmonised spirits of all religions that can contribute in establishing peace in the world, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Ghandhi Asram Trust, Noakhali organised the discussion at the National Museum auditorium in the city to mark the 100th anniversary of Mahatma Ghandhi's Satyagraha Andolon and 60th anniversary of Peace Mission in Noakhali.

Speaking on the occasion, journalist and litterateur Syed Abul Maksud said Ghandhi was a philosopher, an economist, a transformational leader and above all a preacher.

Eminent rights activist and former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal said although it may appear that Ghandhi's philosophy has some contradictions, close analysis of his teachings would prove that there is no contradiction at all.

Gopal Krishna Ghandhi, Ghandhi's grandson and state ombudsman of West Bengal, sent a message on the occasion, where he said Ghandhi's philosophy would contribute in establishing peace in the world if followed properly.

Acting Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Sarbajit Roy Chowdhury pledged to extend all sorts of cooperation to the Asram in preaching Ghandhi's teachings of non-violence.

CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya chaired the programme while National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Member Secretary of Ghandhi Asram Trust Jharnadhara Chowdhury and Trustee of Liberation War Museum Mofidul Huq also spoke.

**DHAKA**  
**T O D A Y**

**Award distribution ceremony**

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (Basis) will hold Best IT Use Award Ceremony 2007. Venue: Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 7:00pm.

## Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 21st death anniversary of Justice Syed Muhammad Hussain will be observed tomorrow, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at his residence and foods will be distributed among the orphans.

An eminent judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Hussain was also the chairman of the Bangladesh chapter of International Law Association, Amnesty International and International Commission of Jurists.

He was also the general secretary of the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (BAFA) and Pakistan Arts Council. His publications include a book titled 'Banglar Katha'.

In recognition of his contribution, Justice Hussain was awarded 'Swadhinata Padak' (posthumous) in 1998.

## Amin Laskar

The 10th death anniversary of Amin Laskar, former president of Bangladesh Chemist and Druggist and founder-member of Saarc Chamber of Commerce, will be observed tomorrow, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at DOHS Mosque after Maghrib prayers.

## Chehlum

Chehlum of poet Abdul Halim Mia will be held at his house at 15/6 Mirbagh in the city after Zohr prayers today, says a press release.

A doa and milad mahfil will be held on the occasion.

Abdul Halim, who has composed many folk songs, passed away on February 21 at the age of 78.

Relatives, friends, followers and well-wishers are requested to attend the milad.

## One arrested for offering bribe to OC in Golachipa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

One person was arrested on charge of bribing the police at Golachipa in Patuakhali yesterday.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Golachipa Police Station Golam Rahman arrested Yunus Ali Mridha, 45, of Haridevpur village under the upazila who allegedly offered Tk 3,000 as bribe to remove his name from a case.

It is learned that a case was filed on March 17 accusing Mridha and others for their alleged involvement in a land dispute and Mridha came to remove his name from the case and offered bribe to the OC.

Meanwhile, members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Motiur Rahman, sub-inspector of Kalagachia police camp under Golachipa on Thursday evening when he was taking Tk 3,000 as bribe.

**WEATHER**  
**T O D A Y**

**Temperature may rise**

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain dry over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Mild heat wave is sweeping over Khulna division and the regions of Rajshahi and Ishwardi and it may spread over Barisal division and the regions of Faridpur, Dhaka and Sylhet.

Day temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 37.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and the lowest of 18.6 degrees at Srimongal.

**The sun sets in the capital at 6:14pm today and rises at 5:50am tomorrow.**

The 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	36.1	24.3	54	30
Chittagong	34.0	22.6	75	76
Rajshahi	37.4	21.5	60	34
Khulna	35.5	22.0	68	40
Barisal	35.4	21.5	75	47
Sylhet	36.0	21.6	52	44
Cox's Bazar	32.0	22.2	79	77