

# Forestland now 10pc of total area against minimum 25pc

## Says Ctg divisional commissioner

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Country's total forestland has come down to 10 percent as against the minimum requirement of 25 percent of its total land.

This was stated by Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Mokhesur Rahman while addressing a meeting as chief guest at the auditorium of Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI) yesterday.

The meeting titled 'Introducing BFRI-innovated technology and exchange of views with journalists' was chaired by BFRI Director Dr Md Ashrafur Hoque.

Mokhesur urged BFRI scien-

tists to intensify their work for preservation, development and expansion of forestland in the country.

He urged BFRI authorities to turn the institute spreading over around 75 acres of land into a research ground for the students of forestry, environment, botany and soil science departments of different public and private universities.

"BFRI could also create scope for training of the newly recruited forest officials who are going to neighbouring countries like Pakistan and India for the same purpose every year," he observed.

BFRI Chief Research Officer Dr Md Khairul Alam said since the

inception of the institute in 1968, its scientists succeeded in innovating improved variety of seed and plant, developing bud cutting (Kanchi Kalam) and tissue culture in bamboo plant, manufacturing of quality furniture from rubber timber and use of local timber as railway slipper.

He said the institute also initiated some afforestation projects to develop forests in the northern districts.

The BFRI director in his speech underscored the need for manpower and structural development of the institute to meet the present demand.

Speakers at the meeting also

called for increasing annual allocation for research to help develop forest resources and expand forestland in the country.

They observed that the allocation made for research is very insignificant.

The meeting was told that of the total allocation of Tk 9 crore for BFRI in 2006-07 fiscal, only Tk 60 lakh went for research, and the rest was spent as salaries and allowances.

Senior scientists of BFRI and representatives of different electronic and print media were present at the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR

International Grainger Challenge Prize winners Dr Abul Hussam and Dr AKM Munir hold the citation they received at a reception at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) auditorium on Dhaka University campus yesterday. Former chief adviser to the caretaker government Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, middle, is also seen.

# US forces find Iraq mass grave, battle insurgents

AFP, Baghdad

US forces found around 40 bodies, bound and shot, in a fresh mass grave south of Fallujah, the military said Saturday as it reported 26 militants were killed in heavy fighting in Baghdad.

"A local Iraqi citizen's tip led coalition forces to the site of a mass grave late Friday evening

outside Ferris, approximately 35 kilometers (21 miles) south of Fallujah," in western Anbar province, the military said.

"Coalition forces uncovered 35 to 40 bodies at the site. The remains were bound and had gunshot wounds."

Major Jeff Pool, spokesman for US forces in Anbar, said US Army soldiers found the grave after a tip-off.

"There were gunshots to the head and torso. Some of them had been bound, they were executed. It was recent," he said, adding that an investigation had been launched to identify the victims and their killers.

In pre-dawn raids in the Baghdad Shiite district of Sadr City, US and Iraqi forces backed by helicopters killed 26 militants suspected of links to "Iranian terror networks," the US military said. Seventeen more were detained.

"It is believed that the suspected terrorists have close ties to Iranian terror networks and are responsible for facilitating the flow of lethal aid into Iraq," it said.

The impoverished neighbourhood woke before dawn to the sound of rockets slamming into buildings and machine guns raking the concrete apartment blocks.

Dozens of gunmen ran through the streets, firing pistols and machine guns at US helicopters which responded with missiles. Several

cars and homes were destroyed. Meanwhile, a suicide bomber killed at least four police recruits and wounded around 30 other people in an attack on a police station in Muqaddiyah, northeast of Baghdad, an official said.

Interior ministry director of operations Brigadier General Abdel Karim Khalaf said the attack took place around noon in Muqaddiyah, Diyala province, the second most dangerous region in Iraq after Baghdad.

Police Lieutenant Ahmed Ali from the provincial capital, Baquba, said those killed were all police recruits.

Hours later, three Iraqi army soldiers were killed when a booby-trapped house exploded in the heart of the provincial capital of Baquba, Ali said, adding that another three Iraqi soldiers were wounded in the blast.

The attacks came less than two weeks after US and Iraqi forces launched a massive air and ground assault against Al-Qaeda strongholds in the province.

In Baqubah, the heart of the operation, thousands of US and Iraqi troops have been tip-toeing through deserted city blocks lined with deeply buried roadside bombs and entire houses decked with explosives.

On Saturday, the US military revealed that a man killed in a US-led raid east of Fallujah on Friday was a senior Al-Qaeda militant.

## Stolen oil worth Tk 5cr recovered in N'ganj: 12 held

A CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday recovered one lakh litres of fuel worth about Tk 5 crore stolen from two major fuel depots of Meghna and Padma oil companies at Siddhirganj in Narayanganj and arrested 12 people in this connection.

Lt Commander Mohammad Mahtab Ali of Rab-11 confirmed the recovered fuel included diesel, petrol, octane, kerosene and furnace.

He also said that the law enforcers are trying to find the masterminds behind the stealing.

The arrestees were identified as Zakir Hossain, Ibrahim, Asmat Ali, Hanif, Salauddin, Shamim, Ashrafuddin, Kabir Hossain, Nasir Hossain, Mintu Miah, Ariful and Faisal.

Rab sources quoted the arrestees said that Akhil Bhuiyan and Shah Alam, the masterminds behind the stealing, in connivance with some corrupt officials of the two oil depots had been carrying out the illegal business.

They used to bribe police and some administrative officials to have the illegal work done unhindered, added the arrestees.

The fuel was recovered as a result of a 60-hour combing operation around the depots, both controlled by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

Rab conducted a thorough search in the residences and shops in Ail Para, Godnail Uttar Para, S O Road and Burma Stand. They also searched ponds in the area and the river Shitalakkha for the stolen fuel.

Sources said such misdeeds could be checked significantly if digital system could be introduced at the depot.

## Production in Zia Fertiliser Factory halted

UNB, Brahmanbaria

Production in Ashuganj Zia Fertiliser Factory was suspended yesterday morning due to some technical problems.

Official sources said the factory authorities suspended the production at about 8:00am soon after the stock of ammonia, main component of producing urea, ran out.

"Ammonia production was halted in the factory on Thursday after the compressor of the ammonia plant turned nonfunctional due to overheating. Since then, we have continued the production operation utilising reserve stock of ammonia," said a factory official.

"It will take around a week to repair the fault to resume the production," he said.

The government already had to count a whopping loss as the state-run fertiliser factory, with age-old equipment, turned inoperative frequently due to recurrence of technical faults.

Due to halt in production, the factory has to incur a loss of around Tk 75 lakh daily, said a source.

A total of 1,400 metric tons of urea fertiliser are produced everyday in the factory.

With the latest suspension, fertiliser production in Zia Fertiliser was suspended twice this month.

The fertiliser production in the factory was suspended for around 11 times in the last nine months.

## AUST degree classes resume today

The classes of the degree programme of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, Dhaka will resume today, says a press release.



PHOTO: PID

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed presides over a meeting of the Council of Advisers at his office in the city yesterday.

# Road accidents kill 11

STAR REPORT

At least 11 people were killed and 79 others injured in separate road accidents in Faridpur, Comilla, Magura, Noakhali, Manikganj and Jhenidah yesterday.

UNB reports: In Faridpur, five people were killed and 37 others injured when a bus plunged into a ditch beside Dhaka-Barisal Highway at Pulia village in Bhanga upazila early yesterday.

Police said a Dhaka-bound night coach from Khulna fell into the roadside ditch after it collided with a truck at about 1:00am, leaving five people dead on the spot and 37 others injured.

Of the deceased, three were identified as bus helper Shibir Hossain, 18, and passenger Iskander Hossain, 70, and Selim Miah, 30. The identity of two others could not be known immediately.

Eleven of the injured were rushed to Faridpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition while 26 others to Bhanga Upazila Health Complex.

Police seized the truck, but the driver and helper managed to escape.

In Comilla, two people were killed and 20 others injured when a bus and a goods-laden truck collided head-on on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Cheora road crossing in Choudagram upazila yesterday morning.

Witnesses said a Feni-bound passenger bus collided with a

Dhaka-bound truck at about 8:00am, killing the unidentified truck helper, aged about 24, on the spot and injuring 21 passengers of the bus.

Of the injured, eight were admitted to Comilla Medical College Hospital in critical condition where Sripur Madrasa teacher Shamsul Alam, 38, succumbed to his injuries.

Magura correspondent adds: one person was killed and 22 people were injured in separate road accidents in the district yesterday.

Police said the first accident occurred at 7:00am when a cement-laden truck hit a roadside tree as its driver lost his control over the steering while giving side to a rickshaw van. The accident left the unidentified truck helper dead on the spot and two people injured.

The injured truck driver Jalal Uddin and van peddler Bhangu Miah were admitted to Sadar Hospital.

In another accident, at least 20 people were injured when a Dhaka-bound bus fell into a ditch beside Magura-Jhenidah road at Ichhakhada village in the morning.

The injured were admitted to the Sadar hospital.

In Noakhali, an unidentified man was crushed under the wheels of a truck at about 9:00am while crossing the road in Miarpool area of Begumganj upazila.

Our correspondent from Manikganj reports: One person was killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Dhamrai yesterday.

day.

The victim was identified as Abdur Rahim of Sundurpur village under Daudkandi upazila in Comilla district.

Dhamrai police said the accident occurred at around 10:00am at Bathuli under Dhamrai Police Station when a Dhaka-bound bus ran over Abdur Rahim where he was examining computer system of newly built weight scale at Bathuli, which is likely to be opened today. Rahim is supervisor of the weight scale.

The body was sent to Manikganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

A case has been lodged with Dhamrai Police Station.

Our Correspondent from Jhenidah adds: A youth was killed in a road accident at 4:00pm here yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mizanur Rahman, 30, son of Giasuddin of Bakshipur village under Sadar Upazila.

Witnesses said a Chuadanga-bound passenger bus from Jhenidah hit a motorcycle in front of DC's Court in the town, leaving the cyclist dead on the spot. The motorcyclist was going home from Chuadanga.

On information, police rushed to the spot and sent the body to Jhenidah Hospital morgue for autopsy.



PHOTO: STAR

Finance and Planning Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam speaks at a post-budget press conference at National Economic Council (NEC) yesterday. On his left are Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Saleh Uddin and Chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR) Badiur Rahman.

## FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES Kuwait oil, communications ministers resign

AFP, Kuwait City

Kuwaiti Oil Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah al-Sabah, who faced a no-confidence vote in parliament over alleged financial irregularities, has stepped down along with the communications minister, official media said yesterday.

Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah accepted the resignation of Sheikh Ali, who risked dismissal on a simple majority of 25 members of the 50-seat parliament in the July 9 vote, the official KUNA news agency said.

The emir also "accepted the resignation of Communications Minister and State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Sharida al-Measherji," the news agency added.

Opposition MPs have accused Sheikh Ali of involvement in the multi-million dollar Kuwait Oil Tanker Company fraud case in which former oil minister Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah and four other top KOTC officials are accused of stealing more than 100 million dollars. They have denied any wrongdoing.

The minister had faced nine hours of questioning in the Kuwaiti parliament last Monday.

Islamist Measherji has apparently resigned in protest to the questioning of Sheikh Ali in parliament, which was supported mainly by Islamist MPs, parliamentary sources said.

## Govt urged to allocate khas lands for Dalit community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Dalit (lower caste) community yesterday urged the caretaker government to allocate khas lands for them to permanently solve their housing problem in the city.

They also called upon all to change attitude towards them and treat them as human beings.

Dalits are mostly the sweepers living in different colonies designated for them in the city in an inhuman condition as the space allocated for each family is too inadequate and there is a lack of sanitation and other facilities.

They placed their demands and aired their grievances at a seminar titled 'Housing problem of Dalit in Dhaka and its solution' organised by Bangladesh Dalits' Human Rights (BDHR) and Dalit Women Forum (DWF) in the city.

Around 50,000 or 60,000 members of Dalit community live in some 27 colonies in unhygienic condition. Each family live in a 9-foot by 11-foot room and they have to pay rents and utility bills, said BDHR President B Solomon.

Some 750 families live in Gonokuti colony, but there are only 16 latrines for women and girls and 16 more for men and boys and there is no bathroom, he said.

He also said that many Dalits used to live in slums, but successive governments have evicted them but

did not take steps for their rehabilitation.

Speaking at the programme, Dr Hamida Hossain of Ain O Salish Kendra said the government makes arrangements for the accommodation of lawmakers and government officials; it should also take special measures for the Dalit community as their service to society is no less important than others.

She also stressed the need to develop social conscience in order to put an end to discriminatory attitude towards the Dalit community.

Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori, Abul Hossain of Bangladesh Grameen O Nagar Daridra Federation, Mahiuddin Ahmed of Bangladesh Bastibashi Union and Meherunnessa, a woman ward commissioner, also spoke.

## Khaleda shocked at Asia's death

Former Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia expressed deep shock at the death of Asia Begum, elder sister of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and aunt to AL President Sheikh Hasina, says a BNP press release.

Khaleda prayed for the salvation of her departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family, the release added.

## LONDON CONFERENCE Roots of conflict in British society discussed

ANSAR AHMED ULLAH

A conference on 'Social vision: Working for a more equal and tolerant society' was organised by the London School of Economics and Political Science Social Vision Global Alumni Network on June 26.

The purpose of the conference was to discuss and identify the roots of conflict in contemporary British society.

Speakers and participants at the conference analyzed different dimensions of conflict including the rise of religion, fundamentalism, and community cohesion.

They also discussed ways to explore the causes of conflict and identify the long-term solutions.

The speakers included Nazir Afzal OBE, director of the UK Crown Prosecution Service, Ed Bateman, chief superintendent of Metropolitan Police, Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, Muslim Parliament and Zakir Khan, from the London School of Economics and Political Science Social Vision Global Alumni Network.

The conference was attended by participants from various organisations including local government authorities, Scotland Yard and the Police, NGOs and charitable organisations.

London School of Economics and Political Science Social Vision Global Alumni Network is a Network of LSE Alumni working together for a more equal and tolerant society and is active internationally including the United Kingdom, India, and Bangladesh presently.

## Girl kept confined, raped in Ctg Five arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested four people from an apartment building at Agrabad in the city on Friday night on charges of keeping a teenage girl confined for several days and violating her.

The elite force also arrested a woman from the same house for luring the girl to the house with a promise of job at a garments factory.

The Rab members conducted a raid on the house and arrested the culprits at around 11:00pm following a complaint lodged by the victim's father. They also recovered six bottles of Phensidyl from the possession of the culprits, sources said.

The arrestees are Md Solaiman Khan alias Badsha, 40, Md Shafiq Mia, 20, Md Nabi, Md Salahuddin, 23, and Nurpur, 25.

During a preliminary interrogation, Nurpur confessed that she lured the victim to that house.

The other culprits also confessed to their crime, said a Rab press release.

## Obituary



Prof Dr AKM Aminul Islam, an scholar and educationist, passed away due to cancer at a New York Hospital on June 27 at the

age of 74, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, three sons and elder sister Professor Dr Afia Dil, Professor Emeritus at Alliant International University at San Diego, California, USA.

Prof Aminul Islam was a teacher of the Bangla Department at the Dhaka University in the fifties. Later he joined the Wright State University at Dayton, Ohio, USA and after 26 years of teaching he was appointed Professor Emeritus of Anthropology.

After namaz-e-janaza in New York, his dead body was sent to Dayton, Ohio where he will be buried.

## OIC welcomes proposed US envoy

AFP, Riyadh

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) welcomed yesterday a US decision to create a post for a special envoy to the largest Islamic bloc.

The decision announced on Wednesday by US President George W Bush would "hopefully contribute to strengthening the dialogue between the United States and the OIC," Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said in a statement.

He also hoped it would represent a major step "towards a historical reconciliation between the West and the Muslim world."

Bush made the announcement at a speech marking the 50th anniversary of the Islamic Centre of Washington, a mosque and Islamic cultural center in the US capital.

In his speech Bush said the US envoy to the 57-nation bloc of Islamic nations would listen to Muslim countries, share Washington's views and explain US values.

### No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions and at many places over Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi division in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places, Met Office said. It also predicted that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 33.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 23.8 degree Celsius at Feni.

**The sun sets in the capital at 6:50pm today and rises at 5:15am 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	32.7	26.7	76	71
Chittagong	29.0	25.2	91	89
Rajshahi	33.0	26.8	89	85
Khulna	32.3	26.6	77	91
Barisal	30.5	26.8	88	96
Sylhet	33.9	25.5	91	67
Cox's Bazar	26.4	25.0	99	100