

SAVING SUNDARBANS

Dhaka asked to make formal request for funds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Heritage Centre (WHC) has invited a formal request from Bangladesh for getting support from its emergency response fund for the Sundarbans, the lone world natural heritage site of the country. One-fourth of the largest mangrove forest of the world has been badly affected by Cyclone Sidr. Experts calculated the damage in

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CA asks NGOs to be lenient with borrowers

Gen Moeen suggests instalment waiver

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday requested the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to be lenient as much as possible in realising loan instalments from the cyclone-affected people.

Meanwhile, Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed requested the

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CAMPUS VIOLENCE

4 RU teachers get 2yrs jail sentence



Moloy Bhounik
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A speedy trial court of Rajshahi yesterday sentenced four Rajshahi University (RU) teachers to two years' rigorous imprisonment for violating Emergency Power Rules (EPR) 2007 by bringing out a silent procession on the campus on August 21.

The court also fined the teachers—Moloy Bhounik of management department, Dulal Chandra Biswas, Sayed Selim Reza Newton and Abdullah Al Mamun of mass communication department—Tk

1,000 each, in default of which they will have to suffer one month more in jail.

Two other accused in the case—former RU vice chancellor Prof M Saidur Rahman Khan and syndicate member and convener of RU Progressive Teachers' Society Prof M Abdus Sobhan—were acquitted. Both the teachers were released from Rajshahi Central Jail at 1:30pm following the verdict.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ruhul Amin, who was the judge of the speedy trial court, pronounced the verdict at 11:35am

in a packed courtroom.

Tight security measures were taken in and around the court, several points in the city and on the RU campus. Law enforcers allowed no one in the court except journalists, lawyers, family members of the accused and a few senior teachers. Hundreds of curious people, including students, were waiting outside the court when the verdict was being delivered.

Judge Ruhul Amin said the accused had three charges for EPR violation against them—taking

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NAM APARTMENTS

Allotment to 108 ex-MPs cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday cancelled the allotments of NAM apartments to 108 former members of the parliament (MP), who are either convicted or accused or under trial for corruption, or who have failed to submit their wealth statements.

The authority of allotting the apartments was also transferred from the parliament to the government until further notice, while the government fixed new rents for the apartments, which will be retroactively effective from March 1 of this year.

Upon payment of the new rents, eligible former MPs will need to re-

apply to the housing department for allotments of the apartments, while the Parliament Secretariat will take steps for implementing the new rents.

Housing and Public Works Adviser Mainul Hossain approved the proposal yesterday, and told reporters afterward that the decision was taken in consultation with the speaker of the parliament in light of the changed circumstances.

He added that the former MPs who accept the government fixed rents may remain in their NAM flats, if they are neither accused, charged nor under trial for corruption.

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DEATH TOLL NOW 3,268

Sidr damage worse than UN estimate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations (UN) yesterday said that the damage from Cyclone Sidr is worse than initial estimates.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in a press release yesterday, said, "As more information becomes available, an even grimmer reality is being revealed."

UN raised the number of people affected by Sidr to 15 lakh, added 5,000 more to the injury list, and raised the figure for houses destroyed, by two lakh.

Latest UN assessments, in coordination with government agencies, suggest 2.2 million people are in need of immediate life-saving relief and 85 lakh homes

have been destroyed—around 15 lakh more than originally estimated. The actual number of dead livestock has doubled from the initial assessment to 12.5 lakh.

The number of injured now stands at 40,000, while another 872 remain missing. The official death toll is now 3,268.

OCHA also said material damages are more significant than originally thought, as 564,000 houses have been completely destroyed according to latest assessments, up by 2 lakh.

OCHA also said more revelations are still to come, as more areas become accessible. This will reveal the true extent of the damage to roads, public buildings and

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AGRI SECTOR REHABILITATION

Sidr-hit farmers to get Tk 69cr in 10 days

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The agriculture ministry has approved a fund of Tk 69 crore for immediate distribution in the first phase of its rehabilitation programmes to recover from agricultural damage caused by cyclone Sidr. The ministry has also prepared four alternative programmes for rehabilitation in the second and third phases with the highest fund of Tk 371 crore.

Ministry sources said considering the cultivation season of Boro, vegetables and betel leaf, the Tk 69-crore fund will be distributed among farmers within 10 days.

This rehabilitation programme

includes 39,700 hectares of land and distribution of 1,300 tonnes of seed and 9,588 tonnes of fertiliser.

"The ministry will provide seeds, fertilisers and irrigation to the affected farmers of 29 cyclone-hit districts under the three-phase rehabilitation programmes," said a high official of the ministry.

He said the supports would be given to the farmers for cultivation of Boro, Aush, wheat, maize, beans and vegetables.

"We will consult the NGOs and banks to learn about their programmes for the cyclone victims, before finalising it," a source said.

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Eyes on relief, no heart for work

SHAMIM ASHRAF, from Kolapara, Patuakhali

While there is an acute lack of work in many places, there are allegations that labourers are foregoing the little work available, preferring to queue for hours to receive relief materials instead.

Since the distribution of relief materials began in the Sidr-hit southern districts, many low-income people now spend time and effort to receive relief goods rather than look for work.

This has resulted in a scarcity of day-labourers, rickshawpullers and domestic help in the region, especially in the less affected areas.

Many farmers who need to

harvest their IRRI fields now say that it's become a problem to find daylabourers to work for them. The scarcity of labourers has also led to an increase in the cost of their services.

"You could get a labourer for Tk 100-150 and a meal a day before the cyclone, now they charge between Tk 250 to 300 for the same," said Forman Ali, a farmer of Kolapara Sadar.

Though the IRRI was due for harvest about two weeks ago, farmers who have not lost all their crops have not yet been able to reap what remains in their fields due to this crisis.

This problem is evident in all nine unions of Kolapara.

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