

# Ensure indigenous people's right to land to save environment

Speakers tell Bapa-Ben conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ensuring legal and traditional rights of indigenous people to land will save environment and protect the country from natural calamities, said the speakers at a conference yesterday.

They also criticised different government projects such as social afforestation and eco-park that evict the indigenous people by occupying their lands and habitats.

The conference on 'Indigenous People and Bangladesh Environment' has been organised jointly by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Bangladesh Environment Network (Ben) in association with eight departments of eight public universities including Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in the city.

The two-day conference is the first of its kind where indigenous representatives from different parts of the country, social workers and researchers are taking part.

Speakers at the conference laid emphasis on participatory concept of development while planning projects, inter-country policy to prevent environmental pollution from neighboring countries and bringing indigenous people under the process of modernisation by upgrading their earnings.

"Legal rights of indigenous people must be ensured to save the environment where they live in, and they must be brought under the process of modernisation," said Prof

Nazrul Islam, coordinator of Ben.

"The indigenous people are born and brought up in the lap of nature. The way they earn, they cultivate and above all they survive have its own tradition and close connection with the nature that includes hills, rivers, forests and even the plain land. So ensuring their right means taking steps to save the environment," he added.

Prof Abdulah Abu Sayeed, chairman of the inaugural session, said, "The indigenous people were deprived of their rights to give dishonest people the opportunity to exploit and loot their life and livelihood."

The speakers made a 12-point demand at the session to ensure the rights of indigenous people including their constitutional approval, access to primary education in their own mother tongue besides the existing curriculum, right to land, separate ministries for the indigenous people and implementation of the peace treaty.

General Secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh Muzahidul Islam Selim said the problem of the indigenous people should be viewed from political and economic perspective.

He also laid emphasis on ensuring an environment in the country where each ethnic group can flourish with its distinct culture and tradition.

"An inter-country policy should be formulated to save our environment from its threatened condition. After 50 years indigenous people in Sylhet will have to evacuate their present habitat as huge sands from India are filling our rivers," said Shefalika Tripura.

Chaired by Bapa Vice-president ASM Shahjahan, the plenary session was also addressed by Rocky Chakma and Trimati Tanchanga.

A total of 21 papers were presented at the session while 27 papers will be presented today.

The programme also incorporates children's art exhibition, film projection and cultural function.

Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a conference at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in the city yesterday.

## Consolidate communal harmony

Archbishop says at social gathering

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Laid off workers of state-owned Alim Jute Mills suspended their dawn-to-dusk blockade programme on Khulna-Jessore highway from yesterday till 12:00 noon today following assurance of law-enforcing agencies.

Officials of different law-enforcing agencies assured the laid off workers to try their best to arrange payment of all arrears through a discussion with the high-ups of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).

Although the road blockade programme was postponed, workers demonstrated inside the mill from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm yesterday demanding early payment of their arrears and withdrawal of the decision to lay off the jute mill.

Later, in a rally at 3:00 pm CBA leaders Abdul Hamid, Amirul Islam and Abdus Salam warned the management of severe consequence if they fail to meet their demands.

Workers who applied to the management to quit their jobs under the voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) also joined the movement.

Meanwhile, retired workers of the Crescent Jute Mills will observe a daylong hunger strike tomorrow and lay siege to its main office tomorrow to press home their demands.

ALIM JUTE MILLS  
Workers suspend blockade after assurance from law enforcers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

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Absconding convict held in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Fatulla police yesterday arrested Mohon Mia, an absconding convict who was sentenced to death in sensational Arju murder case, from Kodomtoli at Adamjee.

He killed Arju in broad daylight in 2002, police said.

He was accused in several cases.

CCC accords reception to freedom fighters

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) accorded a reception to around 300 freedom fighters under 12 police stations of the port city for the first time on Victory Day.

CCC Acting Mayor M Manjur Alam was the chief guest in the reception ceremony. Afroza Kalam, Chairman of Social Welfare Standing Committee of CCC, presided over the ceremony at Lalidighi Mayadighi.

MA Mannan spoke on behalf of the freedom fighters on the occasion.

Acting Mayor in his speech said that Chittagong has a glorious history of Liberation War. He called upon all to be united to build a prosperous Bangladesh.

Later, the chief guest handed over crests among the freedom fighters.

CCC Commissioner Rekha Alam Chowdhury, Secretary AKM Khaifur Alam, M Kafil Uddin, Dr ABM Faizur Rahman, Abu Saleh, Prof Mohammad Mamta Uddin Chowdhury, Shah Alam and Fahim Uddin were present at the ceremony.

## WEATHER TODAY

### Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country with partly cloudy sky over the southern part in the next 12 hours until 6:00 pm today.

Mild cold wave is sweeping over Rajshahi and Mymensingh and Jessor and it may continue.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 26.3 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Mymensingh and Sylhet and lowest 7.3 degrees Celsius at Ishwardi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:15 pm today and rises at 6:30 am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in celsius	Humidity percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	23.7	13.7	62	75
Chittagong	22.8	20.0	60	70
Rajshahi	24.5	09.5	69	69
Khulna	21.5	13.2	69	75
Barisal	22.0	14.4	61	81
Sylhet	26.3	14.6	95	78
Cox's Bazar	23.4	20.2	68	69



Recipients of the UNFPA Media Award 2007 pose for photograph with the guests at National Press Club in the city yesterday.

13 journos get UNFPA Media Award 2007  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prize giving ceremony of the UNFPA Media Award 2007 was held at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

This year 13 journalists from both print and electronic media received the award under different categories.

The award carries prize money, crest and certificate.

The Daily Star received a special award for its continuous support to reproductive health (RH) / family planning (FP) and gender related programmes.

UNFPA Representative, Bangladesh Arthur Erken gave away the awards among the winners as the chief guest.

On behalf of The Daily Star, Rezaul Karim Lotus, chief reporter, received the award.

Alpha Arzu of the daily New Age won the first prize in print media (English) while Nicholas Biswas, a contributor to The Daily Star, and Nurul Islam Hasib of The Daily Independent became second and third respectively.

In print media (Bengali), Razu Ahmed of the daily Aijker Kagoj became first while Ismat Morjida Khan, a contributor to The Daily Samakal, became second.

Angir Nahar Monty, Naznin Akther and Mansura Hossain jointly won the third prize in this section.

Meanwhile, Tanjil Mahmud, Reazuddin Sheikh Badsha and Munni Saha won the award in electronic media (TV) while Abul Matin and Salahuddin Ahmed won in electronic media (Radio).

Condition of KCC mayor has deteriorated  
Says wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A five-member medical board was formed yesterday for the treatment of detained Mayor of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Sheikh Tayebur Rahman.

Headed by Dr Kazi Hamid Asgar, an associate professor of Orthopaedics department of Khulna Medical College and Hospital (KMCH), the board has already checked up health condition of the mayor.

The report points out that families of primary school students incur expenditure in respect of tuition fees, admission fees, bags, transport and other such related costs.

The report is based on 2005 statistics and costs.

The report stresses the need for increasing public funds for primary and secondary level institutions.

The Education Watch report has also found wide variations in public funding between urban and rural institutions of the same type at both primary and secondary levels.

"We are not at present on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for 2015 or to fulfill the constitutional pledge to 'extend free and compulsory education to all children,'" the report says.

Discrimination between boys and girls in both rural and urban areas is also small regardless of the types of institutions, the report says, regarding that guardians no longer discriminate against female children in regard to education.

The report shows public expenditure per student per annum in a government primary school (for 2005) to be Tk 1,728 followed by Tk 1,656 in the state-aided madrasas. The expenditure for the same is only Tk 664 in registered non-government schools.

At the secondary level, public expenditure per student per annum is Tk 2,461 in government assisted

## CA performs Umrah

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed performed Umrah prior to Hajj at Makkah Al Mukarram on Sunday evening and offered special munajat for overall welfare of the nation.

Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed and other members of the CA's entourage also performed Umrah with the head of caretaker government and joined the munajat, according to a message received here lastnight.

Fakhruddin went to Mina at noon yesterday and would stay over there until the Fridayazr prayers.

The CA's entourage will leave Minas this morning for Arafat Maidan to perform the main rituals of Hajj.

## DU 'Gha' unit admission test deferred

DU CORRESPONDENT

The admission test of 'Gha' unit at Dhaka University (DU) for the academic session 2007-08 will be held on January 18, instead of January 4, 2008.

The authorities took the decision to shift the date, as the university will remain closed then due to scheduled winter vacation, sources said.

The admission test of 'Kha' unit will be held on January 11.

## Withdraw cases against RUJ secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and its front organisations in a statement yesterday demanded withdrawal of the false cases against Jahangir Alam Akash, general secretary of Rajshahi Union of Journalists (RUJ), and an end to the harassments on him.

In 1947, the Bengali Hindu Bhalobash didn't accept Bengali Muslims because they said they were not Bengali enough, then in 1971, West Pakistanis thought Bengali Muslims were not Muslim enough, he added.

AKbar disagreed with the dominant view that a minority is a group of people who are demographically outnumbered in a particular area, stressing that the category is based on perceptions.

Outlining the history of Bengali Muslims to illustrate his point, he said they were affected the most as a minority in the last century that have transformed their history, and in effect their lives.

AKbar said the partition of Bengal in 1947, the Indo-Pak partition in 1947 and Bangladesh's independence in 1971 were the three key events that affected Bengali Muslims as minorities.

He said people were informed of the damage and casualties as the media men risked their lives to go to the cyclone-affected areas to collect information and pictures, which is why "We all could be united to fight the disaster."

"You all have sacrificed a lot and I feel it is my moral duty to thank you. My conscience repeatedly says media men are very close to us, our very close friends," Archbishop said.

Moderating the programme, Radio Veritas Asia Bangladesh Correspondent Saifuddin Sabuj said, "Taking part in religious festivals by people of other faiths has become a tradition. We must keep it up."

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