

Bangladesh 'on track' to achieve MDG on child survival

Maternal mortality rate still high

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh is very much 'on track' to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4 on child survival, but is far away from the target of reducing maternal deaths - the goal 5 of the United Nations set for 2015, according to a report available here yesterday.

The 2008 report titled 'Tracking Progress in Maternal, Newborn and Child Survival' was released at the 118th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in South Africa on Thursday.

The mortality rate of children under five years has come down at 69 per thousand in 2006 from 149 in 1990, marking a 4.8 percent average annual reduction, which is slightly over the final target to achieve the rate at 50 by 2015.

The maternal mortality ratio, however, remained 570 per 100,000 lives, indicating a very high ratio of mother deaths in Bangladesh. According to the study, one in 51 women were at lifetime risk of death up to 2005 in the country,

said the report prepared by the United Nations after reviewing progress in 68 countries.

Successful immunisation coupled with vitamin-A supplementation has been found to be the key factors reducing mortality of children. The report also suggested gearing up the existing programmes with proper nutritional support for further reduction in child mortality.

The highest number of delivery at home by unskilled or semiskilled birth attendants has been identified as the main culprit for high maternal deaths in Bangladesh. Majority of women die of haemorrhage followed by anaemia, hypertensive disorders, obstructed labour and abortion. More than 21,000 mothers died in 2005, said the report.

Parliamentarians attending the 118th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Cape Town joined the global health experts and policymakers to discuss the role they can play in accelerating the action to achieve goal 4 and 5 of MDGs.

Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad Barrister Jamir Uddin Sircar is attending the assembly.

Over 10 million women and children still die each year from causes that are largely preventable and treatable. The majority of maternal and child deaths occur in Africa and South Asia, with Sub-Saharan Africa's burden increasing.

The report, using the existing country data, highlighted the rapid progress that many of the 68 countries are making in providing vaccinations, vitamin-A supplementation and insecticide-treated mosquito nets to prevent major killers such as measles and malaria.

The report also identified a number of missed opportunities that need urgent attention. These include reduction in unmet need for modern contraceptives now being used only by one-third of women, increase of skilled care at birth, access to quality clinical care for sick children and improving nutritional status through poverty reduction.

Nutrition has been found to be the underlying cause of 3.5 million

child deaths annually, and as many as 20 percent of maternal deaths.

Despite the missed opportunities, the report also notes that a number of countries, including China, Haiti and Turkmenistan, have made substantial progress in reducing deaths of under-five children in the past three years.

Sixteen of the 68 priority countries, including Bangladesh, are now 'on track' to achieve Millennium Development Goal 4.

The report findings show poor families missing out skilled care at birth and clinical care for newborns and children when they are ill. Other barriers include armed conflict and a high HIV prevalence, which together have erased gains in child survival in at least 12 African countries.

Overall funding from donor for maternal, newborn and child health has increased in recent years, although health systems for these groups remained grossly under-funded in relation to the needs of priority countries.



Awami League presidium member Amir Hossain Amu speaks at a mass signature campaign demanding immediate release of party chief Sheikh Hasina at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. Awami Juba League organised the programme.

Take stern action against communal forces

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday came down heavily on the caretaker government for its soft stance on communal forces who staged violent protests recently against the national women development policy.

They said if the communal forces are not dealt with a strong hand and the war criminals are not punished, no development and advancement will take place in the country.

The seminar titled 'Role of India-Russia-Bhutan in Bangladesh's Liberation War' was organised by Bangladesh-Bharat Sampriti Parishad (BBSPP) in the capital to commemorate the formation of first government of independent Bangladesh on April 17, 1971.

"The government's attitude towards the fanatical and communal forces is friendly. With regard to the issue of women development policy, we find the govern-

ment is maintaining a policy of appeasing the communal forces," said Professor Kabir Chowdhury, who is also the chief adviser of BBSPP.

"We had hoped that the government would formulate a law for women on the basis of women development policy 2008 as it will help us move forward further and faster," he said.

Prof Chowdhury called for initiating the process for the trial of war criminals by bringing well-known war criminals to justice.

"The anti-liberation forces are continuing their attempts to distort our history and they even call our liberation war a 'civil war'," said AL presidium member Abdur Razzak, who presided over the seminar.

He said the country will not achieve peace and progress unless the war criminals are punished.

"The liberation war took place in every sphere of life, including politics, diplomacy, culture and even in the football field. But the

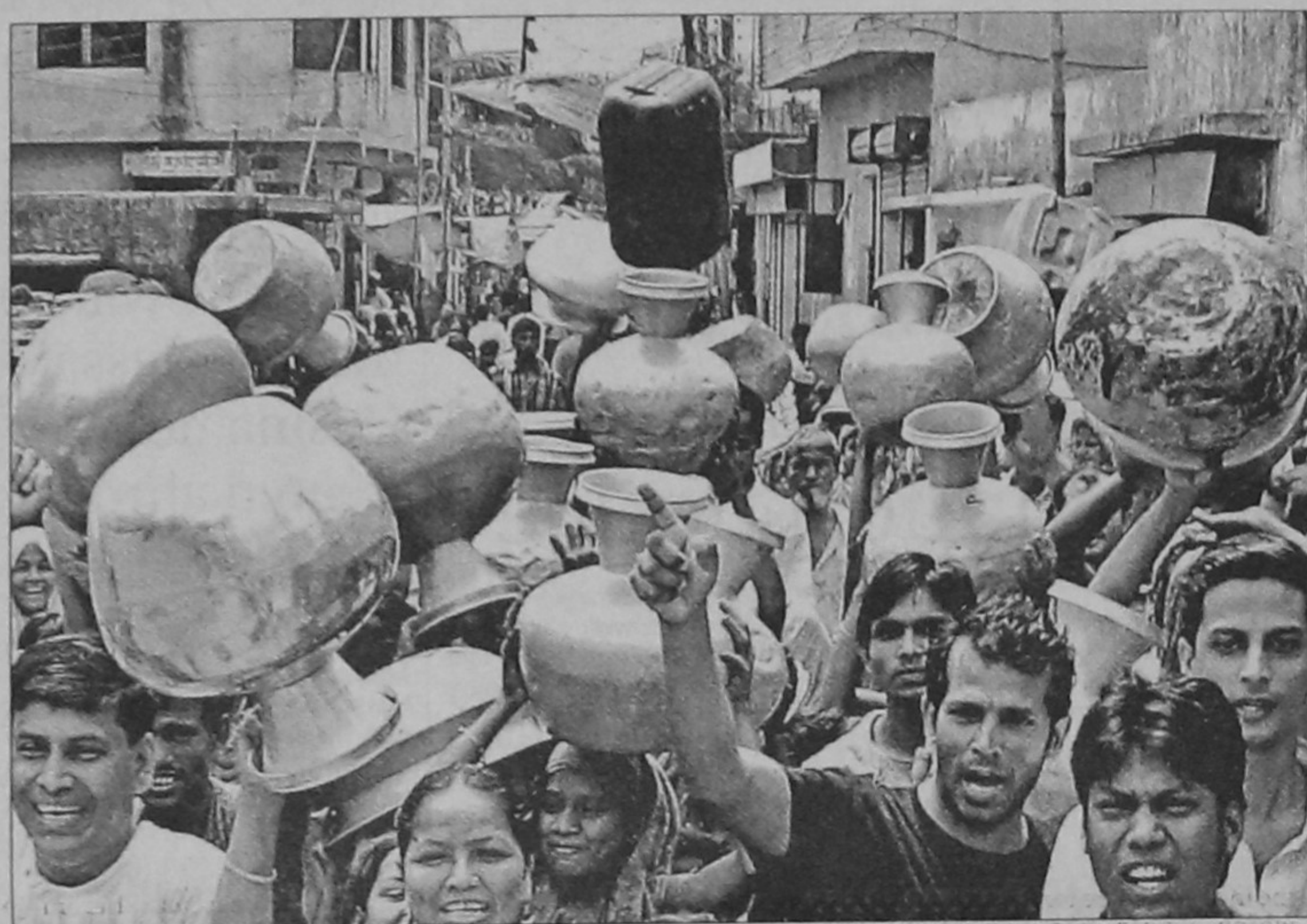
war criminals have not been punished yet. Rather, they were promoted by political parties through alliance in national elections," said Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu.

Speakers at the seminar opined that April 17 should be observed nationally every year to renew the spirit and lesson of the liberation war for building a democratic and secular country.

They called for incorporating true history of the liberation war in textbooks so that the children become aware of the country's independence from national and international perspectives.

They also highlighted the contribution of India, Russia and Bhutan to the liberation war.

First Secretary of Indian High Commission Rajib Chowdhury, Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Saifullah Bir Uttam, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, Tayebul Haque, a member of West Bengal Congress, CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim and Haider Akbar Khan Rono also spoke on the occasion.



Local residents stage a demonstration at Anandanagar in Badda in the city yesterday demanding adequate supply of water in the area.

Declare nat'l minimum wage of Tk 4,500

Demands Sramik League

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Jatiya Sramik League (JSL) have demanded declaration of national minimum wage of Tk 4,500 and its immediate implementation in all institutions and industries across the country according to scale and grade of the employees, says a press release.

JSL President Abdul Matin Master and General Secretary Roy Ramesh Chandra in a joint statement yesterday said workers' lives have become unbearable due to skyrocketing prices of essentials.

"It is really tough for general workers to lead their lives with the present price hike. So, the government should implement national minimum wage at Tk 4500 immediately," they said.

The leaders also demanded immediate distribution of rice, oil and pulse to workers of different sectors including garment, rickshaw pullers and transport workers.

They demanded introduction of permanent rationing system for the workers.

Newly married woman killed for dowry

UNB, Sirajganj

A newly married woman was killed by her husband over dowry at Char Kojuri village in Shahjapur upazila on Thursday night.

The victim, Rozina Khatun, 18, got married only 20 days ago.

But her husband Jahangir Khan tortured her regularly for dowry money after their marriage, the police said.

Failing to realise the dowry money, Jahangir beat up his wife and strangled her at his house at about 10:30pm on Thursday.

Jahangir and all his family members went into hiding following the incident.

Receiving information, the police recovered the body yesterday morning and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

UN agency appeals for \$256m more in food funds

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations agency charged with relieving world hunger made an appeal yesterday for 256 million dollars more in funds to cope with sharp rises in food prices.

The World Food Programme (WFP) request came on top of another "extraordinary emergency appeal" of 500 million dollars made by the agency in March to top up its 2008 budget.

The agency has estimated that food prices have risen some 55 percent since June 2007 and that these costs have had "an enormous impact on our operations", said WFP spokeswoman Christiane Berthiaume.

The WFP has already warned that it would have to cut rations if the necessary funds were not available.

Food prices have been spiralling higher globally due to rising populations, strong demand from developing countries, the use of certain foods in biofuels to combat global warming, and the increasing frequency of floods and droughts as a result of climate change.

The WFP provides food for 73 million people in 78 countries.

Edible oil price goes up further in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Price of edible oil both at wholesale and retail markets in the port city registered a fresh hike yesterday due to shortfall in supply.

Price of soybean oil shot up by Tk 130 per maund (37.32 kg) at the wholesale market in a span of seven days while price of palm oil increased by Tk 230 per maund during the same period, traders said.

The wholesalers said less supply of edible oil from refineries led to the price hike both at wholesale and retail markets.

During a visit to different retail markets yesterday, this correspondent found that a five-litre container of soybean oil of Rupchanda brand was being sold at Tk 520 to Tk 530, whereas the price was between Tk 512 to Tk 514 a day ago and one litre Teer brand soybean oil was being sold at Tk 108 while the price was Tk 103-105 on Thursday.

At the Karnaphuli Market, some shops were selling a five-litre container at the previous rate of Tk 513 to Tk 514 yesterday morning while some other shops started selling at

the increased price yesterday afternoon.

MD Gias of M/s Gias Brothers at Karnaphuli Market said retailers started selling soybean oil at a higher price due to the increase in price at the wholesale market.

A litre of non-brand soybean oil was selling at Tk 104 to 105 at Reazuddin Bazar while the price was only Tk 102 two days ago.

Ratan Kanti Nandi of Miresarai Traders at Karnaphuli Market said they bought non-brand soybean oil at Tk 3780 per maund from Khatunganj on Thursday afternoon. The price was Tk 3680 on Saturday last.

Palm oil at wholesale markets was being sold at Tk 3550 per maund on Thursday, compared with its previous rate of Tk 3300 on last Saturday.

Traders at Khatunganj wholesale market said they did not get any new delivery order from refineries last week as the refineries stopped issuing delivery order citing shortfall in supply of oil.

A wholesaler said the price might increase further if new delivery orders are not issued soon.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country. Mild heat wave sweeping over the Khulna division and the regions of Rajshahi and Ishwardi may continue, Met Office said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 37.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and the lowest of 20.8 degrees at Syedpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:22pm today and rises at 5:33am 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	35.1	22.8	77	61
Chittagong	31.6	25.0	75	77
Rajshahi	37.2	21.4	89	62
Khulna	34.8	26.0	77	65
Barisal	34.6	25.9	80	70
Sylhet	32.4	22.0	79	72
Cox's Bazar	34.2	25.6	64	74



Seminar

National Centre for Control of Rheumatic Fever and Heart Disease organises a national seminar on 'Control of heart diseases: Bangladesh perspective'. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 11:00am.

Roundtable

Citizens Rights Movement organises a roundtable on causes of price spiral of agricultural and consumer products and ways to overcome it. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

View exchange

Partnership of Women in Action (PaWA) organises a view exchange meeting on 'Constitutional rights of women: Perspective women development policy'. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity. Time: 10:30am.

Seminar

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) and Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) jointly organise a seminar on labour laws in Bangladesh. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

A discussion will be held to mark the historic Mujib Nagar Day. Venue: Shaheed Tajul Islam auditorium. Time: 3:30pm.

Buet seminar

Department of Chemistry, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) organises a seminar on 'Nanotechnology for the environment: A new hope for clean water'. Venue: Buet Council Bhaban. Time: 4:30pm.

Workshop

Department of Civil Engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) organises a workshop on early warning dissemination for disaster management. Venue: Civil Engineering building, Buet. Time: 9:00am.

View exchange

Eastern University organises a view exchange meeting on higher education in the country. Venue: BPATC, Savar. Time: 3:00pm.

Rotary Dhaka Central

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm.



Lt Gen (Ret'd) Harun-ur Rashid launches a book titled 'Ekti Surjo Uthar Golpo' by Rezaul Hasan at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. On his right are Anwar-ul-Alam Shahid and Mamunur Rashid and on his left are Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and poet Sajjad Kadir.

Climate change driving war, hunger: France

World's biggest carbon polluters hold meet

AFP, Paris

French President Nicolas Sarkozy on Friday told the world's biggest carbon polluters that global warming was becoming a driver of hunger, unrest and conflict, with the war in Darfur a concrete example.

"Climate change is already having a considerable impact on security," Sarkozy said in a speech to ministers from 16 economies that together account for 80 percent of the planet's greenhouse-gas emissions.

Water scarcity and rivalry for farmland and fishing resources were emerging as "major challenges," especially in Africa, he said.

"In Darfur, we see this explosive mixture from the impact of climate change, which prompts emigration by increasingly impoverished people, which then has consequences in war," said Sarkozy.

"If we keep going down this path, climate change will encourage the immigration of people with nothing towards areas where the

population do have something, and the Darfur crisis will be only one crisis among dozens of others."

Nearly five years old, the war in southwestern Sudan has claimed more than 200,000 lives from fighting, famine and disease and 2.2 million others have been left homeless. The exodus has had a spillover effect on neighbouring countries.

The conflict began when ethnic minority rebels took up arms against the Arab-dominated regime and state-backed Arab militia, fighting for resources and power in one of the most remote and deprived places on earth.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon last June also suggested the Darfur conflict arose "at least in part" from climate change.

UN statistics showed rainfall declined some 40 percent over the past two decades as a rise in Indian Ocean temperatures disrupted monsoons, he said.

Sarkozy announced France would double its emergency food aid this year, spending 60 million euros (100 million dollars).

"We cannot remain indifferent to the unrest among those people who, in the developing countries, can no longer satisfy their hunger," he said.

Soaring prices for basic grains -- rice, wheat, soybean and corn -- have provoked protests and rioting in at least half a dozen developing countries in past months.

Experts say the food crisis has multiple causes.

These include the surging demand for meat in fast-growing China and India, which encourages land to be turned over for grazing and grain to be grown for animal fodder rather than food.

In addition, the surging cost of oil has had an impact on many poor people, adding to the pinch caused by rising food prices.

But scientists also point to a likely role by climate change.

Rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns may be amplifying water scarcity, especially in Australia, which is one of the world's breadbaskets, according to some opinion.

BELA LEGAL NOTICE

'Take action against illegal structures on St Martin's island'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (BELA) on Thursday sent legal notices to authorities concerned to take steps against unauthorised commercial structures like hotels and resorts on the country's lone coral island Saint Martin's for the sake of its ecological safety.

The legal notice said a section of unscrupulous businessmen established a total of 34 hotels, resorts and restaurants on the island so far in the name of tourism development in violation of the government rules.

Uncontrolled movement of a large number of visitors on the seashore, setting up of camp fire by them and frequent movement of different water transports are also posing a great ecological threat to the island, it said.

The association sent copies of the legal notice to the respective secretaries of Environment and Forests Ministry, Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry, Fisheries and Livestock Ministry, Shipping Ministry, said a press release yesterday.

The copies were also sent to the Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, Director General of Environment Department, Deputy Commissioner (D.C.), Superintendent of Police (SP) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of District Council of Cox's Bazar, Divisional Forest Officer and Director of Department of Environment (DoE) Chittagong.

The press release stated that Bangladesh government through a notice published on June 29 in 1999 declared the island a 'Ecologically Critical Area' and prohibited collection and destruction of different aquatic lives like snails and turtles, different coral stones and aquatics plants and setting up of any commercial structure without permission.

'Remain vigilant against changes in electoral roadmap'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Awami Party (NAP) President Prof Mozaffar Ahmed yesterday said all should remain vigilant so that the electoral roadmap cannot be changed in the name of reforms and dialogue.

Speaking at a meeting at the party office in the capital, he said the country is now going through a critical period.

"The administration as well as judiciary should not be used for political purposes," Prof Mozaffar said.

He also demanded that the government provide farm subsidy and allocate more money for food, energy, education and power sectors in the next budget.

The NAP chief said the government withdrew farm subsidy in line with the recommendations of World Bank and IMF, but these agencies are not helping the country during the crisis.

NAP General Secretary Advocate Enamul Haque and other leaders Amina Ahmed, MA Goni, Zakir Hossain, Poritosh Debnath, Advocate Asadullah Tareq, Ismail Hossain, advocate Ruhul Amin, Toifazzal Hossain Kislul, Khairul Anam Helal, Saidur Rahman, Shafiq Ahmed Khan, Zakir Hossain, Nur Jalal, AKM Nurul Islam and Mofizul Islam also spoke, said a press release.

First-ever open scout group secretaries confce

The first-ever open scout group secretaries conference organised by Bangladesh Scouts began at Mouchak in Gazipur on Thursday, says a press release.

Chief National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts M Fazlur Rahman inaugurated the conference as the chief guest and had an open session with the participants.

National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts Dr Mirza Ali Haider presented the lead paper at the conference with National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts SM Zahurul Islam working as the conference director.

About 200 group secretaries are participating at the conference. The leaders discussed the problems that hinder the expansion of open scout troop in Bangladesh while the participants discussed how open troops could achieve these goals.

National commissioners, deputy national commissioners and high officials of Bangladesh Scouts and local elites were present in the opening session.

The conference ends today.