

545 acres of arable land lost a day

Speakers tell view exchange meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday said that within 2088 there would be no cultivable land in Bangladesh if the present rate of conversion of farmlands into non-cultivable ones remains so.

They urged the policymakers to adopt a master plan for using the land of the country for cultivation to achieve food security.

The view exchange meeting on 'Recovering farm land, stopping non-farming use of farmlands and national food security' was organised by Forward Party at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

Hanif Mahmud, a former researcher of Grameen Bank, in a

paper said the available government statistics say that everyday the country loses about 545 acres of cultivable land and if the rate continues then there would be no cultivable land within the next 77 years.

He in his paper recommended imposing strict laws on using lands and creating awareness among the people to this end. Hanif also suggested not building houses, industries, educational or religious institutions in farmlands and creating environment-friendly housing system to accommodate more people in a fewer space.

In the paper Hanif said in 1974, 66 per cent of the total lands of the country were farmlands but in 1996

that was reduced to 59 per cent and now the figure is even lower.

Forward Party Member Secretary Abdul Munim said the country needs unity to ensure self-sufficiency in food.

He also urged the political parties to focus on agriculture to achieve food security and invest more on agriculture, recover grabbed farmlands, stop conversion of farmlands into non-farming lands and bring reforms in land management.

ABM Mostafa Amin, convener of Forward Party, presided over the meeting that was also attended by agriculture experts and party leaders.



Helen Keller Int'l president arrives in city today

Helen Keller International (HKI) President and CEO Kathy Spahn arrives in the city today for a five-day official visit to observe the 30th anniversary of the organisation's work in Bangladesh, says a press release.

A seminar on 'Food and Nutrition: Field, Food and Family' will be organised by the HKI as part of the celebration programme.

The HKI president and CEO is scheduled to meet President Iajuddin Ahmed and Health Adviser AMM Shaukat Ali. She will also visit the HKI's Homestead Food Production Programme in Barisal. Spahn has been serving as the president and CEO of HKI since March 2005. She works in the organisation's headquarters office in New York.

The HKI boss provides direction and overall management for all of its programmes and initiatives to prevent blindness and malnutrition in 23 countries in Asia, Africa as well as in the US.

Four new OCs take office in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Four new officer-in-charges (OCs) took their offices while another seven officers were posted at different branches and stations under Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) yesterday.

The OCs took their offices after their predecessors were stand released at a time on June 10.

Of the new OCs, Mohammad Shah Alam was posted at Kotwali Station while Masudul Alam at Pahartali, Mezban Uddin Ahmed at Bayezid and Zabeedur Rahman at Bandar Station, CMP sources said.

The stand-released OCs were Nurul Alam of Kotwali Station, Majibur Rahman Majumder of Pahartali, Kazi Matul Islam of Bayezid and Md Jahangir Alam of Bandar Station.

On the other hand, four inspectors also joined different branches of the CMP. Of them, Chitta Ranjan Pal at Airport Immigration while Shahabuddin Chowdhury at Special Branch and Abdul Baset and Abdur Razzak at Detective Branch.

Petrol Inspector (PI) Mohammad Habib Ahsan, Farukur Rahman and Nazrul Islam were posted at Airport Immigration, Chandgaon and Kotwali stations respectively, said the sources.

Roadside blast kills 2 police commandos in Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger rebels yesterday set off a roadside mine killing two police commandos in eastern Sri Lanka, the defence ministry said.

The fragmentation mine was placed on a parked bicycle in the district of Batticaloa and targeted the Special Task Force police commandos, the ministry said.

Fighting meanwhile continued across the northern territories of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar and Wel Oya, with security forces reporting they killed 15 Tamil Tiger rebels for the loss of two soldiers on Saturday, the ministry said.

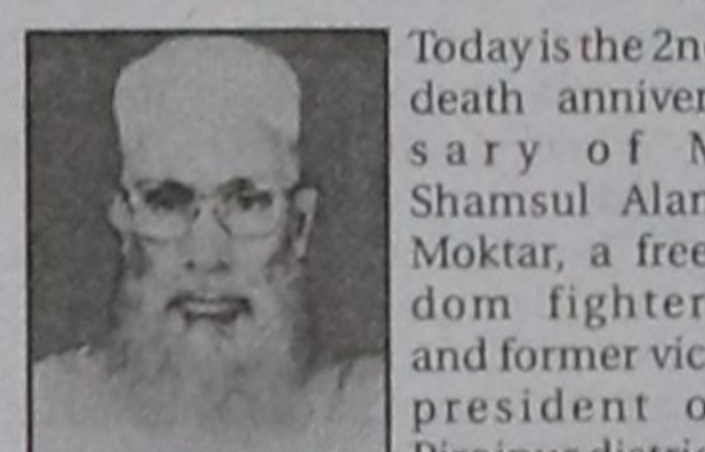
There was no immediate comment from separatist Tiger rebels.

Two days of clashes raised the number of rebels killed by security forces to 4,354 while 403 government troops have died in combat since January, according to defence ministry figures.

Casualty claims cannot be verified as the military prevents journalists from travelling to rebel-held areas.

Fighting has worsened since Colombo pulled out of a six-year truce with the Tigers in January.

Death anniversary



Today is the 2nd death anniversary of M Shamsul Alam Moktar, a freedom fighter and former vice president of Pirojpur district.

Awami League, says a press release. On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at his residence at Mathbarian Pirojpur.

Relatives and admirers are requested to pray for peace of the departed soul.



Rainwater remains stagnant beside the Aganagar main road at Keraniganj upazila causing untold suffering to the local people. The photo was taken yesterday.

COUNCIL OF ADVISERS MEET HELD Ombudsman (Amend) Ordinance sent back for further examination

UNB, Dhaka

The Council of Advisers yesterday discussed the Ombudsman (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 and sent it back for further examination pending approval.

A meeting of the council of advisers with Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair approved in principle another draft ordinance designating the responsibility of the president of managing committee, governing body or ad hoc committee of the government and non-government schools, colleges, madrasas and institutions of technical education.

"The new ordinance is likely to bring diversification in managing

committees, governing bodies or ad hoc committees of the government and non-government educational institutions," it is stated in the objective of the law in the making.

After the provisional approval, the ministry concerned was asked to place it again before the council "as soon as possible".

The meeting also approved a proposal cancelling proposed amendment to the Government and Local Authority Lands and Buildings (Recovery of Possession) Ordinance 1970.

The amendment proposal was for incorporating in the ordinance a provision so that the government could evict illegal ownerships of

private and individual lands and establishments alongside eviction of illegal possession of government lands and buildings.

Besides, the meeting approved in principle a proposal for the government's ratification of the Cape Town Convention and Related Aircraft Protocol. So far, 21 countries, including India and Pakistan, have ratified the convention and aircraft protocol.

CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim briefed newsmen about the meeting.

Members of the council of advisers attended the meeting at the CA's office. Cabinet secretary and secretaries concerned were also present.

BSF returns 24 Bangladeshis

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) handed over 24 Bangladeshi citizens, who served different terms in Indian jails after being trafficked across the border, to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) through Benapole check post yesterday afternoon.

Police said the returnees, including 11 women and five children, had been trafficked to India through different borders by manpower brokers who deceived them by saying they would be getting better jobs. Indian police caught these people and sent them to Kolkata Presidency Jail.

Bangladesh Mahila Ainjibi Samity brought them back by contacting the jail authorities. Its members formally received them from the Benapole land port police yesterday.

They had taken measures to send them home.

Of the 24 returnees, 17 people are from Bagerhat, four from Gopalganj, two from Satkhira and one from Barisal.

Release of 5 indigenous people demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Mukti Council (JMC) in a statement yesterday demanded release of five indigenous people, including Gonatantrik Jubo Forum leader Alokes Chakma, says a press release.

The other arrestees are Ani Bikash Chakma, Pulak Chakma, Shantimai Chakma and an identified person.

JMC President Badruddin Umar and General Secretary Fajul Hakim in the statement said, "Plain cloth police arrested them from Hathajari on June 21 while returning from Chittagong University. But Hathazari police failed to say anything about their whereabouts."

They said arrests of leaders of democratic organisations in Chittagong Hill Tracts unveil the fascist character of the government.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar
Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) organises a seminar on 'Diversification of Bangladesh export: The case of shrimp sector of Bangladesh'. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion
Bangladesh Awami League organises a discussion to mark its 59th founding anniversary. Venue: Engineers Institution auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Workshop
Bangladesh Government, World Bank, DFID, ADB and AusAid jointly organise a regional workshop on 'Asia regional workshop on implementing procurement reforms and improving performance'. Venue: Westin Hotel. Time: 9:00am.

Discussion
Chirantong Bangladesh Kendrio Sangsad organises a discussion on Palashi tragedy, colonial aggression and present perspective. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

AL founding anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 59th founding anniversary of the Awami League (AL) is being observed today.

On this day in 1949, East Pakistan Awami Muslim League was formed at the historic Rose Garden in Old Dhaka.

Later, the word 'Muslim' was dropped from the name of the party to make it secular.

The AL played a pioneering role in all democratic movements starting from the Language Movement of 1952 to the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

To observe the day, the AL will place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu at Bangabandhu Memorial Building on Road No 32 in Dhanmondi in the capital, and hold a special prayer there at 8:00am.

An AL delegation led by Mukul Bose, Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan, Habibur Rahman Siraj and Talukder Abdul Khaleque will visit Bangabandhu's graveyard at Tungipara in Gopalganj and place wreaths there on behalf of the party.

The AL will also organise a discussion on June 25 at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh to mark the day.

In a statement marking the day, AL acting president Zillur Rahman said the country experienced many developments in different sectors during the AL regime from 1996 to 2001, but "the BNP-Jamaat alliance came to power through rigged polls in 2001 and hampered the development of the country."

The country retreated in all sectors, he said, adding that the situation would have to be changed, and people's fate would have to be improved.

"To this end, Awami League will lead the country," said Zillur.

Prior to her departure for the USA on June 12 for medical treatment, AL President Sheikh Hasina asked the AL leadership to observe the day in a befitting manner.

Zillur and AL acting general secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam have also urged all party leaders and workers to observe the day.

Moni Singh-Farhad Trust executives

Dr Fauzia Moslem and Dr Rabiul Haque were elected president and treasurer of Moni Singh-Farhad Memorial Trust, says a press release.

They were elected at a board meeting of the trust on Friday.

The meeting also decided to create an information bank on the struggles of the political leaders, and an archive on political, social and cultural movements.

BEGUNBARI CANAL Drive against illegal structures continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) yesterday demolished around 10 shanties on the Begunbari canal near Rampura Bridge.

A Rajuk team, led by Magistrate ASM Emdadul Dastagir, started tearing down the shanties at around 11:00am to make the way for a road network under Hatirjheel-Begunbari Integrated Development Project.

At least 50 workers, police personnel and a bulldozer took part in the drive that continued till

5:00pm.

"We are bringing down the structures as part of our ongoing drive against illegal encroachment to implement the Hatirjheel-Begunbari Integrated Development Project," said Dastagir.

"We could not pull down many structures in the area due to a writ petition in the High Court filed by the owners," he added.

Since March, Rajuk so far has removed over 650 illegal structures from the Hatirjheel-Begunbari area to implement the road network.

The Rajuk on June 1 brought down about 75 structures including the site office of the proposed Hilton Hotel on the Begunbari canal on Tongi Diversion Road.

The government undertook the Tk 1,473.59-crore project along the Hatirjheel-Begunbari canal on February 7. The project is jointly financed by the government and Japan Debt Cancellation Fund.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Dhaka Wasa), the Armed Forces Division and various city development agencies are implementing the project.

Rajuk is to spend Tk 1,218.69 crore, LGED Tk 175 crore and Dhaka Wasa Tk 77.98 crore for their part in the project.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) will spend Tk 1.92 crore for conducting a survey there.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy rainfalls are also likely at places, Met Office said, predicting slight rise in day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 34.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 23.0 degrees Celsius at Sitakunda.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:49pm today and rises at 5:13am 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	33.4	27.3	80	75
Chittagong	30.8	24.7	89	--
Rajshahi	33.8	25.6	84	83
Khulna	32.6	27.0	80	73
Barisal	32.2	26.2	87	78
Sylhet	31.7	23.7	91	--
Cox's Bazar	31.4	23.9	97	80