

Global warming threatens indigenous peoples: FAO

AFP, Rome

Global warming and limited access to land and other resources threaten many indigenous peoples, the UN food agency warned yesterday.

"Indigenous peoples are among the first to suffer from increasingly harsh and erratic weather conditions, and a generalised lack of empowerment to claim goods and services," said indigenous peoples expert Regina Laub of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Many indigenous groups live in vulnerable environments such as mountainous areas, the Arctic, jungles or dry lands, added the FAO statement released on the eve of the International Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The FAO noted that native populations also played a critical role in adapting to climate change.

Indigenous communities are often the custodians of unique knowledge and skills, the Rome-based agency noted, adding that some 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity "that may be vital in adapting to climate change" is found within their territories.

COASTAL ZONES

Computer model developed to design management system for development

BSS, Dhaka

Rapidly expanding population associated with a high demand for food and fuel, decreasing cropland, increasing salinity and expanding aquaculture have emerged as invariable impediments to the management of the country's coastal zones by protecting their ecology.

Unplanned cutting of trees for timbers and fuels is also causing severe problems for coastal villages and the mangrove forest in the coastal zones.

Against this backdrop, a senior professor of Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) has developed a computer model to help the policymakers design an integrated and sustainable management system for sustainable development of the coastal zones.

The computer model will help the planners measure the equilibrium between food security and environmental degradation in the coastal areas prior to take any coastal management plan, Prof BK Bala of BAU and author of the model told the news agency.

Prof Bala, a noted agriculture scientist and former dean of the Farm Power and Machinery Department of BAU, said population is expected to increase from 36.8 million in 2001 to 60.8 million by 2050 in the coastal zones, intensifying demands for foods and fuels and putting pressure on ecological system.

Bangladesh's coastal zone is constituted with 32 percent of total land of the country, containing 28 percent of total population. A total of 48 upazilas in 12 districts are exposed to coast and 99 upazilas of 17 districts have interior coast.

Out of 2.85 million hectares of coastal cultivable land about 1.0

million hectares affected by salinity. Drainage and seepage from shrimp aquaculture pond are increasing salinity in the land and water, he added.

Shrimp cultivation areas in the country expanded from 51,812 hectares in 1983 to 1,41,353 hectares in 2002 causing environmental degradation in the coastal zones. The expansion of shrimp farming has resulted in decrease in crop production and many environmental problems.

Prof Bala said forests play an important role in maintaining ecological balance. These forests are also the largest carbon-sink above the soil. But, the Sundarbans, largest mangrove forest in the world, is decreasing because of unplanned and illegal cutting of trees for timber and fuel. The problem seriously aggravated by the recent devastating cyclone Sidr.

One shot at city house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed criminals shot and injured a man at a house at Sutrapur in the city yesterday.

The injured, Mukul Mian, 45, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a critical condition. He suffered bullet injuries in his back and abdomen. Mukul is a conductor of a bus that ply Dhaka-Chittagong route.

Shahanara Begum, wife of the injured, said a gang three to four people entered their tin-roofed house at around 6:45pm and looked for Rina Begum, caretaker of the house. Mukul Mian is a tenant of the house.

Shahanara said, "As my husband came out of the room to know their identities, one of the criminals shot him twice."

Govt to import 2 lakh tonnes of non-urea fertiliser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has reached an agreement with Tunisia and Morocco to import 2 lakh tonnes of non-urea fertiliser at state level -- one lakh tonne from each country -- beginning this October.

"The amount may, if needed, be increased up to 3 lakh tonnes," said a press release of the agriculture ministry, adding that the said amount of fertilisers would be imported by 2009.

To ensure availability of non-urea fertilisers Triple Super Phosphate (TSP), Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) and Muriate of Potash (MoP) in the long run, there is also a scope in the agreement to import these fertilisers in next three years.

Such an agreement was made possible during a visit by a high-powered delegation led by Agriculture Secretary M Abdul Aziz to Tunisia and Morocco.

11-year-old girl raped in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An 11-year-old girl was raped by a youth at Sutrapur in the city yesterday.

Mohammad Sumon, a factory worker and neighbour of the girl, raped her inside their house at Swamibagh at around noon finding her alone.

The victim's parents, who are garment workers, found their daughter injured seriously inside the room and took her to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Locals caught Sumon and handed him over to police after giving him a good beating.

Bangladesh Tea Assoc executives

METRO DESK

The election of the executive committee of the Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA) for the term 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 was held at its Chittagong office recently, says a press release.

The newly elected office bearers are M Salman Isphani, chairman, Mohd Saifan Choudhury, senior vice-chairman, Ardashir Kabir, vice-chairman, and members SS Iftekhar Ahmed, HMS Ziaul Ahsan, M Shah Alam, Nurul Alam, Shah Khairul Anam, Shafique A Chowdhury, M Wahidul Haque, Mostafa Kamal, Morshedul Alam Quaderi, Kamran T Rahman, Riazur Rahman and QH Zaman.

The new committee will take office on August 19.

Navy team wins Qirat and Azan competition

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Navy team became the champion of Inter-services Qirat and Azan Competition that ended at Sailor's Colony Mosque in Mirpur yesterday.

The Navy team scored 2067.5 points while Air Force team, who became runner-up, got 1985.5 points in the four-day competition, said an ISPR release.

In the Qirat competition, M Glas Uddin and MM Rahman of Navy and M Humayun Kabir of Army became first, second and third respectively.

In the Azan competition, M W Ullah of Navy, corporal M Ziaur Rahman of Air Force and M Glas Uddin of Navy became first, second and third respectively.

Bangladesh Navy has been consecutively winning the championship in Qirat and Azan Competition since 2005.

Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam was present at the concluding ceremony as the chief guest and distributed prizes among the winners.



Abayab Natya Dal stages a drama at a Street Drama Festival at Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. Potho Natak Parishad organised the festival.

'Include articles on tobacco in nat'l curriculum'

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at an awareness campaign have underscored the need for inclusion of tobacco-related articles in the national curriculum to provide information to the students about the dangers of tobacco use.

The campaign organised by LIFE with the assistance of World Health Organisation was held at Lalmeta Housing Society School in the city on Thursday.

Acting headmaster of the school Abdul Hye, senior programme officer of Dhaka Ahsania Mission Iqbal Masud, senior teacher Shariful Islam and LIFE program director Muhammad Amirul Islam spoke at the programme chaired by LIFE Executive Director Kamrul Islam Sony.

Kamrul Islam Sony called on the students to refrain from any kind of tobacco use since it never gives anything good. "Rather, it increases one's risk of cancers as well as heart attack or stroke," he added.

Citing statistics, Sony said that 10 million malnourished people could have an adequate diet if money spent on tobacco were spent on food instead.

At the programme, the school was also declared smoking-free zone.

EU toughens sanctions against Iran

AFP, Brussels/Washington

European Union nations have introduced fresh sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme, including restrictions on public loans and tougher cargo inspections, the EU presidency announced yesterday.

The measures, in line with an agreement by European ambassadors last month, are a robust application of the latest UN Security Council resolution on Iran.

The UN has called for "vigilance" in entering into new commitments for public-provided financial support for trade with Iran, including the granting of export credits.

The EU has gone further by urging member states to exercise "restraint" in its dealings with Iran in those areas.

Expats pledge to fight climate change

Ben's 10th anniversary celebrated in Canberra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi expatriates in Australia and the Australian government have expressed their commitment to combat multiple effects of climate change in Bangladesh.

The commitment came at a symposium to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Bangladesh Environment Network (Ben) in Canberra last week.

The symposium titled 'Environment and Bangladesh' was organised by Ben's Australian chapter at the Bangladesh High Commission in Canberra to strengthen ties between Ben and environmentalists in Australia.

In a message to the symposium, Ben Coordinator Nazrul Islam said jolted by the looming danger posed

to the country by climate change, Bangladeshis, both inside and outside the country, are waking up more widely to environmental issues.

The symposium was attended by prominent Australian environmental activist and former legislator Kerry Tucker, Executive Director of Australia Institute Richard Dennis, AUSAID Director for Environment and Climate Change Brian Dawson and acting Bangladesh High Commissioner Mahbub Saleh.

The speakers acknowledged the multiple challenges facing Bangladesh as a result of climate change, largely exacerbated by greenhouse gas emissions from the rich and developed nations.

At the symposium divided into

three sessions, eight presentations were made by scholars and activists who outlined the series of challenges facing Bangladesh as a result of climate change.

Of them, three presentations included 'The role of expatriate Bangladeshis to protect the environment', 'Water management' and 'Effects of climate change on energy, health and infrastructure'.

Bangladeshi-origin scholars, environmental activists and expatriates also participated in the celebration of 10th anniversary of Ben, a global network of expatriate Bangladeshis and friends supporting environmental causes in Bangladesh.

The network also held its 10th celebrations in New York last month.



Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam gives away the championship trophy to the Navy team at the concluding ceremony of Inter-services Qirat and Azan Competition at Sailor's Colony Mosque in the city yesterday.



An open manhole on a road near Postogola Bridge in the city remains unrepaired for long due to indifferent attitude of the authorities, posing danger to vehicles and pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday.

Warmer weather produces more intense rainfall: Study

AFP, Washington

US and British researchers have confirmed the link between warmer climate and an increase in powerful rainstorms, according to a study released on Thursday that underscores one of the challenges of global warming.

The researchers even found that the increase of extreme rainfall was higher than what has been predicted in current computer models, according to the study published in the journal Science.

The scientists pointed out that one of the biggest concerns regarding climate change is that heavy rainstorms will become more common and intense in a warmer

climate due to the higher moisture available for condensation.

The more powerful rains also increase the risk of flooding that could have substantial impacts on societies and economies, they said.

To understand the link between warmer climate, the researchers used naturally-driven changes associated with the El Nino weather system as a laboratory for testing their hypotheses.

El Nino is an occasional seasonal warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean that upsets normal weather patterns from the western seaboard of Latin America to East Africa, and potentially has a global impact on climate.

Studying satellite observations

from the past 20 years, the experts found that heavy rain events increased during warm periods and decreased during cold times.

"A warmer atmosphere contains larger amounts of moisture which boosts the intensity of heavy downpours," said Brian Soden, associate professor at the University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Science.

"Comparing observations with results from computer models improves understanding of how rainfall responds to a warming world" said Richard Allan, of the University of Reading's Environmental Systems Science Centre.



The newly elected office-bearers of Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA).

Online social networking sites are hackers' playgrounds

AFP, Las Vegas

Computer security researchers on Thursday warned that online social networking websites are playgrounds for hackers who can easily take advantage of people's trust.

Opportunities for mischief abound as users place intimate details of their lives on profile pages and install mini-applications made by strangers that don't always have their privacy at heart.

In a trend pioneered with tremendous success by Facebook, social networking websites have opened their operating platforms to let outside developers craft fun, hip, or functional software "widgets" that can be added to profile pages.

Malicious code can be hidden in

such applications, computer security specialists Nathan Hamiel and Shawn Moyer said at a premier Black Hat conference in Las Vegas.

"I can't necessarily attack Facebook or MySpace, but I can attack their users all day long," Moyer told AFP. "Don't put anything on a Facebook account that you don't consider public."

People are prone to place faith in social networking widgets and links from friends, said Idea Information Security consultant Nathan Hamiel.

"People are going nuts adding applications they don't need," Hamiel told AFP.

"Every time they do that they are showing an implicit trust in whoever wrote the application, and most people don't know who that is."

Hamiel and Moyer showed peers software capable of plundering profile information, swiping people's "friends," or locking people out of their own MySpace pages.

A pair of MySpace engineers who attended the demonstration said that hacks are known risks in today's social platforms and that they had Hamiel's application deleted by the end of the talk.

Fake postings on comment boards advising people to update software are ways to trick social network users into downloading malicious software that can commandeer control of machines, Hamiel said.

"Social networks really don't care if you get pawed or not," Hamiel said, using slang referring to a computer user being dominated and humiliated by hackers.