

ASIA REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SUMMIT

US keen to extend higher edn programmes to Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

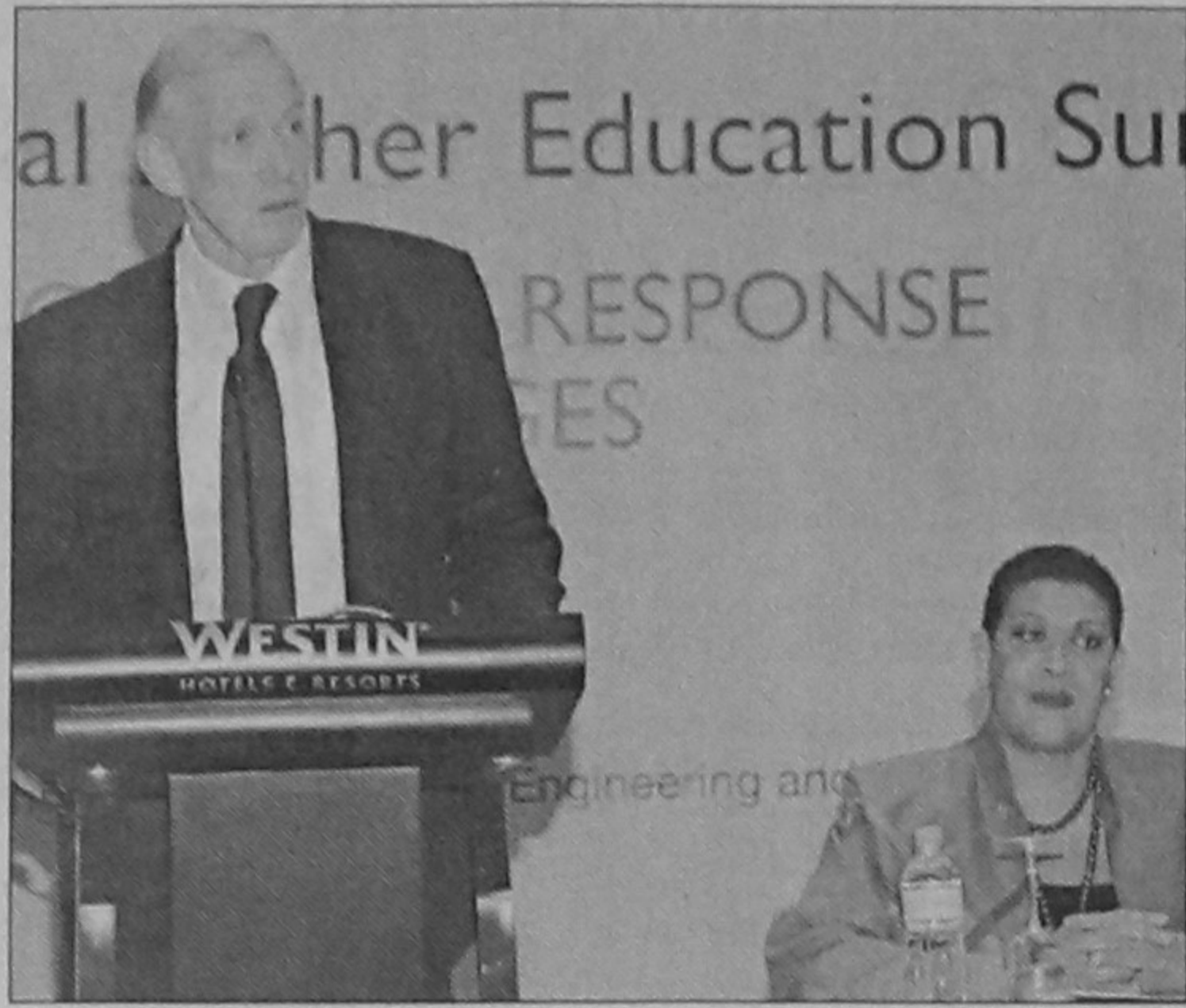
The US is keen to extend higher education programmes to Asian countries, including Bangladesh, to help face global challenges such as food security, disaster management and poverty reduction.

"The number of visas issued to Bangladeshi students has increased recently. We welcome them... we want to see more students," said Thomas Farrell, US deputy assistant secretary of state for education and cultural affairs, at Asia Regional Higher Education Summit yesterday.

The US may award five more Fulbright scholarships to Bangladeshi students a year in the areas of food security and disaster management, he said at the three-day summit titled 'Higher Education's Response to Global Challenges' that began at a city hotel on Monday.

Presently, the US awards 18 to 20 Fulbright scholarships to Bangladeshi students and sends 14 to 16 academics for teaching or researches to Bangladesh, according to an official of US Embassy in Dhaka.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in association with University of Dhaka and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) organised the summit attended by around 150 academics and officials from public and private sectors in Asia and the US.



US Ambassador James F Moriarty speaks at a session of Asia Regional Higher Education Summit at a city hotel yesterday.

The summit focused on four areas -- food security, women's entrepreneurship, and teacher's training and natural disaster management -- for discussion.

"Higher education has no alternatives. The US, therefore, internationally develops programmes and facilitates individuals and institutions for better education and research," Thomas Farrell said while talking to reporters on the sidelines of the summit.

At another session, Michael E

McCoy, executive director of American-Indonesian Exchange Foundation, said Indonesian students who underwent Fulbright or other higher education programmes in the US made tremendous achievements in their society.

American graduates with funding from private entrepreneurs also went to Indonesia to teach English, which greatly helped Indonesians pursue higher education, he said.

Michael said there are around

50 bi-national commissions to collaborate with the US on higher education programmes.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, who moderated a session on 'Building Innovative Higher Education Partnerships', said the summit discussed elaborately the ways the universities in Asia and the US can strengthen partnerships.

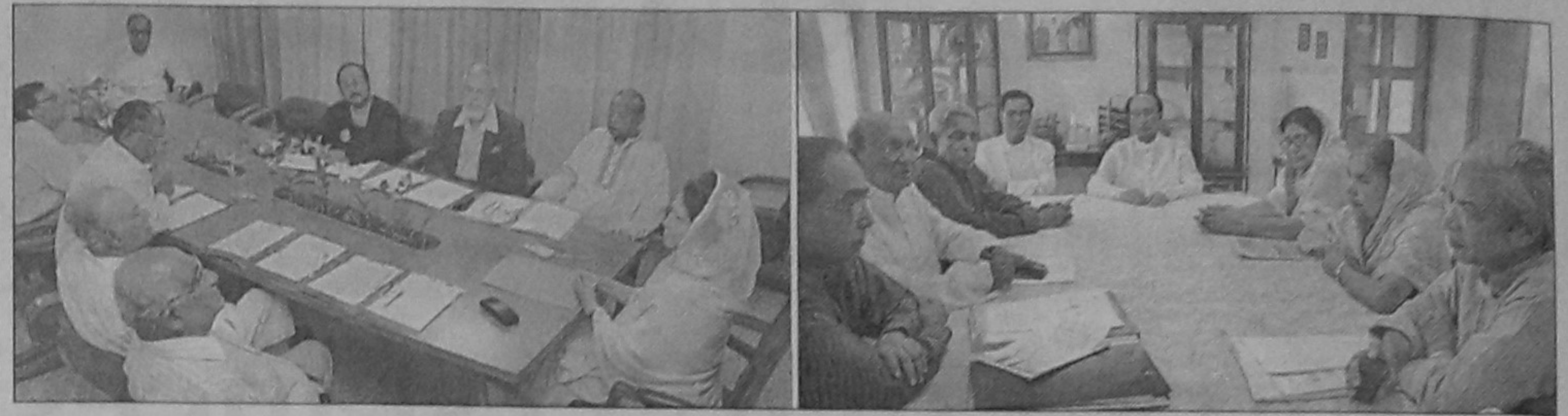
These partnerships can surely be with the private sectors, including the national and multinational corporations, he said, adding that representatives of Microsoft, Intel, Aga Khan Foundation have already extended their support to the tertiary education.

"The academics of various countries are sharing their experiences. This is a great scope for partnership," he said, adding that the summit will surely open new avenues of stronger collaboration.

A participant suggested preparing a directory of the universities in Asia and the US to facilitate sharing of the best practices that contribute to the excellence in education.

Brac Executive Director Mahabub Hossain at a session on food security said developing high yielding varieties of crops is a challenge in the agriculture sector, as arable land is declining in the countries like Bangladesh.

However, generating more employments with better pay for poor people to ensure food security is a greater challenge in Bangladesh, he added.



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, left, speaks at a meeting of her party standing committee at BNP office at Gulshan in the city and Awami League Acting President Zillur Rahman, right, addresses party presidium meeting at his residence at Gulshan yesterday.

ACC firm to continue anti-graft drives: Hasan Mashhud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (ret) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday said the anti-graft watchdog will hold a firm position regarding the corruption cases.

ACC will continue its maximum effort to continue the anti-corruption drives whatever obstacles may come, he added.

The ACC boss said this at the inaugural ceremony of a new building of Rahamanj High School at Bakerganj upazila in the district.

The building of the school devastated by cyclone Sidr was constructed with the financial assistance of Bangladesh American Association, an organisation of the expatriate Bangladeshis living in Petersburg in the US.

Sources said ACC had supervised the construction work that started on May 10. The building will also be used as a cyclone shelter centre.

Light of hopes on the anti-corruption drive arose in the minds of the people as the ACC started the drive with the cooperation of all, but frustration may be grown about the drive as many of them are now backtracking, he said, adding that the frustration will not last long.

He said cases against the candidates of the upcoming general elections will not be withdrawn and they will have to face the cases legally even if they win the polls.

"We have big challenges ahead... it is to be seen that to what extent we would be able to work during the period of an elected political government, he added.

When asked how they would run the drive during the regime of an elected government, ACC boss said, "We would work independently if the political government allows us to do so."

"But we are taking preparation to face the challenges and we have all the necessary documents," he added.

The ACC chief said what would they do when the corrupt suspects are getting bail granted by the courts. It is natural that once an accused released on bail, he or she need not go to jail, he said, adding, "It is to be

seen what would happen in future." Hasan Mashhud will come to Barisal again on October 12 to take part in several programmes, including youth rally and concert, organised by Transparency International Bangladesh and ACC.

Dr Shamsur Bakh of the association, ACC Director of Barisal office Maj Shahrar Ahmed Amin, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Bakerganj upazila Shah Abdul Tarik, Headmaster of the school Md Mansur Hawlader and Chairman of Upazila Parishad Rustam Mollah also took part in the programme.

Obituary

UNB, Dhaka



Dilip Kumar Bhadra, director for Administration and Finance of Bangladesh Betar, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at United Hospital early yesterday at the age of 47.

His body will be cremated at his village Kamarpur in Pangsha upazila under Rajbari district.

Bhadra left behind his wife, one son and one daughter and a host of friends and relations to mourn his death.

Muhammad Nurul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syed Muhammad Nurul Islam, brother-in-law of Kalyan Party Chairman Major Gen (ret) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, passed away at a city hospital yesterday at the age of 60, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons and one daughter to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard in Hathazari upazila.

His kulkhwani will be held at his village home after Juma prayers on Friday.

Rashida Begum

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rashida Begum, wife of Abdur Rashid, former cultural officer of Rajshahi Shilpakala Academy and a cultural personality, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on Monday at the age of 55.

She left behind her husband, two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

She was buried at Hetem Kha graveyard in the city.

Cultural activists, RCC women councillors and Rajshahi Awami League in separate message expressed their shock at her death.

Farhad's death anniversary tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tomorrow is the 21st death anniversary of Comrade Mohammad Farhad, former general secretary of Bangladesh Communist party (CPB), says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his wife's residence after Asr prayers in the city. A discussion will also be held at CPB office at 5:00pm on Friday.

Alpha Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

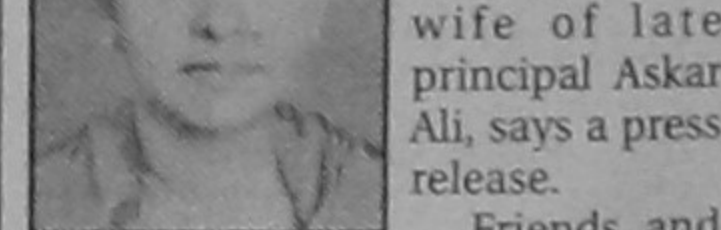


Today is the second death anniversary of Alpha Ali, a journalist and educationalist, and wife of Fozle Ali, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at her residence in Faridpur.

Begum Jahanara Ali

METRO DESK



Today is the first death anniversary of Begum Jahanara Ali, wife of late principal Askar Ali, says a press release.

Friends and relatives are requested to pray for peace of the departed soul.

Qulqhwani held

DU CORRESPONDENT

Qulqhwani of Dr Shamsul Huda Harun, a renowned political scientist and former chairman of the Department of Political Science of Dhaka University, was held at his Gulshan residence in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Awami League presidium member Tofail Ahmed, Jaiya Samantantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu, University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Anwar Hossain, Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Dr Anwar Hossain and Prof Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman among others attended the programme.

US embassy closed tomorrow

METRO DESK

The American Embassy, including the consular section and the public affairs section with the Archer K Blood American Centre Library and the student advising centre will remain closed tomorrow to celebrate Durga Puja, says a press release.

The Embassy will also be closed on October 12 to celebrate Columbus Day, an American holiday.

Phensidyl seized

RU CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in separate drives in four districts in Rajshahi region yesterday seized huge quantity of sares and phensidyl and arrested four people.

Rab seized 33 pieces of sares worth around Tk 33,000 at Helechna village in Dinajpur.

They seized 305 bottles of phensidyl in Joypurhat, Gaibandha and Rangpur. The arrestees are Manik Mai, 28, Shariful Islam, 25, Malek Mia, 32, and Ariful Islam, 30.

Three criminals held after fight with Rab

2 Rab members injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members arrested three criminals with firearms at an underconstruction site at Golapbazar in the city after a fight with them last night.

The criminals -- Rezaul Karim Russell, 26, Abdur Nur Mamun, 28, and Mahmud Al-Faisal alias Parvez, 26, -- and two Rab members -- ASI Helal Uddin, 35, and Shahinur Rahman, 28, -- were also injured in the fight.

They are now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Rab sources said the three arrestees are suspected killers of cable TV operator ABM Shariatullah Billal, 42, owner of Tri Star Media Centre in Shahjahanpur, who was gunned down on September 26.

Acting on a tip-off that five suspected killers have gathered at the underconstruction site, a team of Rab members raided it at about 8:30pm.

Sensing the presence of Rab, the criminals tried to escape but were locked into a scuffle with the Rab men. Two of the criminals, however, managed to escape.

The Rab also recovered a revolver, a pistol, a shutter-gun and five bullets from the possession of three arrestees.

Meanwhile, Ramna police arrested two criminals and recovered two firearms and 12 bullets from their possession at Malibagh DIT Road in the evening.

The two were identified as Hannan, 18, and Jhantu, 18.

Several of their accomplices were also with them, but they escaped by exploding a bomb.

Burglars steal 70 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk 1.25 lakh from 2 houses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Burglars stole over 70 tolas of gold ornaments and Tk 1.25 lakh from two houses at Mohammadpur and Tantibazar in the city yesterday.

At Mohammadpur, a gang of burglars stole 18 tolas of gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk 4.5 lakh from the house of a judge in the evening.

The burglars entered the house of Judge Tania Kamal at F-Block after breaking open the door and took away gold ornaments, sares and other dresses. Nobody was at home at that time.

Judge Tania Kamal of CMM court returned home at around 7:30pm only to find the door of her house broken.

In the other incident, another gang of burglars stole 55 tolas of gold ornaments and Tk 1.25 lakh from two flats in a building at Tantibazar in the old part of the city.

The gang entered the flats of Joy Kishan Bose and Basu Bose on the second and fourth floors of the building breaking open the door locks at noon when nobody was at the flats, sources said.

Kishan and Basu told reporters that they along with their family members went out to visit Pujya Mandaps.

Kotwali police said the burglars took away around 30 tolas of gold ornaments and Tk 50,000 from the house of Joy Kishan and 25 tolas of gold and Tk 75,000 from the house of Basu.

Sub-inspector Sahadat Hossain said they detained a security guard for interrogation.

Mindless tree felling in Khejurchhara forest

FROM PAGE 16

Bapa presented the picture to the press during a briefing at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday where Khasia people from Srimangal were present.

The 4,000 trees marked for felling includes 1,100 in Alom Punji, 2,000 in Kahlim Punji, 750 in Nokpool Punji and 50 each in Rom Punji and Laklamin Punji.

"We heard that the tea garden has the permission from the government but we doubt it. Police made Khasia people sign a deal of understanding with the garden authorities that said the tea garden has permission from the government," said Joseph Gomez, an environmentalist.

"Despite several attempts, we could not see the document which the government allegedly gave them," he added.

He also mentioned that when they approached the local administration recently, they misbehaved

with them. "It is recognised worldwide that indigenous people preserve forests and the environment but repression of the people has been going on over the years. It went on during the time of the democratic governments and it goes on even now during the time of a caretaker government," said Sanjib Drong, leader of indigenous people.

Bapa placed a five-point demand before the government that include immediate steps to stop tree-felling in the forest.

The demands also include immediate stop to the selling of chopped-down trees of Nahar tea garden and its adjacent areas, eviction of the tea garden from the 400 acres of forest land it encroached illegally, halting the illegal taxation of the indigenous community and cancelling the process of leasing out forests and hills.

"We receive foreign funds in the name of climate-change adaptation projects but we chop down our natural forests. Our government has promised to preserve forests but it is not evident in its work," said Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmed.

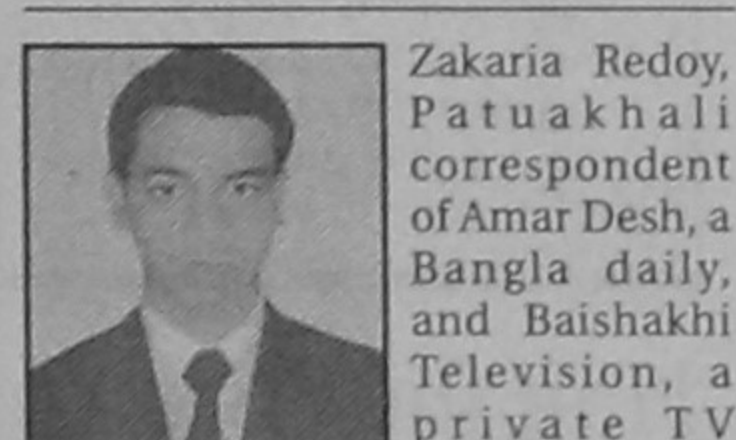
The speakers at the press briefing alleged that the government's ministries, directorates, and district administration are directly and indirectly encouraging felling of trees, cutting of hills, killing of animals and destruction of forests.

According to Bapa, the tea garden has been operating on 1,200 acres of land including 200 acres of forest land where the Khasias cultivate berel leaf. The tea garden took lease of only 864.58 acres of land.

The tea garden also sub-leased 630 acres of land violating lease conditions.

Appeal for help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali



Zakaria Redoy, Patuakhali correspondent of Amar Desh, a Bangla daily, and Baishakhi Television, a private TV channel, has been suffering from 'Plastic Anamia' for years.

Doctors said treatment is possible in India and around Tk 10 lakh will be needed for his bone marrow transplant. He needs financial help for the treatment.

Now he needs 25 to 30 bags of blood as life support in every three months and around Tk 1200 is needed per day to buy medicine, which is behind his capacity due to poor financial condition.

He urged the generous people of the society for their financial help. His savings account number is 14118, Agrani Bank, Natun Bazar branch, Patuakhali. For details: 01717177141.

Weather Today section with forecast for Dhaka and other cities, including temperature and humidity data.

Dhaka Today Roundtable section with details about a weekly discussion event for people with disabilities.

Scrap RPO first, reiterates BNP

FROM PAGE 1

party wanted to sit on October 15. Meanwhile, Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiki, a member of BNP standing committee, said they did not get any date from the government.

"We will contest in the election, but the government must remove the obstacles in the way to our participation," BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain told reporters after the two-hour long meeting of the standing committee in the party chairperson's new Gulshan office.

Chairperson Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting attended by Khandaker Delwar Hossain and standing committee members Saifur Rahman, RA Gani, Tanbir Ahmed Siddiki, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, M Shamsul Islam, and Lt Gen (ret) Mahbubur Rahman, among others.

Standing committee members Moudud Ahmed and Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain were not present as both of them are currently in jail facing criminal charges.

Another member Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed also could not attend, as he is mourning the recent death of his brother Prof KAA Kamruddin.

The meeting also decided to scrap the recent standing committee decision to make Khaleda Zia a life time chairperson of the party, which was taken in the committee's last meeting held on Sept 13.

Khandaker Delwar Hossain told reporters, "The amendments to the RPO are an obstacle to holding a free and fair election."

Asked about an election under the state of emergency, he said, "The Emergency must be lifted as a free and fair election can't be held under the law of the jungle, and the

election will not be fair under such an autocratic law."

He however said he hopes that the December 18 election will be held, but the government must create a congenial atmosphere and ensure a level playing field.

"Don't hold any arranged election, and we don't want to see barriers in the way to holding a free and fair election," he sent the message out to the government, adding that they want justice, not favour.

Delwar also hoped that the government will create the environment necessary through bringing demanded changes to the RPO amended by the military backed caretaker government.

Regarding BNP's participation in the election and its registration with the EC, he said they will take decisions on the matters through discussions in party forums as well as with its four-party alliance partners.

"We want to participate in the election, but does the government want our participation?" he quipped.

Delwar said the government announced the poll date, but did not say anything about their five-point demand.

"There are many questions in the public mind about the government's sincerity about holding a meaningful election."

The BNP secretary general also urged the government to withdraw the cases against the party's leaders including its chairperson, as the cases are 'ill motivated'. He demanded release of other political leaders as well.

"We don't support the strategy of keeping the leaders away from the election through farcical trials," he said adding that they will accept

trials under the regular laws of the land, not under emergency power rules.

He said the standing committee discussed the party's preparations for the election, the expected dialogue with the government, and the latest political development in the country.

The BNP leader alleged that the government is creating pressure on courts to convict detained political leaders.

Criticising the government for not solving the crises in public life, he said an elected government and a parliament would be able to solve them.

On September 28, leaders of BNP-led four-party alliance announced countrywide demonstrations scheduled for October 12, for pressing home the five-point demand which the alliance had also taken up.

Meanwhile, the BNP high command has taken an initiative to bring some changes to the party's rank and file in a bid to reorganise some party committees ahead of the election.

Party insiders said a committee for the party's Dhaka city unit might be announced soon.

Moreover, the chairperson might bring in additional senior leaders to the party's standing committee and national executive committee (NEC).

At least 4 posts have been vacant in the NSC for a long time. The committee currently has only 149 members while the party constitution demands that the committee comprises 251 members, said party leaders adding that the chairperson might fill up the vacant posts soon.

Next polls to make 'new beginning'

FROM PAGE 16

very important; probably it's the most important election in Bangladesh history. I think people will go to vote and make the government of their choice."

Asked why Britain considers this election as most important, Vaz, a former state minister for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said: "Because it is time to break the cycle of despair. I think whole country wants a fresh start, a new beginning."

Asked about some uncertainty about the elections under the state of emergency, he said Bangladesh does not need advice from British politicians and "I am sure it will get its own act together and decide for itself in a proper way."

Asked about certain concerns about the credibility of the elec-

tions under the emergency, the British parliamentarian said it is the Bangladeshi people and the government to decide what is best for them.

Vaz, who was elected five times to the House of Commons from Labour Party, said: "I just want to have peaceful election, just want to see there is an election."

Asked if the elections could not be held as scheduled on December 18, he said: "I think everybody will be disappointed. Because, we are looking forward to see a new government is being elected."

Vaz said the caretaker government has done extremely well "but it has to move on."

The parliamentary delegation arrived in Dhaka on Monday after a

visit to India to examine the impact of the UK government's worldwide plans for a new point-based migration system and the introduction of new sponsorship arrangements.

The system made uncertain the recruitment of chefs from Bangladesh for popular curry industry in Britain.

He was critical of new Immigration Minister Phil Woolas for his reported comments favouring cap (limit) on immigration to Britain. "This is quite a dramatic shift in the government policy," he said, adding: "We've never supported a cap, never supported a quota system."

Vaz favoured recruitment of skilled workforce from outside Europe as he said population in Europe is declining.