

KHAS LAND DISTRIBUTION

Irregularities worsen crisis in haor regions

Says Speaker Abdul Hamid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate yesterday said irregularities in the khas (fallow) land distribution and corruption of local land offices worsen the crisis in haor (water body) regions of the country.

The socio-economic condition of around 32,000 square kilometre haor regions is extremely deplorable, he said, adding that education, health and food security are also severely weak in the areas due to poor infrastructural condition and adverse weather.

The Speaker, who also hails from haor region, said this while addressing a workshop on 'Dynamics of khas land management settlement in haor basin' as the chief guest at the LGED auditorium in the city.

Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and Concern Worldwide, Bangladesh jointly organised the workshop to disseminate the findings of a research on Khas Land Management and Settlement in haor basin.

Presenting the findings, Dr Abul Hossain, research fellow of PPRC, said the total amount of khas lands in the country is 12,63,752.2 acres and the distributed amount is 7,59,438.7 acres, adding that 54,873.8 acres of khas lands is illegally occupied, while 2,18,884.6 acres of khas lands is eligible for lease.

In seven haor districts the total amount of khas lands is 2,81,426.6 acres, while 8923.2 acres of khas lands is illegally occupied, he mentioned.

Abul also said that more

than 56 percent beneficiaries, who have already got allotted khas lands, have been facing problems with the allotted lands in haor basin.

Pointing out some irregularities, including weaknesses in identifying landless, lack of monitoring after distribution of khas lands and corruption of land settlement office, he stressed the need for strong enforcement of existing rules and regularities in khas land identification and distribution process.

He also suggested for preparing a systematic database for landless and all citizens, introducing cooperative system of landless for proper distribution and optimal utilisation of agriculture khas lands in haor, increasing legal aid for the landless who were

allocated khas lands but not get their possession and monitoring over the distributed lands.

Speaker Hamid said homeless people should provide with khas lands in other places instead of the lands in the haor areas.

Suggesting for constructing more submerged roads in the haor areas, re-excavating beels and removing lease system in the rivers in haor areas, he called on all to work sincerely so that the real poor and landless families get the lands.

He also urged the concerned organisations to hold dialogues with the local public representatives for the development of the area.

Newly appointed Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Atiur Rahman said formulating a special policy for the lagged region is a must as these people always remain deprived.

Urging for budgetary allocation for the neglected and deprived populace, he suggested holding debates on their issues in parliament, introducing electronic database about khas lands and continuous monitoring after their distribution.

With former adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, also executive chairman of PPRC, in the chair, the workshop was also addressed by Kieron Crawley, country director of Concern Worldwide, Charles Whiteley, charge d'affaires, delegation of the European Commission, Syed Ziauddin Ahmed, director of PPRC, and Mustafa Jabbar, convener of first national haor convention.



PHOTO: STAR

Former adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman speaks at a workshop on 'Dynamics of khas land management settlement in haor basin' at LGED auditorium in the city yesterday. Power and Participation Research Centre and Concern Worldwide, Bangladesh organised the programme.

Integrated policy to tackle natural calamity to be formulated

Says JS standing committee chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is taking initiatives to set up more cyclone shelters which will be used as multipurpose centres in coastal areas.

This was stated by Chairman of parliamentary standing committee on food and disaster management ministry Saidul Haq at a seminar in the city yesterday.

The seminar was organised jointly by the Coast Trust and April 29 Smirity Parishad at the National Press Club in the city commemorating the loss of lives caused by the devastating cyclone that hit the coastal areas in 1991.

The Awami League lawmaker said the government is taking steps to formulate an integrated policy to tackle natural calamity.

"We would put up a proposal to the government to hand over the maintenance of existing cyclone shelters to disaster management ministry as most of them are now in dilapidated condition," he added.

Speaking as chief guest State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud stressed the need for capacity building since people know how to live with natural calamity.

He underscored the need for building safe houses as alternative to cyclone shelters in coastal areas to cope with the disaster.

The state minister also focused on forming an integrated housing policy for sustainable development.

The speakers said the government should provide the coastal people with home loan so that they can build sustainable houses to face disaster.

They also stressed the need for introducing community radio service which will help disseminate disaster-related information including danger signal numbers so that people can take precautionary steps accordingly.

Moderated by Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, executive director of Coast Trust, the programme was also attended by the lawmakers of the coastal areas.

WAR CRIME CASES

Three get bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted anticipatory bail for six months to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, chairman of Masjid Council, and two Jamaat leaders of Narail in two separate war crime related cases against them.

After hearing separate bail petitions filed by the accused, an HC bench of MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Marzi-ul Huq also issued separate rules upon the government to show cause within four weeks why the petitioners should not be granted regular bail.

Accused Abdul Kalam Azad, and Jamaat leaders Advocate Ruhul Quddus Khan and Md Badruddoza appeared before the HC bench and submitted bail petitions.

Their lawyers told the court that the cases were filed against the petitioners out of political vendetta and to harass them.

On April 20, Bhakta Ranjan Biswas, who hails from Purra Namapara in Shalita, Faridpur, filed the case with the judicial magistrate's court of the district against Maulana Abul Kalam of Shalita upazila, who is an Imam of a mosque in Dhaka and TV personality on religious programmes, and his associate Mohammad Kazi.

In the case, Bhakta Ranjan alleged that Maulana Abul Kalam and Mohammad Kazi

shot dead his father Madhob Chandra Biswas, and his two neighbours -- Montu Bakshi and Gyanuddin Biswas -- at their houses in July 1971.

On April 7, Nur Jahan Begum of Narail filed a case with Narail police station against Ruhul Quddus Khan and Badruddoza on charges of killing her husband Rafiqul Islam and brother-in-law Mahtabuddin during the Liberation War in 1971.

Rickshaw garage owner shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of armed criminals sprayed bullets on a rickshaw garage, leaving its owner bullet injured as he refused to pay extortion money at Bhasantek in the city yesterday.

The injured was identified as Badal, 26, of lane-1 in the area. Lokman Hossain, relative of Badal, said a gang of four criminals led by Jamai Shahid and Nata Shahid entered the garage and sprayed bullets on the owner's head and arms, leaving him injured.

The injured was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

SC AFFIRMS HC ORDER

Conviction of Mir Nasir in graft case remains valid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday affirmed a High Court (HC) order that vacated its earlier stay order on the conviction of former state minister for civil aviation and tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin in a corruption case filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

The apex court, however, did not interfere with his bail granted by the HC upon an appeal filed by Nasiruddin.

The SC decision came upon a leave-to-appeal petition filed by the ACC against the HC order staying the verdict of a lower court, which had sentenced Nasiruddin to 13 years' imprisonment in the case.

The lawyers concerned said the matter regarding conviction of Nasiruddin will be settled at the HC after the hearing of his appeal now pending with this court.

The HC on April 22 this year vacated its stay order and discharged the writ petition of Nasiruddin upon which the same court on September 17 last year stayed his conviction.

The HC came up with this order, as Nasiruddin prayed to the court not to proceed with the pending writ petition. He made the prayer as he got bail from this court following the pending appeal.

In response to the writ petition filed by Nasiruddin, the HC on September 17 last year, stayed his conviction and also issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why the trial proceedings of the case and the conviction against him should not be declared illegal.

The HC on November 13 last year granted him bail on health grounds upon his appeal against the trial court verdict. He was released on bail on November 19 last year.

The ACC's leave-to-appeal petition came before the Appellate Division for hearing yesterday.

After holding a brief hearing on the petition, the apex court dismissed it (petition) on the ground that it has become ineffective following the April 22 HC order that vacated the stay order on the conviction of Nasiruddin.

ACC's lawyer Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that following the SC order, the trial court verdict sentencing Nasiruddin in the corruption case will remain valid, as the apex court passed the order approving the HC decision of April 22.

However, the HC order granting him bail in the same case will remain in force, he added.

Advocate Saifuddin Ahmad Chowdhury appeared for Nasiruddin in the court.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Krishak Samity forms a human chain at Mutktangan in the city yesterday demanding that Boro paddy procurement price be fixed at Tk 17 per kilogram.

Set up Information Commission soon

Demands RTI Forum

METRO DESK

The Right to Information (RTI) Forum, a network of more than 80 organisations and individuals, has welcomed the publication of Right to Information law 2009 in the official Bangladesh Gazette.

In a statement yesterday, the forum said it believes that enactment of RTI Act has demonstrated the present government's commitment to meeting its electoral pledges to create an environment conducive to establishing accountable governance and preventing corruption.

Commending the government in this regard,

Shaheen Anam, convener of the forum, stressed the importance of setting up, as soon as possible, the Information Commission, as provided by the Act.

To facilitate this, she demanded that the selection committee for the appointment of commissioners be formed immediately in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Act.

The forum also hoped that the authorities will put in every effort, in line with the government's commitment, to ensure that the commission will be properly resourced, fully independent and effective.

It also stressed the importance of developing a well-

defined RTI implementation policy with clear delineation of short, medium and long-term targets.

The forum, together with other stakeholders, will be happy to work with the government in developing such a policy in a participatory process, the statement said.

The forum also hoped that the government, by attaching utmost priority to the enforcement of the Act, will establish for itself high degree of credibility in the eyes of the people, for whom the Act has opened up unprecedented openings for promoting all basic rights and entitlements as per the constitution and laws of the land.

'Take action against govt land grabbers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary standing committee yesterday asked the concerned ministry to take stern action immediately against road transport organisations that illegally grabbed the government or privately owned land or establishment.

The parliamentary standing committee on labour and employment ministry expressed deep satisfaction over the incident of grabbing government land or establishment by some 'unregistered' road transport organisations.

The committee chief Shahjahan Khan directed officials of the ministry to rescue the government land or establishment grabbed by different organisations.

He also asked the leaders of labour union to cooperate with the local administration in this regard.

Committee members Abdus Sattar, Shahiduzzaman Sarker, Manoranjan Shil Gopal and Israfil Alam were also present at the meeting.

BDR driver dies at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladesh Rifle (BDR) driver died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital last night where he was undergoing treatment since March 17.

The deceased was identified as Kabir Uddin, 55, who was posted in Rangamati BDR sector.

Sources said the driver was earlier admitted into Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University hospital and was later shifted to DMCH.

Hospital sources said he was suffering from both heart and kidney diseases.

12 injured in BCL factional clash at Comilla varsity

UNB, Comilla

At least 12 people, including the proctor and a teacher, were injured in a clash between two groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on the Comilla University campus yesterday.

Shortly after the clash, the university authorities suspended its all classes until May 5.

Witnesses said the clash between Masum and Chisti groups broke out at around 5:30pm over a trifling matter, leaving the people injured.

Proctor Dr Abu Zafar and teacher Amzad Hossain were also injured as they tried to quell the warring groups.

AWARENESS ON KIDNEY DISEASE

10 patients

operated upon free of cost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barakah Kidney Hospital and Research Institute Limited yesterday provided operation services free of cost to 10 poor patients as part of its month-long awareness campaign on Kidney disease.

A total of 3,000 patients of Shonir Akhra, Mirpur, Sripur and Gazipur were provided with health services free of cost during the campaign, said chairman of the hospital Prof M Fakhru Islam while speaking at a discussion yesterday.

Former chief election commissioner Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf was present as the chief guest at the discussion while secretary general of Bangladesh Renal Association Prof Dr Mohammad Firoz Khan was present as special guest.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the fourth death anniversary of Dwijabar Dasgupta, a lawyer in Bagerhat and father of Pinaki Dasgupta, senior reporter of the Daily Ittefaq, says a press release.

On the occasion, religious rituals will be held for salvation of the departed soul at his village home in Morolganj. Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the session.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

Unitrack curriculum on the cards: Minister

DU CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said a unitrack curriculum would be introduced at primary level education to eliminate the existing discrimination.

"There are eleven types of education systems at the primary level. Steps would be taken gradually to introduce a unitrack curriculum to eliminate the discrimination," Nahid said while addressing a book launching ceremony at Liberation War Museum in the city as the chief guest.

The minister unveiled the cover of the book titled 'Chhotoder Muktiuddher Itiha' (The History of the Liberation War for the Children) authored by noted writer Muhammad Zafar Iqbal on the occasion.

Mukhtir Uddog organised the programme.

Nahid said 90 percent children go to primary school, but 48 percent of them drop out after completing primary education.

"Steps would be taken to stop this dropout rate and ensure that every child goes to school within 2011," the education minister said seeking assistance from all concerned to face the challenges in the education sector.

He blamed the anti-liberation forces for distorting the real history of the liberation war in the textbooks that mislead the country's young generation.

Nahid said one of the challenges ahead of the present government is to sustain the spirit of the liberation war and try the war criminals.

Former adviser Advocate Sultana Kamal said the book was written when anti-liberation forces were hatching a conspiracy to confuse the new generation by distorting the history of the liberation war.

She said the book is a small attempt to portray the real history of the liberation war before the young generation.

Former governor of the Bangladesh Bank Dr Farash Uddin said this book should be made available to one crore primary school children across the country.

Cultural activists Hasan Imam, Liberation War Museum Trustee Dr Sarwar Ali and freedom fighter Maj Gen (ret'd) Imamuzzaman Bir Bikram also spoke at the function.

The price of the book has been fixed at Tk 20.

Life skills education for youths can cut HIV/AIDS risks

METRO DESK

The new findings of two studies have revealed that life skills education (LSE) for vulnerable youths can protect them from risk behaviour related to HIV/AIDS, says a press release.

The studies found that the programme on LSE for youths aged between 15 and 24 years was well received by communities and the peer-based approach functioned positively among them in 12 selected districts of Dhaka and Khulna divisions.

The findings of the studies, jointly carried out by the National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP), ICDDR,B and Save the Children-USA, were disseminated at a seminar at ICDDR,B in the city on Tuesday.

The researchers were conducted under 'HIV/AIDS Programme: Prevention and Strategic Responses' project, a collaborative project between the health and family welfare ministry and Save the Children-USA, supported by the Global Fund.

The studies also showed that safe sex practices improved among young people who were trained on life skills by enabling them to face critical situation using intellectual abilities.

A national survey conducted by the project in 2005 found that almost one in four unmarried Bangladeshi youths (22 percent) reported having premarital sex.

The studies suggested that 30 percent of youths had ever had premarital or extramarital sex, with a higher proportion in the urban areas (33 percent) compared to the rural areas (25 percent). The use of condoms during last sex was 56 percent among youths who had ever had sex.

However, LSE intervention improved knowledge and use of condoms among sexually active young people by more than 10 percent. The youths participating identified the 'correct steps of using condoms' and the 'drug addiction and HIV/AIDS' as the most important sessions.

Dr Hosne Ara Tahmin, additional director general of DGHS, attended the seminar as the chief guest, while Dr Ishaque Khan, life director of National AIDS/STD Programme and Stevenson Kelly, country director of Save the Children-USA, were present as the special guests.

Chehlum

METRO DESK

Chehlum of Syed Mohammad Zohayer, former secretary of civil aviation and tourism ministry, will be held at his residence at House # 5, Road # 113, Gulshan # 2 in the city after Juma prayers tomorrow, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers have been requested to attend the chehlum.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

There are also chances of rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind at one or two places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Dhaka, Tangail, Mymensingh, Jessore and Kushtia, Met office said.

Prevailing mild to moderate heatwave over the regions of Jessore, Satkhira, Chuadanga, Patuakhali, Rajshahi, Iswardi may continue, it said, adding that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:27pm today and rises at 5:24am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 38.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Jessore and the lowest of 23.5 degree at Srimongal.

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
Dhaka	34.9	27.5
Chittagong	32.0	25.8
Rajshahi	36.2	27.3
Khulna	35.5	27.6
Bharu	33.5	26.4
Sylhet	33.8	25.8
Cox's Bazar	33.5	25.5
	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	67	61
Chittagong	76	75
Rajshahi	73	56
Khulna	74	69
Bharu	73	71
Sylhet	76	61
Cox's Bazar	63	69