



Cheated clients of Jubak form a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding return of their money deposited with Jubak.

BUDGETARY ALLOCATION

Conserving environment should get priority

Bapa demands at press confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Conservation of environment should be the prime consideration for allocating fund in the upcoming national budget, said the leaders of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) at a press conference in the city yesterday.

"Environment should be the central consideration for budgetary allocation," said Md Arifur Rahman, member-secretary of Bapa's Programme Committee on Finance, Trade and Development, while reading out a written statement.

The upcoming budget for fiscal 2009-10 should be designed in such a way that the issue of conserving environment gets priority, he said at the press conference held at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said the government should spend the black money, if legitimised in anyway, for the conservation of environment as a corporate social responsibility.

"We hope that as an environmental activist, Finance Minister AMA Muhi would take necessary steps to save Dhaka's lifeline Buriganga river from pollution and illegal grabbing in the light of his past experience," said Prof Ahmad.

He said construction of permanent structure like bridge disregarding its impact on environment and extraction of sand destroy

rivers and wetlands.

All the rivers in Bangladesh are part of a 'river system' and these are vital sources of sweet water, he added.

Prof Ahmad also called for an end to unplanned urbanisation, earth filling of wetlands, and environmental pollution in ship breaking industry.

Pointing to poor scenario in conserving environment, Arifur Rahman said 70 percent of Tk 233 crore budgetary allocation for environment and forest ministry in the current fiscal was earmarked for non-development (salary allowances) expenditure.

He also called for enforcement of 'polluters must pay' policy to raise fund for the conservation of environment.

At the press conference, Bapa leaders made a set of recommendations including reclamation of rivers and wetlands, promoting renewable energy sources, strict control on air-polluting brick kiln and transports and low carbon-emission policy.

They also demanded budgetary priority and policy mechanism for protecting rivers like Buriganga from industrial and other pollutions.

Bapa General Secretary Dr Mohammad Abdul Matin and member-secretary Sharif Jamil were present on the occasion.

World Telecom, Info Society Day today

UNB, Dhaka

The World Telecommunications and Information Society Day (WTISD) will be observed in the country today as elsewhere in 189 other member-countries of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), highlighting the new government's recipe for building a digital Bangladesh.

This year's universal theme for the day is 'Protecting Children in Cyberspace', which underlines the need of building awareness against abuse of the information superhighway.

Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has taken up a two-day programme on the occasion.

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have issued messages on the occasion, both reaffirming the government pledge to digitise Bangladesh for quicker advances.

The president said, "The present government has declared Vision-2021 for building up an information technology based digital Bangladesh. I think that observance of the World Telecommunications and Information Society Day will help implement the vision."

Desco snaps 144 illegal connections

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco) has disconnected a total of 144 illegal electricity connections in different areas of the city from May 10 to 13.

According to a Desco press release, the action was taken as part of their ongoing drive against the illegal electricity users.

During the drive, the consumers were fined a total of Tk 248,074.

Earlier, the Desco disconnected 215 illegal electricity connections in different areas of the city, including Uttara, Dakkhin Khan, Kalyanpur, Gulshan and Pallabi. The consumers were also fined about Tk 6.48 lakh.

The Desco authorities said that the drive against the illegal electricity users has been intensified and it will continue across its command areas.

'Rescue preparation too poor to deal with quake disaster'

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The present rescue preparation as well as equipment of fire service and civil defence directorate is too poor to deal with a disaster caused by a moderate to severe earthquake, according to a list submitted by the authorities concerned to the High Court (HC).

A prayer will be moved soon to the HC to direct the government to allocate adequate budget for procuring sufficient rescue equipment of proper standard to save lives of people in case of a severe earthquake, said a lawyer concerned.

The fire service and defence authorities have recently submitted the list in response to a HC direction, which came upon a public interest writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB).

Petitioner's counsel Advocate Manzill Murshid told The Daily Star that the equipment are of minimum standard and those are not properly effective in carrying out a rescue drive in any place hit by a severe earthquake.

He said there have been mild earthquakes in different parts of the country and it is high time to take adequate steps to face any eventuality.

He said only turntable ladder of 170 feet high, snorkels (moving ladder) of 88 feet high and water tenders with power of containing 11000 litres of water are very useful in rescue operation, but the remaining equipment are not of that standard.

According to the list, there are only two turntable ladders, four snorkels, two break down vans, one emergency tender, six foam tenders (to put out fire from oil), five water tenders, 24 rotary rescue saw (for cutting), 58 vibrators, 59 generators, 14 hydraulic spreader with power unit (for rescuing from inside), 22 air blowers (for giving oxygen inside), eight oxy-acetylene cutters (for cutting iron), 15 pipe squeezers (to stop gas line), six search cameras, one image camera (for looking inside) and three gas detectors.

But there is no chemical tender for putting out fire, no track dozer or bulldozer, no crush tenders, no cranes, no

chipping hammers (for making hole), and no electric drill as per the list.

The writ petition stated that as per reports published in media and information

received from different sources, the following equipment are badly needed in conducting rescue operation: Six turntable ladders with 170 feet high, six snorkels with

88 feet high, 20 break down vans with high hydraulic power, eight emergency tenders with lighting units, six chemical tender for putting out fire, six track dozers (bulldozer), six crush tenders, two foam tenders (to put out fire from oil), six water tenders (11,000 litres), six cranes, 10 rotary rescue saw (for cutting), eight chipping hammers (for making hole), four vibrators, six electric drills, six generators, six hydraulic spreader with power unit (for rescuing from inside), six air blower (for giving oxygen inside), six oxy-acetylene cutters (for cutting iron), pipe squeezers (to stop gas line), six search cameras, six image cameras (for looking inside) and six gas detectors.

Upon the petition, the HC on December 1 of last year directed the director general of fire service and civil defence to submit a list of present rescue equipment to this court through the registrar of the Supreme Court.

The HC also issued a rule upon the government to explain why its inaction in arranging sufficient rescue equipment in case of a disaster caused by an earthquake should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the court also asked the government to show cause as to why it should not be directed to arrange sufficient rescue equipment in order to save the lives of citizens in case of a disaster caused by an earthquake.



Firefighters use a turntable ladder during a fire drill at the Secretariat in the city.

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Hicare School celebrates Bangla New Year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hicare School, an institution for hearing impaired children, yesterday celebrated Bangla Nobo Borsho (New Year) through a vibrant cultural function on its premises at Dhanmondi in the city, said a press release.

The children with disability performed a series of songs, recitations, dances and drama that enthralled the audiences.

Speaking on the occasion as chief guest Agran Bank Chairman Siddiqur Rahman Chowdhury said the performance proves that with training and education the chil-

dren with disability can become responsible citizens.

He stressed the need to include them in the mainstream development activities of the country.

It was stated in the function that there are at present 1,40,00,000 children with disability in the country. Of them 25,00,000 are hearing impaired.

Presided over by school managing committee President Faizur Rahman Choudhury, the programme was also attended by Manzoor-ul Karim, former secretary to the government, and Muhammad Shams-ul Haque, founder of Hicare School.

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