

Sustainable plan a must to reduce impacts of cyclone

Speakers tell nat'l seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a national seminar yesterday said advance preparation and sustainable planning is important to reduce the devastation caused by cyclone and other natural disasters.

Involving the local government and the people in the long-term planning is urgent, they added.

The seminar on 'Conserving land and water in Bangladesh: Lesson learned from cyclone Aila' was organised by Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) in collaboration with Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) to mark the World Day to Combat

Desertification and Drought.

Held at the LGED auditorium in the city, Dr Ainun Nishat, country representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), presented the keynote paper.

Dr Nishat said, "We are often too prompt to respond to the aftermath of cyclones with relief work. But we have to keep in mind that only relief work is not the best way to deal with cyclone disasters. Planning beforehand will help reduce the devastation."

"We are already affected by erratic weather pattern. Intensity of cyclone and its frequency has already increased. Salinity of coastal belt will increase with the sea-

level rise. This requires early planning," he added.

He suggested building specially designed embankments that meet up the needs and keeping them in good shape at all times. Planting deep-rooted tree species in the coastal belt and promoting salinity-resistant or tolerant crops.

Dr Nishat, however, said planting bigger trees on embankments can damage them.

Safety net for coastal people with insurance coverage is necessary so that affected people can start all over afresh, he said.

He also pointed out that the coastal zone policy of the country is one of the best, but

it is hardly being implemented.

Food and Disaster Management Secretary Md Moklesur Rahman said not just homes, people also lose their livelihood for cyclone. Starting all over again is one of the major problems they face. Special support system should be introduced so that people can get back on their feet.

Building shelter homes for livestock is necessary as it is directly involved in their livelihood, he added.

Outbreak of diarrhoea in cyclone-hit area is quite common. Construction of water purification plant to provide safe water can make things better, he suggested.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pays her last respect to language movement veteran Gaziul Haque at Square Hospital in the city yesterday. Gaziul Haque passed away yesterday afternoon.

Gaziul Haque's death condoled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political, social, and cultural organisations yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of veteran language movement veteran Gaziul Haque.

The leaders of Jatiya Party (JP-Manju), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Bangladesh Chhatra League (JSD), and Zaker Party condoled his death.

In separate statements they recalled the contribution of Gaziul Haque to the language movement and said that the nation would remember him forever with heartfelt respect.

They also prayed for eternal peace of his departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Fire breaks out at high-rise office building

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out on the 13th floor of a high-rise office building in the city's Dikusha area, last night, damaging furniture on the floor.

An electrical short-circuit sparked off the fire at the office of Fair Lone Agency around 6:30pm in the 20-storey Co-operative Society Bhaban, the police said.

However, firefighters brought the blaze under control after a struggle for two hours.

Though six fire brigade units with ladders reached the spot in time, their ladders could not reach the floor, leaving the task of firefighters difficult, the police said.

Ismail Hossain, a tea stall owner in the area, said locals saw huge smoke coming out of the 13th floor and heard people in the building screaming for help.

Within few minutes, the firefighters reached the spot, but due to poor logistic support, the water pipe could not reach the floor, he said, adding that the ladder and other tools reached up to the 11th floor.

However, they took their water pipes through the staircase of the building to the floor that took much time.

CG system needed until EC becomes neutral

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition party BNP believes that there is a need for caretaker government (CG) system in the country until the Election Commission (EC) becomes absolutely neutral and free from politicisation.

"The question of cancelling the CG system does not arise at all. Its necessity will remain until the political parties bring changes in their mindset and the EC becomes fully independent," said BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain while talking to reporters at the party's Nayapalton office in the city.

His observation came at a time when a debate is going on about the necessity of the CG system.

Ruling Awami League leaders including Suranjit Sengupta demanded cancellation of the system in parliament on Tuesday saying it has no necessity now.

Delwar said as the EC has failed to become neutral, the time did not come to cancel the system.

He once again demanded trial of former president

Iajuddin Ahmed, former chief adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and former army chief Moeen U Ahmed saying that the trial of the immediate-past caretaker government will be held in the soil of this country even if the present government avoids it.

Delwar alleged that names of BNP leaders including Tarique Rahman, son of party chairperson, has been incorporated in the 10-truck arms haul case as part of a conspiracy.

Meanwhile, BNP Standing Committee has urged the countrymen to be alert so that the present government cannot change the route of Asian Highway.

"H-41 (Mongla-Teknaf-Myanmar) route will be the right choice for Bangladesh for connecting with Asian Highway," opined the committee at a meeting held on Tuesday night, said a party press release yesterday.

The committee said becoming a part of Asian Highway is not new for Bangladesh as the country became a part of it during the tenure of Khaleda Zia.

15 hurt in attack by Jubok Real Estate men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

At least 15 people, including six women, were injured when the hired goons of Jubok Real Estate attacked the buyers who took possession of their lands at Kanchpur area in Sonargaon yesterday.

Of the injured, Hemayet Uddin Chowdhury, 50, was admitted to Orthopaedic Hospital while Rabeya, 32, Bilquis, 28, Maya, 30, and Aleya, 40, were admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Police and witnesses said Jubok Real Estate took Tk 11 crore from 21 people by selling 14 bighas of land at Gendaria block in Dhaka and Sonargaon block in Narayanganj.

Shafiu Rahman Dulu, a buyer, said Jubok officials had long been assuring them of handing over their land, but did not do so.

So, the buyers themselves took the possession of their land one month ago and kept it under their control, he added.

Jubok's hired goons led by an official Zahurul Islam attacked the buyers at noon, he said.

Later, the police brought the situation under control.

'Reinstate constitution of 1972'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday demanded the constitution of 1972 be reinstated for establishing a secular and democratic Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad held the discussion on the constitution of 1972 at the National Press Club in the city.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the martyrs sacrificed their life for a non-communal and democratic Bangladesh.

"To take the country forward in the spirit of liberation war, we will have to ensure secularism first," he said.

Dr Neem Chandra Bhowmik, Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta, Advocate Siril Siddik and former deputy inspector general (DIG) Satya Ranjan Barai also spoke.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Abdur Rashid, former principal of Chittagong Teachers' Training College, passed away at Birdem hospital in the city on Monday at the age of 67, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and one son.

A milad mahfil and Quran khwani will be held at his residence at Dirai in Sunamganj after Asr prayers tomorrow.

'Gender sensitive budget can ensure women's dev'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha (BNPS), a non-government organisation, yesterday welcomed the government's initiative to announce the proposed national budget for the fiscal 2009-2010 as gender sensitive.

"For the first time, the government proposed the gender-orientated budget that allocated Tk 9660.8 crore for women's development and their well-being which is really appreciable," said BNPS Executive Director Rokeya Kabir.

She said this at a press conference titled 'Expectations of women folk and national budget 2009-2010' at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city.

BNPS urged the government to introduce gender sensitive curriculum from the pre-schooling system to higher education.

Rokeya Kabir said the proposed budgetary allocation and gender-orientated steps of the government are satisfactory, but it could have considered some other major issues related to women's rights and their security.

BNPS Coordinator Shahnaz Sumi in a written statement said there was no specific indication of ensuring women's security in society where they often become victims of violence and torture of different types.

"When women enter the labour market, they have to face a number of problems on

some specific issues, including working atmosphere, maternity leave, security, transportation, wages, pension as well. So, the government can include these issues in the budget," she said.

BNPS mentioned that the government should take steps to enforce the gender focal point that was formed with 18 ministries to entitle the women's access to the budgetary allocation without facing any discrimination.

Dr Pratima Paul Majumdar, senior research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Omar Tarek Chowdhury, senior coordinator of BNPS, and Parveen Sultana Jhuma, executive committee member, also spoke at the briefing.

Daud's aides not involved in crimes in country

Says DMP chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The arrested accomplices of Mafia don Daud Ibrahim took shelter in the country after committing crimes in India, but they are not involved in any criminal activities in the country.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner (DMP) AKM Shahidul Haque made the comment to reporters after attending a seminar at his office.

He also said the three Indian criminals had regular contacts with Chhota Shakil, who is the second man of Daud Ibrahim's illegal empire active in India.

"After committing crimes, they came to the country to evade arrest in India, but the police did not find out their involvement with any criminal gangs in the country during the grilling at TFI cell," he said.

So far, three Indian criminals were arrested by detective police. In the first phase, two Indian criminals - Abdul Rauf Daud Merchant, Zahid and their Bangladeshi host Kamal - were arrested from Brahmanbaria town and according to their information detective police arrested Arif from Krishnamarket in the city's Mohammadpur area.

They were interrogated by detective police and TFI cell in several phases.

Nilima Ibrahim's death anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 7th death anniversary of Dr Nilima Ibrahim, an educationist, pioneer of women's rights movement and founder president of Mahila Samity, says a press release.

A milad mahfil will be held at 11:00am at Mahila Samity auditorium. Besides, Mahila Samity will place wreaths at her grave at martyred intellectuals' graveyard.

Begum Sajeda Ahmed

METRO DESK

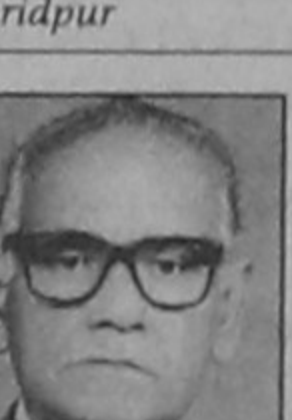


Ahmed, a former judge, says a press release.

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

Gour Chandra Bala

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur



Today is the 4th death anniversary of Gour Chandra Bala, former minister for forest and food of Jukto Front government.

On the occasion, his family members will organise social and religious programmes at his village under Rajoyor upazila in Madaripur.

MURDER OF JUBO LEAGUE LEADER Protesters set fire to 50 houses in Narsingdi

A CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Agitating locals set fire to around 50 houses, including the residence of a pro-BNP union parishad (UP) chairman at Belabo upazila here yesterday protesting the killing of Jubo League leader on Tuesday.

Police said firefighters from Narsingdi and Bhairab rushed to the spot and doused the fire after a two-hour effort.

Identified as Abdus Sattar, president of Sarabad union Jubo League of the same upazila, the victim was severely beaten up by a gang of

criminals led by Sarabad UP Chairman Shahidul Islam Tanvir in a sweetmeat shop at Narayanpur the previous day.

Sattar succumbed to his injuries on way to Bhairab upazila health complex.

As the news spread in the locality, aggrieved locals took positions around the houses of the chairman and his accomplices in the village and set fire to them around 12:00pm.

On information, police and firefighters rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Local lawmaker advocate

Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun and Police Super Mohammad Ali Mia visited the locale and requested the angry villagers not to violate laws assuring them of taking legal action against the killers.

One of the younger brothers of the victim filed a murder case against 14 to 15 people, including the UP chairman.

Police arrested two brothers - Dayal and Shahjahan - in this connection.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Borhan Uddin of Belabo Police Station said police have been deployed in the area to ward off any untoward situation.

Call to resist construction of Tipaimukh dam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Union yesterday demanded steps to halt the Tipaimukh hydroelectric dam project on the Barak river near Manipur-Mizoram border as it stands against the country's national interest and violates international river law.

The leaders and activists threatened to go for a tougher movement if the project is not stopped immediately, says a press release.

"If the dam is built, at least eight eastern districts of the country will certainly turn into a desert," they added.

They placed the demand at a human chain formed at Muktangan in the city.

"Due to construction of Tipaimukh dam, the incidence of earthquake will definitely be a regular phenomenon which may cause huge damages to human lives and have impacts on nature as well as climate," said Khan Asaduzzaman Masum, president of the organisation.

General Secretary Manabendra Dev said, "The water flow of Surma, Kushiara and Meghna rivers will certainly change their natural courses due to the dam which would badly affect the agriculture in the surrounding areas."

The dam would cause salinity in water and would contribute to lowering the underground water level which would also accelerate the arsenic level in water, he added.

DHAKA TODAY

Human chain

Vigaranisa Noon School and College will form a human chain to mark Environment Day with the theme 'Save river, save country'. Venue: Bailey Road. Time: 10:00am.

View exchange meeting

Steps towards Development organises a view exchange meeting on 'Budget 2009-10: Review on gender perspective'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Discussion

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad will hold a discussion on 'Budget 2009-10: Particular focus on millennium development goals (MDGs)'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

Seminar

Bangladesh Scouts in association with World Health Organisation organises a seminar to mark World Tobacco Free Day. Venue: Scouts HQ, Kakrail. Time: 9:00am.

Symposium

Bangladesh Forum for Educational Development (BAFED) UNESCO Education Symposium will be held. Venue: IDB Bhaban. Time: 9:30am.

Discussion

Markcom Ltd will hold a discussion titled 'Budget 2009-10: What are there for SMEs and women

entrepreneurs'. Venue: Biam auditorium. Time: 2:30pm.

Seminar

School of Business Studies, Southeast University (SEU) organises a seminar on 'Budget 2009-10: Expectations of the new generation'. Venue: Seminar Hall, SEU Banani campus. Time: 11:00am.

Discussion

Dhaka City Corporation Action Programme on Child Labour will hold a discussion to mark World Day against Child Labour 2009. Venue: Mahanagar Natya Mancha. Time: 9:30am.

View exchange meeting

Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (CAB) organises a view exchange meeting on price hike of essentials. Venue: CAB conference room. Time: 11:00am.

Seminar

International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) organises a seminar on budget 2009-10. Venue: IUBAT. Time: 2:00pm.

Discussion

University of Liberal Art Bangladesh and the daily Jugantor will hold a discussion on 'National budget 2009-10: Views from the corporate sector'. Venue: ULAB auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Boon for tax-dodgers, bane for taxpayers

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how many jobs have actually been created. If the findings contradict the claim of the investor, the money whitening opportunity with 10 percent tax for the individual will be revoked, and he or she will then have to pay the regular rate of tax on the amount invested.

The industrial sectors in which black money owners may invest their money are: power, energy, river or sea ports, container terminals, gas pipelines, solar power plants, monorails, subways, elevated roads, flyovers, telecom infrastructure (except mobile phone services), water treatment plants, liquefied natural gas terminals, pharmaceuticals, textiles, spinning, MSS rods, corrugated iron sheets, plastic industries, etc.

If a black money owner invests in the share market to whiten money, that investment will be locked in the sector for a minimum of two years.

In cases of flat purchase with black money, the purchasers must pay taxes in higher rates than what had been offered with similar previous opportunities. There will be six different slabs of such special taxes.

For purchasing a flat in residential areas of Dhaka and Chittagong, a black money owner must pay Tk 800 per square metre (sqm) for a plinth area of less than 100 sqm; Tk 1,000 per sqm for a plinth area of more than 100 sqm but below

200 sqm, and Tk 1,500 per sqm for a plinth area of more than 200 sqm. Previous governments also offered such opportunities in two slabs with tax rates of Tk 300 per sqm, and Tk 500 per sqm.

For purchasing flats in residential areas outside Dhaka and Chittagong, a black money owner must pay taxes in similar three slabs as well at the rates of Tk 400 per sqm, Tk 600 per sqm, and Tk 1,000 per sqm.

Black money owners got opportunities to whiten their money by paying 10 percent tax during past Awami League (AL) and BNP regimes as well. During the regime of Ershad, they paid 20 percent tax to whiten money, and 25 percent was paid during Zia's regime when the opportunity was first introduced.

Moreover, black money owners were also given the opportunity of enjoying zero tax facility for whitening their money, if they invested in industries during past regimes of both AL and BNP.

Between June 4, 2007 and September 30, 2007 during the immediate past caretaker regime, an opportunity was provided to legalise undisclosed money by paying 5 percent fine on the amount whitened, but on top of regular tax on the amount. Taking the opportunity Tk 8,895 crore was whitened, and the state received Tk 803 crore in tax.

The caretaker government

then again gave the opportunity between July 1, 2008 and October 31, 2008. But that time around moneywhiteners had to pay 7.5 percent fine on top of the regular tax paid on the amount whitened. The amount of money whitened during the period was Tk 787 crore, with Tk 108 crore going to the state coffers as tax.

During BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance rule, no question was raised about the amount whitened and no tax was required, if it was invested in trading businesses, industries producing commodities and services, and in the share market between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2005; resulting in whitening of Tk 1,325 crore without any money going to the state as tax.

In fiscal year 2005-'06, at the end of the last BNP regime, a scope of whitening money by paying only 7.5 percent tax was provided, resulting in legalisation of Tk 4,603 crore, with Tk 345 crore going to the state as tax.

During the last AL regime, the scope was given to whiten money in two ways between January 1, 1997 and December 31, 1999.

In cases of investments in expansion, renovation or modernisation of existing industries, and in the share market, black money could be legalised by paying 7.5 percent tax on the invested amount. The process saw Tk 125 crore being whitened,

with the state getting Tk 9 crore in tax.

The other provision was for whitening money without paying any tax on the whitened amount, if the amount was invested in newly established industries which would pay regular taxes. But the industry would enjoy a tax holiday if 7.5 percent whitening tax was paid on the invested amount. Under the provision, Tk 435 crore was legalised, but the state did not get any tax from whitening of black money.

During the same tenure of AL in power, the government between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2001 gave money whitening opportunity again with the provision of paying 10 percent tax on the amount whitened. The move helped to whiten Tk 1,000 crore, and the state got Tk 100 crore in tax.

During Ershad's regime, a similar opportunity was given in exchange for paying 10 percent tax on the amount whitened between 1987 and 1990, if the whitened money was invested in industries, or by paying 20 percent tax on the amount to be whitened, if not invested in industries. The provision saw Tk 850 crore being whitened while Tk 115 crore went to the state as tax.

The first opportunity to whiten money in fiscal year 1976-'77, saw Tk 70 crore being whitened in exchange for payment of 25 percent tax on the whitened amount.