

Stop encroachment on land of indigenous people

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous people will continue to suffer land-related problems unless Bangalee settlers are withdrawn from the hilly region and camps of army, BDR, police and Ansar are removed, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

They made the observation following a disclosure of findings of a research that the lands of ethnic communities are being encroached with the

help of law enforcement agencies and even through secret government notification for rehabilitation of Bangalees in the region over the years.

It is unfortunate that even some NGOs are taking control of the land of indigenous people by any means supported by international donors, said Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon MP in his speech as the chief guest.

Association for Land Reform and Development organised the seminar on 'Real circumstances of Adivasi people losing land and Chittagong Hill Tracts Treaty perspective' at YWCA auditorium in the city.

"To build a peaceful society, we have to instil a sense of security in indigenous people so that they do not have the fear of losing their land," said columnist Syed Abul Maksud.

Researchers Shaktipada

Tripura and Ilira Dewan presented separate papers on the findings of the research.

According to the papers, 1356 square miles of land were encroached in 1870 in the name of protecting the forest, and 54,000 acres land in between 1959 and 1962 for building the Kaptai dam, affecting the lifestyle of indigenous people and making them refugees.

In between 1979 and 1986, a total of 80,000 Bangalee families were rehabilitated in the hilly region on 920,000 acres of lands belonging to the ethnic communities, the researchers said.

"In 1992, around 2.18 lakh acres of land were declared as newly protected forest land while thousands of acres of land were leased out for industrialisation in the area on different occasions, affecting the livelihoods of indigenous people."

According to the paper, army camps were set up in 75,686 acres of land only in Bandarban while 40,077 acres of land were encroached by different companies, individuals and bureaucrats in the district.

"At present, indigenous people and permanent Bangalees in the hilly areas have 0.08 hectares of cultivable land per head compared to 0.20 hectares in other parts of the country."

The researchers also recommended putting an end to land encroachment in the hilly region, taking stern action against encroachers, making police and land administration more effective, implementing CHT Peace Accord, and giving constitutional recognition to indigenous people and ensuring their land rights.

MILITARY TRAINING

Army requests people not to get confused about explosions

UNB, Dhaka

The firing of explosives will take place during military training at different spots, the Army Headquarters said yesterday, requesting people not to get confused about such explosions.

"Bangladesh Army's 14 Independent Engineering Brigade and 10 RI-battalion, 11 RI-battalion and 57 Engineering Company under this brigade have planned explosive firing in its Summer Joint Training-2009 to be held on July 3-9," said an ISPR release.

The training of 10 RI-battalion will be held at Sonargaon-Araibazar (6757 square) in Narayanganj district while 11 RI-battalion at Meghna Bridge (6809 square) under Gazaria thana in Munshiganj district, 57 Engineering Company at Kanchpur-Langabandh (6316 square) under Sonargaon thana in Narayanganj district and headquarters' 14 Independent Engineering Brigade at Kaliganj (5815 square) under Sonargaon thana in Narayanganj district.



Conference

Scholars Bangladesh organises the First NRB Manpower Development and Opportunities Conference-2009 beginning today. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 6:00pm.

Finance Fest

Department of Finance, Dhaka University organises Finance Fest '09. Venue: Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Kanak and Her Artworks' edited by Dr Mustafa Majid will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Food carnival

A two-day Rupchanda Food Carnival will begin. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 10:00am.

Book fair

A book fair to mark the rainy season will begin. Venue: Concord Emporium Shopping Complex. Time: 5:00pm.



Anisul Islam Mahmud, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on expatriates' welfare ministry, speaks at a seminar on 'Ratification of the UN Convention on Migrants and their Families' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Dr CRAbrar and on his left is Sheeja Hafiza.

Anis slams bureaucrats for high migration cost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anisul Islam Mahmud, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on expatriates' welfare ministry, yesterday criticised the bureaucrats for not being able to contain high cost that the overseas job seekers have to pay to go abroad.

"Why don't you know how the cost of migration is so high, and make mechanisms so that none can overcharge the overseas job seekers," he said while speaking as the chief guest at a seminar at National Press Club in the city.

Anisul Islam made the remarks following speakers' concern that high cost was the major problem of going abroad for jobs.

The government in 2006 fixed that the recruiting agencies can charge highest Tk 84,000 to send a worker abroad. But, workers pay Tk two lakh to Tk 2.5 lakh to go to the Middle Eastern countries and Malaysia and Tk four lakh to Tk five lakh to go to Singapore.

There are a lot of instances that migrant workers cannot recover the money that they spend in their contract period because of the high cost, the speakers said at the seminar titled 'Ratification of the UN

convention on migrants and their Families'.

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Brac, Bangladesh Obhishahi Mahila Samik Association, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Warbe Development Foundation, DanChurchAid, Obhishahi Kormi Unnayan Programme and Human Rights Development Information Centre organised the seminar.

"I would accuse the bureaucrats for this. Tk 84,000 was fixed a few years ago, and this cannot be universal rate. This is an artificial rate," said Anisul Islam, also former foreign minister.

Bangladesh Bank and expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry know that recruiting agencies buy work visas through hundi, but nobody cared about it, he added.

"If visas are to be purchased, what is the problem to legalise the system?" he put a question.

Mahmud also criticised the recruiting agencies, saying that their duty is not only like match-making, rather they have to play their due role in protecting the migrant workers.

Baira (Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies) should take actions against those who

overcharge the overseas job seekers, Anisul Islam mentioned.

Moderating the seminar, RMMRU Coordinator Prof CR Abrar said there is a fear that labour market will shrink if the UN Convention on the Migrants and their Families is ratified.

"Empirical evidence doesn't suggest anything such will happen if the convention is ratified," he said, adding that its ratification will rather help protect migrants' rights.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said the country has obligations to the migrant workers and would get international support if the UN convention is ratified. It is imperative for Bangladesh to ratify the convention, she added.

There are some good rules and regulations to check fraudulent practices in the overseas employment sector, but the authorities should enforce the rules now, Shaheen Anam said.

Warbe Development Foundation Chairman Syed Saiful Haque, recruiting agent Abdul Alim, Brac official Sheeja Hafiza, Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training Director General Masud Ahmed, Director Nurul Islam and BOMSA official Sumaiya Islam also spoke.

Contempt petition against Huda, Kamaruzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A contempt of court petition was filed yesterday with the High Court (HC) against BNP leader Nazmul Huda and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman on charges of making 'derogatory' remarks about the HC judges who delivered the June 21 judgement on proclamation of independence.

SM Zafar Sadik, a lawyer of the Supreme Court (SC), filed the petition with the HC bench comprised of justices ABM Khairul Haque and M Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed.

The bench yesterday fixed today for hearing the petition.

Earlier on June 24, the same HC bench issued a contempt rule against former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed for making 'contemptuous' statements, about the HC judges who delivered the judgment on the declaration of the republic's independence.

It also directed Prof Emajuddin to appear before the court today in connection with the contempt of court petition against him.

Advocate Manzil Murshid, a lawyer for Zafar Sadik, yesterday told The Daily Star former BNP minister Nazmul Huda and Assistant Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami Md Kamaruzzaman made derogatory remarks about the HC judges who in their verdict said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was declarer of independence of the country on March 26, 1971.

Huda and Kamaruzzaman said the judgment on the proclamation of the independence was not a judgment of the HC rather it was personal verdicts of the judges concerned. On June 30 their remarks were published in different national dailies.

They also said that the judgment was a political one.

Quoting the newspaper reports on the remarks of Huda and Kamaruzzaman Manzil said their statements had undermined the dignity of the SC and HC judges.

He also said such statements about the judges are highly contemptuous.

Hillary calls Dipu Moni, lauds govt

UNB, Dhaka

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton talked to Foreign Minister Dipu Moni over telephone on Tuesday evening and discussed bilateral issues.

During the conversation, Hillary recollected her last meeting with Dipu Moni in The Hague during the International Conference on Afghanistan and hoped to meet her in the forthcoming 16th Asian Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting this month.

The US secretary of state termed South Asia as the region of opportunity and expressed her keen interest to foster greater cooperation with this region.

Dipu Moni mentioned that South Asia remains to be one of the least integrated regions of the world in spite of huge population and heritage and so much of prospect and promises.

She welcomed the desire of Hillary to forge greater and renewed collaboration with South Asia.

Hillary lauded the role of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government for its measures taken for women empowerment, modernisation of madrasah education etc and vowed their continued cooperation in combating terrorism, building regional cooperation.

Benajir chairman of Lions Past Dist Governors Forum

METRO DESK

Benajir Ahmed, vice chairman and past chairman of the board of governors of North South University Foundation and an industrialist, was elected chairman of Lions Past District Governors Forum (PDG Forum) for second time of Lions Club International, Multiple Dist-315 Bangladesh, at its 13th annual general meeting on June 30, says a press release.

Lions PDG Forum represents all Past & Present Districts Governors of Lions Clubs International Multiple Dist-315 Bangladesh since inception of Lions Clubs in Bangladesh from 1958.

UGC employees executives

METRO DESK

MA Wares and Md Nur Islam Chowdhury (Shimul) have been elected president and general secretary of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) Karmakarta-Karmachari Parishad for 2009-2011 on June 28, says a press release.

Other office-bearers are Vice-President: Khandaker Mahtab Hossain and Mohammad Abdus Salam, Joint General Secretary: Md Jewel Miah, Assistant General Secretary: Md Nurul Islam Bapari, Treasurer: Md Anwar Hossain, Cultural Secretary: Md Habibul Haque, Sports & Library Secretary: Md Nur Islam and Office Secretary: Md Harun-er-Rashid.

Executive committee members are Md Tajul Islam, Md Khokon Miah, Md Shahinur Alam, Md Golam Rosul and Md Abdul Malek.

200 makeshift houses demolished at Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Housing Authority (NHA) authorities yesterday knocked down around 200 makeshift houses at Mirpur-11 in the city.

Locals alleged that NHA conducted a more than six-hour eviction drive at sections 14 and 15, starting from 10:00am without prior notice that leaving the dwellers shelterless in rain.

Some locals said they were not served with any eviction notice earlier, but heard an eviction declaration over loudspeakers on Saturday in the area, adding that they had been living in the slums for around 20 years.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Delwar Ahmed of Kafil Police Station said, "I received a letter from the NHA authorities which sought protection during the drive. In the morning, NHA men reached the spot with a bulldozer and stated eviction in presence of policemen."

Mostafa Kamruddin, executive director of Urban Poor, an NGO, told BBC that they went to the court, seeking stay order. The court granted the order and asked NHA not to conduct any eviction without arranging rehabilitation for the concerned people.

They informed NHA of the court order, but it did not pay heed, he added.

NHA Chairman Abu Siddique told BBC, "There is no scope for rehabilitating the people who started settling illegally in our lands. Standing

of barotz sh bharat 2011 committee of NHA has decided to evict all the grabbers from the NHA land. As part of it, we conducted the drive."

RMG worker beaten to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After fighting for life for three days, a garment worker who was beaten up by local criminals succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

The victim, Masum Khalifa, was a supervisor of Panshi Knit Limited at Tongi, Gazipur.

Managing Director Jamal Hossain of Panshi Knit said some local criminals led by Belal dragged Masum out of the factory at Khapara in Gazipur and beat him up with iron rods on Sunday noon.

Severely injured Masum was rushed to a local clinic and later shifted to DMCH where he died.

On Thursday last, the same gang attacked Reaz, another worker of the factory, and Masum chased the attackers, which angered the gang.

During the Sunday's attack on Masum, factory workers caught Belal and handed him over to the police, Jamal said.

Tongi police said attackers Belal and his brother Helal were arrested and produced before a Gazipur court, which sent them to jail on Sunday.



Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at most places over all six divisions with moderately heavy falls at places in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:50pm today and rises at 6:15am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 33.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and lowest 23.8 degrees Celsius at Rangpur and Comilla.

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	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.7	24.4	82	95
Chittagong	27.4	25.6	95	96
Rajshahi	32.8	24.8	95	80
Khulna	31.0	25.0	90	84
Barisal	29.0	25.7	92	95
Sylhet	30.0	24.6	96	95
Cox's Bazar	32.0	27.5	79	92

Cabinet body suggests salary ratio at 1:9.75

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet committee is going to suggest the ratio of the lowest and the highest salaries at 1:9.75 in the new pay scale for the government staffs.

According to the existing pay scale, the ratio of the lowest and highest salaries is 1:9.58. The pay commission suggested making it 1:11.25.

The cabinet body for implementation of the pay commission proposal at its final meeting with yesterday decided to suggest the ratio to the cabinet.

Cabinet Secretary Abdul Aziz Sarker, who heads the committee, chaired the meeting.

After the meeting, Aziz told journalists that they made the salary structure reviewing the commodity prices, the government's financing capability and salary structures of the neighbouring countries.

However, he did not say anything about the lowest and highest salaries. Their recommendation would be placed in the cabinet very soon, he added.

Meeting sources said the lowest basic salary of Tk 4,000 as suggested by the pay commission may be accepted. The highest salary of fixed Tk 45,000 may be cut down to Tk 39,000.

The committee earlier thought of fixing the lowest basic salary at Tk 4,800. But it would require huge amount of the government funds, as the number of employees in the lower tiers is huge, sources added.

In the present budget, Tk 3,146 crore has been allotted for implementation of the new pay scale, but if the salary at the lower level is increased, another about Tk 5,000 crore is required to implement the payscale.

JUNE 27-29 MAYHEM IN ASHULIA 'Garment workers not involved'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Garment workers were not involved in June 27-29 mayhem in Ashulia rather a vested interest group was taking advantage of the situation, said leaders of Garment Workers Unity Forum yesterday.

They said the local goons and "jhoot" (garment rejects) traders were fuelling the discontent among the workers to take control of business in the area.

Longstanding demands for better wage and benefits of low-paid workers had been side-tracked because of the violent turn of events, they added.

Addressing a press conference at the forum's office in Tophkana Moshrefa Mishu, chairperson of the forum, said the workers of S Suhli Ltd was staging a peaceful demonstration on 27 June when the Ansar provoked by the management of the company opened fire.

She claimed that several workers of S Suhli were still missing after the shooting incident.

"Survival of garment workers directly depends on these factories. The workers would never jeopardise their livelihood in such a way. A third party is responsible for using the situation," she said.

"The owners must understand if the workers' demands are met they too will gain from it. It will ensure peaceful working atmosphere and increase production. Half fed workers can never work properly," she added.

The forum leaders urged the government to ensure trade union rights of garment workers and prioritise their demands scrapping police to establish industrial police and workers welfare committee.

They also urged the government to formulate a wage board and minimum wage of Tk 5000 considering the price hike of essentials.

BSMMU faculty opens outdoor for evening shift

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dental Faculty of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) opened outdoor for the evening shift yesterday, says a press release.

Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque inaugurated the outdoor.

The outdoor of the faculty will remain open for all between 2.30pm and 5.00pm.

Qazi Faruque's removal HC rule on Proshika governing body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the governing body of Proshika to explain within 10 days why an injunction should not be imposed on its (governing body) decision removing Qazi Faruque Ahmed from the office of its chairman.

Upon a revision petition filed by Faruque against the lower court order, the HC bench of Justice Md Abdus Salam passed the order.

The court said the matter will come up before this court for hearing on July 16.

The governing body of Proshika, one of the largest NGOs, at a meeting on May 24 replaced its chairman Faruque with advocate Abdul Wadud in the face of an employees' agitation against Faruque.

Faruque on May 27 filed a petition with a first assistant judge's court in Dhaka seeking an injunction on the decision of the governing body.

The first assistant judge's court on May 31 rejected the petition.

Faruque on June 1 filed an appeal with the district judge's court of Dhaka against the rejection order. The district judge's court on June 6 also rejected the appeal.

Qazi Faruque recently filed the civil revision petition against the district judge's court order.

The hearing of the petition was held yesterday.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 8th death anniversary of Dr Shibtosh Roy, an ardent social worker, says a press release.

Dr Shibtosh, who worked at Dhaka Community Hospital, was killed in a road accident at Tarajanj in Rangpur district on this day in 2001.

On the occasion, Dhaka Community Hospital will organise a discussion. His family will also organise a religious programme at his village home for peace of the departed soul.

Begum Safiunnessa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tomorrow is the 7th death anniversary of Begum Safiunnessa, mother of Advocate Pirjada Ma Rashid Mian Badsha, says a press release.

1300 phone lines out of order

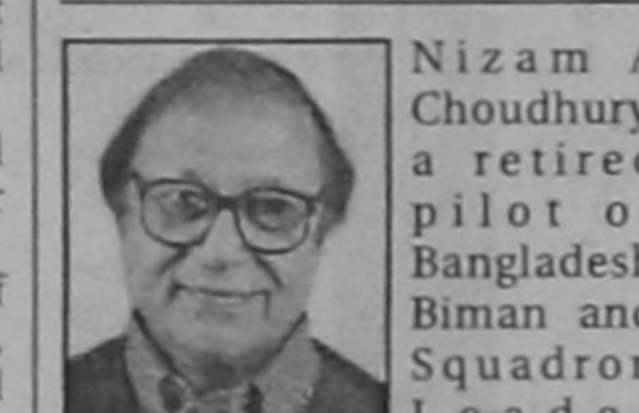
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 1300 telephone lines of Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Ltd (BTCL) went out of order in Gulshan, Tejgaon, Niketan and adjacent areas after the primary cable was stolen on Tuesday, says a BTCL press release.

The telephone lines will be operative within four days.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Nizam A Choudhury, a retired pilot of Bangladesh Biman and Squadron Leader

(retd) of the then Pakistan Air Force, passed away at Apollo Hospitals in the city yesterday after a prolonged illness, says a press release.

He was the eldest son of late Advocate Ashrafuddin Choudhury, an MLA of Assam province of undivided India.

Born in 1931 in Sylhet, Nizam joined the Pakistan Air Force in 1949. After his retirement as Squadron Leader in 1964, he joined PIA as a commercial pilot. In March 1971, while in Karachi, he was grounded by PIA as he refused in writing to fly aircraft carrying soldiers and ammunition to Dhaka.

After independence, he joined Biman in 1972 and was elected as the president of Bangladesh Airlines Pilot Association (BAPA) in 1984.

He left behind his wife, four children and brothers and sisters.

He will be buried on the Hazrat Shahjalal Mazar premises in Sylhet today.

M Jafar Ullah



director general of Islamic Bank Training and Research Academy, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Mirpur in the city yesterday at the age of 58, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, three sons and a daughter to mourn his death.

Prof Abu Nasser Muhammad Abdus Zaher, chairman, board of directors of the bank, consoled the death.