

Temperature rise changing Himalayan ecosystem

Experts tell Kathmandu conference

PINAKI ROY from Kathmandu

The gradual rise in temperature in the Himalayas is changing the ecosystem leaving the Himalayan people and wildlife on the edge of extinction.

Representatives from the Himalayan communities and experts said this during the last day of the two-day conference on 'Climate change' in Kathmandu, Nepal, yesterday.

Snow leopards and spotted leopards are sometimes seen in the localities as they are coming down for a new habitat, they said and continued that they have been suffering from mosquito menace even at the altitude of 4,300 metres above the sea level.

"Last few years, we have been experiencing mosquitoes and suffering from bacteria

rial diseases like diarrhoea, a new phenomenon here," said Sonam W Sherpa, 40, from Jiri village of mid hills, 4,300 metres above the sea level, near the Mount Everest.

He said they have also spotted some species of snakes in much higher altitude, which was an exception before.

Country Representative of World Wildlife Fund, Nepal Anil Mahanandhar in his presentation said leopards are coming down as the glaciers have already started to melt.

"It is most unlikely and we are yet to ascertain what other changes are going on here since we have no proper research," he said.

Anil continued that the Himalayan blue sheep live in the altitude between the grass line and snowline, but as the

snowline is now moving higher, the blue sheep are under the threat of extinction.

Prof Mohan Monisingh, vice chairman of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said the vegetation and wildlife moving to higher altitudes would upset the ecosystem and symbiotic balance and extinct many plant and animal species.

According to the scientists at the conference, over the decades, almost 1.2 degrees Celsius of temperature increased and the retreated glaciers that created around 7,500 lakes in the Himalayan countries, including India, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan, are increasing flood risks for downstream country Bangladesh.

Around 68 of those lakes

could burst out anytime, said the experts, adding that 67 percent of the Himalayas have been retreating about 10 metres every year and the glacier of the eastern side is melting faster than the western part.

Syed Iqbal Husnain, of Energy and Resource Institute, who has been working on the Himalayas for years, said besides carbon dioxide, black carbon is also causing ecological changes here.

The experts underscored the need for carrying out pragmatic researches on the Himalayas as no research has been conducted on climate change and the Himalayas. In the IPCC's fourth report which was published in 2007, the Himalayan region was termed 'white spot' as no data was available on it.



PHOTO: BNP
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia places wreaths at the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday on the occasion of the party's 31st founding anniversary. (Story on Page 3)

Khaleda unhappy over slow pace of party reorganising process

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a meeting of standing committee on Monday midnight expressed her concern over the slow pace of progress in the party's reorganising process.

Earlier, the party standing committee asked the leaders concerned of the main opposition to complete its reorganising process by December.

Party insiders said BNP's highest policy-making body at the meeting also discussed the issue of forming its Dhaka city unit.

Sources said during the meeting most of the standing committee members opined that the Dhaka city unit should be formed by keeping Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as its convener.

They said the names of the convener and joint-conveners of the proposed convening committee of Dhaka city unit might be finalised on Saturday.

The FBCCI president and other leaders also met Home Minister Sahara Khatun and State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku to discuss the issue of arrest of Azad, also a Commercially Important Person (CIP).

Azad was arrested on Thursday night on charges of assaulting a police officer.

Expressing sympathy for the injured police officer, Annisul Huq demanded formation of an impartial investigation committee with a justice and two businessmen.

He also said the business community has full confidence in the ability of the police to maintain law and order.

President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) Zafar Osman, President of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) Fazlul Hoque, Acting President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Faruk Hasan and FBCCI leaders Abul Kashem Ahmed and Abu Alam Chowdhury were present at the meeting.

During the meeting, the issue of Dhaka city committee came up for discussion and most of the members said that there is no alternative to Khoka to make the party's city unit stronger, a member of the standing committee told The Daily Star.

However, Party Secretary

of upazila committee.

The party high command could not form the Dhaka city committee due to much-talked conflict between Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and former mayor Mirza Abbas.

Asked about the meeting as well as the party's reorganising process, standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman said they have discussed the development of the reorganising process.

The issue of forming city committee also came up for discussion and all of us expressed our views about choosing a competent leadership to run the party in the city, he said.

On June 9, the party announced new convening committees for 71 out of its 75 organisational districts across the country. But most of the committees failed to implement the directive of the central committee regarding formation of full district convening committee and forma-

tion of upazila committee.

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for three months a government notice asking former BNP minister Moudud Ahmed to pay tax on undisclosed money he earned in different fiscal years.

After hearing a writ petition filed by Moudud, a vacation bench of the HC also issued a rule upon the government to explain within four weeks why the notice to Moudud should not be declared illegal.

The income tax authorities, on August 28 last year, issued a notice to Moudud to pay over Tk 4 crore tax on undisclosed money to the state.

Moudud on August 31 filed a writ petition with the HC challenging the legality of the notice stating that the government has issued the notice without any lawful authority since five writ petitions challenging government notices regarding his tax were pending with the HC.

Moudud yesterday told The Daily Star that when he was in jail during the period of the caretaker government, he offered the government to pay Tk 3.84 crore as income tax to exempt him from tax charges, but the government refused it.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said the authorities have assessed the income tax of Moudud as per the order of the Supreme Court.

He said Moudud offered the government over Tk 3 crore as income tax but he did not pay the tax rather he filed separate writ petitions with the HC against tax notices.

Muktijuddha Projonmo executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 72-member central committee of Bangladesh Muktijuddha Projonmo was reformed with Fazlul Karim Arif Patowari as its president and Sheikh Kamrul Hasan Taba as general secretary for the term 2009 to 2012.

Other office-bearers are: vice president (l) -- Shah Alam Sikdar; treasurer -- Md Jahangir Islam; joint secretary (l) -- Rabul Islam Rabi; and office secretary -- Kazal Hossain.



PHOTO: STAR
Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a programme organised by Bangabir Osmani Smriti Parishad to mark the 91st birth anniversary of Gen MAG Osmani at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday.

Reserve forests turn barren

FROM PAGE 16

The foresters on a few occasions seize illegally logged timber for eyewash.

But in most cases the foresters directly or indirectly assist the illegal loggers in smuggling timber from the reserve forests in exchange of hefty bribes, they alleged.

"We are going to formulate a new education policy in order to bring qualitative changes in the education system in the country and the committee, formed to formulate it, will place their recommendations today," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid regarding said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid at a programme to distribute laptops to selected secondary schools at Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education yesterday.

The government formed the 16-member committee on April 8 to review the report of Shamsul Haque Education Committee 1997 in order to formulate a modern national education policy in line with the report of Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission 1974.

The DFO said, "Our officials can't properly check the forests due to inaccessibility and insecurity. Shortage of manpower is another problem. As a result, trees from the reserve forests are stolen sometimes."

During a visit to

Riyangkhya some Bangla-speaking lumberjacks told this correspondent they illegally cut down trees to earn bread for their families as they have no job.

These lumberjacks boasted of having "good understanding" with the foresters.

The reserve forests, created in 1967-1968, had various precious woods including teak, mahogany and gambar about 15 years ago. But a vast tract of these forests has now turned into deserted land.

During a recent visit to the Riyangkhya Reserve Forest under Farua Range of CHT South Forest Division in Bilaichhari, huge stolen logs were found lying on the ground.

The Farua Range was a dense forest two decades ago, but the forest has assumed a barren look now.

People of the localities also blame a section of the Rohingya for illegal logging.

During a visit to

Conservator of Forest of Rangamati Circle RK Majumder told The Daily Star, "As far as I know some groups of Rohingyas are involved in timber theft. They enter the Riyangkhya forest through different border points of Bandarban and Rangamati."

He said some criminal gangs also engage local loggers to cut down trees.

"We are helpless as our workforce is small comparing to that of the criminals," Majumder said but claimed the situation has marked some improvement in recent months.

He denied that forest officials have an underworld deal with the illegal loggers.

Sources say the illegal loggers in groups enter the forests and fell trees every day at different points of Riyangkhya and Sitapahar reserve forests and smuggle the timber to Rangunia in Chittagong through Kaptai

route. The sources add the illegal wood is stockpiled in Bilaichari of Bokalia in Chittagong, a destination for thousands of CFT of illegal timber from Bandarban and Rangamati.

A section of foresters along

the route.

Contacted, the lawmaker from Chittagong outright rejected the allegation saying, "I've never issued such order. I only requested the forest officials not to harass the poor furniture traders of Bilaichari."

He argued the foresters should seize the timber when it comes all the 200 kilometres from the hills to the port city.

"The illegal logs should be seized before those land in Chittagong," he said, promptly adding the forest officials can seize illegal logs if they find those in Bilaichari.

State Councillor of Geneva Canton in Switzerland Francois Longchamp receives Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Geneva International Airport yesterday. The premier is now in Geneva to attend a five-day UN-sponsored conference on climate change. (Story on Page 16)

Youths urged to become skilled human resources

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday urged the young generation to build themselves as skilled human resources through acquiring efficiency in information and communication technology (ICT) with an aim to build a poverty, corruption and hunger-free prosperous Bangladesh.

"Only skilled human resources can change the fate of society as well as nation. The

main way of establishing skilled human resources is to spread education and knowledge of modern information and communication technology among the young generation," he said.

Speaking as the chief guest, the minister said this at the laptop distribution ceremony among a number of selected secondary schools at the meeting room of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) in the city.

Through the function, education ministry has formally started distributing 1,414 laptops, collected from Election Commission (EC), among 707 schools across the country. Nahid handed over 80 laptops among the heads of 40 high schools.

The minister said, "We want to spread the touch of ICT to every section of the education sector aiming at making the young generation more skilled."

Education Secretary Syed Ataur Rahman, DSHE Director General Noman-ur-Rashid and a number of ministry officials were present at the function.

The schools for distributing laptops were selected under the basis of immediate past SSC results, it added.

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