

Books on climate change distributed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The climate change cell of the Department of Environment yesterday distributed publications on global climate change to people working on this issue.

With the assistance from development partners, the climate change cell in coordination with several environmental organisations conducted research and published 33 books, flyers and brochures based on field-level experiences.

The Department of Environment yesterday distributed the publications at a programme at the National Press Club.

Its Director General Dr Zafar Ahmed Khan formally handed over a set of books to State Minister for Forest and Environment Hasan Mahmud, who was present as the chief guest. Secretary of the ministry Mihir Kanti Majumder was present as special guest.

Terming climate change a harsh reality for the country, the state minister said, "We are the victim of activities by developed countries."

The per capita carbon emissions in developing countries is 0.2 tonnes while the figure for the developed countries is 15 tonnes, he said.

But the people from poverty-stricken countries like Bangladesh are most vulnerable to the impacts of the climate change, he said and called on all to come forward to combat it.

Dr Zafar Ahmed said the climate change cell has been doing a tremendous job to disseminate information about the climate change.

He also suggested changing the name of the department as 'The Department of Environment and Climate Change'.

Acting Country Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Robert Juhkam was also present.

3 more hilsa breeding places spotted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 10-day ban on catching hilsa fish at four breeding grounds in the country starts today.

These are from Shaher Khali to Haitkhandi in Chittagong, from Uttar Tazumuddin to West Sayed Awalia Point in Bhola, from North Kutubdia to Gandamara in Cox's Bazar and Lata Chapali in Patuakhali.

The fisheries directorate has also identified three more breeding places in Lakhmipur, Noakhali and Feni.

At a press briefing at the directorate, Md Shorful Alam, secretary to fisheries and livestock ministry, said hilsa catching in these areas has been banned from October 15 to 24 as this is the peak season for hilsa spawn.

He said the government is determined to protect jatka and make sanctuaries for hilsa fish.

He also said the hilsa production was only 1.99 lakh metric tons in 2003-04 while it has increased to 2.98 lakh metric tons in 2008-09.

The secretary said the government has a plan to rehabilitate the coastal fishermen by implementing a project.

The vigilance team and mobile court will conduct special drive to enforce the ban, he added.

The fisheries directorate has chalked out a series of programmes for these 10 days. These include distribution of leaflets and posters, awareness campaign through radio and television, advertisement through national dailies, and boat race at different areas.

Joint Secretary Shamsul Kibria, Director General of fisheries Md Rafiqul Islam, and representatives of navy and coast guards were present at the press conference.



Huge traffic congestion occurs almost every day at Farmgate in the city due to haphazard parking of vehicles. The photo was taken yesterday.

\$130m ADB loan to improve public health services

METRO DESK

Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the government of Bangladesh signed two agreements for \$130 million soft loan yesterday to help improve public and environmental health services in Bangladesh's large cities, says a press release.

The Manila-based lending agency is also providing a \$5 lakh technical assistance grant, which would be used for capacity building of the local government division and the city corporations.

Secretary to Economic Relations Division (ERD) M. Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan and Officer-in-Charge of ADB's Bangladesh Resident Mission Nurul Huda signed the deal on behalf of the government and ADB respectively at a function at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city.

The concessional ADB loan would support the government's Urban Public and Environmental Health Sector Development Programme, which would provide benefits to 10.3 million people in six divisional cities covering 34 percent of all urban areas and a number of municipalities.

The programme would help make progress on millennium development goals (MDGs) relating to child and maternal health care, communicable diseases and urban sanitation by reducing child mortality and morbidity; and reducing

the prevalence of water-borne and food-related diseases in the selected urban areas.

The reforms under the programme would help achieve the sustainable provision and operation of improved public and environmental health services in urban areas, including all the city corporations and the municipalities.

The reforms include strengthening institutional arrangements, improving financial sustainability, improving public and environmental health service delivery, and strengthening governance and management.

Municipal finances would be strengthened to enable sustainability of urban basic services.

The programme would improve municipal solid waste and medical waste management, food safety, and capacity of the local government division and city corporations for public and environmental health.

The programme's municipal solid waste management component would support primary collection for urban poor, secondary collection and transportation and integrated waste treatment facilities.

The integrated waste treatment would support clean development mechanism by reducing carbon emission and tap carbon credits. Under the food safety component, two food laboratories would

be established, one each in Dhaka and Chittagong.

Modern slaughterhouses would be established in each of the six city corporations for preparation and processing of standard quality meat and meat products, and other related economic by-products.

Except for a few city states, Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world with more than 1,000 people per square kilometre, and the urban population is expected to rise to 89.5 million by 2030, from only around 37 million in 2008.

As a result of the rapid pace of urbanisation, many people live in poor hygienic conditions and are more vulnerable to health hazards.

"The urban poor are exposed to serious health problems because of weak public and environmental health services, poor sanitation, overcrowding, unhygienic living conditions and other challenges," said Nurul.

"A burgeoning urban population is only going to make the situation more challenging while the agencies that are mandated to provide urban services have limited institutional and financial capacities."

ADB is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific region through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth and regional integration.

Rotary team leaves for US

METRO DESK

A five-member Group Study Exchange (GSE) team left for Rotary International District (RID) 5240 California, USA last night headed by its Team Leader Rtn PP Dr Syed Abu Sayeed PHF of Rotary Club of Metropolitan Khulna.

Other members of the team are Syed Rabius Shams of Rotary Club of Dhaka North West, Khondker Emdadul Haq Sagor of Rotary Club of Dhaka South, Sajjad Haider of Rotary Club of Dhaka North West and Shamim Azad of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central, says a press release.

The programme is scheduled for one month commencing from October 15 to November 13.

District Governor of RID 3280 Rtn AKM Shamsul Huda PHF in a message congratulated the GSE team for their participation in the exchange programme of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.

During the four-week tour, the GSE team will also participate in the District Conference of RID 5240 California on October 23-24.

The study tour will provide the participants an opportunity to share experience and views with others Rotarians.

As part of the exchange programme, a team of four to five members from District 5240 will visit Bangladesh for four weeks during January next year.

BANGLADESH-MYANMAR BORDER Govt taking steps cautiously: Tuku

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Home Affairs Shamsul Haque Tuku yesterday said the government was taking measures cautiously regarding the development on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border but said there was nothing to get worried.

"The government is taking steps and will take such measures in any given situation. It is the responsibility of the government to protect the country's sovereignty," he told reporters at his Secretariat office when asked about the military build-up by Myanmar on the border with Bangladesh.

A tense situation was prevailing on the frontier for the last few days as Myanmar mobilised huge forces and heavy weapons in

an indication to a large-scale conflict with Bangladesh.

To repulse any incursion by the neighbouring forces, Bangladesh also sent reinforcement on the border.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, however, rejected any such movements on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Myanmar was constructing a fence on its territory conforming with the international laws, she added.

Asked whether there is any quarter inside the government linked to the militants, Tuku said the government would take stern action against anybody found having any link with militancy.

He said the government is determined to root out militancy, adding that it is an ongoing process.

NUCLEAR DEAL

Bangladesh team to visit Russia

UNB, Dhaka

After a long wait, a seven-member high-powered Bangladesh delegation is going to Russia on Saturday for a spot inspection of their nuclear installations to get elaborate ideas about installing nuclear power plants in the country.

"On return home, we'll give our opinion to the government about the signing of deals with Russia for installing a nuclear power plant in the country," State Minister for Science and Information Communication Technology Yeafesh Osman told reporters yesterday after a seminar.

Electrical, Electronic and Communication Engineering Department of the Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) organised the seminar titled 'Nuclear Power Plants in Bangladesh: Prospects and Problems' at Mirpur Cantonment.

The science and ICT minister said they are visiting Russia to enhance "physical confidence" of the technology comparing with Bangladesh's existing condition.

"We have already visited China to get experience on the technology," he told the journalists about the spade-work before going nuclear to fight inimical power shortages that threaten to upset the country's development drives.

Asked whether they had received any proposal from any country, Yeafesh Osman said the USA and Korea have shown their interest.

The delegation, led by Yeafesh Osman, will stay in the host country from October 19 to 21.

Official sources said the purpose of the tour is to strike a deal between the two nations and to have experience and learn about the Russian nuclear-power technology.

The proposed visit was earlier supposed to take place in August. But, on the plea of security clearance, it was delayed by two months, the sources said.

According to the sources, the visit is a follow-up to the fruitful discussion between the two countries in Dhaka in April this year.

During the talks, Moscow expressed its keen interest in assisting Dhaka to set up two 1,000-megawatt power plants.

The government of Bangladesh received a Russian invitation in July and prepared an eight-member delegation list.

But the Russian government took time to do security clearance formalities for the Bangladesh team to visit their nuclear installations. As per Russian security system, any foreign delegation willing to visit any nuclear power plant needs security clearance.

Officials of the ICT ministry said they are hopeful that, during the visit, an agreement would be signed between the two countries at the state level to move forward the nuclear-power project in Bangladesh.



Managing Director and CEO of Brac Bank Ltd AEA Muhaimen and President of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh Prof Sirajul Islam pose for photograph after handing over a cheque for Tk 25 lakh to the latter at his office in the city yesterday as a donation to the project for publishing Children's Banglapedia and creating an online bibliography. Deputy Managing Director of the bank Syed Mahbubur Rahman, Managing Editor of Banglapedia Dr Shahjahan Miah and Editor of Junior Banglapedia Delwar Hassan were present.

RTI act to ensure people's rights

Says chief information commissioner

BSS, Dhaka

To ensure people's rights in the society through providing them with accurate knowledge and information, the government has enacted the Right to Information Act, M Azizur Rahman, chief information commissioner (CIC), said yesterday.

"The main objective of this act is not to ensure penalty for anyone, rather to support them through changing their mindset to build a pro-people government as enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh," he said terming the act as a landmark to ensure the people's access to information, also a tool of poverty alleviation.

The CIC made these observations while addressing as the chief guest a daylong seminar on 'Right to Information Act and its implementation' organised by the Press Information Department at PID

conference room.

Information Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury and Information Commissioners Mohammad Abu Taher and Dr Sadeka Halim also spoke at the seminar while Deputy Secretary Bijan Lal Dev presented the keynote paper.

Urging the media to play a vital role in implementing the law with a pro-poor approach, Azizur Rahman said the Right to Information Act would greatly help ensure transparency and accountability in society.

Policy makers must have political will to implement the RTI Act in an effective way and tackle the operational challenges of the law, he said.

Prof Sadeka Halim said the information commission should be strengthened to discharge its duty in a proper manner.

"Bureaucracy, elected representatives and local people - these three compo-

nents are three wings of the whole show and if anyone of them is not aware about their duty and rights, then the whole show would be a flop," she said.

She urged the government to allocate special funds in the national budget for the RTI implementation and functioning of the Information Commission.

The Right to Information Act, 2009 was made effective in Bangladesh since April this year. According to the act, the government and other institutions using public funds will have to provide people with necessary information within 45 days if anyone applies for it.

If any official refuses to provide information, anybody can file appeal with the Information Commission.

The official concerned, if found guilty, may be penalised from Tk 50 for every day of delay, but the total sum shall not exceed Tk 5,000.

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