

CLIMATE CHANGE
Multi-donor trust fund to be formed soon
 UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is going to form a multi-donor trust fund soon for financing schemes for tackling adverse impacts of the global climate change on the country.

State Minister for Environment and Forests Hasan Mahmud said this yesterday after a meeting with Country Representative of Department for International Development (DFID) Chris Austin at his Secretariat office.

"An inter-ministerial meeting will be held on Tuesday to take further step in this regard," he said.

Replying to a question about the Copenhagen Accord capping the recent global climate summit, Hasan said Bangladesh has ratified the accord and decided to take part in further proceedings on the provisional deal.

Meanwhile, the UK has given an assurance of donating £75 million for the multi-donor fund.

ALPP emergency meeting today
 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) will hold an emergency meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who will chair the meeting, is likely to give direction to the party lawmakers regarding the government's activities in its second year.

The meeting is also likely to review the political and socio-economic situation ahead of the execution of the Bangabandhu murder convicts.

The meeting will start at 3:00pm at the ruling party's conference room at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Meanwhile, the parliament sitting will resume today at 4:00pm.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, left, and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, right, offer prayers at Tongi during the Akheri Munajat of Bishwa Jtema yesterday. (Story on Page 1)



PHOTO: STAR

SEDITION CASE AGAINST 2 LAWYERS
Three more PWs give statements
 COURT CORRESPONDENT

Three more prosecution witnesses, including the investigation officer (IO) of a sedition case filed against two lawyers on charges of vandalism on the Supreme Court (SC) premises on November 30 in 2006, gave their statements before a Dhaka court yesterday.

The accused lawyers -- advocates Subrata Chowdhury and Sheikh Awsafur Rahman -- were present in the court during the hearing.

The witnesses who gave their statements are Inspector Akhter Morshed, Sub-Inspector (SI) Nazim Mollah and Sergeant Hossain Shahid Chowdhury.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court recorded statements of the witnesses and later defence lawyers cross-examined them.

The court also fixed January 31 as the date for the next hearing of the case. The court asked the remaining prosecution witnesses to appear before it on the scheduled date.

During the hearing, Akhter Morshed, also the first IO of the case, told the court that he took over the charge of investigation as per direction from the then officer-in-charge (OC) of Shahbagh Police Station and investigated it till December 11.

Nazim Mollah, the last IO, told the court that he interrogated the complainant, recorded his statements and other witnesses. Later, he submitted the charge sheet against only Subrata Chowdhury and Sheikh Awsafur Rahman on January 6 last year as the charges were found to be true.

He dropped the names of noted jurists Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Amir-Ul-Islam, Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud and Barrister Tania Amir from the charge sheet as the charges brought against them were not proved, the IO said.

No go-ahead for film archive building

TAWFIQUE ALI

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has arbitrarily embarked on road construction across a plot designated for Bangladesh Film Archives in the city's Agargaon administrative zone.

Housing and public works ministry in 1993 allotted the 112.5-katha (1.86 acres) plot in favour of the film archive.

Md Abdul Hai, executive engineer of Public Works Department (PWD), in a letter to the DCC executive engineer (zone-7) on December 20 said the proposed road was shown in an unapproved design and could not be built across the administrative plots.

A Tk 75-crore project funded by Japan Debt Cancellation Fund (JDCF) is awaiting final nod to build a 15-storey archive complex on the plot with modern facilities.

But DCC Chief Engineer Brig Gen Abdul Quadir said the Tk 83.72 crore project of Mirpur Grameen Bank-Agargaon Link Road was approved by Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec).

Dr Mohammad Jahangir Hossain, director general of the archive, said he checked with Rajdhani Unnayan

Kartripakha (Rajuk) and found that the proposed road is not in the Rajuk master plan.

Brig Quadir claimed that Rajuk initially had this road in its master plan but later it altered the plan and did not inform DCC.

However, DCC postponed the construction work recently after Information Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul

Naser Chowdhury had written to the DCC authorities asking them not to go ahead with the road construction plan.

Officials said lack of coordination among the government agencies and delay in project approval have led to the situation.

The archive has ever been without a proper address since it was established in

1978 due to callousness of the successive political governments resulting in loss of many invaluable films, said top officials and filmmakers.

Noted filmmaker Tareque Masud said construction of the archive premises has been deferred time and again due to fund crisis and lack of commitment of the decision makers.

The information secretary said the project proposal is awaiting final nod at Planning Commission. It requires the approval of Ecneec as it is worth above Tk 25 crore.

"Many timeless movies made by Zahir Raihan and Alamgir Kabir on the country's core history have been damaged due to callousness of the

political governments," said Tareque Masud.

The archive was shifted from one rented house to another one ever since it was instituted.

Great damage to the collections occurred in 11 years when the archive was housed at the servant quarters of Sangsad Bhaban from 1987 to 1998.

Expensive equipment like dehumidifiers, air conditioners and editing machines for film preservation were damaged during that time as those were out of use.

Jahangir said the archive's collection has a total of 2,308 local and foreign films, including features, documentary newsreels and short films, around 25 films on liberation war and 10 to 15 films by world famous Lumiere Brothers of France.

There are also 8,000 film posters, 20,000 still photographs, 2,000 film scripts and 3,000 film-related books.

The archive will comprise film vault, library, administrative building, projection hall, museum, research centre, festival office and appreciation theatre.

At present, the archive is housed at the national broadcasting centre at Shahbagh.



Lack of coordination among the government agencies and delay in project approval have brought the project of constructing a building for Bangladesh Film Archives to a standstill. Dhaka City Corporation had even started constructing a road across the designated plot in the city's Agargaon area, which now remains suspended. PHOTO COURTESY: TAREQUE MASUD

CIRDAP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

'Poverty, rural development issues major challenges'

BSS, Dhaka

Poverty and rural development issues will continue to remain as major challenges for the member countries of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (Cirdap).

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam said this at the Cirdap Executive Committee (EC-27) meeting at a city hotel yesterday.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak spoke as the special guest at the inaugural session of the five-day second ministerial meeting of Cirdap.

Syed Ashrafur, also the general secretary of AL, described agriculture as the largest source of employment and livelihood for the rural poor and said about 70 percent of the world's poor still live in rural areas of which 67 percent are in Cirdap member countries (CMCs).

He said benefits of Cirdap must reach the country's agriculture sector as it has been being considered as a pathway for

overall national development.

The minister hoped that the sector would help attain food-autarky, improve productivity and generate employment and capital formation.

It is imperative to make the Cirdap more active and therefore well off of the CMCs should come up with innovative ideas and thoughts in doing so, said the LGRD minister.

Jahangir Kabir said the incumbent government has made the agriculture sector a top priority and a plenty of policies have already been adopted with a view to improving the livelihoods of rural people.

Referring to the fact that over 43 percent population of Bangladesh live below the poverty line, the state minister said the target of the government is to lower the poverty level to 15 percent by 2021.

Director General of Cirdap Dr Durga P Paudyal delivered the welcome speech while Chairperson of Cirdap Executive Committee (EC-26) and Director of

Philippines-based Bureau of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (BARBD) Elina C Cabanes and Secretary of Rural Development and Cooperatives Division Rokeya Sultana also spoke.

Dr Durga P Paudyal said the rural development policy should be changed in the context of climate change and millennium development goals (MDGs).

He said the Cirdap needs to reposition itself in the new policy and strategies for rural development should remain relevant to its member countries.

Elina C Cabanes said assessing the contribution of agriculture sector of CMCs to cut poverty and ensure food-security must be examined with a view to infusing dynamism in socio-economic uplift.

Since the inception in 1979, said Elina C Cabanes, the Cirdap has been working for assisting national actions and promoting regional cooperation relating to integrated rural development in the region, and to act as a catalyst for related activities among the CMCs.

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ORPHANAGE CASE
HC defers hearing till Jan 27
 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday deferred till January 27 the hearing on two petitions filed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman seeking stay on the proceedings of Zia Orphanage Trust embezzlement case.

The HC bench of Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Md Abdur Razzaque, which was due to hear the petitions yesterday, deferred the hearing following a time prayer moved by Additional Attorney General AKM Zohirul Hoque.

Khaleda and Tarique, also the senior vice-chairman of BNP, who is now in London for treatment, separately filed the petitions with the HC on November 11 last year to stay the proceedings against them in the corruption case filed by the Anti-corruption Commission.

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