

Asian nations craft plan to save tigers

Aim to double number by 2022

AP, Hua Hin

More than a dozen Asian nations aim to double the numbers of wild tigers by 2022 and prohibit the building of roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects that could harm their habitats.

However, a draft declaration that was to be adopted by the 13 countries Friday includes no new money to finance the conservation efforts which scientists said must be more than doubled. The draft, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, mentions only a commitment from countries to use money from ecotourism, carbon financing and infrastructure projects to pay for tiger programmes.

"With political will and implementation of the needed action, the extinction of the wild tigers across much of their range can be averted," the declaration states. "Tiger conservation is important to protect biodiversity and preserve a vital part of our national heritage."

Officials at the first Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation, in Thai coastal resort of Hua Hin, were to adopt the declaration Friday. It will then be considered for approval by heads of state of the 13 countries in September at a meeting in Vladivostok, Russia.

Tiger numbers in recent decades have plummeted because of human encroachment with the loss of more than nine-tenths of their habitat and

poaching to supply a vibrant trade in tiger parts. From an estimated 100,000 at the beginning of the 20th century, the number of tigers today is less than 3,500.

John Seidensticker, head of conservation ecology at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park and chairman of the Save the Tiger Fund, said the draft declaration included all the components for ensuring a steady recovery of tigers.

Along with a target for doubling tiger populations, countries would agree to protect core tiger habitats as well as buffer zones and corridors that connect key sanctuaries and national parks. The declaration also supports maintaining a permanent ban on the trade of tiger parts and reducing poaching through beefed-up law enforcement.

"If we get everything done in this declaration, we will turn tiger populations around so in fact it's a positive not a negative," Seidensticker said. "For me, I'm very happy with this."

The meeting which opened Wednesday was organised by Thailand and the Global Tiger Initiative, a coalition formed in 2008 by the World Bank, the Smithsonian Institute and nearly 40 conservation groups. It aims to double tiger numbers by 2022.

The 13 countries attending the meeting are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.

SA Games

FROM PAGE 1 of modern Olympic movement "faster, higher, stronger" in his welcome speech.

"Participation itself is more important than triumph, this is what we believe and we have organised this games with that inspiration in mind," said Muhith before the prime minister pronounced, "I declare the meet open".

It was a night to remember for the nation as they watched some dazzling performances from some 7,500 performers from schools, colleges, Bangladesh Army and Ansar and VDP as well as aquatic and laser shows and intense fire-works.

Performers upheld Bangladesh's rural life, festivity, culture while 600 Santals portrayed their struggle for freedom from the British colonial regime with a play titled "Nacholer Rani".

The most exciting part of the opening ceremony was, however, the aquatic and laser show which impressed everyone including foreign journalists and guests. The historic speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7, 1971, and George Harrison's famous song "Bangladesh" was played and displayed through the aquatic and laser show.

In a quest for spreading out the games and generating enthusiasm among people, some of the events have been placed at divisional headquarters Khulna, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Chittagong. Khulna and Sylhet will host cycling and wushu while a few matches of football and cricket will be held in Chittagong and Rajshahi.

AL leader

FROM PAGE 16 Abu Bakar and his daughter Nupur with two others indiscriminately near Hossainpur hospital while they were returning from Hossainpur Police Station after giving testimony in a murder case involving Abu Bakar's son-in-law.

About two years ago, Abu Bakar's son-in-law Harun was killed at Khilpara in sadar upazila where he came to visit his father-in-law. Abu Bakar had filed a case with sadar police station accusing some unidentified men.

However, Harun's family filed another case with sadar thana accusing Abu Bakar.

Locals alleged that a rival group of AL had attacked Abu Bakar and his daughter.

Police raided the house of Salam, Harun's brother, at Dipeshar village, but none was arrested, the OC said.

AL's extended

FROM PAGE 1 the party's amended charter at that meeting.

Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, presidium member and deputy leader of the House, will chair the meeting.

Talking to reporters at Ganobhaban yesterday, AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam said the extended meeting might see some politically important decisions taken.

AL would bring in fresh leadership in every grassroots-level committee, he said adding that it could however take three years to complete the process.

"District and upazila-level councils will be held after a countrywide drive for new members," said Ashraf, also LGRD and cooperatives minister.

Sources said Hasina would launch the recruitment drive at today's meeting. Her party aims to have several million new members in 2010.

AL has completed all preparations for the twin meetings. The last time it held an extended meeting was on May 26, 2008, when Sheikh Hasina was detained by the army-led caretaker government.

The government's successes in last one year, recent developments like the execution of Bangabandhu's killers and various issues regarding the organisation will be on the agenda, Mrinal Kanti Das, AL's deputy office secretary, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The ruling party has already sought a name each from its 72 organisational districts for inclusion in the national committee.

These 72 will join 73 ALCWC members and 21 others, nominated by the party chief, to make up the 166-member national committee.

Presidents and general secretaries of 72 districts, six leaders from six divisions, party veterans from across the country, ministers, prime minister's advisers, lawmakers and leaders of associated bodies will attend the meeting.

On the basis of opinions from the party ranks, a set of decisions might be taken on how to run the party and the government more effectively. Besides, there would be discussions on measures to hold councils at city, district, upazila, ward, and union levels.

Victory of the rule

FROM PAGE 1 would take some steps to right so grievous a wrong.

If her doing nothing in her first term (1991-1996) was a surprise, her action during her second term (2001-2006) was shocking. By that time an Awami League government (1996-2001) had already done the bulk of the legal work, and courts at all levels had already pronounced their guilty verdicts. What remained was only the appeal process. By not allowing the appointments of a few new judges, Khaleda Zia's government delayed for five years the final judicial steps to complete the appeal part of the trial. For five years of BNP-led alliance rule, Bangabandhu murder trial was left totally unattended, and AL had to return to power to complete it.

Here we would like to underscore one important point. It is to the credit of the AL government in general and to Sheikh Hasina in person that no extra judicial measure was resorted to in trying Bangabandhu's killers. There was no special court, tribunal or any special law to try these people. The ordinary laws of the land, which are applied to any citizen seeking justice, were followed by Sheikh Hasina and her party. This particular action made the trial most transparent and internationally acceptable. The temptation to go for special measures must have been strong, and the strength to resist them needs to be recognised and praised.

One of the many sad consequences of Bangabandhu's murder was that politics of

killing and that of military intervention entered our system. The dream of the freedom fighters that independent Bangladesh would always be democratically governed and that power would never have to be transferred through violence, was shattered with the events of August 15, 1975. Bangladesh had to suffer immensely and witness many more instances of political murder, violence, and military coups and counter coups. Those events caused many of our valiant freedom fighters to die and some of our best politicians to lose their lives. Bangladesh's politics entered a phase of violence and murder -- from which it is yet to come out.

With the carrying out of justice in Bangabandhu murder case, and with the due punishment meted out to his killers, we now hope that Bangladesh will enter a new phase of progress both in politics and social development. We hope never again to see any killing or violence in the country's politics. We hope to see greater tolerance and accommodation of opponents' views. We want to see the parliament becoming centre of all our political debates, and the streets left for use more by the public and less by political party activists.

Now that we have been able to start restoration of the rule of law and justice, we hope to be able to consolidate it, for strengthening democracy and establishment of peoples' rights in every aspect, and move on to build the Sonar Bangla of our martyrs' dreams.

Saddam wasn't big

FROM PAGE 16 powerful, clear and unremittent message that after Sept. 11 if you were a regime engaged in WMD (weapons of mass destruction), you had to stop."

Clutching a sheath of documents, a tense-looking Blair sat down in a London conference centre to answer questions from the Iraq Inquiry, a wide-ranging investigation commissioned by the government to scrutinise the behind-the-scenes machinations from 2001 through Britain's decision to join the costly and unpopular Iraq war.

Blair was questioned about charges that his government was so determined to topple the Iraqi dictator that they exaggerated the content of intelligence reports on Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction. He was pressed on when exactly he offered US President George W Bush support for an invasion.

The former British ambassador to Washington, Christopher Meyer, has said it appeared that an agreement was "signed in blood" by Bush and Blair at the president's ranch in Crawford, Texas, in April 2002.

"The only commitment I gave (at Crawford) was a commitment to deal with Saddam," Blair said. He said he told Bush "we will be with them in dealing with this threat."

Blair said other world leaders did not feel the same way he and Bush did.

"Although the American mindset had changed dramatically (after Sept. 11) and frankly mine had as well when I talked to other leaders, particularly in Europe, I didn't get the same impression."

An audience gathered in a central London convention centre for the session included family members of soldiers and civilians killed or missing in Iraq. Commuters arriving at the Westminster underground station near the hearing centre were met by several people gathering signatures for a petition urging that Blair be tried as

DU violence

FROM PAGE 1 10-day remand before the court but it granted only three days.

Pasha was one of the three men who were seen brandishing firearms in newspaper photos and on TV footage of the clashes.

Pasha, who was wearing jeans and a black scarf in those footage and photos, is a third-year student of political science at Dhaka College.

When BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was arrested during the caretaker government's rule, he pasted posters at Dhaka College and its surrounding area under the banner of "Khaleda Zia Mukti Parishad", of which he was the president.

Pasha is also accused in several cases filed in connection with extortion and other criminal activities with the city's New Market, Jatrabari and Demra police stations.

Following the clash, Sub-Inspector Mohammad Nasim filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing eight people including Pasha and 300 unnamed others.

4th convocation

FROM PAGE 16 occasion. Main entrances of the campus have been decorated with colourful makeshift arches that convey warm welcome to the graduates, guests and others.

Graduates are directed to enter the main venue of the function at the central playground by 10:30am while members of senate, syndicate and academic council, teachers of the university and directors or principals of university's constituent institutions are requested to gather on the Shaheed Minar premises within 10:30am to participate in the procession.

Guests are requested to arrive at the venue by 11:00am.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will also attend the function.

Chief Justice Tofazzal Hossain will address the ceremony as the convocation speaker.

A total of 3,949 graduates will participate in the ceremony to receive their certificates while 16 graduates will be given gold medals.

The first convocation ceremony at JU was held on February 5, 1997.

BNP may return

FROM PAGE 1 The party later announced a 10-point demand, including security for the party chief and the government's desisting from the move to cancel the lease of her cantonment residence, for returning to parliament.

Asked about their demand for more seats in the front row, Farroque said, "The speaker has assured us of considering the matter. We hope he will live up to his word."

He alleged that on January 26 a trial court sent summons to Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence at 3:30am in connection with the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

"Sending summons to a former prime minister at the dead of night is absolutely discourteous," he said, adding that this is nothing but an attempt to create obstacles to the opposition's return to parliament.

Farroque said the government speaks for democracy and making parliament effective on one hand, but on the other, it has been repressing the opposition and showing undemocratic attitude.

The BNP leader termed deaths of BM Bakir and Amirul Islam Mintoo, two pro-BNP trade union and cultural leaders, in jails mysterious and demanded neutral probe into the deaths.

BNP Joint Secretary General Mahbubuddin Khokon and Social Welfare Secretary Abul Khair Bhuiyan, among others, were present at the briefing.

6 Nepali

FROM PAGE 1 a huge bang after leaving the third floor.

The injured are Kalu Man Tamang (judoka), Debu Thapa (female judoka), Radha Devi Rai (female judoka), Ramesh Magar (judoka) Gyan Bahadur Shrestha (weightlifter), Gopal Shrestha (weightlifter) and Dem Basnet (member of the Nepal Sports Council).

Of them, Kalu Man broke his leg and has been ruled out of the event, noted Lt Col (ret'd) Waliullah, chief executive officer of Bangladesh Olympic Association. Others received minor injuries.

Mahbubullah, marketing manager of the hotel, said there might have been a technical fault, but the fact is that there were 21 persons on the lift which has a capacity of only 13.

BD women

FROM PAGE 1 struck in the ninth, 56th and 59th minutes.

Apart from Moirangthem's treble, Naobi Chanu and Sasmita scored two goals each. Yumnam added the other for the winners. Pinky Bompal netted the consolation goal for Sri Lanka.

In the men's competition at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong, Afghanistan upset India 1-0 with Belal Arezou scoring the only goal two minutes from half time. After conceding the lead, India put up a spirited show and yielded a lot of scoring chances but unfortunately all went in vain.

In the other match at the same venue, defending champions Pakistan suffered a one-goal defeat to Sri Lanka though Pakistan squandered a couple of penalty shots.

S Kaiz scored the winner in the sixth minute while Pakistan failed to convert penalty shots in the 40th and 44th minutes.

Laden blames

FROM PAGE 16 with the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, he warned of the impact of global warming by saying that "discussing climate change is not an intellectual luxury, but a reality."

"This is a message to the whole world about those who are causing climate change, whether deliberately or not, and what we should do about that," he said.

The al-Qaeda leader then slammed the US administration under former President George W. Bush for not signing the Kyoto protocol on combating climate change.

"Bush the son, and the (US) Congress before him, rejected this agreement, only to satisfy the big companies," he said. Bin Laden then went on to urge a boycott of the US dollar.

"We should stop using the dollar and get rid of it... I know that there would be huge repercussions for that, but this would be the only way to free humankind from slavery... to America and its companies," he added.

The broadcast came less than a week after bin Laden praised as a "hero" Nigerian national Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab who allegedly tried to detonate explosives on a US plane approaching Detroit on Christmas Day, in another audio message.

"The message that was conveyed through the (attack on the) plane... is that America should not dream of security until we enjoy it as a reality in Palestine," he said in the message.

Global climate

FROM PAGE 16 should contribute to battling global warming. At the end, the key emerging economies of Brazil, South Africa, India and China brokered a political accord with President Barack Obama and they will play a key role in shaping what the UN hopes will be a legally binding climate deal by the end of the year.

As countries shakily emerge from recession, a key part of the debate is ensuring that progress is environmentally effective but also won't break the bank.

"In the private sector, we need clear targets," said Renault-Nissan head Carlos Ghosn, who has championed electric cars. He encouraged cooperation among governments and the private sector for a climate accord and for fixed emissions targets and prices for emitting carbon gases.

Yvo de Boer, head of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, told The Associated Press that recent scandals over climate data have not discredited the scientific evidence that global warming exists and must be countered.

"What's happened, it's unfortunate, it's bad, it's wrong, but I don't think it has damaged the basic science," he said in an interview late Thursday.

Global warming sceptics have expressed anger after a UN report warning that Himalayan glaciers could be gone by 2035 turned out to be off by hundreds of years because of a typo the actual year was 2350 and over stolen e-mails from the University of East Anglia's climate science unit.

"Concluding that the Himalayan glaciers are going to disappear later is like being happy about the fact that the Titanic is sinking more slowly than we had originally feared, even though it's still going to sink," de Boer said.

De Boer expressed confidence that the business leaders at Davos, who are starting to enjoy an economic recovery after a rough couple of years, would invest anew in renewable energy.

"Energy sector investments that were put on hold because of the crisis are beginning to be made again," he said. "I think people will take future climate change policy into account."

Also Friday, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and his wife Melinda said their foundation will donate \$10 billion over the next decade to research new vaccines and bring them to the world's poorest countries.

"Innovation will make it possible to save more children than ever before," Gates, who is a regular at the annual Swiss ski resort meeting of political and business leaders, called on others to "fill critical financing gaps in both research funding and childhood immunisation programmes."

"Increased investment in vaccines by governments and the private sector could help developing countries dramatically reduce child mortality by the end of the decade," said a Foundation statement.

The projections were based on research by experts at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the United States, on the potential impact of vaccines on childhood deaths over the next 10 years.

"We must make this decade of vaccines," said Gates at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. "Vaccines already save and improve millions of lives in developing countries."

sage aired on Sunday by Al-Jazeera. The authenticity of that statement could not immediately be verified, but IntelCentre, a US group that monitors Islamist websites, said it appeared to be the voice of bin Laden.

US President Barack Obama said that bin Laden's decision to claim the attempted plane attack on December 25 showed the al-Qaeda leader had been "weakened."

The State Department said later that bin Laden was seeking "glory" by taking credit for incidents around the world.

"Bin Laden has been trying to put his fingerprints on just about everything that's happened for years," said Daniel Benjamin, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism.

"He's doing what bin Laden is sort of the tried and true strategy of associating himself with it and in that way sort of trying to get some of the reflected glory of the moment, if you can call that," he said.

IntelCentre said it considered the language used by bin Laden in the earlier recording as "a possible indicator of an upcoming attack" in the next 12 months.

Bin Laden has a 50-million-dollar bounty on his head and has been in hiding for the past eight years. He is widely believed to be holed up along the remote mountainous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ruet students clash

FROM PAGE 16

head injury. The students and law enforcers got engaged in chase and counter-chase and hurled brickbats and stones at each other.

Later, policemen entered the Ruet campus and lobbed teargas canisters and beat up university students.

Agitating students vandalised several offices including that of the Ruet vice chancellor at the administrative building protesting what they said was police intrusion into the varsity and attack on students.

Ruet Physical Instructor Rokonzaman and seven students including Himel, Al Amin, Nixon, Rabin were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The injured also include Azhar Uddin, photojournalist of Prothom Alo.

"We were compelled to charge baton as the students marched to damage the bus counters," said Sarder Nurul Amin, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police. He said police fired 40 teargas shells.

The university students did not take any permission from the Ruet authorities or police for holding a rally in the city

and caused disturbance to local residents, he said.

Assistant Commissioner Tarikul Islam said seven policemen including Tofazzel Hossain, officer-in-charge of Motihar Police Station, police constables Tawhidul and Shahidul were injured.

Ruet VC Sirajul Karim Chowdhury along with his wife returned to the campus from Chapainawabganj at about 4:30pm and talked to the agitating students.

The students called off demonstrations after half an hour. But they demanded immediate withdrawal of the OC of Motihar Police Station Tofazzel Hossain.

The Ruet VC told the The Daily Star, "I heard them patiently and urged them to calm down."

"Police could have shown tolerance towards the students," he added.

The students said the Rajshahi City Corporation mayor assured them over the phone that he would look into the matter.

Ruet students Himel, Minarul, Reza, Nayan, Jony, Feroz Hossain, Sushanta, Ripon, Foyshal and Miftahul Ferdous were injured in the clashes.

Reazuddin Bazar

FROM PAGE 16

to Reazuddin Bazar and evict illegal occupants from its adjoining areas and pavements.

The hawkers, on the other hand, vowed to wage a movement until their problem is solved.

None has been arrested so far in the three cases filed in connection with the incidents.

Meanwhile, leaders of Reazuddin Bazar Banik Samity and Tamakumandi Lane Banik Samity held a meeting with Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury to reach a settlement on Thursday evening.

The mayor assured the traders of solving their problem, said Reazuddin Bazar Banik Samity President Salamat Ali.

Bangladesh Shop Owners Association of Chittagong also held a meeting at a local hotel yesterday evening.

Central leaders of the organisation from Dhaka attended the meeting to discuss the situation and decide on the next course of action, said the sources.

"We may go for tough programme unless the problem is resolved," said Salamat, also general secretary of Bangladesh Shop Owners Association of Chittagong.

Hawkers' leaders, on the other hand, at a press conference yesterday termed the clash a plot to divert the attention of people from the execution of the killers of Bangabandhu.

At the press conference at Chittagong Press Club they said that hawk-trader row was nothing new and on all the previous occasions it used to be settled through negotiation.

They further alleged that the hawkers belonging to Hawkers League were mostly affected as their shops were burnt to ashes during the clash.

Chattagram Hawkers Oikya Parishad General Secretary Nurul Alam read out a written statement at the press conference where Oikya Parishad President Hrisi Biswash, Chittagong Mahanagar Sammillito Hawkers Federation and Tamakumandi Lane Banik Samity held a meeting with Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury to reach a settlement on Thursday evening.

The mayor assured the traders of solving their problem, said Reazuddin Bazar Banik Samity President Salamat Ali as he asked them not to occupy the adjacent footpath and block the main entry to Reazuddin Bazar.

Earlier, the clash ensued Wednesday evening when some hawkers assaulted Reazuddin Bazar Banik Samity President Salamat Ali as he asked them not to occupy the adjacent footpath and block the main entry to Reazuddin Bazar.

New regulatory

FROM PAGE 16 Bangladesh, told The Daily Star, "We recommended formation of NGO Commission with the representatives of all ministries concerned to oversee the activities of NGOs."

The commission could be a "one-stop centre" from where one can get all information about the activities of NGOs, he said.

It also can make a "template code of conduct" for NGOs and monitor whether NGOs are complying with it or not, said the development expert.

He said that the NGOs should have an effective mechanism and a code of conduct for ensuring transparency.

On the basis of opinions from the party ranks, a set of decisions might be taken on how to run the party and the government more effectively.