

Constitutional recognition of ethnic groups on the cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT A parliamentary body started working yesterday to provide constitutional recognition to the country's ethnic communities and ensuring their fundamental rights. The parliamentary standing committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs made the decision at a meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. Muhammad Shah Alam, chief of the committee, told the reporters that the country's indigenous people have no constitutional recognition. "We will place recommendation to the National Parliament's special committee to amend the constitution soon in this regard", he also said. Former justice of the Supreme Court, Golam Rabbani and four ruling party lawmakers of Chittagong Hill Tracts were present at the meeting.

Adopt strategy for food security

Hasina urges LDC leaders

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for South-South and North Cooperation for increasing food production for self-consumption, exports and global food security, a major concern of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). "To us LDCs, food security is of prime concern. Unfortunately, climate change and the world recession in 2008 created universal food shortage. Even countries with money faced hardship in procuring food," she said at a breakfast meeting of LDC leaders at the UN Headquarters here. Hasina stressed adoption of innovative strategies, including South-South and North Cooperation, employment of excess farmers in some countries to farm uncultivated lands in some other countries and supplying tools, technology and quality inputs from the North. "This would be an ideal arrangement for producing food for self-consumption, for exports, and for ensuring global food security," she told the LDC leaders. She said the road to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had some serious setbacks due to the recent world economic recession, and adverse impacts of climate change. "Both these phenomena owe their origin in the developed world, whereas the maximum sufferance as a result is being felt by the LDCs, in terms of reduction in investment, remittances, tourism, exports, and shortages of food and energy." She said it is the time for the LDCs to raise a united call from the group at COP 16 in Cancun in December to adopt a new legal regime under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Protocol to ensure social, cultural and economic rehabilitation of climate change induced persons.

Hasina said for LDCs, SIDS and MVCs, climate change is of vital concern. Last year at COP 15, she said the LDCs could build their case of being the worst affected, and therefore, need maximum financial assistance from the developed world whose reckless industrialisation has brought them to such dire straits. The Prime Minister said the Copenhagen Accord was to be the base for a legally binding agreement based on the Bali Plan of Action, with commitments of specific cuts of greenhouse gas emissions from all major producers. She reiterated her call for establishment a "Climate Change Fund" to help the affected countries. "I strongly feel, we should go to COP 16 in December next at Cancun with prior agreed positions on all these crucial issues," she told the meeting. Hasina congratulated the Ethiopian Prime Minister, co-chair of the High Level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing, for his continuing efforts in ensuring that LDCs, SIDS and MVCs perspective be accepted in managing the "Fund", and for its fast implementation. Pointing to Bangladesh's case, she said Bangladesh's urgency is simply because the country with 160 million people, of whom 30 million live in 140 islands, would be going under water with a meter rise in sea level. "We are, therefore, eagerly looking forward to the "Fund" and its quick disbursement for timely implementation of our 134-point climate change action plan." She sought an LDC consensus on the question of rehabilitation of climate change migrants as she noted that scientific estimates indicate that by 2050 there will be a billion climate displaced people with one in every 45 people in the world a victim. Expressing deep concern, she said most would

seek migration, and they would be from LDCs moving within their countries, or beyond, and such movement would cause social disorders, political instability, cross border conflicts, and upheavals. Hasina said fiscal stimulus has been helpful in producing signs of recovery from the global recession. But it is not a durable, sustainable solution. She said the ongoing economic malaise is due to years of disregard for equity and justice. She said the present character of the Bretton Woods Institutions has also had its unrealistic role. For any real change for good, the LDCs must have a stronger presence in the World Bank and the IMF. Hasina said developed countries must be persuaded to give liberal trade concessions as duty- and quota-free market access to the LDCs. She stressed early conclusion of the Doha Development Round of WTO negotiations. Hasina reminded OECD's fulfillment of ODA commitment of 0.2 percent of their GNI to LDCs by 2010, as reaffirmed in the Brussels Programme of Action. As for the 1.1 trillion US dollar decided at the G-20 London Summit to restore credit, she said growth and jobs in the world economy, and the Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth of the G-20 Pittsburgh Summit in 2009, the LDCs need to push hard to change the stringent conditions for receiving the benefits of those promises. The PM said Bangladesh was privileged to host the Asia-Pacific High Level Policy Dialogue in January this year, which adopted the Dhaka Outcome Document. She presented the Document at the 66th Annual Session of ESCAP in Seoul and ESCAP endorsed the Document, which will be presented at the 4th UN Conference on LDCs in Istanbul next year.

BDR-BSF MEET BEGINS TODAY Trans-border smuggling to top agenda

KAILASH SARKAR

Bangladesh and India kick off a border conference at the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters today focusing on different issues including preventing trans-border smuggling and improving law and order in the border areas. At the six-day director general level conference, both BDR and BSF will also exchange the lists of criminals hiding in India and Bangladesh, sources said. "The conference will mainly focus on two issues--preventing drug smuggling and human trafficking and improving law and order in the border areas," BDR DG Maj Gen Md Rafiqul Islam told The Daily Star. Regarding frequent shooting incidents in the border areas, the BDR DG said, "We will propose to impose section 144 after the evening hours in some specific areas to restrict people's movement."

"It will improve the law and order in bordering areas," he added. "We have prepared a list of wanted criminals who are suspected to have been hiding in neighbouring countries. The list has been prepared in cooperation with different law-enforcing and intelligence agencies," Rafiqul Islam said adding, "Both BSF and BDR will exchange such lists and a discussion will take place on the issue." At the conference, Dhaka will raise the issue of killing, wounding, and torturing of unarmed Bangladeshi nationals by BSF and Indian civilians at the border, BDR sources said. Issues of adversely possessed land, construction of structure illegally, abduction of Bangladeshi people by BSF men will also come up for discussion. BSF DG Raman Srivastava leads a 20-member delegation while BDR chief a 22-member team in the conference.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at a roundtable titled "Addressing challenges of poverty, hunger and gender equality" in New York on Monday as the co-chair of the session.

Level crossings, edn institutions lead to Uttara traffic jam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large number of educational institutions and half a dozen railway level crossings contribute to everyday gridlock on the busy airport road at Uttara, traffic department says. Both commuters and Uttara dwellers suffer badly for movement of thousands of people in the area, though the model town once considered a spacious and peaceful neighbourhood. Masudur Rahman Bhuiyan, deputy commissioner of traffic police (north), said 66 educational institutions, either public or private, especially colleges and English medium schools, and an unspecified number of hospitals and clinics are housed in Uttara. A top English medium school, right on the airport road, contributes notably to

traffic congestion, since most students and parents move on private cars, said Bhuiyan. At six level crossings in Uttara, vehicles get halted around 98 times in twenty-four hours; a five-minute halt at one crossing creates a three-kilometre tailback, disrupting heavily the traffic movement on the road, he added. Commuters, to and from Uttara and Gulshan, suffered a horrendous traffic gridlock yesterday during school and office hours. "It took me half an hour just to get out of Uttara Sector-5 to drop my daughter at her school in Sector-10," said Shamsuzzaman Khan, a resident of the area. Long tailback was on the airport road from Sector-4 to Banani intersection around 8:30am yesterday.

Afsana Khanom, another sufferer, said "While a 30-minute drive, it took me nearly one and a half hours to get back to Gulshan from my daughter's school in Uttara Sector-4." According to Bhuiyan, two intersections at Jasim Uddin Road and near House Building Finance Corporation create severe traffic jam. He added the long-route vehicles from Ashulia and Tongi also occupy the road. "Once built, the Kuril interchange will significantly improve the situation." Similar tailback was on the Gulshan Avenue seen between Gulshan roundabouts-2 and 1 in the early afternoon. Bhuiyan said innumerable vehicles roll to Gulshan streets at a time, and inadequate road coverage result in traffic deadlock.

Cancel rise of court fee Demands SCBA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday demanded of the government to cancel its decision on increased court fees. If the government does not cancel this decision by September 27, the SCBA along with other district bar associations will go for a tougher movement against the government, said Khandker Mahub Hossain, president of the SCBA. He was presenting a written statement at a press conference at South Hall of the SCBA in the afternoon. The SCBA president said the government has enacted the Court Fee Amendment Act, 2010 increasing the court fees 25 to 50 times higher than previous fees, which has come into effect since September 1. It has almost been impossible to move cases by the litigants particularly the lower and middle class people to get justice due to the hike of the court fees, he said. SCBA Secretary Badruddoza and former secretary Zainul Abedin, among others, were also present at the press conference.

Police boxes erected on city streets illegally

Ashrafal tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police has illegally set up a large number of police boxes on footpaths and road dividers in the city, causing troubles to pedestrians, said LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafal Islam yesterday. In a reply to lawmakers' queries in the parliament, he said the police boxes have been built without approval of Dhaka City Corporation. "The DCC cannot allow construction of such police boxes on footpaths and road dividers as it is against traffic rules, Ashrafal added. He said, "Letters were sent to the home ministry and police commissioner in September and November last year respectively for removal of the illegal structures." Besides, DCC and police authorities held a meeting and decided to remove the unauthorised police boxes carrying different advertisements, said the minister.

"But they did not pay heed to the decision. Even, police obstructed the city corporation's move to remove the illegal structures." DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque told The Daily Star that some of the police boxes were constructed with written permission of the concerned authority while the rest with verbal permission. Shahidul said they already sought DCC's written permission and a committee has also been formed with DMP deputy commissioner (traffic east) in this regard. The DCC earlier asked DMP to remove the police boxes on city streets, which DMP refused to entertain. About removal of overhead TV-Internet cables from the electric polls, the LGRD minister said Dhaka Power Distribution Company and Dhaka Electricity Supply Company will remove the cables with support from DCC by November.

Produce Huji chief Sept 27 Court asks jail authorities

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed different jail authorities to produce Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and eight others, now in custody, before it on September 27 in the 76 kg bomb recovery case. The 76 kg bomb was recovered at the Sheikh Lutful Rahman Ideal College under Kotlipara upazila in Gopalganj district on July 21, 2000 which was planted aiming to assassinate the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who was to address a rally there the next day. Judge Kaniz Akhter Nasrina Khanam of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 passed the order as jail authorities failed to produce Munshi Mohibullah, one of the accused, before it yesterday. Mufti Hannan, the prime accused and seven others were brought before the tribunal yesterday under tight security. Accused Anisul Islam is now on bail while 16 other Huji leader and activists remained absconding since the case was filed. Sources said Sub-Inspector Nur Hossain of Kotlipara police filed a case under the Explosive Substances Act following the incident of July 21, 2000. Criminal Investigation Department submitted the charge sheet against Mufti Hannan and 24 others on April 8 of 2001, showing 83 people as prosecution witnesses. Gopalganj District and Sessions Judge's Court framed charges against Hannan and 24 others on July 2 the same year. Later, the court recorded statements of 41 prosecution witnesses including complainant of the case. Then the case was shifted to the Speedy Trial Tribunal on Gopalganj District and Sessions Judge's Court for its quick disposal.

Concern over shortage of hajj aircraft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary committee yesterday expressed grave concern over shortage of aircraft to carry intended hajj pilgrims this year. The parliamentary standing committee on the civil aviation and tourism ministry asked the Biman Bangladesh Airlines Limited to collect one or two wide-bodied aircraft immediately to carry all intended hajj pilgrims. The house watchdog at its meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban warned the civil aviation minister GM Quader that if the national flag carrier is failed to collect aircraft due to his direction "not to operate aircraft of 20 years of age," the minister will be responsible for the sufferings of the devotees. The committee will inform about the matter to the prime minister very soon to inquire her direction to this end, Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, chief of the committee, told reporters after a four-hour long meeting. "In the previous year Biman carried around 54,000 hajjis fairly. But this year the numbers of intended hajj pilgrims have increased to around 94,000. With only two Boeing and a DC10-30 aircraft, it will be very difficult for Biman this year to carry hajj pilgrims fairly," said Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal, a member of the parliamentary body. If any untoward situation happens in carrying hajjis, image of the prime minister and grand alliance will be decay. But nothing will happen to the respective minister," said Badal, also a Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal lawmaker.



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia speaks at the party standing committee meeting at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Khulna varsity pro-VC removed for nepotism

UNB, Khulna

Prof Dr Purnendu Gain was removed yesterday from the post of vice-chancellor of Khulna University on charge of nepotism. The action against Dr Gain was taken on directive from Chancellor and President Zillur Rahman to relieve him from the vital position. The directive of the chancellor came when nepotism of Dr Gain in appointing his wife Rita Majumdar as lecturer was referred to him by the selection board of the university. Dr Gain will now revert to his post of Professor of the Mathematics Department, said an official.

WEATHER TODAY Rain likely UNB, Dhaka Light to moderate rain or showers likely in a few places by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna, Sylhet and Rangpur divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today. Moderately heavy falls are also likely at places, Met Office said. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital at 5:55pm today and rises at 5:48am tomorrow. Country's highest temperature 34.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Khulna and lowest 24.5 degrees Celsius at Mongla. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Max: Celsius, Min: Celsius, Morning, Evening, Humidity in percentage.

Two killed in city road crashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were killed in two road accidents on the Airport Road in the city yesterday. A private car ran over Amiruzzaman, aged around 85, of Palpara in Gazipur, while he was crossing the road near Lotus Kamal Tower at Khilkhet around 1:00pm. Locals rushed him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead. Although police seized the car, the driver fled. In another accident, Airport road occurred a body of an unidentified man, aged around 40, from near Munmun Tower at around 1:30am yesterday. Police are yet to identify the vehicle that crushed him. The body has been sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

8 city shops fined for selling polybags

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday fined eight shop owners at Shantinagar and Fakirpur in the city Tk 63,000 for selling and storing polybags illegally. The mobile court led by Sukumar Biswas, Dhaka Divisional acting director of the Department of Environment (DoE), also seized one ton of polybags. Out of eight storeowners, three were from Fakirpur

and five from Shantinagar, who were fined Tk 18,000 and Tk 45,000 respectively. The court realised Tk 54,000 in fines on the spot. The court also sealed Bhai Bhui Packaging in Fakirpur for storing polybags. Dhaka district's Executive Magistrate Mohammad Jasim Uddin conducted the mobile court in cooperation with Dhaka Metropolitan Police by police and DoE officials. The drive will continue till September 23. Fatima Zohra, wife of late Abdul Wahed Mia, a lawyer of Pirojpur and founder of Pirojpur HS Suhrawardy College, passed away at her daughter's residence in Dhaka on the night of September 16 at the age of 74, says a press release. She left behind her three sons and four daughters to mourn her death. She was laid to rest at Pirojpur graveyard on September 17.