

Dhaka signs IEF charter

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh endorsed International Energy Forum (IEF) Charter along with 85 oil producing and consuming countries, transit states and leading international organisations in the petroleum sector.

Adviser to the prime minister Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury signed the charter on Tuesday at King Abdul Aziz International Conference Centre in Riyadh, said a handout.

The endorsement of the charter will open a new era for Bangladesh for international cooperation in the energy sector. The charter is designed to increase transparency and access to information on both the supply and demand sides in the global energy sector.

Tawfiq is leading a five-member delegation to the Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting in Saudi Arabia.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the adviser along with Bangladesh Ambassador in Saudi Arabia Shahidul Islam held separate meetings with the UAE Minister for Energy Mohammed Bin Dhaen Al Hamli.

The energy adviser requested the UAE minister to invest in the power and energy sector in Bangladesh.

Tawfiq also met Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi and oil ministers of Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina walking back after unveiling the 48-foot tall statue of Buddha at Dharmarajik Buddha Bihar in Kamapur of the city yesterday. PHOTO: PID

Hasina urges people to work for peace

48-foot high statue of Lord Buddha unveiled

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged people of all faiths and communities to work shoulder to shoulder to build Bangladesh as the most peaceful and prosperous nation in South Asia.

She gave the call while speaking as chief guest at a function marking the unveiling of a 48-foot high statue of Lord Buddha at Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery Campus in the city's Kamapur yesterday morning.

Addressing the function, Hasina renewed her vow to eliminate corruption, terrorism and militancy from Bangladesh and said the on going drives against all evil deeds would continue.

Mentioning that welfare of mankind is the essence of all religions, she requested people from all walks of life to devote themselves for the welfare of the humanity.

The prime minister said brotherly and peaceful relations among the people of all religions are essential for national, regional and international development. "To attain our cherished economic emancipation, peace and stability are indispensable."

She said the country's constitution upholds people's right to live in peace and comfort in the society. "Our constitution also preserves the people's right to live in a secular society where people of all religions will have full dignity and freedom."

Hasina said people of various community, religion, caste and creed are living peacefully in Bangladesh. "Such harmony and peaceful co-existence is rare in the world history."

She assured the Buddhist community of ensuring all facilities for them to live in peace in Bangladesh.

Chaired by President of Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha

Suddhananda Mahathero, the function was also addressed, among others, by Industries Minister Dilip Barua, Religious Affairs Minister Md Shahjahan Miah, Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP, Thai Ambassador in Dhaka Tasanawadee Miancharoen, Phrakhru Sangakharak Boonsong Upasamo, Lord Abbot and President of the Monks Wat Songmettawanaram, and Police Major General from Thailand Suwira Songmetta.

Earlier, after arriving at the Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery Campus, the prime minister unveiled the plaque of the statue of Buddha. The Thai Royal family has donated the statue, the highest such sculpture of Buddha in Bangladesh.

At the function, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributed Atish Dipankar Peace Gold Award and Visuddhananda Mahathero Gold Award.

She said the previous Awami League government had allocated two bighas of land for setting up a Buddhist Monastery at the city's Badda while the present government has again allocated another two bighas of land in Uttara to set up another Buddhist Monastery.

She lamented that the Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery auditorium and clinic, which were inaugurated during the previous Awami League government were "neglected" by the next BNP-Jamaat government.

"However, as in the past, my government will again take care of these two infrastructures," she said. About national development, Hasina said her government is attaching top most priority to development in the rural areas.

"If we can keep our rural people in peace and comfort, the country will advance a lot towards sustainable development. We must make our rural economy self-reliant," she said.

Digital reporting from April

Says AK Khandker

UNB, Dhaka

Planning Minister AK Khandker said a digital reporting system will be introduced by the implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) as part of the government's initiative to build digital Bangladesh.

"A web-based software titled Project Monitoring Information System (PMIS) has been formulated in this regard," he told a workshop organised by the IMED at the NEC conference room yesterday.

Speaking as the chief guest, the minister said all the ministries and divisions will be able to send their reports to the IMED using the software from April.

Planning Division Secretary Monzur Hossain, IMED Secretary M Habibullah Majumder, Personal Secretary to the prime minister Nazrul Islam Khan, UNDP Representative M Morshed also addressed the occasion.

The minister said that once the digital reporting is launched, it would be possible to get the implementation progress of the development projects within 1 to 3 days of each month, which would pave the way for taking necessary steps for facing challenges.

Hizb ut-Tahrir man held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested a suspected member of banned militant outfit Hizb-ut-Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB) in the city's PC Culture Housing area yesterday.

Police said they also recovered 104 posters containing anti-state and anti-government statements from the possession of detained Ibne Mizan alias Sentu, 25, when he was pasting those posters on the walls, aided by his three associates, who ran away.

Police said during preliminary interrogation, Sentu admitted that he is an active member of the organisation.

The government banned the extremist organisation on October 22, 2009.

Expansion of Cox's Bazar Airport to evict 40,000

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government decision of land acquisition for expanding Cox's Bazar Airport came under protest by the local leaders yesterday.

The Tk 602 crore land acquisition project would make around 40,000 people of Kutubdiapara, Samitypara, and Fadnerdail under Cox's Bazar municipality homeless, local leaders of that area claimed at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

The leaders warned the government that the locals would even lay down their lives to save their land.

They alleged that a vested quarter is influencing the government for the acquisition project covering 16 populated localities, but people of the areas would not let it happen.

The airport's own land should be enough for the expansion work, as much of it remain unused for many years, said Akhter Kamal

Azad, a councillor of Cox's Bazar municipality ward No 1, in a written statement.

Further, at least 58 acres of the airport land, which has been grabbed by local influential people could be recovered and used for the purpose, he added.

The leaders said the government wants to acquire 682 acres of 'Khas' land which would cover the 230-acre land of 40,000 people for expanding the runway from 6,775ft to 9,000ft in length and 150ft to 200ft in width.

The people from Kutubdia Island had been living on those pieces of Khas land after the devastating cyclone of 1991, which swept away a large portion of the island, added the leaders.

Atik Ullah Sawdagar, president of ward No 1 Awami League; Moksudul Haq, Mawlana Zahidur Rahman, khatib of South Kutubdiapara Jame Mosque; and Khorshed Alam, a social worker of Kutubdia; were also present at the conference.

Qirat, Azan contest of army begins

BSS, Dhaka

A three-day Inter-area Qirat and Azan Competition-2011 of Bangladesh Army began at Signal Mosque of Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

Commander of Army Signal Brigade Brigadier General Mohammad Imam Huda inaugurated the contest, said an ISPR release.

A total 78 competitors of 13 teams of different areas of Bangladesh Army are taking part in the competition.

Prizes will be distributed among the participants after Juma prayers on the first Friday of upcoming holy month of Ramadan.



Titu, the 18-year-old challenged boy, is in a wheelchair presented by housewife Nargis Rahman, standing behind, at The Daily Star Centre in the city yesterday. The chair is among many other gifts Titu received from cross-section of people after The Daily Star published his photo, inset, on February 21. PHOTO: STAR

Jewellery shop looted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers looted gold ornaments from a jewellery shop at Bakshibazar in the old part of the city yesterday.

Mohammad Shahjahan, owner of the jewellery shop 'New Shohag Jewellers' at 10/7 Bakshibazar lane, said robbers at gunpoint broke the locker of the shop and looted gold ornaments and cash around 4:00 am.

A group of four armed robbers knocked on the door of the shop and forcibly entered the shop as soon as his brother Abu Taher opened the door, he added.

Shahjahan claimed that robbers looted around 52 tolas of gold ornaments.

Abu and an employee of the shop, Paltan, used to sleep inside the shop, he said. Paltan has been employed for 11 years in the 35 year old shop, he added. Abu, Paltan and three night guards of the area were picked up for interrogation, police said. A case was filed in this collection.

Peace not established in CHT : Speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Peaceful environment has not been established in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) area, as CHT Peace Treaty was not implemented properly in the last 13 years, said speakers yesterday.

They said indigenous community members are still facing repression like in the past, as the treaty was not implemented according to its clauses.

The discussants were addressing a human-chain organised by Manobotabadi Nagorik Samaj at TSC intersection in Dhaka University (DU), marking the first anniversary of atrocities and killing in Baghaihat of

Rangamati and Khagrachhari.

Settler Bangalees attacked indigenous people in two unions of Baghaihat on February 19 and 20 and in Khagrachhari on February 23 last year.

Joining the human chain, Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori said adequate measures to preserve the rights of indigenous people are yet to be taken according to the clauses in the CHT Peace Treaty.

DU teacher Robaet Ferdous, Bulbul Lalitakala Academy President Shamsuzzaman Noor, Journalist Masuda Bhatti, Dainik Samakal Managing Editor Abu Sayeed Khan and indigenous leader Chaitali Tripar also spoke in the programme.



WARBE Development Foundation forms a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday demanding security of Bangladeshi workers in the turbulent countries of the Middle East. PHOTO: STAR

Book on indigenous communities published

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The publication ceremony of a book titled "Bangladesher Adivasi: Ethnographi O Gobeshana", an ethnographic research on the country's indigenous community, was held at National Museum in the city yesterday.

The book, in three parts, portrays diversified life and lifestyle of indigenous communities of the country.

Former chief adviser to a caretaker government Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman unveiled the cover of the book, edited by Prof Mesbah Kamal and Mangal Kumar Chakma.

Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar Andolan and Bangladesh Adivasi Forum jointly published the book with cooperation of Oxfam GB.

Speaking as the chief guest, Justice Habibur said indigenous people worked for the book and the information presented there was not imposed by anyone. He greeted the organisers for publishing the book.

Sanjib Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, and Jannat-e-Ferdousi, vice-general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar Andolan, also spoke.

Social media fuel Arab protests

AFP, Washington

Social media, cellphone cameras, satellite television, restive youth and years of pent-up anger are proving to be a toxic mix for authoritarian regimes in the Middle East.

In clip after clip of footage from the street protests that have been sweeping the region, demonstrators--mostly young men--can be seen among the crowds holding mobile phone cameras aloft to document the scenes.

The shaky footage of peaceful protests--and images of horrific carnage--have been uploaded to Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and other sites and aired on pan-Arab satellite television stations like Al-Jazeera.

Google-owned YouTube has been high-lighting amateur footage from the unrest--such as clips from Libya from a user who goes by the name "enoughgaddafi" at its news and politics channel, CitizenTube.

In Bahrain and Libya, graphic pictures and raw video of harsh crackdowns by the security forces on crowds of protesters earned international condemnation for

their governments and further fueled popular anger in the streets.

Micah Sifry, co-founder of politics and technology blog techPresident noted in a recent blog post that mobile phone coverage in the Middle East is far higher than Internet penetration.

"The biggest factor in the unfolding events, to me, appears to be the emergent power of young people, compounded by how urbanized they are and how connected they are by mobile phones," Sifry said.

"Could it be that what we're witnessing is the political coming of age of Generation TXT?" The extent to which social media contributed to the toppling of the leaders of Egypt and Tunisia--and protests of varying size and intensity in Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Yemen--is a matter of debate.

But Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Libya's Moamer Kadhafi took the threats posed by the Internet seriously enough, apparently, when they took the extraordinary step of attempting to cut their own people off the Web.