

Saarc Food Bank to help check food price volatility

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Saarc Food Bank Board is considering the bank's use during volatility of food prices, aiming to stabilise the South Asian region's food market.

"Such a move could help stabilise the food market in the region," said Bangladesh Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque yesterday.

No South Asian nation is able to ensure food security by itself, so cooperation among the nations is imperative to tackle food shortages at times of disasters and to stabilise volatility of food prices, he added.

He was addressing as the chief guest the inaugural session of the fifth special meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) Food Bank Board held at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital ahead of the Saarc's ministerial level meeting in July.

"We discussed on the issue and will take a decision soon after analysing detailed data on food production, consumption and import and export of the Saarc countries," Elahi Dad Khan, director of the Bangladesh Directorate of Food, told The Daily Star.

Saarc Food Bank, formed in 2007, now has a food stock of 4.86 lakh tonnes with contributions from the Saarc member countries.

Bangladesh Food Secretary Barun Dev Mitra chaired the meeting that was attended by the officials from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Bhutan.



Agitating activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami block the path of a car and forces it to go in reverse near BNP's city unit office at Kazir Dewry in Chittagong city yesterday during a two-hour-long clash with law enforcers. (Inset) Truncheon-charging policemen lash out on an opposition activist. (Story on Page 1)



PHOTO: STAR

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Dewan Golam Sarwar (Hadi Gazi), Nabiganj upazila chairman of Habiganj and a freedom fighter, passed away at the Queen Elizabeth Alexander Hospital of Portsmouth in the UK yesterday at the age of 65.

He left behind his wife, one son, three daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the third death anniversary of Nazmul Alam, a renowned literary scholar and former director general of Bangladesh Betar, says a press release.

He passed away on this day in 2008 at the age of 81.

National land use plan stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A national land use plan is crucially required to ensure healthy urbanisation and economic development in the country, said experts at a conference in the capital yesterday.

Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), a non-profit research organisation, organised the conference to mark its 40th founding anniversary at Cirdap auditorium.

Strict compliance with zoning of agricultural, forests and wetlands immediately is vital to ensure sustainable urban growth in Bangladesh, said Prof Nazrul Islam, honorary chairman of CUS.

Four crores people that constitute an estimated 28 per cent of the country's total population live in urban areas, he said. Of the total urban people, 40 per cent live in Dhaka city alone.

Dhaka that has been a mega city with 10 million people since 2001 and presently having 15 million is set to emerge as a metacity (having 20 million people), he said.

It is projected that half of Bangladesh will come under urbanisation by the year 2050 with an enhanced urban-rural connectivity, he said.

Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, termed urbanisation an inevitable reality and said that land use is going to be central to pursuing a balanced urban growth.

Prof Anisuzzaman, who attended the conference as chief guest, said rural people migrate to urban centres primarily in search of livelihood, apart from business, education and medical services.

Prof Sarwar Jahan of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and architect Khadem Ali, vice chairman of CUS, chaired two sessions attended by leading architects and urban planners.

AUGUST 21 CASES Next hearing tomorrow

COURT CORRESPONDENT

State-appointed counsels for nine fugitive accused, including BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman, yesterday completed cross-examining the complainant of the August 21 grenade attack cases.

Judge Shahed Nuruddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 then fixed tomorrow for the next hearing of the cases.

On that day, counsel of Harkatul Jihad (Huji) leader Maulana Liton, will cross-examine former sub-inspector of Motijheel Police Station Sharif Faruque Ahmed, also a complainant of the cases.

The accused are Tarique Rahman, BNP lawmaker Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad, Mohammad Hanif, owner of Hanif Paribahan, and six Huji leaders -- Anisul Mursalin, Mahibul Muttakin, Jahangir Alam Badar, Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, Babu alias Ratul Babu and Khalilur Rahman.

VCs asked not to work only for political gain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday urged the vice chancellors of public universities to be more responsible and conscious to ensure educational atmosphere at their universities.

"Don't do such a thing only for gaining political motive that hampers students' education life," he said at a press briefing after a close-door meeting with the University Council, a platform for the vice chancellors of public universities, at the Secretariat.

The minister held the meeting with the council following the recent incidents at two universities Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and Jahangirnagar University (JU).

Vice Chancellors (VC) of 32 public universities, representative of VCs from two universities, Education Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, and University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof AK Azad Chowdhury were also present.

Asked about the meeting, Nahid said they have talked about the educational environment, problems and duties to solve the problems at different public universi-

ties.

"We have heard different problems about the universities from the vice chancellors," he said, adding that they have placed different problems, including teachers, classroom, dormitory and financial crisis of the universities.

Asked about the appointment of a VC from a panel selected by the senate that run as per the university act, 1973, he said it is the duty of the senates to form respective panels at the four universities.

About JU, he said the prime minister would take decision about JU after consultation with the Chancellor. "It will be the prime minister to decide what else to do with Jahangirnagar University."

However, some of the vice chancellors told The Daily Star that they have informed the minister about the fact that some teachers belonging to BNP-Jamaat are trying to create instable situation at the universities.

"Some teachers who follow progressive values also join these BNP-Jamaat teachers for their own interest to make destabilise the university environment," said a VC wishing not to be named. "We also informed this fact to the minister," he added.

Anti-Bangladesh before & after '71

FROM PAGE 1

Just when Pakistan was on the verge of losing the war, Ghulam Azam went to Pakistan on November 22, 1971. He formed East Pakistan Retrieval Committee in Pakistan and campaigned until 1973 to build public opinion against Bangladesh and its recognition in the Islamic world.

While reading out the charges yesterday, Justice Md Nizamul Huq, chairman of the International Crimes Tribunal-1, gave a brief profile of accused Ghulam Azam.

He said Ghulam Azam went to London in 1973 and set up an office of East Pakistan Retrieval Committee there. He published a weekly, Sonar Bangla, in London, which was used as a propaganda tool against Bangladesh.

Bangladesh government cancelled his citizenship on April 18, 1973.

Ghulam Azam later visited Saudi Arabia in March, 1975. He met King Faisal and told him that Hindus have captured East Pakistan, the holy Quran has been burnt, mosques have been destroyed and converted into temples, and Muslims were killed.

He collected funds from the Middle East for rebuilding mosques and madrasas. After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ghulam Azam returned to Bangladesh on August 11, 1978 with a Pakistani passport. He got back his citizenship and rejoined his post as the ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami. He served in the post until Motiur Rahman Nizami was elected ameer.

Ghulam Azam was born on November 7, 1922. He studied in a madrasa first and then obtained master's degree from Dhaka University in 1950. He was a teacher of Rangpur Carmichael College between 1950 and 1955.

He joined Jamaat-e-Islami in 1954 and served as its secretary from 1957 to 1960. He

became the ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami in 1969. During the Liberation War, Jamaat and Islami Chhatra Sangha under his leadership opposed the Liberation War.

He played a pivotal role in forming Shanti (peace) Committee, Razakar, Al Badr, Al Shams (collaborator forces). He was an elected member of the national assembly from Tangail in the sham elections of 1971, Justice Nizamul Huq said.

The Daily Star went through historic documents and is able to shed more light on Ghulam Azam's records.

According to records on the Liberation War, Ghulam Azam began playing an active role in helping the Pakistani occupation forces even as the nation joined the armed struggle to free Bangladesh soon after the launch of a massacre by the Pakistani military on the night of March 25, 1971.

He was ameer of the East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami before the Liberation War. As the ameer, he campaigned across Bangladesh and even in Pakistan (then West Pakistan) in an attempt to foil the liberation movement.

"Pakistan is the house of Islam for the world's Muslims. Therefore, Jamaat activists don't justify staying alive if Pakistan disintegrates," said Ghulam Azam in a speech to mobilise his party men and followers against Bangladesh and help the occupation forces. (Source: Jamaat's mouthpiece the daily Sangram, 1971).

Ghulam Azam is one of the front men who actively helped the Pakistani forces' attempts to foil the birth of Bangladesh. He was hyperactive against the Liberation War and became a symbol of war crimes in Bangladesh.

He met Pakistani General Tikka Khan, who was known as the "Butcher of Baluchistan", 10 days after the war started and earned the same title "butcher" as an architect of the genocide launched on the

night of March 25, 1971 in Dhaka.

During the nine-month bloody war, Ghulam Azam and his party Jamaat-e-Islami, its student wing Islami Chhatra Sangha (later renamed Islami Chhatra Shibir) played a key role along with their other political partners to foil Bangladesh's independence struggle.

According to newspapers, including the daily Sangram, and books and documents on 1971, Jamaat and its student wing played a key role in forming the Peace Committees and some other collaborator forces like Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams.

Throughout the nine-month war, Jamaat, its student wing and the collaborator forces actively helped the Pakistani military in mass killing, rape and atrocities.

The Pakistani forces and their Bangladeshi collaborators committed genocide and war crimes that left three million people dead and around a quarter million women violated, besides the planned elimination of some of the best of Bengali brains on December 14, 1971.

War records show that Jamaat formed Razakar and Al-Badr forces to counter the freedom fighters. Razakar force was established by former secretary general of Jamaat Moulana Abul Kalam Mohammad Yousuf, and Al Badr included the Islami Chhatra Sangha activists.

Anticipating defeat, the occupation forces and their collaborators--mostly leaders of Jamaat and its student front-picked up leading Bengali intellectuals and professionals on December 14 and killed them en masse with a view to intellectually crippling the emerging independent nation.

Though Ghulam Azam was the brain behind Jamaat's anti-liberation efforts, incumbent Jamaat ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, president of Islami Chhatra Sangha in 1971, played a vital role in collaborating with

the Pakistani junta in committing genocide.

Nizami, who is also behind bars on charges of war crimes, had said, "Every one of us should assume the role of a Muslim soldier of an Islamic state and through cooperation with the oppressed and by winning their confidence we must kill those who are hatching a conspiracy against Pakistan and Islam." (Daily Sangram quoted Nizami on September 15, 1971)

Ghulam Azam and his party men and anti-liberation elements used to call the freedom fighters "miscreants", "Indian agents", "malau" (an offensive word used against the Hindus), and "infiltrators".

On April 8, 1971, Ghulam Azam issued a joint statement with other Jamaat leaders. A book containing an account of the killers and collaborators titled "Genocide '71" quotes from that statement: "India is interfering in the internal affairs of East Pakistan. Wherever patriotic Pakistanis see Indian agents or anti-Pakistan elements and infiltrators, they will destroy them."

Genocide '71 also reads: "On June 18, on arriving at Lahore airport, Ghulam Azam spoke to journalists, stating that, in order to further improve the conditions in East Pakistan, he was going to provide some additional advice to the president (General Yahya Khan).

"However, he refused to elaborate any further on what sort of advice he was going to give. Regarding the situation in East Pakistan, he said: 'The miscreants are still engaged in destructive activities. Their main aim is to create terror and turbulence. These miscreants are being directed by Naxalites and left-wing forces.'

On June 19, before Tikka Khan left for Dhaka, Ghulam Azam met then Pakistan president Yahya Khan. After his meeting with Yahya, he addressed a press conference in Lahore. He told journalists, "The miscreants are still active in East Pakistan. People must

be provided with arms to destroy them."

Addressing Jamaat workers prior to the press conference, Ghulam Azam said, "In order to prevent the disintegration of Pakistan, the armed forces had to be deployed."

He further noted, "The recent tumult in East Pakistan is 10 times greater than the 1857 Revolution in Bengal."

Speaking at a press conference in Peshawar on August 26, he said, "The armed forces have saved us from the treachery of our enemies and from the evil designs of India. The people of East Pakistan are lending full support to the armed forces in destroying miscreants and infiltrators."

On November 23, Yahya Khan declared a state of national emergency.

Ghulam Azam welcomed this announcement. He told the press in Lahore, "The best way to defend ourselves is striking at our enemies." He said in order to restore peace in East Pakistan, each patriotic citizen, each member of the Peace Committees, Razakar, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams must be armed with modern automatic weapons.

At a meeting in Rawalpindi on November 29, he said, "There is no example in the history of a nation at war surviving without retaliation. Aggression is the best form of defence."

On December 3, he in Karachi said, "An East Pakistani should be in charge of the foreign office because it is only an East Pakistani who can cope with the Bangladesh tamasha [the Bangladesh farce]."

Immediately after victory on December 16, 1971, Ghulam Azam and many others like him fled to Pakistan and returned only after the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members in 1975.

After victory the first issues of newspapers of the new nation carried the govern-

ment's decision to ban five communal parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, on December 18 with immediate effect.

The banned parties were given the green light to resume politics during the regime of late president Ziaur Rahman.

Genocide '71 said soon after Ghulam Azam with a few of his followers went to Saudi Arabia, an advertisement, in the name of a fake organisation, appeared in several Middle Eastern papers. The ad proclaimed, "mosques are being burnt in East Pakistan, Hindus are killing Muslims and destroying their properties." On the plea that Islam had to be saved, the ad appealed for contributions.

It also said Ghulam Azam, in order to collect funds and to continue his campaign against Bangladesh, visited several countries of the region, including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait,

and Beirut. After completing his tour of these areas, he left for London in April, 1973.

Even though he came to Dhaka on a three-month visa during the rule of president Ziaur Rahman in 1978, he never left Bangladesh. He became Jamaat's undeclared ameer taking over from alleged war criminal late Abbas Ali Khan who was the acting ameer.

In the early 90's, Ghulam Azam was officially declared ameer of Jamaat, while Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam launched a unique mass movement demanding trial of war criminals.

She held an unprecedented People's Court as a symbolic trial of Ghulam Azam where thousands of people gathered and the court pronounced a verdict to the effect that offences committed by him during the Liberation War deserve capital punishment.

Ghulam Azam's citizenship

Police raid Sangram office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police raided offices of the daily Sangram and weekly Sonar Bangla, the Jaamat-owned newspapers, in the capital's Maghbar yesterday.

A joint team of Ramna police and Detective Branch (DB) of police conducted the raid for around two hours from 1:00pm.

Witnesses said the law enforcers searched every room of the offices located in the same building in which the central office of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami is also situated.

The Jamaat leaders and activists often sit in the offices for carrying out their party activities.

Syed Nurul Islam, deputy commissioner of Ramna division, told The Daily Star that they conducted the raid on information that there were a number of fugitive Jamaat leaders and activists were hiding in the building.

"We had also information that the Jamaat men were projecting plans to commit subversive and criminal activities on the eve of the mass procession of 18-party alliance led by BNP and Jamaat scheduled to be held tomorrow [Monday]," the DC said.

Asked, the DC said no one was arrested during the raids as the Jamaat men fled away.



Roundtable

Bangladesh Shishu Academy and Plan International Bangladesh will arrange a roundtable; Venue: Directorate of Primary Education, Mirpur; Time: 3:00pm.

Dialogue

Sharee will hold a dialogue; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:00am.

Workshop

Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables & Allied Products Exporters Association; Venue: Hotel 71 Kaizuddin Tower, Bijoy Nagar; Time: 10:00am.

Meeting

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad will organise an experience exchange meeting; Venue: Cirdap Auditorium; Time: 4:00pm.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim HABIDI'S 10TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY



Today, the 14th of May, is the 10th death anniversary of our only daughter Fatima (Habidi) Rahman. Our beloved Habidi passed away on this day in 2002 at St. Mary's Hospital in London. Habidi is no longer with us but her sweet memories remain in our hearts for ever.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for the eternal peace of her departed soul.

MAHMUDA AND ANSAR RAHMAN