

Inu places 'minus Khaleda formula'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming Khaleda Zia "patron of war criminals", Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu yesterday asked the leader of the opposition in parliament to give up relation with the war criminals, otherwise the pro-liberation forces would oust her from the country's politics.

"It is the last chance for you [Khaleda]... give up relationship with war criminals," he said while addressing a discussion at Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Shamprodaikota, Jongibodi Birodh Mancha (SJB), a citizens' platform against militancy and communalism, organised the discussion marking its second anniversary.

Drawing attention on the much-talked about "minus-two formula", Inu said, "Instead of minus two (Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia), only minus of Khaleda could bring political stability in the country."

"If you [pro-liberation forces] want to save the country from the venom of communalism, keep Bangladesh ever free from conspiracy hatched by the war criminals, then carry out a successful drive against Khaleda," the left-leaning parliamentarian said.

The chief of JSD, a major component of the Awami League-led government, also urged the pro-liberation forces to be united to oust Khaleda from the country's politics.

Deputy Speaker Col (retd) Shawkat Ali demanded to arrest all of the war criminals to bring them under trial on phases and called to publish a list of the war criminals immediately.

"We wouldn't accept any symbolic trial. We want trial of all war criminals whatever years it would take," he said.

Claiming that, if voted to power, BNP would not hold the trial, the deputy speaker urged the pro-liberation people to unitedly work to bring AL to power again.

Jamaat-e-Islami is a major component of BNP-led 18-party alliance and six Jamaat leaders, including its former and incumbent chiefs, are facing trial at the International Crimes Tribunal for their alleged involvement in committing crimes against humanity during the War of Liberation. Two former and incumbent BNP lawmakers were also charged with similar charges.

SJBM Coordinator Ajoy Roy chaired the programme while Workers' Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon, Acting Secretary General of Sector Commanders Forum Haroon Habib, Platform's Joint-Coordinator Ziauddin Tareq Ali and Member Secretary Dr Nur Mohammad Talukdar spoke among others.

5 killed in Sirajganj road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Five persons were killed and two others injured when a truck carrying labourers collided with a lorry on the west approach road of Bangabandhu Bridge early yesterday.

Three of the deceased were identified as Masud Ahmed, 30, of Joypur village, Golam Gaus, 20, of Billa village in Jaipurhat and Zahidul Islam, 30, from Chilahata under Bogra district.

The injured were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital.

Aslam Hossain, sub-inspector of Bangabandhu Bridge West Police Station, said a truck carrying around 30 labourers collided head-on with a lorry early in the morning. Police recovered the bodies and the injured persons.



Managing Worker and Chairman of Sahara India Pariwar, Subrata Roy Sahara, speaks at a press conference of Sahara Matribhumi Unnayan Corporation Ltd at the capital's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

350 passengers escape accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A launch with some 350 passengers barely survived an accident in the river Dhaleshwari in Munshiganj Thursday night after it was hit by a storm and developed a crack in its bottom.

The master immediately drove the Barisal-bound vessel, MV Koko-1, ashore and anchored it near Shah Cement Factory in Muktaarpur around 10:00pm.

Later another launch, MV Koko-5, came to the rescue of the passengers around 1:00am yesterday. After evacuation, it started for Barisal at about 2:30am.

The vessel will be taken to the dockyard for repair.

Youths trained on climate issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day national conference to train the future leaders of climate and health related issues concluded in the capital yesterday.

The programme titled 'First national conference of Youth Think Tank on climate change and health' began at the auditorium of Department of Forest in the capital yesterday.

While addressing as chief guest the inaugural session of the conference on Thursday, Environment and Forest Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud said the government cannot tackle the issue of climate change alone, therefore, a community-based mass awareness and capacity building programme is needed.

The Youth Think Tank, consisting of a group of hundred university students from across the country, was trained to take the lead in solving climate and health related problems of their communities using their creativity, merit, expertise and local resources," said the conference Convener Dr Iqbal Kabir.

The youths took part in technical sessions, made action plans and shared ideas with respect to the gradually raging health threats in different parts of the country due to climate change.

Md Didar Ahsan, additional secretary and coordinator of Climate Change Unit of environment and forest ministry, Shamsul Gafur Mahmud, national professional officer of World Health Organisation, and Dr Md Zahirul Islam, training physician of ICDDR,B, also addressed the programme.

TACKLING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Govt progressed much AL leaders, environmentalists tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League-led grand alliance government has made much progress in tackling the environmental degradation on the whole but is to go a long way to make the country liveable for the future generations, AL leaders and environmentalists said at a seminar yesterday.

They identified river management, sound and air pollution, and solid waste management as the major challenges ahead.

"The government has amended the constitution incorporating a provision for protection and improvement of the environment and bio-diversity, which is one of the most important steps of the government towards tackling environmental degradation", AL lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury told the seminar at the capital's Institution of Engineer, Bangladesh.

The AL organised the programme titled "Grand alliance government's three years in tackling environment degradation, successes and future challenges". The ruling party has been holding sector-wise seminars for the last couple of months.

Placing the keynote paper, Saber Hossain, also chairman of all-party parliamentary groups on climate change, said parliament itself had been serving a prominent role in protecting the environment, and the government had taken a number of steps to this end.

In addition to formulating laws for the protection of the environment, the government has also increased the number of environment offices across the country and staff them with an aim to tackle environmental challenges, he added.

"We are also playing a leading role in the international arena over environmental protection and having positive results in the country". He stressed the need for capacity building so that the country can bargain in the global arena to protect its environment.

The lawmaker said the country's agricultural land was dwindling, which might plunge the whole agricultural system into a serious catastrophe. The issue and its environment consequences should be

deeply thought, given the growing population of the country, he added.

Environment and Forest Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud said they had modernised all the existing laws of the country to protect the environment. Moreover, the government has taken a massive initiative since its beginning to plant around 10 crore saplings every year to fill the gap of tree felling in the past, he added.

He however said, "When around 1,000 people live per square kilometre of the country, it is very tough to protect the forests if people are not aware of protecting the environment".

The present government has made it mandatory to have permission for even any government agency or institution to cut trees and stepped into urban forestation, he said.

The minister observed that alongside the government, people must be aware of the environment and related laws.

This government has realised Tk 72 crore on charge harming or polluting the environment, while the previous governments from 2001 did not even realise Tk 72,000 to this end, he added.

Dr Hasan claimed that now around 60 percent of the industries had their effluent treatment plant (ETP), and within six months it would be increased to 75 percent, ultimately helping tackle the industrial pollution.

The government is also working to introduce modern waste management system in Dhaka and Chittagong, he added.

Noted economist Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad put emphasis on improving relationship with the civil society members and increasing the financial capability of people to face the environmental challenges in the coming days.

He also emphasised proper implementation of the environmental laws.

AL Presidium Member Yusuf Hossain Humayun, ruling party Whip Shagufta Yasmin Emily, party leader Afzal Hossain, and Pro-Vice Chancellor of Buet Prof Habibur Rahman, among others, spoke at the seminar chaired by AL advisory council member Prof Durga Das Bhattacharya.



Nagarik Sanghati forms a human chain before Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University yesterday demanding enactment of a disaster management law.

PHOTO: STAR

RIVER-LINKING

Govt urged to stop Indian project

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), an environmental organisation, yesterday demanded the government ask the Indian authorities to immediately cancel its river-linking project, which, once implemented, would have serious environmental consequences in Bangladesh.

The casualties of the project will be many times that of the Farakka barrage, speakers said at a rally organised by Bapa before Jatiya Press Club. The river project has also generated protests inside India too, they said, calling the government to act soon.

The Indian Supreme Court, on February 27, gave the go-ahead to the project. It aims to link 30 major rivers and divert the course of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, which snake through Bangladesh, the speakers said.

They said the decision had drawn reactions from across the entire Indian sub-continent, while environmentalists and common people of India questioned the project.

For due reasons, the people of Bangladesh are concerned and raised the demand of stopping it immediately, as the project would destroy the nature, environment and economy of the country. It will also put at risk the very existence of Bangladesh, they said.

A Bapa press release said similar rallies were staged by expatriate Bangladeshis in the US, Australia, Germany, Canada and Japan at the call of Bangladesh Environment Network.

Private car drivers want to work eight hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Private car drivers yesterday demanded appointment cards during their employment, eight-hour work time, overtime wages, and weekend.

These were on an eight-point demand, with which Private Car Drivers' Union formed a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Meanwhile, restaurant workers yesterday said the government announced their minimum wages on November 24, 2009, but the restaurant owners were still to implement the decision.

Moreover, the owners' hired goons attacked them when they staged a protest programme on May 1, the workers said at a rally before Jatiya Press Club.

EVEREST ADVENTURE

Wasfia Nazreen may summit today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nishat Majumder and her fellow mountaineer MA Mohit started trekking towards Kathmandu yesterday morning from the base camp, while another Bangladeshi woman mountaineer, Wasfia Nazreen, is expected to reach summit this morning.

If Wasfia, who left the base camp on Monday, reaches the top, she will be the second Bangladeshi woman to achieve the feat after Nishat, who scaled the mountain peak on May 19.

Wasfia on Thursday deferred her quest by a day due to inclement weather.

"We hope Wasfia will push for the summit tonight [Friday] and will reach the summit tomorrow [Saturday] morning," said Korvi Rakshand, spokesperson of Bangladesh on Seven Summits' campaign, which arranged the trekking, told The Daily Star last night.

Meanwhile, after staying three nights at the base camp at around 5,350 metre above the sea level Nishat and Mohit had started for Kathmandu yesterday.

"I have come to know that Nishat and Mohit have started descending from the base camp today [Friday] morning," said Premba Dorje Sherpa, whose brother Mingmaa Gyalje Sherpa is acting as the guide for the duo.

Muhit as the first Bangladeshi scaled the mountain twice and from both sides. He first scaled the mountain peak on May 21 last year.

Musa Ibrahim was the first Bangladeshi to conquer the Everest on May 23, 2010.

Body of a boy found in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The decomposed body of an unidentified boy was found at the city's Dakkhin Khan yesterday. On information, police around 2:00pm recovered the body buried under a pile of rubbish near Dakkhin Khan Bazaar.

Street urchins found the body while digging up the earth there.

Miscreants might have killed the victim elsewhere a few days ago and dumped the body there, said Humayun Kabir, sub-inspector of Dakkhin Khan Police Station.

The victim, aged around 14, wore black trousers and black t-shirt, the SI said.

The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

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