

Govt wants tigers in densely deer populated forests

Says environment minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering whether it can introduce tigers in the country's densely deer populated places, including Nijhum Dwip, to maintain ecological balance, said Environment and Forests Minister Hasan Mahmud at a discussion yesterday.

"We are thinking over this issue and I have already talked with the World Bank whether we can introduce tigers in such places where deer population is boosting in Bangladesh," he said.

The Department of Forests organised the discussion at Osmani Memorial auditorium in the capital marking the Global Tiger Day, 2012 yesterday.

As elsewhere in the world, the day was observed in Bangladesh on the theme "Save Sundarbans Tiger Landscape" this year.

In the absence of tigers, deer-population is boosting rapidly in Nijhum Dwip, which is currently housing around 10,000 deer while the figure should be around 3,000 to 4,000.

"Once upon a time, there were habitations of tigers in Dhaka and its adjacent areas. It is not possible to return to that historical period. But we can introduce tigers in the different forests of Bangladesh," said Mahmud.

Stressing the need for identifying the actual number of tigers in Sundarbans, he said the government will conduct a tiger census soon using a modern technology using cameras.

The minister also said the government will introduce 'risk allowance' for those who work in the Sundarbans facing risks imposed by wild animals.

A proposal for risk allowance has already been sent to the Economic Relations Division under the Finance Ministry for approval, he said.

Talking about the density of tigers in Sundarbans, he said one tiger lives per 200 square kilometres of forest in Russia, but one lives per 15 to 20 sq km in Sundarbans.

Presenting a paper, Jahangirnagar University Zoology Prof Monirul Hasan Khan said around 200 to 450 tigers live in Sundarbans in Bangladesh, while the joint India and Bangladesh tiger census of 2004 estimated the figure to be 419 tigers.

Chief Forest Conservator Yunus Ali chaired the discussion while Environment and Forests Secretary Mesbah Ul Alam and Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique also addressed among others.

World Bank is funding the "Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Wildlife Protection Project" of the government.

Left-leaning political leaders urge for Ducsu polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of some left-leaning political organisations urged the authorities of Dhaka University (DU) to take necessary steps to hold polls to the DU Central Students' Union (Ducsu) soon.

They were speaking at a discussion at the base of Aparajeya Bangla on the DU campus yesterday.

Dhaka Bishwabiddaloy Shikharthi Odhikar Mancha (Dhaka University Students' Rights Forum) organised the programme.

With the forum's spokesman Nur Bahadur, in the chair, former Ducsu leaders including Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President ASM Abdur Rab, Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Dr Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi, and Murhsed Ali, spoke on the occasion.

Mujahidul Islam Selim said electing representatives through the Ducsu polls is a democratic right of students of the university.

Abdur Rab said the DU authorities should ensure the practice of democracy among the students.

Last polls to the Ducsu were held in 1990.

Strict anti-smoking law in the offing

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to amend the Smoking and Using of Tobacco Products (Control) Act, 2005, keeping provisions to fine Tk 10 lakh to any tobacco industry running advertisement of its product, said Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday.

The government has also decided to fine Tk 500 to any individual smoking in public places and to restrict the sale of tobacco products to children aged below 16 years, he added.

The minister was addressing a discussion on "Voices of tobacco victims" jointly organised by United Forum against

Tobacco, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, PROGGA and Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance in the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

Under the current act, the fines are only Taka 1,000 for advertising tobacco products and Tk 50 for smoking in public places.

Health experts and civil society members have urged the government to amend the act to curb the use of tobacco products.

According to World Health Organisation, around 57,000 people die from diseases related to tobacco consumption while 3,82,000 become disabled from it every year in Bangladesh, said Matthew Myers, president of Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, USA.

14 more trains, 130 buses before Eid

UNB, Dhaka

Additional 14 trains and 130 buses will run on different routes across the country ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr to ensure easy and safe journey of homebound people.

The trains will start plying three days before the Eid, Communications Minister Obaidul Quader, who is also in-charge of the railway ministry, told reporters at Rail Bhaban after a meeting with its officials yesterday.

Quader further said 130 buses will be added to Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation's existing fleet a week ahead of the Eid.

About the black-marketing of railway tickets, he said from now on, advance tickets will be available 10 days ahead of any journey instead of three days and it'll come into effect 10 days before the Eid.



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Khulna District Administration and Bangladesh Forest Department bring out a procession in Khulna city yesterday marking "World Tiger Day 2012".

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