

Plant trees, save environment

PM urges all, opens nat'l tree plantation campaign

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to plant and nurture saplings in their respective workplaces and houses in an attempt to protect the environment.

She made the call while inaugurating the programmes of the World Environment Day 2019 and National Tree Plantation Campaign 2019 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

She also urged everybody to plant at least three saplings – a fruit tree, a timber tree and a medicinal tree.

The theme of this year's World Environment Day is "Air Pollution" with the slogan -- Beat Air Pollution.

During the programme, the PM handed over the National Environmental Award 2019 to three individuals and two organisations under two categories for their contributions to the environment.

Chairman of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation Dr Qazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmad, noted Water and Climate Changes expert Prof Ainun Nishat and Scientific Adviser of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation Dr Mubarak Ahmad Khan received the environmental awards under the individual category. Bangladesh Forest Research

Institute and Envoy Textiles Limited received the environmental awards under the organisation category.

The Prime Minister also handed over Bangabandhu Award for Wildlife Conservation 2019 and Prime Minister's National Award for Tree Plantation 2018 at the event.

Hasina said her government's target is to bring 20 percent land of the country under forestation. The government is taking various measures to accomplish the target, she added.

The PM also asked the development planners to consider the protection of water bodies while undertaking any development project.

According to the World Health Organisation, some 4.2 million people die every year as a result of exposure of ambient (outdoor) air pollution, while 3.8 million die due to household exposure to smoke from dirty stoves or fuel, she said.

With the modernisation and rise in technology use, people damage and pollute the environment in many ways to make their lives comfortable, she said.

She asked the researches to consider the environmental damages caused by the use of modern equipment and technology in their study.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits a stall during programmes of the World Environment Day 2019 and National Tree Plantation Campaign 2019 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Three killed in 'gunfights'

Leader of a criminal gang among the dead

STAR REPORT

Three people, including an alleged leader of a criminal gang, were killed in separate "gunfights" with the law enforcers in Dhaka and two other districts yesterday.

Tanvir Ahmed Anik, 36, so-called ringleader of criminal gang "Seven-Star Group", was killed in a "gunfight" with Rab in the capital's Mohammadpur early yesterday, said Major Mohammad Alif of Rab-2.

Tipped off that Tanvir and his associates would gather somewhere in Basila, a team of Rab conducted a drive to arrest them.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the miscreants opened fire on them, forcing them to fire back that triggered a "shootout", Alif added.

Later, Rab members recovered Tanvir and rushed him to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said the Rab official.

They also recovered a firearm and five bullets from the spot.

Two Rab members -- Habildar Abdur Rahman and Constable Md Enamul -- were also injured in the incident, said the Rab official.

The official claimed that Tanvir was accused in eight to 10 cases filed on different charges, including murder and abduction.

Two cases were filed with Mohammadpur Police Station in connection with the incident.

Meanwhile in Cumilla, Md Tofayel, 23, an alleged drug peddler, was killed

in a "gunfight" with police in Cumilla's Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Abdullah Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Cumilla Sadar South Model Police Station, said based on information, a team of police conducted an anti-drug drive in Rajapara Chowmohoni area around 2:15am, reports our Cumilla correspondent.

Sensing police presence, the drug peddlers opened fire on them, the OC said, adding that the "gunfight" ensued when police fired back in retaliation.

Later, police recovered Tofayel with bullet injuries and took him to Cumilla Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Tofayel was wanted in at least six cases. Police seized a firearm, a cartridge, a knife, and 400 pieces of yaba pills from the spot.

In Narayanganj, Lipu alias Boma Lipu, 30, an alleged drug trader, was killed in a "shootout" with the Detective Branch (DB) of police.

Police said he was wanted in 16 cases. DB police arrested Lipu on Wednesday evening and went on a drive to recover firearms in the city's Dapa Balur Math area. When they reached the scene around 3:00am, Lipu's associates opened fire on police forcing them to retaliate, said Kamrul Hasan, sub-inspector of DB police.

Lipu came in line of the fire during the "gunfight" and was taken to Narayanganj General Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said the SI.

"We are conducting drive to arrest the associates of Lipu," added SI Kamrul.

Schoolgirl killed after rape in B'baria

Two other girls, a housewife violated

STAR REPORT

A schoolgirl was killed after allegedly being raped and two other girls were allegedly violated in separate incidents in three districts in the last two days.

Besides, a court in Thakurgaon sent a youth to jail on Wednesday on charges of raping a housewife and circulating footage of the incident on social media.

In Brahmanbaria, police yesterday recovered the body of a ninth grader, who was killed after allegedly being raped by her brother-in-law, from Shalgaon village.

The victim is Tamanna, 15, of Aminpur village in Brahmanbaria municipality. She was a student of Shalgaon-Kalishima High School.

Talking to The Daily Star, her elder sister Smriti Akter said Tamanna was staying at her home on Wednesday.

Smriti's husband Nayeem Islam, 28, brought home mango juice at night. Soon after drinking the juice, Smriti fell asleep.

She woke up next morning and found the bloodstained body of her sister on the bed of a room at the house. She also found that Nayeem fled home.

Smriti suspected that Nayeem, a night guard, might have killed her sister after raping her.

Atiqur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Po-lice Station, said police recovered the body from the house and sent it to Brahmanbaria General Hospital for an autopsy.

In Rangpur, police arrested an elderly man for raping a five-year-old girl in the city's Kartik Munsipara area on Wednesday afternoon.

The arrestee is Mozammel Haque, 55, a resident of the same area.

Quoting family members and locals, police said the victim was playing near her home in Kartik Munshipara. Mozammel enticed her to go to his house by giving her a chocolate and raped her.

As the girl started screaming for help, locals and her family members rushed there and caught the alleged rapist.

Police later picked Mozammel from the house. Yesterday, he was sent to Rangpur jail after being produced before a local court, said AKM Nazmul Quader, OC of Haragachh Police Station.

The girl was sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for medical examinations.

In Dhaka, police arrested Thandu Mollah, 63, for allegedly raping an 11-year-old deaf girl in Bagonnagar area of Dhamrai upazila yesterday.

Police said the victim was staying at her home alone in the morning when her neighbour Thandu entered her home and violated her.

Hearing screams, locals rushed to the home, rescued the girl and caught Thandu. Police later arrested him from there.

In Thakurgaon, police on Wednesday arrested Saddam Hossain,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

Farmers need more support

FROM PAGE 1

At the programme, noted agricultural economists said the government, apart from the price support, has to give each farmer a support of Tk 2,000 against an acre of land as their income have come down.

Prof Mondol also said the size of the proposed budget was big and it was needed for the country's development goals.

He, however, said they did not get any visions in the budget speech to transform traditional agriculture into a commercial one, a promise mentioned in the Awami League's election manifesto.

Question also remains whether the real farmers would reap benefits of the various incentives in the sector, he said, adding that the government will have to take steps to ensure that the real farmers get the benefits.

Prof Fakir Azmal Huda of Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, who presented the keynote speech at the seminar, said surplus paddy of small and medium

farmers was a big problem and facing it was a big challenge. But the budget speech did not mention anything about the matter, he said.

Government subsidies which are given at different inputs of agriculture are not sufficient, he said.

In recent budgets, the government kept allocations of Tk 9,000 crore as subsidy in the agriculture sector, but it did not spend more than Tk 5,201 crore, he said.

Mentioning the government decision to have allocations "only for threshing machines for making the sector mechanised", Prof Azmal said had there been allocation for all agricultural machines, the production cost would have been down.

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque said the government had taken several steps for ensuring fair prices to farmers. He, however, admitted that there were some limitations in some cases.

"I am assuring you that we will take more steps so that farmers get their deserving price," he said, adding, "The

government is trying to commercialise the sector and make it profitable ... you will get results shortly."

He said they would provide Tk 2000 crore to Tk 3000 crore in subsidies on agriculture equipment. It would come from the Tk 9,000 crore allocation as agriculture subsidy in the proposed budget.

Razzaque said a scheme regarding the subsidy was underway. It was not mentioned in the budget speech as the project was not ready then, he said.

Asked about the production cost, he said farmers spent most of their money in planting and harvesting crops as labourers are not available in most cases.

So they will provide price support to purchase farming machines so that the production cost becomes low, he said.

The minister also promised steps to stop middlemen from depriving the farmers of fair prices.

Planning Minister Abdul Mannan said they had taken several steps for the rapid commercialisation of the sector.

Sourav freed after 11 days

FROM PAGE 1

About the identities of the abductors, Sohail Taj had earlier said he knew about the abductors. In a Facebook post, he also threatened to expose the captors if his nephew was not returned to the family.

Before going missing, Sourav received a call from a phone number that belongs to an official of a government agency in Dhaka, said the former minister, who resigned just months after taking office in 2009.

A counterterrorism official in Chattogram said they already got the details of the incoming and outgoing calls, but declined to elaborate.

After he was dropped off, Sourav went to a nearby rice mill, gave his identity and sought help. Rice mill manager Kanchan Mia and staffer Samir Uddin then contacted his family by phone, said Mizanur Rahman Akondo, officer-in-charge of Tarakanda Police Station.

Later, he was taken to Mymensingh Police Superintendent Shah Abid Hossain's residence where he took a shower and was given a green Punjabi to put on.

From there, police escorted him to the residence of Sohail Taj in the capital's Banani around 11:30am.

Asked about his abductors, Mohammad Shahidullah, deputy commissioner of the CT unit, said they would hear from Sourav about the incident once he went to Chattogram.

But his family suspects those who picked him up earlier had a hand in his latest abduction.

"He is shivering in panic whenever anyone touches him. Can you imagine the environment he was kept in?" said his father.

"When I asked my son about their identities, he said: 'Who else could be there to do such a thing to me?'" Idris told The Daily Star.

Asked if there was any torture mark on his body, he said they were yet to check that. "But he is very stressed both mentally and physically. He cannot speak properly now and everything will be clear once he gets well."

Earlier at a press conference on Monday, Saurav's mother said her son was picked up on several occasions by different law enforcement and intelligence agencies. He was interrogated about his relationship with a woman.

The family blamed the woman's father for the abduction.

In an instant reaction, Sourav thanked everyone who worked hard

for his rescue.

"I want to thank my uncle [Sohail Taj], my family, the law enforcers and everyone who prayed for me and worked hard to rescue me," he told reporters.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Sohail Taj said, "Such incidents ... I have now gone through this experience. I saw what a storm sweeps over a family. This should not happen to anyone in Bangladesh."

Earlier around 6:00am, the former minister went live on his Facebook page to say Sourav had been found alive.

Law enforcers in Bangladesh have long been blamed for dozens of abductions, although they deny such claims.

Between January 2009 and December 2018, at least 507 people have fallen victims to enforced disappearance, according to the International Federation for Human Rights.

Of them, 62 people were later found dead while 286 returned alive. The whereabouts of 159 is still unknown, the Paris-based rights body said.

None of those who returned never spoke in public about their captors.

[Our Mymensingh correspondent contributed to this report]

Flattest pitches I've ever seen, says Bumrah

FROM PAGE 1

know that wickets are flat in England and while bowling, we take that into consideration as the worst possible scenario. So if there is a bit of help, then adjustment becomes easy," he said.

Bumrah, who bowled a lethal first spell against South Africa in India's World Cup opener, feels the track at Southampton was a decent one first up but stroke making became easier

once the two new balls got a bit old. "In the first game that we played here, there was some help with the new ball but it was a decent wicket. But as soon as the ball got older, it became better to bat on. The Oval was a batting wicket, where you saw 350 being scored," he observed.

"But you don't focus on these things. You see on a given day, what works for you. So quickly analyse the wicket and see if there's no help, you

go back to your strengths," he said.

"When sometimes there is help, you try to swing the ball and take some wickets," said the bowler, who has scalped five wickets from three games so far in the World Cup. Bumrah also said opening the bowling with Mohammed Shami will hardly make a difference as all three -- Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Shami and him -- have bowled together a lot of times.

Europe seeks compromise candidate for top EU job

AFP, Brussels

European leaders will try once again yesterday to agree on a compromise EU leader after political groups failed to unite behind one candidate.

None of the leading names to have emerged during last month's European election has won consensus support

from the four main parliamentary parties to become president of the European Commission, the EU's powerful executive arm.

This lowers the threat that Thursday's summit will turn into a stand-off between rival capitals, but could also delay efforts to fill Brussels' top job.

"I remain cautiously optimistic, as those I have spoken to have expressed determination to decide swiftly," EU Council president Donald Tusk said.

Tusk chairs EU summits and has set his colleagues the task of agreeing on a nominee to replace Jean-Claude Juncker as Commission head.

SC stays HC bail to Rana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed until July 1 a High Court verdict that granted bail to Amanur Rahman Khan Rana, former Awami League lawmaker from Tangail-3, in a murder case.

Chamber Judge of the SC's Appellate Division Justice Md Nuruzzaman passed the order following a government petition seeking a stay on the HC judgment.

The judge also sent the government plea to the apex court's full bench for its hearing on July 1.

Following the SC order, Rana cannot walk out of jail until its further order, Deputy Attorney General Md Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam moved the government petition while Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury and Rusho Mostofa appeared for Rana.

Citing the government petition, Bashir said three accused of the case made confessional statements about Rana's involvement in the murder of Jubo League activists -- Shamim and Mamun -- in 2012.

Rana was charge-sheeted in the case, he said, adding that the charge sheet was not placed before the HC during hearing of his bail petition.

The HC on Wednesday gave permanent bail to Rana in the murder case, clearing the way for his release from prison.

Shamim and Mamun were killed on the orders of Amanur and his brother Jahidur Rahman Khan Kakon in Tangail in July 2012, said Ashok Kumar Sinha, investigation officer of the case.

Mamun's father Abdul Aziz lodged the murder case with a Tangail court on July 9 in 2013 against 13 people and Tangail Model Police Station recorded the case on September 21 that year as per the Tangail court order. Rana was shown arrested in the case in May last year.

PHQ warns against graft in constable recruitment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As recruitment of 9,680 police constables is going to begin on June 22 in all 64 districts across the country, the Police Headquarters yesterday warned against all sorts of monetary exchange and other unfair means in this regard.

A release, signed by Assistant Inspector General (Media and PR) Sohail Rana, said, "Appointment will be cancelled and legal action will be taken by the Police Headquarters in case of any kind of monetary exchange or unfair means centring the recruitment of the constables."

The recruitment will end on July 9. Officials said the police headquarters had already decided to send a SP ranked and an additional SP ranked official to all the districts to ensure cent percent fair written examinations, said an official at the PHQ.