

Mabia ushers in

FROM PAGE 1
facilities for weightlifters. They still train at a shabby gymnasium with poor equipment and poor amenities next to the National Sports Council. There is no foreign coach in this discipline and no opportunity to train abroad.

"If we can win gold in SA Games with four months' camp, we can do much better with long-term training," Mabia said, a sentiment echoed by Ziarul Islam, who won gold in men's 96-kg weight category a short while after Mabia's feat.

The Bangladesh Army athlete lifted a total of 262 kilos, comfortably beating a Nepali counterpart by 15 kilos.

The man from Dinajpur was elated for more reasons than one. "I'm happy. This is my first South Asian Games and also my first trip outside the country. I'm very excited and happy with my performance."

The twin gold medals followed by two silver medals and one bronze medal from the same discipline lifted the gloom over the Bangladesh contingent following three days without gold.

And things got better in Kathmandu, where fencer Fatema Mujib won gold in women's individual sabre event, beating her Nepali counterpart 15-10.

The 20-year-old from Habiganj, who

like Ziarul won her first gold in her first appearance at SA Games, had dual reasons to celebrate. "It's my birthday. I didn't reveal it to anyone before. I thought I should reveal it once I win gold," Fatema said.

Rubel Mia won a bronze in fencing while there was a silver medal in mixed team shooting courtesy of Abdullahel Baki and Syeda Atkia Hasan. There were also two silver and one bronze medal in swimming while wrestling won Bangladesh one silver and one bronze medal. One bronze medal came from cycling.

At the end of the day, Bangladesh's total medal-count rose to 89 medals -- seven gold, 26 silver and 56 bronze medals -- Bangladesh's best-ever performance outside the country.

Things are expected to get even better when Bangladesh start their gold-hunt in archery in Pokhara today, where Bangladesh's archers made it to the final of all ten events.

Bangladesh will face Sri Lanka in five of those finals while they will face Bhutan in four and Nepal in one final -- today and tomorrow.

In the same city, Bangladesh women's cricket team will be the favourites when they take on Sri Lanka in the final today.



A few policemen try to stop Awami League men vandalising chairs following a brawl between two factions prior to the first session of the party's Chattogram (north) unit council at the Laldighi Maidan yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

Salam, Aatur at AL Ctg north helm

Brawl breaks out between two factions before council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

In a programme marred by violence, Awami League named MA Salam and Sheikh Aatur Rahman as the president and general secretary of its Chattogram (north) unit for the next three years.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader announced the names yesterday at the triennial council of the unit held after seven years at International Convention Centre in the city's Kazir Dewri area.

Out of 366 delegates present at the programme, 350 cast their votes to elect the leaders.

Salam bagged 223 votes while his closest candidate ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury got 129 votes. And Aatur bagged 196 votes defeating the closest Gias Uddin by 45.

The unit's new president said he would keep working on enhancing the organisation's capacity to make

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Govt plans to set up

FROM PAGE 1
"I don't want that like us someone will have to wait for years [for justice] while bearing the pain of losing relatives. Let all have justice and shelter of law as per constitutional provisions," Hasina told the conference.

This year's judicial conference was organised on the theme "Justice for Peace and Development" at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The PM said she thought the legislature, the judiciary and the executive branches were very much essential for running the state.

"These three organs will operate with their laws and policies. Again, there should be coordination among these three organs, which will advance the country towards peace and development."

Hasina also said the government wanted continuation of democratic process in the country. In this connection, she congratulated the judiciary for its bold step to declare illegal the grabbing of power through the killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

As a result, it was easy to continue the democratic process of the country as well as expediting development, she said.

The premier said the president, as per the constitution, promulgated rules and regulations for distributing government's jobs and run it. The president also promulgates the warrant of precedence.

"Only the president has the jurisdiction

to make any change to these matters. As per the constitution, there is no scope to raise any question in court about the activities of the president."

But it is often seen that courts issue rules regarding the president's jurisdiction, she said.

"If one [organ of the state] interferes in another's job, then it would be tough to run the state or ensure justice or peace or development of the country."

Hasina also described numerous programmes carried out in the country for the development of the judiciary.

Regarding writing verdicts in English, the PM said a Bengali version should be there simultaneously so that people can understand the verdicts properly. She said the judges should consider this matter.

Defending operating mobile courts by executive magistrates, she said those were popular with the people as they confirm immediate punishment to culprits. Due to the mobile courts, the pressure of additional cases on the judiciary has eased, the premier added.

Law Minister Anisul Huq and Law and Justice Division Secretary Md Golam Sarwar also spoke at the programme, chaired by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain.

The daylong conference discussed all relevant issues, including backlog of cases, digitalisation of the judiciary and effective court administration management.

Judges from the Appellate and High Court divisions of the Supreme Court and subordinate courts across the country attended the event.

Fresh onslaught on Meghna

FROM PAGE 1
licence, he said, "The site is not within the jurisdiction of my port limit."

He then expressed his "surprise" when it was pointed out that the incident was taking place within his port limit, which stretches up to Ananda Bazar of Sonargaon, and is controlled from Narayanganj port. He said, "You better see me in person. We will cooperate with you."

Asked exactly what he meant by "cooperation", he said it would be over whether there had been any incident of river-grabbing.

The Port Act and Port Rules requires a BIWTA river port officer to be responsible for keeping a navigable channel and river foreshore free of obstructions and workable for port activities.

This was apparently not being followed in this case.

The continuous encroachment on the major rivers shows that BIWTA, the upazila administration, police, district administration, water development board and environment department all appear to be oblivious to what the highest court's judgements are.

A High Court bench of Justice Moeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Md Ashrafur Kamal in a full text of the latest verdict over river-grabbing in early July observed that killing a river was virtually a collective suicide of all and would kill both the present and the future generations.

The courts also declared rivers as "legal person" and river-grabbing was made a criminal offence, adding that the state must act as the people's trustee of all rivers, hills, sea beaches, forests, canals, beels and wetlands.

Another HC bench in a 2009 landmark judgment detailed the directions for deputy commissioners and other government agencies on how to save the country's rivers.

When contacted about the ongoing sand-filling in Meghna, Md Moniruzzaman Talukdar, deputy commissioner of Munshiganj district, said he was not aware of any such river grabbing.

"I, however, will enquire about it and take action," he said.

Some documents obtained by this correspondent show that the immediate past deputy commissioner of Munshiganj leased out over 12 acres of the Meghna river foreshore and floodplains to a private petroleum purification plant at the said site.

Documents show that the entire proposed 12-acre site is a Khas land, of which 6.6 acres was previously leased out to nearly 50 local farmers and the rest 5.5 acres remained unleased.

The district administration acquired the leased-out portion and then leased the entire government-owned river foreshore and floodplains for development of the private petroleum plant.

BIWTA DIRECTOR TAKES DUBIOUS STANCE

Following repeated exposure of the ruthless river grabbing in February and May in this paper, the National River Conservation Commission carried out an inspection.

In late October, it made a list of 13 companies including power plants, cement factories, ship builders, paper mill and an economic zone as prominent grabbers in the Meghna river.

The commission asked BIWTA to evict all those river encroachers, which in turn formed a five-member committee led by an executive magistrate. The committee was to ascertain how much of the Meghna river was grabbed by those companies.

The committee submitted its report to the BIWTA director Shafiqul Haque.

In early November, this correspondent requested Shafiqul Haque for a copy of the report to know which company had grabbed how much of the river.

Haque, however, refused to share the information.

Pointed out that it was a public document, he said, "I cannot share it because there are many things written about the river grabbers in the report. How can I give a copy to a journalist?"

PLENTY OF LAWS, BUT CUSTODIANS INACTIVE

Muzibur Rahman Howlader, chairman of the National River Conservation Commission, said, "Leasing out river foreshores and floodplains and changing the character [of the river] are all illegal according to river laws, water act and wetland conservation law. We will reverse any such initiative. With a cabinet division direction, an investigation is ongoing on grabbing of Meghna Khas lands and foreshore -- which are integral to a river."

He believes that river encroachment is the result of inaction of the river custodians and their complicity with the very powerful grabbers.

Relevant river custodians do not enforce the laws in effect for conservation, he said, even though police are empowered by sections 133, 135, 137 and 139 of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1898 to arrest river grabbers and produce them before a district magistrate for penalty, he said.

The sections 277 and 278 of the penal code provide for punishment in this regard, he added.

Multiple laws are there in place for river conservation, so one does not have to wait for a High Court judgment to save the country's rivers, he said.

Trump calls on World Bank to stop lending to China

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump lashed out at the World Bank on Friday, blaming the international financial institution for lending money to China.

"Why is the World Bank loaning money to China? Can this be possible? China has plenty of money, and if they don't, they create it. STOP!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

98pc textbooks

FROM PAGE 1
of free textbooks among such a large number of students on the first day of January," NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha told The Daily Star on Thursday.

NCTB prints and distributes textbooks for pre-primary, primary, secondary levels in schools, ebtedayee (equivalent to primary), dakhil (equivalent to secondary) and vocational dakhil in madrasas as per the demand of ministries concerned.

In terms of the number of books, the NCTB is the largest publishing house in the world, claimed its officials.

BEGINNING

Before 2010, the government used to distribute free textbooks at primary level, and secondary students had to buy the books.

Prof Farhadul Islam, NCTB member (textbook), said the Awami League government in 2009 started to consider distribution of free textbooks among all the primary and secondary students.

Before this, many secondary students who were not from financially solvent families failed to buy books and dropped out of schools. They were mostly from low-income groups or the disadvantaged communities of the society.

A set of books cost Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,500.

Printers also often created an artificial crisis by not printing and distributing books in the market. In some cases, books used to hit the stalls in March-April or even later, Farid said.

In 2010, the government distributed 19,90,96,561 copies of textbooks among 2,76,62,529 students.

For 2020 academic year, 66,75,276 copies

of textbooks will be distributed among 32,72,186 students of pre-primary level, 9,85,05,480 copies among 2,04,41,595 primary students and 2,32,43,035 copies among 32,69,715 ebtedayee (equivalent to primary) students.

Besides, 2,30,130 copies of textbooks in five ethnic languages -- Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Sadri and Garo -- will be given to 97,594 students of pre-primary and grade I to III students.

Officials also say 18,01,88,639 copies textbooks will be distributed among 1,24,06,151 secondary Bangla version students and 12,86,892 copies among 80,406 secondary students of English version.

The government will distribute 3,85,37,905 copies among 26,26,625 dakhil students and 53,17,363 copies of textbook among 5,57,198 technical, SSC vocational and dakhil vocational students.

And 9,504 copies of braille books will be given to 750 visually impaired students.

Nearly Tk 1,011 crore will be spent in the process.

A number of school teachers, however, said that the government success is often overshadowed by the quality of textbook's paper, printing and binding.

They also said the physical quality of the textbooks is so poor that on many occasions they don't survive the school year. Illustrations in the books are also not attractive.

The NCTB chairman said they have improved the quality of paper and printing. "We are also addressing others issues. In the books for 2020 you will hardly see these problems," he added.

Malaria cases drop by 62pc

FROM PAGE 1
Dengue was first confined to Dhaka, but it later spread across the country. So far, more than one lakh dengue patients have been treated in hospitals across the country this year.

Experts said it was possible to tackle the disease if Bangladesh took long term, organised steps, similar to the ones it took on malaria.

"We have been working for a long time to eliminate malaria from the country. We had taken a number of short-term and long-term programmes and now we are reaping the benefits of those programmes," Prof Dr Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star.

The authorities, however, could not predict the massiveness of dengue and it was not in the policy planning, he added.

"Now we are taking up long term projects and hopeful that we will be able to eliminate dengue from the country too."

According to the WHO report, an estimated 1.61 billion people in the South-East Asia region are at risk of malaria.

It said in 2018, the region had almost 8 million estimated cases and about 11,600

estimated deaths -- reductions of 69 percent and 70 percent respectively from 2010 -- representing the largest decline among all regions.

Prof Mahmudur Rahman, former director of the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said the measures to check dengue and malaria are different, but if organised and long-term programmes were taken in the case of dengue, it could have been contained.

"Bangladesh has been working for a long time to eliminate malaria in an organised manner. External funds were also a factor," he said.

The report said all countries are targeting to achieve a more than 40 percent reduction in Malaria cases by 2020, and all have strategic plans that aim for malaria elimination by 2030 at the latest.

Three countries accounted for 98 percent of the total reported cases in the region, the main contributor being India (58 percent), followed by Indonesia (30 percent) and Myanmar (10 percent), it said.

The major challenges remain decreased funding, treatment failures and vector resistance

to pyrethroids, the insecticides used against the vectors, the WHO said.

It said the 2000-2015 period saw an exceptional reduction of malaria burden around the world, with many countries with a low burden of malaria having moved quickly towards elimination.

In recent years, however, global progress in reducing the rate of new malaria infections has slowed.

There were an estimated 228 million cases in 2018, compared to 231 million in 2017, while the global incidence rate of malaria, or the number of cases per 1,000 population, fell from 71 in 2010 to 57 in 2014 and remained at similar levels through 2018, the report said.

Global progress in reducing deaths has also slowed.

The major burden of malaria remains heavily concentrated in Africa. In 2018, the African Region accounted for 93 percent of all cases worldwide, according to WHO.

In view of recent trends, the report estimated that the global target of reducing case incidence and death rates of at least 40 percent by 2020, compared with a 2015 baseline, would likely be missed, the report added.

On this day

FROM PAGE 1
force to surrender and assures them that Geneva Convention will be followed to treat the surrendered Pakistan troops. This message is broadcasted in Akashbani radio repeatedly.

Troops of General Sagat Singh enter from the eastern frontier and march forward towards the west. A faction advanced towards Ashuganj while another reached Ashuganj Bridge.

A proposal of immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani troops from Bangladesh is granted in UN general assembly. Indian representative in the assembly Sri Samar Sen says that Pakistan had to accept Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign state. To restore peace in the subcontinent, Awami

League chief Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has to be freed.

The 57th Mountain division of Indian army reaches Brahmanbaria. Pakistani troops left the district before they reached. Meanwhile, S-Force reach Sarail without any resistance.

In the evening, the 11th East Bengal Regiment enter Azampur and Durgapur beside Ashuganj. 2nd East Bengal Regiment and a battalion of soldiers advance in between Sarail and Shahbajpur. The 10th Bihar Regiment of Indian army's 311th Mountain Brigade gather south of Durgapur.

Source: Shafiqul Islam, KM Bir Uttam Major General. Muktiyuddhe Bangladesh, Dhaka: Agami Prokashon, 1995: 212.



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Graduate School of Business
Plot-16, Block-B, Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka-1212, Room No- 2025. Hotline: +880 9612 939393
Tel: 8431645-53, 8432065-76 Ext- 2119, 2133. Fax: 8431991. e-mail: gsb@iub.edu.bd