ENVIRONMENT NEWSLETTER

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This issue of the Environment Newsletter includes the following items:

- 1) <u>Green Voice anniversary!</u>
- 2) <u>Climate change: Koira women's long procession for water</u>
- 3) Green Prime Minister of Ireland

1. Green Voice anniversary!



Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN) congratulates all of Green Voice on its 14th anniversary. The organization marked the occasion with a colorful parade and a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka city. The environment movement is basically a movement for the young and the future generations. It aims at leaving the world in a better condition for them. Young people therefore need to make the environment movement as its own.

From this perspective, BEN is very happy to see the growth of Green Voice over the years. It has drawn a large number of students and other members of the youth to its fold. Green Voice works in close collaboration of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA). Each year, Green Voice members serve as volunteers and participate actively in the BAPA-BEN conference. BEN hopes that in the coming years, Green Voice will succeed in mobilizing more young Bangladeshis for protection of environment.



2. Climate change -- Koira women's long procession for water

Bangladesh is one of the countries that are worst affected by climate change. Salinity intrusion is one of the ways in which climate change is affecting the coastal people of the country. This is borne out by the sufferings of the people of Koira Upazilla of Khulna, one of the coastal districts. People of the area have a hard time to fetch drinking water during the dry season. Tubewell water is too saline to be potable. During the rainy season, they can depend on rain. But during the dry season they have to fetch water from surface water sources, such as ponds, lying afar. Decades pass by, but this misery persists and in fact is getting aggravated. Often the women – who generally undertake the task of fetching water – have to trek more than five kilometers to get a pitcher full of water.

Yet there are solutions, namely construction of special ponds that can hold rainwater for use in the dry season. However, the authorities do not take necessary initiatives because the poor

people of the Upazilla do not command much political voice and clout. Meanwhile, they themselves lack the organization to undertake the task. BEN hopes that the exposure of the problem through press reports as above will draw attention of the authorities. In the long run, effective village level institutions, such as Village Councils – as proposed by BEN Founder, Dr. Nazrul Islam in his book, "Bangabandhu's Dream and Bangladesh's Villages" – need to be set up so that the people's demands are properly mediated and people's labor and material resources can be mobilized to implement local level solutions on a self-reliant basis, without always waiting for initiatives of the government from above. BEN hopes that the government will heed the proposal.

3. Green Phille Minister of Iteland

3. Green Prime Minister of Iceland

Katrin Jakobsdottir, the 41-year-old chairwoman of the Left-Green Movement, has been elected Prime Minister of Iceland. She is one of the most well-liked politicians in Iceland, and has been a former education minister and avowed environmentalist. She has pledged to set Iceland on the path to carbon neutrality by 2040.

Iceland had frequent changes in the government in recent years, with four prime ministers in only two years. Its national politics have been tainted by public distrust and scandal. Katrin's coalition government include parties from both the Left and Right. A democratic socialist, Katrín will require considerable skills to hold them together. However, Katrin is viewed to be suitable for this purpose because she is known to be a bridge-building leader. Because of the very nature of the coalition, Katrin's government is not expected to make any "revolutionary change." However, using her conciliatory approach, Kristin may achieve positive incremental changes.

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