

Study finds how embryo sticks to uterus

AP, Washington

In research that could lead both to new ways to treat infertility and new types of contraceptives, scientists have identified molecules that help embryos stick to the wall of the uterus.

Timing is everything, the study shows.

By analyzing carbohydrate molecules on the surface of the uterus during different times of the female cycle and by identifying a protein, called L-selectin, on the surface of the embryo, researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, learned for the first time how the embryo sticks to the wall.

Susan J. Fisher, a co-author of the study appearing Friday in the journal Science, said coatings on the uterus and on the surface of the embryo act like puzzle pieces that touch and quickly lock.

"One piece of the puzzle is a protein on the embryo and the other is a very specialized carbohydrate sugar structure," said Fisher.

The sugar molecule on the surface of the uterus is secreted for only a short time during a woman's monthly cycle and the embryo, with its L-selectin coating, must arrive at the uterus during this time.

"It has to take place in exact synchrony or you don't get pregnant," said Fisher, noting that failure to implant on the uterus is one of the most common causes of a failed conception.

"Only 50 to 60 percent of all conceptions advance beyond 20 weeks and of pregnancies that are lost, 75 percent represent a failure of implantation," she said.

With this understanding of implantation, researchers may find new ways to help women time their efforts to get pregnant, both naturally and in fertility clinics.

Fisher said it may be possible in fertility clinics to coat embryos with the sugar molecule and help uterus adhesion.

"If we can launch the implantation (process) in the culture dish then you might be able to implant fewer

embryos and have greater certainty" of a successful pregnancy, she said. Currently, fertility clinics can prompt successful pregnancies 25 to 40 percent of the time. By more precisely timing implantation, based on the readiness of the uterus to adhere to the embryo, these chances could improve, said Fisher.

The new research may also help develop contraceptives that are not based on hormones, but on blocking the implantation of the embryo.

"A lot of women don't use the pill because of the hormonal effects," said Fisher. "If you had a drug that went directly to the molecules that control adhesion it would be not only very successful, but also have many less side effects."

Fisher said the new research may also help control the risk of pre-eclampsia, which is the most common cause of maternal death in the industrial world. She said the fundamental cause of the disorder is a shallow attachment of the placenta to the uterus wall. Normally, the placenta forms a strong connection to blood vessels deep within the uterus, but this fails to happen in pre-eclampsia. The placenta grows from both the uterus and the embryo and is the organ that provides nourishment and blood supply to the developing fetus. But it all starts with implantation on the uterus wall.

Six shops gutted in Chandpur

UNB, Chandpur

Six shops gutted in a fire at Raghunathpur Bazaar in sadar upazila Wednesday night.

Witnesses said the fire originated from an electric short circuit in a shop and soon engulfed the adjoining furniture, grocery and stationary shops.

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze.

Morshed

FROM PAGE 1 here in Bangladesh because of its possible fallout.

Dhaka is trying to know the minds of the other affected nations through Bangladesh missions in those countries, such as Egypt, Kuwait and Jordan, who are also strong allies of the United States.

Expressing dismay over the US government decision about Bangladesh, Khan recalled US President George W Bush praising Bangladesh as a strong ally of global coalition against international terrorism and Secretary of State Powell's remark billing Bangladesh as a role model.

The foreign minister hoped that the US government would soon withdraw the restrictive measures against Bangladesh.

In reply to a question Khan said the US decision does not reflect any change in their policy or attitude towards Bangladesh.

He reaffirmed that Bangladesh is a tolerant democratic country with religious harmony and is "totally committed to its fight against terrorism in all its forms and kinds".

The foreign minister hoped that the global fight against terrorism, which is prompted by the September 11 incidents in USA -- should not be weakened through any such uncalled-for actions.

N'ganj polls

FROM PAGE 1

The winner ward commissioners are Mohar Ali (AL) in Ward 1, Jansher Ali, (Independent) in Ward 2, Sawkat Hashem Shaku (Ind.) in Ward 3, Maksudul Alam Khandokar (4 Party) in Ward 4, Md Mohiuddin Proshan (JP) in Ward 5, Azhar Hossain (4 Party) in Ward 6, Alhaz Obayduallah (AL) in Ward 7, Waliuddin Bhuiyan (AL) in Ward 8 and Kamrul Hassan Manna (AL) in Ward 9.

The three women commissioners elected to the reserved seats are Minuara Begum in Ward 1, Dilara Masud Moyna in Ward 2 and Khodeza Khanana Nasrin in Ward 3. All are backed by the Alliance.

Afroza Sultana Hazera who lost in Ward 3 has demanded recounting of votes. She alleged that presiding officers at four centers did not supply result sheets to her polling agents.

Meanwhile the port city took a festive mood yesterday. The winner commissioners brought out colourful processions in the town to celebrate their victory.

The southern part of the town including the DIT Avenue was decorated with thousands of candles, which was the election symbol of Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy.

After announcement of the result, Ivy went to the residence of Nurul Islam Sarder to meet him. Islam was not at his residence.

Haji flight from Sylhet begins

UNB, Sylhet

Bangladesh Biman, the national flag-carrier, yesterday started operating hajj flights for the first time from Sylhet Osmani International Airport.

On the first day, a flight with 30 pilgrims departed the airport for Jeddah at 3pm. The flight was delayed by three hours causing sufferings to the pilgrims.

One stabbed to death at Bogra: 4 arrested

UNB, Bogra

One person was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants in the town's Badurtala area Thursday night.

Police said a gang of four swooped on Babul, 45, manager of Khan Shoe Store at Chhahiruddin Market while he was returning home from workplace at about 10.30pm. They stabbed Babul in the chest and fled the scene. He died on way to hospital.

Reasons behind the killing could not be known.

Police arrested four people, including a woman, in connection with the killing.

Indian citizen held in Rajshahi

BSS, Rajshahi

An Indian citizen was arrested from Rajabari under Godagari upazila in the district Thursday night, police sources said.

The arrested person was identified as Hasan Ali, 38, son of Abul Bashar of Kaharpar village under Laigola thana in Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team from Godagari thana raided the area and arrested Hasan Ali as he failed to produce any valid document regarding his entry into Bangladesh.

Police sent him to court hajat after recording a case with the Godagari Police Station.

Tofail

FROM PAGE 1 He was last shown arrested in a murder case.

"The government arrested me to harass me without any charge," Tofail told newsmen after his release.

Thousands of people are passing days in imprisonment without justice, he said. "The government is trying to destroy those families."

Meanwhile, the court order to release Saleem Samad did not reach Gazipur Jail till yesterday.

Saleem Samad's brother Shamim Samad told The Daily Star that the copy of High Court order was sent to Gazipur through Express Mail Service (EMS) from GPO, Dhaka, on January 15.

The post master of Gazipur Post Office told Shamim Samad yesterday that the copy of the order might reach the post office today and it would be sent to Gazipur jail authorities immediately via the District Judge's office.

Saleem Samad was arrested on November 29 last year in connection with a sedition case. He was put under detention on December 24.

Grace period

FROM PAGE 1 first group of visa holders. That prompted angry demonstrations and a lawsuit against the federal government.

Most were detained because their visas had expired and were released pending a hearing on their cases.

Since those detentions, the Justice Department has embarked on a more intensive campaign to justify the programme and ensure that affected people get notified. The registration is part of a broader INS plan to set up, by 2005, a comprehensive system detailing who is entering, leaving and staying in the United States.

Long-term visitors to the United States from Indonesia, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Bangladesh will have from February 24 to March 28 to register at local INS offices. This does not affect US citizens, diplomats, refugees or permanent resident aliens--those holding "green cards."

Most of those required to register are in the United States as students or business travelers or are visiting relatives.

Immigration lawyers say many people are afraid to come forward, in part because of an INS backlog that can snarl their paperwork and make them vulnerable to deportation if their visas expire while they are awaiting a final outcome of their cases.

"In light of the mass, warrantless arrests, which we believe to be illegal, it is difficult for us to recommend, in good faith, for people to come forward to register," Pete Schey, an attorney for several immigrants in California, said earlier this month.



Performers dance at the Ramna Batamul in the city yesterday to bid adieu to the Bangla month of Poush.

Jubo League leader shot dead

FROM PAGE 1 immediately after the incident where he died at about 9:45am yesterday.

Wife of the victim Marjina Begum, who witnessed the attack, said that she attempted to save him from the attackers but the assailants pushed her down and left the place.

She also alleged that the miscreants were threatening Islam of dire consequences for his role during the Operation Clean Heart.

She said her husband has been killed because he helped the law enforcers arrest criminals over the last three months.

Locals, who gathered at the hospital to see the body of the Jubo League leader, said that Islam went into hiding as soon as the four-party coalition government came to power. But he came back immediately after the anti-crime drive began.

Sources said Chairman Ismail Gazi, an influential man of the locality, also thought that Islam had a role in his arrest during the crack-down on criminals.

According to the police, Islam himself led a group of muscle-men. Two groups of the area

from Botarkandi, Bancharampur, in Comilla, district. He left behind two sons and two daughters (of his first wife) and his second wife Sajju also has three daughters.

Marjina received the body from the morgue after post-mortem. Sources said that his body was supposed to be taken to the Awami League office, but police did not allow it.

The duty officer of Pallabi Police Station said that none from the victim's family went to the police station to file any case till last night. Police picked up at least ten people for interrogation in connection with the killing.

Police sources believe that it was the first revenge killing since the withdrawal of the joint forces on January 9.

Mosharaf Hossain, driver of a yellow taxi, Dhaka Metro Pa-11-1493, who took Islam to the DMCH, claimed that the victim could be saved if the physicians gave him treatment immediately.

Hossain said when Islam was taken to the DMCH, on-duty doctors asked for police clearance, and he had to take him to the Pallabi Police Station and later again to the hospital with clearance from police.

Islam, son of Sundar Ali, was

from Botarkandi, Bancharampur, in Comilla, district. He left behind two sons and two daughters (of his first wife) and his second wife Sajju also has three daughters.

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Hasina

FROM PAGE 1 to only 20 million dollars before 1996.

In her reaction to the AL-backed candidate's victory in Narayanganj municipal polls, Hasina thanked voters in Narayanganj and asked how her party could lose all the parliamentary seats in Narayanganj in the last general elections.

Tarajuddin murder Court order on naraji petition Jan 30

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court Dhaka, on Thursday fixed January 30 for order on the naraji petition (no-confidence) in the Tarajuddin murder case.

Magistrate Shafiq Anwar issued the order upon a petition by the complainant of the case, Mohammad Nurul Islam, submitted on November 30 last year.

The petition was filed for dropping the names of Sajedul Islam Chowdhury alias Dipu Chowdhury, son of former state minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Sourav and Rana from the chargesheet.

In the petition, the complainant said names of Dipu Chowdhury, Sourav and Rana were included in the chargesheet submitted on November 6 last year though he and other prosecution witnesses did not mention their names to the investigation officer (IO). The chargesheet was submitted against Dipu Chowdhury and 22 others.

The complainant, brother of Tarajuddin, on November 30 had also submitted an affidavit before the court, saying that Dipu, Sourav and Rana were not present on the spot when the incident took place, thereby contradicting the FIR in the case, filed by him.

Tarajuddin, president of a cooperative society at Narda in the city's Uttara area, was gunned down by an armed gang on February 8, 2001.

Ansars-robbers

FROM PAGE 12 the Magura-Dhaka highway yesterday.

The dead were identified as Zahid Hossen, 20, rickshawpuller and Anath Biswas, 22, passenger of the rickshaw. Zahid died on the spot while Anath succumbed to his injuries at Magura Sadar hospital.

Driver of the vehicle fled the scene.

Liner service

FROM PAGE 12 of the other three is uncertain.

The Ostrich is now anchored at the Hularhat Steamer Station in Pirojpur. A group of departmental engineers is repairing the steamer, said the authorities.

The Turn is docked in Narayanganj and the Shela is at the Dhaka workshop for repair.

Craze for soft drinks

FROM PAGE 12 soft drinks among young Bangladeshis, the potential for expanding their market in Bangladesh seems promising.

To pump up sales, these soft-drink manufacturers are looking to more variations in terms of size, colour, flavouring and even calorie intake, especially aimed to reach teens, a critical consumer for the multibillion-dollar soft-drink industry. Hence, there are Diet Coke and Pepsi as well as new versions of soft drinks including lemon and apple flavourings such as Slice and Mirinda.

Local soft drink manufacturers are also vying for a piece of the pie and have come up with products like Pran, RC Cola, Virgin, Euro Cola, Shark energy drink etc. In an effort to claim a bigger share of the market, they also hope to unveil more variations of their products in future.

Given the competition in the market, these companies are making ongoing innovations in the industry and rolling out newer products. As such, various new

brands of soft drinks continue to hit the shelves on a regular basis. Over the last few years, soft-drink companies have seen their business grow in volume and are adopting new marketing techniques to boost sales.

The soft-drink culture has successfully integrated itself into the city life. From the consumer's perspective, any social function is incomplete without soft drinks on the menu. In some cases, the traditional Borhani in functions like marriages also find itself competing with Coke or Pepsi. The roadside vendors of coconut drinks are now all but extinct in the big city. Given its current rate of expansion, it is not hard to imagine that the soft-drink industry will make inroads into every nook and corner of the country.

It is however important to monitor the process of manufacturing these drinks to see if the ingredients used meet health standards. Also, there should be awareness about the possible health risks due to large-scale consumption of soda pop.



The only daughter of Nepal's King Gyanendra, Princess Prearana Shah, 25, right, exchanges garlands with her husband-to-be Raj Bahadur Singh, 29, during a pre-wedding ceremony at the royal palace in Kathmandu yesterday.

Moulvibazar gas field

FROM PAGE 1 Bibiyana field.

The country's demand for gas has already exceeded the projected quantity, by over 100mmcf. Against a projected demand of 1,127mmcf in 2003, gas consumption has already shot up to 1240mmcf during peak hours, clogging up the existing gas pipeline capacities.

During this summer, when power consumption will increase by another few hundred megawatts, the demand for gas will also go up.

Discovered in 1999, the Moulvibazar field bears the legacy of the Magurchhara fire. The Magurchhara field, which is also known as Moulvibazar 1, blew out during its drilling, owing to inept operation on the part of Unocal's predecessor, Occidental, on June 14, 1997.

Since discovery, Unocal conducted all scientific studies of the field and assessed that the field had about 350 billion cubic feet (bcf) gas, a quantum indicating that it is a small gas field.

However, Unocal refrained from making an official announcement as that would have contractually compelled it to submit a development plan.

Instead, the company went on hammering the gas export issue.

However, energy experts opposed it saying that Bangladeshi gas reserves were too small to support the idea of export, which requires a commitment of at least seven trillion cubic feet of gas.

A couple of experts from the chemical engineering department of BUET and the state minister for energy supported gas export, saying that Bangladesh had enough gas to make the move.

They argued that Petrobangla was giving 'fabricated and unusually high' gas demand projections. Besides, they said, allowing export would give the oil companies adequate incentive to invest more in the 'stagnant gas market' of Bangladesh.

The majority of the members of a national-level Gas Utilisation Committee opted for meeting domestic demand first, saying that the existing gas reserves could not even cope with the ever-increasing demand.

A seven per cent demand growth rate projection of the committee has already proven too conservative, as the real demand has exceeded that projection.

Even if such conservative projection is taken into account, Bangladesh needs 98mmcf of gas from the Bibiyana gas field in 2007, and 122mmcf in 2008, 249mmcf

in 2010 and 500mmcf in 2012.

Unocal wants to export 500mmcf of gas to Delhi by investing one billion dollars in pipelines in India alone. Even if this project is approved now, the company cannot begin export before 2008, one year after the country's need for Bibiyana gas will arise.

State Minister Mosharrif Hossain, an advocate of Unocal's agenda, recently told the BBC Bangladesh would need Bibiyana gas in 2007.

If the Moulvibazar gas field was developed, it would actually be Unocal's first complete field development.

It inherited the Jalalabad field from Occidental. Then Occidental was again given the Jalalabad field, which has 1.6tcf gas, for mysterious reasons.

The Jalalabad field was discovered by Scimitar but was sealed off as the contract with that company had expired. Typically, a discovered gas field is kept for Petrobangla as a 'ring fenced gas field'.

Two wells were drilled in Moulvibazar, one up to the depth of 3,510 metres with 30 metres of gas-bearing sands. A delineation well encountered about 31 meters of gas-bearing sand.

Amal Sen

FROM PAGE 12 the liberation war of 1971, among others.

He was elected general secretary of the Leninist Communist Party in 1972 and of the United Communist League in 1986.

Sen was elected president of the United Workers Party in 1992 and re-elected in 1995 and made a central committee member of the United Workers Party at its sixth congress in 2000.

Different political parties expressed deep condolence for the death of the veteran leader.

The body of Sen will be brought to the Workers Party office in the city at 3.00pm today and will be carried to the Krishak Andolon-famed Egarokhan village in Narail for burial tomorrow.

The Workers Party expressed profound shock at the death and finalised some memorial programmes.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Samajantrik Dal, Jatiya Gano Front, Jatiya Gonotantrik Sramik Federation, Progotishil Chhatra Jote, Bangladesh Khet Majur Samity, Samajantrik Sramik Front, Samajantrik Chhatra Front, Samajantrik Mahila Forum, Bangladesh Garments Sramik Mukti Andolon, Gono Sangskrit Front, Bangladesh Students Union, Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri also expressed condolence.