

IEB turns 56 today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) will celebrate its 55th founding anniversary by observing Engineers Day today.

To mark the occasion, IEB has organised various programmes spanning seven days, which include discussions, meetings, seminars and workshops.

The main objective of celebrating Engineers Day is to enhance professional skills and disseminate engineering knowledge to people, said IEB leaders at a press conference yesterday at the IEB headquarters.

Highlighting the various initiatives by the IEB to develop a skilled workforce, IEB General Secretary Mohammad Nurul Huda said, to stay afloat in the competitive market of tomorrow, work transparency and accountability should be established.

The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank or other foreign organisation funds most of the large projects in our country. As such foreign engineers are employed. So in spite of our engineers' skills, they get no opportunity to work in large projects, explained Huda.

"Professional engineers, therefore, are now leaving the country as their opportunities get limited everyday," he added.

Engineers Mohammad Manwar Hossain Chowdhury, SM Khabirzaman, Mohammad Kamruzzaman, Farid Ahmed and Mohammad Abdus Sabur were also present while IEB Vice-president Dr. MAK Ajad presided over the conference.

Villagers go on rampage as accident kills 2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushiya

Angry villagers damaged 30 transport vehicles of the Islamic University (IU) following a road accident that killed two people in the Satmire area on the Kushiya-Khulna highway in the district yesterday.

At least 20 IU students were also injured by rampaging villagers who put up barricades across the highway holding up traffic for about four hours.

Police said a campus-bound vehicle of the university carrying students knocked down Chiarunnessa, 65, and Shuvo, 6, of Satmire at about 9:00am, killing both grandmother and grandson.

After the incident, the villagers blocked traffic and demanded punishment for the killer and compensation for the victims' families.

Police was dispatched to the spot but failed to control the angry mob who attacked IU vehicles injuring 20 student commuters.

Later at around noon, an additional police force brought the situation under control. The damage was estimated at Tk 50 lakh.

PWD engr jailed for 7 years in corruption case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A PWD engineer has been sentenced to seven years imprisonment in a corruption case.

Mohammad Majnul Ahsan, Judge of Khulna Divisional Special Court, pronounced the verdict on Monday.

The court also fined the accused Tk 3.20 lakh, in default, he has to suffer two more years in jail.

According to the prosecution, sub-assistant engineer Tajuddin misappropriated construction materials worth Tk 3.15 lakh from Charehat PWD warehouse during his tenure from September 21, 1989 to December 17, 1994.

A corruption case was recorded with Khalishpur thana on May 31, 1997.

Thirteen prosecution witnesses gave their deposition in the court.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 7		6-30 pm
May 8	5-20 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Strong local government needed to halve poverty

Prof. Yunus at city discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has no alternative to strengthening the local government if it wants to halve poverty by 2015, Grameen Bank Chairman Professor Muhammad Yunus said yesterday.

"There has to be a clear mention of the local government's role in poverty reduction in the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper). The central government alone cannot attain the target of halving poverty by 2015," Prof. Yunus told a discussion meeting at the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

The Local Government Consultative Group (LGCG), an independent platform of experts and civil society members who

believe in empowering the local government, organised the discussion to release finds of a survey on newly elected Union Parishad (UP) chairmen.

"Only the existence of a local government ministry and minister is not enough. We need leaders working for the cause of local government institutions," said Prof. Yunus, also LGCG convenor. He invited ideas from other participants so that the LGCG can put forward an agenda to the government to make local government bodies more functional and effective.

If the government holds the Upazila Parishad polls this year, it will give a complete shape to local administration tiers, he said.

Other participants also called

for shoring up local government institutions. They suggested the institutions be independent in terms of budget allocation and relieved of unnecessary intervention of lawmakers.

The LGCG member secretary, Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, presented the finds where he said young, relatively honest and active leadership have emerged because of the recent UP polls to over 4,000 unions.

According to the survey conducted by the Power and Participation Research Centre on 1,349 UP chairmen in 53 districts, 33 per cent of the newly elected chairmen are below 40 years of age.

The dominant social images of the chairmen are, influential -- 53 per cent, good and honest -- 48 per

cent and rich and wealthy -- 43 per cent. Twenty-six per cent of the chairmen are considered promising. The encouraging feature is that only seven per cent of them are dubbed criminals and two per cent touts.

Money power to win the polls proved to be a major factor, which is evident in the fact that each winner spent Tk 6.8 lakh on average, says the survey.

Only eight per cent of the chairmen have no political affiliation, while 42.8 per cent are affiliated with the BNP and 30.3 per cent with the Awami League.

BRAC Executive Director Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, former minis

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Manjurul Ahsan Khan, a leader of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, speaks at the eighth congress of the party in Dhaka yesterday.

Jamaat-BNP regime to fall flat on misrule

Hasina tells lawyers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has said the BNP-Jamaat regime is digging its own grave through misrule and misdeeds.

"The ruling alliance has miserably failed to run the country and it has no right to cling to power any more", she said reiterating her demand for immediate exit of the government.

"The day is not far away when this repressive and corrupt regime will crumble under a mass upsurge," Hasina said at a view exchange meeting with the newly elected executives of the Mymensingh Bar Association at

the party's Dhanmondi office in the city yesterday.

"People are already fed up with the misrule of the alliance government marked by violence, murder, rape and price hike of essentials," she added.

The leader of the opposition urged the lawyers to support the Awami League's movement for unseating the government.

Hasina alleged that the wrong policies of the government have led to price hike of essentials, although the people's income did not rise correspondingly.

The former prime minister claimed that during the Awami League's reign prices of essentials

remained stable and in some cases dropped, while the income of the people went up. "Where is the taxpayers' money going now?" Hasina asked the government.

Without giving any proof, she also accused that the prime minister and her family members siphoned off funds from the state-owned banks. She also brought unsubstantiated allegations of link between some major bomb blasts and the prime minister.

The former prime minister claimed that her government had pushed the country to a certain stage of development, while the present regime is engaged in loot

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Top law ministry official made HC judge despite contempt case

UNB, Dhaka

A top official of the law ministry facing charge of contempt of court for violating a Supreme Court order has been made judge of the High Court.

"It's unprecedented and shows lack of sense and profundity of the government," observed an eminent lawyer while commenting on the induction of the official, who faces the contempt charge, as additional judge of the High Court. "It's simply a pick-and-choose matter," he added requesting anonymity.

While he was the secretary of the law ministry, the High Court served a show-cause notice on him and two others on March 23 asking them to explain why contempt proceedings should not be brought against them for violating its judgement that was affirmed by the Supreme Court.

He was however granted seven days' time yesterday to clarify his position by a bench comprising Justice Hamidul Haq and Justice Jinat Ara.

Journalist abduction Agitating pressmen attacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Criminals yesterday swooped on journalists at Sitakunda who were demonstrating for rescue of abducted local Press Club President and correspondent of the Ittefaq Atahar Siddiq Khosru.

As Khosru remained missing for six days since his abduction, his eldest brother Azhar Siddiq Jahangir filed a case with the Double Mooring Police Station yesterday afternoon.

He named four persons including a local influential political leader as suspects.

Khosru was abducted while going to a relative's house at Maderbari from Dewanhat at around 10:00pm Wednesday.

Local journalists yesterday

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Police club activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, who were demonstrating against shortage of water, gas and electricity, in front of the High Court. At least 50 of them were wounded yesterday.

Victim of police 'brutality'

Dead day-labourer allegedly buried without autopsy

ANWAR ALLI, Rajshahi

A day labourer died due to alleged police brutality at Ekbarpur village in Mougachhi union of Mohonpur upazila here yesterday.

The body of the victim Abdul Gaffar, 45, son of late Abdul Jabbar of Ekbarpur village, bore a deep cut on the forehead and a bruise on the lower abdomen, witnesses said.

Gaffar's burial was also performed in a hurry without any autopsy due to alleged coercion by police although an unnatural death case was filed, sources said.

They said a group of eight policemen led by Sub-inspector Sanaulah and Assistant Sub-inspector Fayeazur Rahman went to the village at around 1:00am yesterday to arrest one Abdul Mannan, an absconding accused in a case.

They called Gaffar out of his house and asked him to lead them to Mannan's house. They beat Gaffar up with batons and rifle

butts. Gaffar, who had already been ill, soon succumbed to his injuries.

Meanwhile, villagers drawn to the spot by the commotion were agitated to find Gaffar's body. They confined the policemen inside the village all night and let them go at about 9:00am. The let-up followed assurances by Mougachhi Union Parishad Chairman Abul Hossain that the victim's family will get justice and by police that the victim's wife Rizia Khatun would get Tk 50,000.

At around 11:00am, as police prepared to bury the body without an autopsy or filing a case, a group of journalists reached the spot to report the incident. At this time, a police officer took the victim's elder son Shahin away with him and returned a few hours later with the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Reaz Ahmed's permission to bury the body without autopsy.

ADM Reaz Ahmed told journalists that he gave the permission following a request by the

victim's son and there was "no objection" from the police or the UP chairman.

The Mougachhi UP chairman told newsmen that he brokered a settlement between the police and the victim's family considering that "it would be good for the family".

Overwhelmed at her husband's death, a wailing Rizia Khatun told this correspondent that her husband died as police beat him up black and blue.

None of the senior officers of the Mohonpur Police Station could be contacted. Duty Officer Khater Ali claimed that none of the eight policemen were responsible for the victim's death, and said that Gaffar died "after developing some problems in the head."

He denied that the eight policemen were confined by villagers and said the body was buried without autopsy as desired by the victim's family.

Cops in the dock

Human rights seminar bashes police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday branded the police as repressors, corrupt and human rights violators.

Organised by the Freedom Foundation and Odhikar, a non-government organisation, the discussion on "The role of law-enforcing agencies in relation to the protection of human rights in Bangladesh" was held at CIRDAP auditorium.

The discussion centred on police affinity to bribery, tendency to tamper with evidences and various such issues.

"They are neither custodians of human rights nor friends of the people. Rather, they are considered as patrons of criminals," said Masood Alam Ragib Ahsan who presented the keynote paper.

The speakers suggested immediate reforms in the police force to turn them into effective law enforcers and protectors of human rights.

"This long pending problem cannot not be changed overnight," said Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, who addressed the discussion as chief guest.

"The police should not be blamed alone for corruption. Are we not corrupt as well?" he asked, adding that the police were very much part of this society.

The discussion also covered lack of training and accountability of the police and non-implementation of recommendations made by various police reforms commission.

Top 'criminals' nabbed in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two notorious criminals including a listed one were held in the city yesterday and Monday.

A police contingent of Double Mooring thana conducted a raid following a tip off and arrested Shakhawat Hossain alias Babul, 32, from Mogoltuli area on Monday evening.

Babul has nine criminal cases and three general diaries lodged against him with the Double Mooring, Panchlaish and Bayezid police stations.

Meanwhile, Chandgaon thana police took in a wanted robber Md. Musa alias Kala Musa yesterday afternoon.

Musa is believed to be the second-in-command of Payeenya Jamal who is the leader of an infamous gang of pirates. Musa is an accused in four criminal cases including murder.

Researchers race to patent SARS virus

AP, San Francisco

Researchers around the world are racing to patent the SARS virus and its genetic material.

Several biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies, the federal government and researchers in Canada and Hong Kong have filed SARS-related patent applications in recent weeks, claiming ownership of everything from bits of genetic material to the virus itself.

Nonprofit and government agencies said their applications are intended to keep the SARS work in the public domain while private companies said patents will protect their research and develop-

ment costs.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for instance, claims ownership of the virus and its entire genetic content.

Rather than trying to profit if such a patent were awarded, the CDC says its application is to prevent others from monopolizing the field.

"The whole purpose of the patent is to prevent folks from controlling the technology," said CDC spokesman Llewellyn Grant. "This is being done to give the industry and other researchers reasonable access to the samples."

Still, the CDC faces international

SARS virus very resilient

Can spread through contact with contaminated objects

Bleach can kill virus in 5 minutes

Virus can survive in human faeces and urine for up to 4 days

Virus can survive 3 weeks in sub-zero temperatures

Sources: WHO AFP