

## GM foods pose threat to health, environment

Speakers tell dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of environmentalists and NGO activists yesterday expressed concern over gradual introduction of Genetically Modified (GM) foods in the country, saying that such foods are harmful to human health and environment and a means to marginalise the small farmers.

Some companies and NGOs are trying to promote GM foods, which pose a threat to biosafety, but the government has no policy in this regard, they said at a dialogue on 'Genetic Engineering in Food and Agriculture: Threat to Farmers and Human Health'.

Jagrata Juba Shingha (JJS) and ActionAid Bangladesh in association with Food Security Network and the European Commission organised the dialogue at Civic Inn in the city.

Farida Akter, executive director of Ubinig, said the USAID-supported Biotech Activities is trying to promote fruit and shoot borer-resistant eggplant, late blight-resistant potato and drought- and salinity-tolerant rice, while GM papaya is also on the list of import.

"This is very alarming both for the agriculture and human health," she said in her presentation citing a number of examples where such foods have negative impacts.

Biotech industry claims that GM crops have higher yields, but in reality they have a lower yield or at best the same yield as non-GM crops, she said.

The industry's claim that GM crops need less pesticides has also been proved false, Farida Akter said, adding that intensification of such crops increases possibility of monocultures, which is true for Argentina. The country used to be a granary of the world, but now it has soy monocultures and has become the exporter of oil feed for cattle in Europe and Asia, she said.

Quoting from a publication, GM Contamination Report, she said 39 countries are known to have been affected by an incident of GM contamination, illegal planting or adverse agricultural side-effects since 1996.

Centre for Sustainable Development (CFSD) Secretary General Mahfuzullah said the claim that GM crops will meet the increasing demand for food worldwide is not true. "There will always be hunger, because it is not related to food production but to politics. Bangladesh has become self-reliant on food production, but 40 percent of people still could not afford more than two square meals a day."

The farmers and the traditional cultivation system will be destroyed due to the dominance of profit-driven multinational companies trying to promote GM foods, he noted.

Pieter Jansen of Both Ends, a Netherlands-based environment organisation, said that there can be co-existence of GM, traditional and organic crops as is there in the European Union, but that requires national legislation if it is to be applied in any other countries.

JJS Executive Director ATM Zakir Hossain and ActionAid's interim Country Director Shoyeb Siddique also spoke at the dialogue moderated by Syeda Rizwana Hasan, director of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association.

## Elect honest candidates to bring about positive change

Says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday called for electing the honest and competent candidates in the upcoming general election to bring about a positive change in the country.

Only a free and fair election can ensure the establishment of a pro-people government that can be a catalyst for the much-desired development, he said.

The year 2007 would be a year of the political and economic emancipation of common people if a united movement can be forged against the misrule of BNP-Jamaat alliance, Dr Kamal said while inaugurating the 11-Party's campaign week for 23-point demand at Muktagang in the city.

The 23-point demand programme is aimed at establishing the rule of law in the country and putting an end to corruption and misrule, he said.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon said people's support for the programme is a must for establishing a non-communal and democratic society.

Gano Azadi Dal President and Coordinator of 11-Party Haji Abdus Samad presided over the inaugural ceremony. WPB General Secretary Bimal Biswas, Gonorantri Party President Nurul Islam, Majdur Party General Secretary Zakir Hossain, Communist Kendra Joint Secretary Ashit Baran Roy and other leaders were also present.

Later, leaders and activists of the 11-Party took out a procession that marched up to Bahadur Shah Park in the old part of the city.

## RMG factory ransacked in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers of a garment factory in the city yesterday ransacked some of the office rooms following an attack on four of their colleagues by some former staffs on Sunday night.

Around 100 workers of Haesong Corporation Limited in Uttara vandalised the administrative, commercial and inspection rooms on the first floor of the factory demanding immediate measures to punish the attackers.

The authorities said they tried to calm down the workers by assuring them of taking steps against the culprits through the law enforcers, but some angry workers did not pay any heed to them.

The agitating workers broke some windows and doors with iron rods at about 8:15am to enter the office rooms to beat the officials, but other colleagues restrained them until police took control of the situation, they claimed.

The workers said they do not have any problem regarding their 22-point demand that they made during the unrest in last month as the Korean authorities are meeting most of them.

But the four staffs who were fired for their misbehaviour with the workers made the attacks to get their jobs back, they added.

The sacked are Production Manager Kamrul Islam, General Manager Khalek and Supervisors Anwar and Rafiq.

The workers said the authorities have nexus with the sacked officials to bring them back as no appointment has been made in any of the vacant posts.

Nazim Uddin, personal manager of the factory, however denied the allegation saying that the four were fired on June 7 and they have no chance to get back their jobs.

"Yesterday's (Sunday) attack was merely an incident occurred outside the factory," he added.

Police have been deployed to avoid any untoward incident and the officer-in-charge sat in a meeting with the workers and authorities to settle the issue.

## Roundtable on nursing held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A roundtable conference on 'Standardisation of nursing profession in Bangladesh at par with global context' was held yesterday at American Hospital Consortium (AHC) School of Nursing in American Super Specialty Hospital Ltd.

On the occasion of the visit of Evelyn L. Acheson, a leading international nursing educationist and Assistant Professor of Nursing Science at University of Oklahoma, USA, is conducting the three-day campaign on building up the image of nursing profession in Bangladesh.

The programme was jointly organised by AHC, Catalyst and Rtm International.

Nursing professionals, government officials, educationists, journalists, doctors and leaders of various social organisations of the country attended the conference.

Dr Mohammed Habibullah, Chairman of American SuperSpecialty Hospital Ltd., Shafiq Rehman, editor, the daily Jajajidin, MA Momen, president of DCCI, Khadija Begum, and Dr Ahmed Al Kabir, director, Rtm International were present at the conference.

An open seminar on prospect of nursing is to be held today and a workshop on distance education on nursing will be held tomorrow.

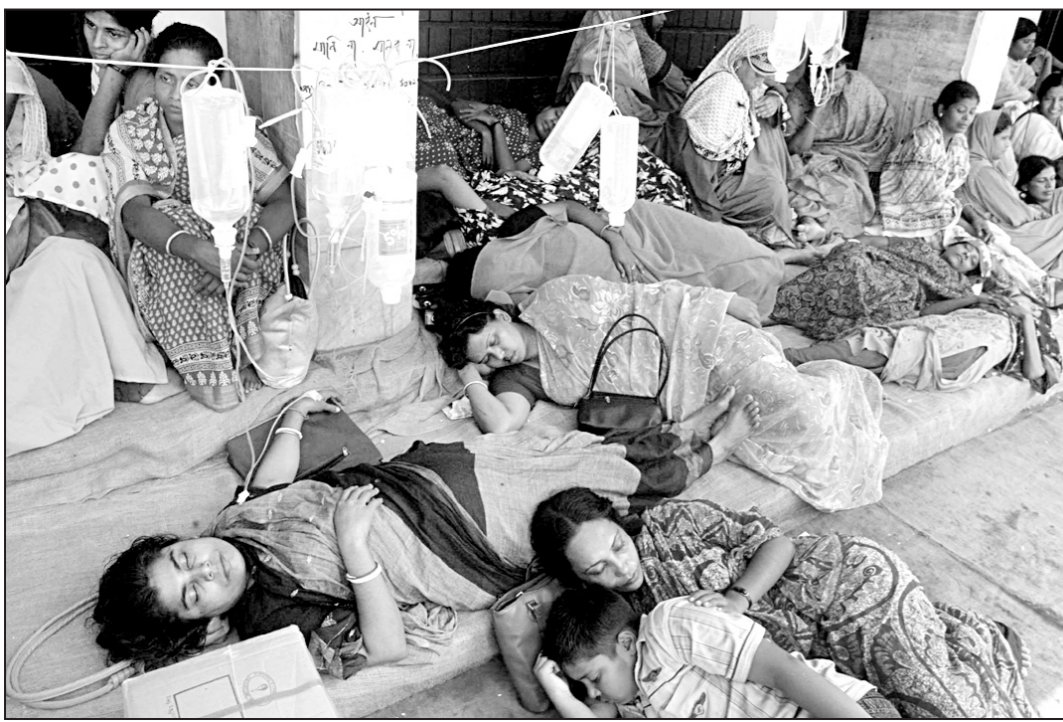


PHOTO: STAR

Employees of the Department of Women Affairs working under a project continue fast-unto-death at Eskaton in the city yesterday for transferring their job to the revenue sector and payment of arrears.

## Concern over condition of hunger strikers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) yesterday expressed concern over the health condition of 722 employees of the Department of Women Affairs who are observing fast-unto-death programme since July 12 for transferring their job to the revenue sector and payment of their arrears.

In a statement, it also urged the government to meet their demands.

The employees, who had been working under a development project of the Department of Women Affairs from 1998 to 2004, are now leading inhuman life, the statement said.

Considering the importance of the project, the establishment ministry approved it in March 2004 but the development desk of the finance department did not take any step in this regard and as a result, 722 employees are not getting salary for the last 24 months, the statement added.

## Rajshahi teachers' grand rally July 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A grand rally of teachers and employees of schools, colleges and madrasas of Rajshahi Division will be held in Dhaka on July 23.

This was announced by Chief Coordinator of Teachers-Employees Combine Movement Principal Mohammad Salim Bhuiyan at a meeting of Rajshahi Divisional Teachers-Employees at Central High School in Bogra yesterday.

He said the lapses in teaching that might take place due to the movement would be recouped by taking extra-classes provided their demands are met.

Presided over by Alhaj Ahmed Ali, president of Bogra District Teachers' Association, the meeting was also addressed by Hasina Akter Rosy, president of Pabna District Teachers' Association, Zakir Hossain, Mohammad Zakaria, Mohammad Anamul Haque and Mohammad Kamruzzaman.

At least 10 thousand teachers and employees of different schools, colleges and madrasas from 16 northern districts attended the meeting.

The speakers said they will not return to their duties without achieving their demands that include 100 percent government financial assistance.

They resented that both Khaleida Zia and Sheikh Hasina pledged to meet their demands before the national elections in the past but none fulfilled their commitments.

## POWER OUTAGE IN KHULNA

# Stop payment of bills from Aug 1

Citizens' Forum urges people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Citizens' Forum (KCF) has called upon people to stop payment of electricity bills from next month if loadshedding problem is not resolved by July 31.

The call was given by Shaikh Abdul Kayyum, KCF chairperson and a freedom fighter, while addressing a press conference at the local press club yesterday.

The KCF leader threatened to launch an intensified agitation to compel the authorities of West Zone Power Development Company Limited (WZPDCL) to save the economy of southwestern region by ensuring uninterrupted power supply.

Power crisis in this part of the country has already exceeded toleration level of people who are paying bills regularly despite loadshedding for at least 16 hours a day, said KCF chairperson.

"We have lost our confidence in

the leadership of all opposition political parties because of their failure in launching agitation against severe power crisis, he added.

Kayyum said the KCF will start exchanging views with people of every ward in the city to gather support in favour of the decision to stop payment of electricity bills from August 1. He said WZPDCL authorities must apprise the consumers through print and electronic media of the electricity being produced in Goalpara Power Plant everyday against the total demand.

Kayyum said severe power shortage had already crippled all export-oriented industries in southwestern region.

"We are shocked to know that the government is intentionally buying time to resolve the problems," he said, adding, now time is ripe to give a befitting reply.

Leaders of all NGOs were present at the press conference.



**WEATHER TODAY**

**Moderate rain likely**

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Sylhet and Dhaka divisions in the next 24 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also likely at one or two places over Rajshahi division during the period, Met Office said, predicting that day temperature may fall slightly.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 34.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and the lowest of 23.6 degrees at Sandwip.

**The sun sets in the capital at 6:48pm today and rises at 5:22am tomorrow.**

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.0	26.8	76	--
Chittagong	33.6	26.3	76	66
Rajshahi	34.2	27.0	81	76
Khulna	33.0	27.5	77	80
Barisal	32.5	26.1	84	88
Sylhet	33.7	26.2	89	71
Cox's Bazar	32.2	26.0	73	76



PHOTO: STAR

11-Party takes out a procession in the city yesterday to mark the campaign week for 23-point demand programme.

## Call to include reproductive health issue in textbooks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called for inclusion of reproductive health issue in textbooks to make youth aware of their reproductive health.

They also called for raising public awareness to ensure reproductive health rights of the youth.

The workshop entitled 'Ensuring reproductive health and prevention of violence against youth' was organised by Nari Maitree, an NGO for women, in collaboration with UNFPA at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Nari Maitree organised the workshop as a closing part of its nine-day-long healthcare programme in observance of the World Population Day 2006 under the Second Urban Health Care Project (UPHCP-II), Partnership

Area (PA)-6.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Rafikus Sultan of UNFPA said the reproductive health issue should be viewed as the right of youth to know about it.

Active participation of youth should also be taken into consideration while formulating programme about youth and adolescent health, he added.

Sirajul Haider, director of UPHCP, PA-2 called for preventing violence against adolescent and youth and creating public awareness to help stop them.

The speakers also stressed the need for adequate social and legal supports for abused youths.

They said trained persons and counsellors should be at the hospitals to address the special needs of abused adolescents and youths.

Dr Mirza AHM Barek, line director of family planning department and Dr Nargis Rahman, director of primary health care, also spoke at the workshop moderated by Milon Bikash Pal, executive director of Public Service Training Centre.

SM Zahurul Islam, secretary to Local Government Division of LGED ministry, was the chief guest at the inaugural session chaired by Doultonnusa, president of Nari Maitree.

During the nine-day-long programme Nari Maitree brought out colourful procession and organised community meeting, open discussion with pregnant mothers, couples' rally and adolescent fair to create awareness about HIV/AIDS at different wards of Dhaka City Corporation.

## 'Save Manikganj from river erosion'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karmajibi Nari (KM) urged the government to take effective measures immediately to save Manikganj from erosion by Kaliganga river.

Leaders of KM said Kaliganga has already devoured vast land of the area forcing hundreds of people landless.

They held a rally, formed a human chain and submitted a memorandum to the prime minister demanding preventive steps to resist the Kaliganga and provide rehabilitation of the affected people.

Women workers also joined the human chain and the rally at Manikganj bus stand.

KM President Shirin Aktar, freedom fighter Iqbal Hossein Khan and Mehra Khatun addressed the rally.

## 3 Manipur schoolboys get new lease of life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three students of Manipur Cadet School and college, who were critically wounded after being stabbed by one of their classmates last month, have recovered fully.

The boys -- Kazi Naimul Islam Badhon, Wadidul Kabir Tonmoy and Kazi Nibrush Nilav -- returned home yesterday after being treated at Ibn Sina Hospital for about a month.

Jahan, a classmate of the three, and his two friends cut the throats of the three class seven students and looted valuables from Badhon's house on June 15. The victims were not acquainted with Jahan's friends.

As the tracheas, vocal cords and parts of oesophagus of the boys were cut, they could not speak but responded by writing on papers.

On their recovery from injuries, the hospital authorities organised a

press conference at its auditorium yesterday where the doctors formally handed over the boys to their parents.

Dr Tawfiq Munim, chief medical officer of Ibn Sina Hospital, told The Daily Star that a 10-member medical team was formed for the treatment of the boys.

"It's a huge success for us. The boys are now able to speak again," he said, adding that the physicians had been in doubt whether the boys would recover from vocal cord injury.

"I am grateful to the doctors of Ibn Sina Hospital who have given my son a new lease of life," said Guley Noor Begum, mother of Badhon.

Jahan and two of his accomplices were arrested two days after the incident.



PHOTO: STAR

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya speaks at a press briefing at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. The Citizens' Committee 2006, a platform of civil society members, organised the press briefing.

## Non-govt teachers, employees vow to continue agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers and employees of non-government high schools, colleges, madrasas vowed to continue demonstrations until their demands were met.

Around 40 organisations of teachers and employees under four platforms are on strike and they have been holding rallies, forming human chains and bringing out processions in support of their demands.

Cent per cent basic salary from the government coffers is their common demand.

Now they get 90 percent basic salary from the public coffers.

All the teachers' organisations, both pro-Awami League and pro-BNP, yesterday condemned the police action on agitating teachers

and demanded punishment for the policemen responsible.

Shikhhak Karmachari Oikya Jote, a platform of eight pro-BNP organisations, yesterday held a press conference at Mohammadpur Central University College in the capital where leaders declared stern programmes for the coming days.

The Jote will form a human chain at the city's Muktagang at 11:00am today and hold a representatives rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on July 22 where they will declare their next course of action.

Another faction of Oikya Jote led by Selim Bhuiyan held a divisional grand rally in Bogra.

Several hundred teachers and employees gathered at the Central High School in Bogra yesterday where leaders of the Jote vowed to

continue their strike until their demands were met.

Teachers and employees under the banner of National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE), a pro-Awami League platform of 11 teachers' and employees' organisations, yesterday brought out procession holding red-flags at the upazila towns across the country protesting the police action on teachers' procession.

NFTE will lay siege to the upazila nirbahi officer's (UNO) offices today.

Bangladesh Shikhhak-Karmachari Oikya Parishad, another platform of eight Awami League backed teachers' and employees' organisations, held a protest rally at the Muktagang yesterday protesting the police action on teachers.

## DERAILMENT Train service disrupted for 11 hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Train communication from Dhaka and Chittagong to North Bengal through Mymensingh was disrupted for 11 hours due to derailment of two compartments of a goods train at Putiali between Bigonebari and Bidyaganjali railway stations at Sadar Upazila at 11:00pm on Sunday night.

Hundreds of passengers of eight trains from Dhaka and Chittagong to North Bengal suffered a lot due to derailment at various stations.

Railway sources said a relief train recovered the derailed compartments of Tarakandi-bound freight train in Jamalpur from Mymensingh after a hectic effort of three hours from 7:00am yesterday.

The train service resumed at 10:00am and the communication started.

## Stolen car recovered using AVLS

Just after two weeks of official launching of the BDCOM Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS), it has achieved the first success in stolen vehicle recovery, says a press release.

A car with onboard AVLS GLP was stolen from Dhanmondi on Friday night. After the car owner informed the AVLS control room, its members identified the location of the car using the system and recovered it from Jamalpur-Modhpur Road with the help of law enforcement agencies.

However, the burglars managed to escape.

## Death anniversary

Bss, Dhaka

Tomorrow is the third death anniversary of eminent journalist Mizanur Rahman.

Mizanur Rahman Smriti Sangsad has chalked out a daylong programme in Gazipur and Dhaka to mark the occasion.

Qurankhwani, milad mahfil and doa mahfil will be held at his Banagram residence in Dhaka and at the Bhalwal Idel Academy at Board Bazar in Gazipur.

The Smriti Sangsad will hold a discussion and milad mahfil at the Jatya Press Club on July 19 at 11:00am.

Prof Dr Abdullah Faruq

Today is the 9th death anniversary of eminent economist Prof Dr Abdullah Faruq, former treasurer of Dhaka University, says a press release.

Colleagues, students and admirers have been requested to pray for peace of the departed soul.

Obituary

Satyen Saha, freedom fighter and leader of Barisal district unit Bangladesh Sangjukto Samik Federation (BSSF), passed away due to old age complications yesterday at the age of 72, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Satyen was laid to rest in Barisal.

BSSF Acting President Tofazzal Hossain Bagu and acting General Secretary Jahangir Alam Chowdhury consoled the death and conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family.

**DHAKA TODAY**

## Workshop

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC) organise a workshop on 'flood forecasting and warning centre website'. Venue: BWDB conference room. Time: 2:30pm.

## Roundtable

National Centre for Investigative Study organises a roundtable on 'Necessity of coordination between government and non-government organisations for fertilizer management'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

## Seminar

Bangladesh Engineering Industry Owners' Association (BEIOA) will hold a seminar on 'promotion of light engineering products and industries'. Venue: Institution of Engineers. Time: 11:45am.

## Roundtable

The daily Amar Desh organises a roundtable on national Hajj policy. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

## Rotary Motihheel

The weekly meeting of Rotary Club of Motihheel will be held. Venue: Hotel Orchard Plaza. Time: 5:30pm.