



Garments workers stage a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday rejecting the salaries fixed by the Minimum Wage Commission. Sixteen garments workers' organisations organised the protest.

S Arabia denies contacts with Israel

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia Tuesday rejected as "fabricated" reported contacts between Saudi and Israeli officials, including a purported meeting between Israel's Premier Ehud Olmert and King Abdullah.

"The news story circulated by Israeli and Qatari media recently over contacts between Saudi and Israeli officials is utterly false," said the SPA state-owned news agency, quoting a foreign ministry official.

"The story is completely fabricated," added the official who was not named.

Israel's mass-selling paper Yediot Ahranot reported Monday that Prime Minister Olmert had held an unprecedented meeting recently with an "extremely" senior figure in the Saudi royal house.

Teenage housewife succumbs to burns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage housewife succumbed to her burn injuries yesterday after fighting for life for 12 days at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

The victim was identified as Helena Aktar, 15.

On September 14, she was rushed to the hospital with severe burns after her husband allegedly set fire to her at her father's residence at Dogair in Demra.

Family members said Helena told them that her husband Aljar set her on fire during an altercation over financial matter.

Her father Abdul Hakim, a driver, told The Daily Star that Aljar, a friend of his son Kamal, and Helena, a student of class nine, eloped and got married four months ago.

However, he approved of their marriage and later arranged a formal ceremony.

Helena came to her father's home from her husband's home in Narail in the first week of September. A few days later, Aljar came to her father's home, but the couple were locked in an altercation, leading to the tragic incident.

After the death of Helena, her family members discovered a two-page letter written by Helena, which reveals that Aljar had deceived her and used to torture her.

The letter also reveals that Helena had been going through hard times because of deception by her unemployed husband and became so frustrated that she even thought of committing suicide.

Aljar has been at large for the last few days.

Body to probe fire incident at Meghna pump house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A four-member committee has been formed to investigate the Monday's fire incident at the pump house of Meghna Petroleum Limited - one of the three marketing companies of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

The fire that broke out at the pump house at Patenga at around 11:30pm could have caused a huge damage since the main oil depots of two other marketing companies of BPC - Padma Oil Company and Jamuna Oil Company - and Eastern Refinery are also located there.

However, fire fighters managed to extinguish the blaze at around 1:00am.

Two pumps and the roof and the glass walls of the pump house were damaged in the fire.

Following the incident, the authorities have suspended the operation of the pump house and made alternative arrangement for supplying oil from the depot, sources said.

The probe committee headed by Meghna Petroleum Deputy General Manager Kudrat-e-Elahi was formed yesterday. It was asked to submit the report within a day.



Garbage litters Mazed Sarder Road in the old part of the city, causing suffering to pedestrians as well as passengers, but the authorities remain indifferent.

PROF AFTAB'S KILLING Punishment to killers demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Jamaat-aligned teachers of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday blamed Awami League and its left allies for the killing of Prof Aftab Ahmed of Dhaka University.

Addressing a rally near the administrative building of RU, they said the slain teacher was a supporter of Jamaat-e-Islami.

"Prof Aftab informed one of his colleagues before his death that the opposition cadres might kill him," claimed Prof Nazrul Islam, director of RU Institute of Education and Research (IER).

He said Prof Aftab was a great intellectual of the country.

Speakers at the rally demanded impartial investigation into the incident and exemplary punishment of the killers.

The rally was addressed by pro-Jamaat teachers Mainuddin Ahmed and Sadekul Islam.

A doa-mahfil was also held at the same place.

Earlier hearing the death news of Prof Aftab, the Jamaat-inherent teachers brought out a mourning procession that paraded different campus roads.

Stop punishment to children at schools for proper mental growth

Speakers tell roundtable

DU CORRESPONDENT

Parents' superstitions and lack of awareness, teachers' poor financial condition and unscientific curricula are primarily responsible for physical and mental punishment of children in educational institutions, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They laid emphasis on introducing effective laws to stop physical and mental punishment of children in educational institutions to ensure proper growth of their mental health.

The roundtable was organised by National Child Parliament of Save the Children Australia at the National Press Club in the city.

Academics, political leaders, legal experts, psychiatrists and a number of children took part in the roundtable.

Mehtab Khanam, psychiatrist and professor of psychology department of Dhaka University (DU), said parents' superstition that children cannot learn if they are not punished by teachers in school and their lack of awareness about children's

psychology result in physical and mental punishment of children.

She also blamed teachers' poor salary as another cause saying "Poor wages of teachers lead them to frustration and frustrated teachers often become violent with children in the school."

"Mental health is a very vital issue for children, but this is always neglected in our society. Most people do not know that a mind also suffers from diseases like a body," said Prof Mehtab.

Prof Monsur Musa, former director general of Bangla Academy, said primary school curricula are not prepared considering children's psychology and their readability.

Comparing with the primary school curricula of China, Japan and Korea, Prof Musa, a specialist in primary education curricula, said education language policy in our country is also faulty which creates a teacher-student communication problem in the class.

"All these things lead to teacher-student conflict and as teachers

beat the students or rebuke them, they lose interest in study and do not want to come to school," he observed.

Moderated by child litterateur Ali Imam, the roundtable was also addressed by former Law minister Abdul Matin Khasru, Prof Syed Anwar Hossain, Workers' Party



Dhaka University Teachers' Association takes out a mourning procession on the university campus in memory of Prof Aftab Ahmed who succumbed to his injuries yesterday. Prof Aftab was critically injured when a gang of assailants shot him on Saturday.

Death condoled

RU CORRESPONDENT

Vice-chancellor of Rajshahi University (RU) Prof Altaf Hossain and Pro-VC Prof Mammunul Keramat in separate statement yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of Prof Aftab.

They also demanded investigation into the incident and exemplary punishment of the killers.

RU Teachers' Association held a meeting last evening to condole the death of Prof Aftab.

5,000 bottles of phensidyl seized

UNB, Keraniganj

Police unearthed a spurious syrup factory and seized 5,000 bottles of phensidyl from Porahati Bazar on Monday night.

Two workers Babul, 17, and Matin, 22, arrested from the spot told the police that the local JCD leader Mahub Molla used to run the phensidyl den. His cousin Lutfar Rahman Mollah, chairman of Teghoria Union, is also involved in it.

Police said Mahub Molla went into hiding. They are investigating into the alleged involvement of UP chairman.

Workshop on PR ends

A two-day training workshop on public relations ended recently where 25 officers from different public and private organisations attended, says a press release.

Bangladesh Press Institute (PIB) in association with Bangladesh Public Relations Association (BPPRA) organised the workshop at the seminar room of the PIB in the city.

PIB Chairman Sadek Khan distributed certificates among the participants.

Among others, Dr Shakhawat Ali Khan, professor of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University, Mostafa Jabbar, editor of Abas, a news agency, and Prof Mansur Musa, teacher at Modern Language Institute of Dhaka University, conducted the workshop.

Ex-CECs debate over fair polls

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number of polling booths and double counting of the cast votes. He also underscored the need for a fair voter list.

Dr Jayaprakash, national coordinator of Lok Satta and the Voteindia movements--a civil society initiative and people's movement for wide-ranging governance and political reforms, emphasised the civil society initiatives for a fair election.

Among the non-elected bodies, the Supreme Court and EC are the most powerful and most credible organisations in India, he said, adding that this is very important for fair polls.

Describing the socio-cultural aspects of the subcontinent as

homogenous, Jayaprakash pointed out some drawbacks of the election process that include flawed electoral rolls, polling irregularities, unaccounted and illegitimate use of money power, rampant criminalisation and autocratic political parties.

In the face of civil society initiatives, India has made some achievements in disclosure of candidate details, political funding reform law, changes in the Rajya Sabha election, strong anti-defection provisions, electronic voting machines and improvement in voter registration, he said.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of CPD, in his introductory speech explained the

civil society moves in Bangladesh with a view to preparing a vision paper for the country.

"We need to change the current composition of the Election Commission to generate public confidence in the upcoming election," he said.

He also emphasised preparation of a fair voter list, depoliticisation of the administration and political reforms for a fair poll, noting that the citizens' committee has already placed a 37-point draft on electoral and political reforms.

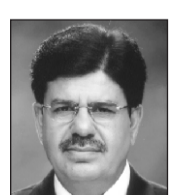
The CPD organised the lecture in association with SUPRO, BROTEE, FEMA, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA),

Centre for Development Communication (CDC), Democracywatch and Steps Towards Development.

CPD Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan chaired the session.

Among politicians, ASHK Sadeque, Lt Gen (retd) Nooruddin Khan and GM Quader were present at the lecture, while Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, Khan Sarwar Murshid, Dr Anisuzzaman, Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury, Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, Taleyah Rehman, Ranjan Karmakar and Muhammad Jahangir participated in the open discussion besides diplomats and other civil society members.

Dr Kamrul IPPNW South Asia region vice-president



Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan of Bangladesh has been elected as a vice-president of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) South Asia region.

At the 17th World Congress held in the Finnish capital Helsinki on 7-10 September 2006, he defeated the Indian candidate to become the ex officio member of IPPNW, a global federation of national medical organisations and a Nobel Peace Laureate.

Founding president of Physicians for Social Responsibility-Bangladesh, Kamrul is the member-secretary of Peshajibi Samonnoy Parishad and general secretary of the Teachers Association of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.