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The World on Time

## Arsenic pollution in Bagerhat

# More falling sick, medical team yet to be sent

By Shahrier Khan

Deadly arsenic pollution of sub-soil water is threatening the lives of thousands of people in Bagerhat and some adjoining districts, according to Public Health Department officials in Bagerhat reached over telephone.

One person, Anil Krishna Das, 60, and his son Shyamol Das, 22, of Fakirhat in Bagerhat died from arsenic poisoning on March 25 and August 1 respectively. Shyamol was earlier taken to Calcutta for treatment and doctors there found high levels of arsenic in his blood.

Following a series of complaints from people of Fakirhat, and other areas of Khulna, the district Public Health Department (PHD) recently tested samples of water collected from 14 shallow tube-wells in Fakirhat and Bagerhat thanas and detected serious arsenic contamination in five of these tube-wells.

These tube-wells have been sealed and local people advised to use water of deep tube-wells only. No arsenic contamination was detected in the water of deep tube-wells but their number is few in the region.

The local PHD has been instructed by the higher authorities to sink new deep tube-wells wherever necessary to avoid the dire consequences of arsenic poisoning. Jamaluddin Ahmed, Executive Engineer of the Department in Bagerhat told The Daily Star over the telephone

yesterday.

There are 2228 shallow tube-wells and only 53 deep tube-wells in the Fakirhat thana. The PHD is yet to take any step to test samples of water from most of these shallow tube-wells.

Jamaluddin said that many people were found sick in different villages of Lockpur union, Bill Jong union, Nalda Moubhong union and Fakirhat union under Fakirhat thana.

Mohammad Reza, a resident of Fakirhat told The Daily Star over telephone that the government should immediately send a medical team in the area. He said he had personally visited some houses in those unions and found one or more sick persons at each of those.

Jamaluddin further said that reports of skin diseases which could be caused by arsenic poisoning had first drawn the attention of the PHD officials earlier this year. Such cases were also reported from Khulna district and it is assumed that arsenic pollution might have taken place also there.

One million people are suffering in those districts bordering Bangladesh. Those include Asokenagar, Deganga, Baruipur and Dhapdapi.

The West Bengal government in its bid to fight arsenic pollution recently sought assistance from the World Bank (WB). Two World Health Organisation (WHO) experts are now working in West Bengal on behalf of the WB for a survey on arsenic pollution, the report said.

## BNP procession today

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Dhaka city unit will bring out a colourful procession today from central office at Naya Paltan marking the 18th founding anniversary of the party. Dhaka city acting general secretary Kazi Abdul Basher requested all ward and thana units to join it from respective areas with processions, reports BSS.

## Campaign banned

From Page 1  
tion meeting or join procession in by-election areas during the period.

Nobody will also be allowed to let loose terrorism or indulge in acts of indiscipline or intimidate those associated with by-election process.

Violators of the prohibition will be subject to two to seven years' imprisonment with fine.

The Commission has also imposed a total ban on playing of motorbike, autorickshaw, microbus, jeep, pick-up vans on roads and mechanised boat and speedboat in waterways from 6 am Tuesday till 6 am Friday in all the thanas, where by-elections will be held.

However, the restriction will not be applicable for the vehicles of contesting candidates, persons having legal identity cards, polling agents, election observers, journalists and polls officials and emergency services.

It also imposed a ban on carrying licensed arms from Tuesday midnight to Saturday midnight in the areas.

## Finance Bill passed

The Jatiya Sangsad last night passed the Finance Bill, 1996 by voice vote in amended form to give effect to the financial proposals of the government, reports BSS.

The Bill, piloted by Finance Minister S A M S Kibria, will come into force with effect from July 1, 1996.

According to the amendments, sub-section (3) of Section 11 of the Income Tax Ordinance, 1984 has been substituted by a newly adopted text - "An accountant member shall be a person who is a commissioner of taxes or who has practised professionally for a period of not less than eight years as a chartered accountant or cost and management accountant or who has practised professionally for a period of not less than 20 years as an income tax practitioner within the meaning of Section 174 (2) (f)."

## Dacoity at Khilgaon

By Staff Correspondent  
Decoits reportedly decamped with valuables worth more than Tk 70 thousand from a house at Khilgaon in the city yesterday.

Mostafizur Rahman, an officer of Shilpa Bank and the owner of the house alleged that the decoits entered his house at 464 Khilgaon by breaking the lock and decamped with goods including gold ornaments, watches, Tk 11 thousand, three international passports, a number of prize bonds and share certificates.

## Ctg 1 & 13

From Page 1

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia made a hectic electioneering campaign at Mirershara for two days till August 31 addressing a series of election rallies seeking vote for her candidate M A Jinnah who won the seat in the 1991 parliamentary polls.

Awami League leaders including Water Resources Minister Abdur Razak also launched a campaign at Mirershara to combat terrorism which is essential for building the economy.

In the meeting, second in a row with the political parties, as a part of Prime Minister's move to take views of others in running the country, Hasina talked to the presidium members of JSD (Inu).

Sheikh Hasina held a similar meeting with the central leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) on Saturday.

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Exchanging views with her in the afternoon the JSD leaders advised the Prime Minister to combat terrorism which is essential for building the economy.

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