

Construction of confce hall at Osmany Udyan 'Govt to go ahead with its plan'

By Special Correspondent

The government will go ahead with its plan to construct the Bangladesh Convention Centre at the Osmany Udyan, Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain said on Thursday.

The centre is being built for the Non-Aligned Summit in 2001. He dismissed public criticisms that construction of the centre there would squeeze the only open green space between old and new Dhaka. Only three acres of the 23.2 acre park will be required for the centre, he told a press conference.

Rest of the space will be beautified with greens, artificial fountain and flower garden, he said.

Answering a question the minister said the structures including a slum on the open space on the northern side of the Udyan will be removed to expand the park. But he refused to shift the centre there although it was suggested that it could be convenient for traffic management and ensuring security.

The minister and officials failed to give a satisfactory reply to the query on the fate of the 11,000 trees which were planted by the Forest Department as part of its urban afforestation programme. Only 1609 trees are there, including 410 at the place designated for the centre, they said.

The minister said, the proposed centre has been designed in such a way that it will rather enhance the beauty of the garden and be congenial to environment.

Answering another question the minister said that before selecting the Osmany Udyan, the government studied three options — an 8.8 acre site beside the Prime Minister's Office, an area in the old airport adjacent to the Military Museum and the land beside the Sonargaon Hotel. Even, there was a proposal for going to Ashulia.

The 3.8 acre site near the Prime Minister's office was re-

jected as it was "too inadequate". The old airport will remain as the second airport and the proposed two-story centre will "pose a problem for it". Chinese experts did not agree on the proposal to use the area adjacent to Sonargaon Hotel as it would be "too expensive", the minister and officials told newsmen.

The minister also dismissed the suggestion that traffic management would be a problem near the Osmany Udyan. "Rickshaws and auto-rickshaws will be phased out in future".

He also promised to investigate how two high-rise markets are being built on the Railway land and construction of the Yamani Market on the south eastern fringe of the Udyan violating Rajuk's building code.

He sought co-operation from journalists in this regard and in straightening the Bijoy Saroni by removing a high rise building blocking its expansion.

Kidnapped businessman rescued from DU hall

By DU Correspondent

Police Thursday rescued an abducted businessman from Salimullah Hall of Dhaka University and arrested two people in this connection.

The arrested were identified as Sarwar Hossain, a second year student of Political Science of the university and Ranjit Kumar Roy, a prospective foreign job seeker.

Dulal Chandra Hawlader, a manpower businessman, was kidnapped by a group of miscreants, from the city's Mugda area on Wednesday night.

The abductors confined him to room No 150 of SM Hall. Hawlader had allegedly taken Tk 72,000 from Ranjit to send him to Malaysia in 1994.

He had, however, failed to do so. Ranjit hired Sarwar to recover the money of which Hawlader already had paid back Tk 20,000.

The abductors allegedly tortured Hawlader and asked him to return Ranjit's money.

The hall provost was informed about the matter by an anonymous caller on Tuesday night and he informed it to DU authorities yesterday. He ordered Sarwar to bring the victim to his office.

After hearing the statements of both abductors and the victim at his office, the provost of the university, called the police and handed all of them over.

Later, DU authorities in an emergency meeting with Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of the university in the chair, suspended Sarwar Hossain temporarily for his alleged involvement in the incident. They also decided to serve a show cause notice to six DU students for their alleged involvement in the incident.

The victim lodged a case with Ramna police. The arrested will be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) today, police said.

Sramik Front's call to observe strike May 26

By Staff Correspondent

Samajtantrik Sramik Front has urged the workers to observe the May 26 countrywide strike called by the SKOP to press home their various demands, including formulation of minimum national wage law.

The call was made from the 4th national conference of the organisation held yesterday at Jatya Press Club with its president Abdullah Sarker in the chair. BSD convenor Khalequzaman addressed the function as chief guest.

At the conference, the workers leaders also demanded immediate announcement of wage commission award, stop of privatisation and implementation of agreements signed with the government in the past.

The leaders said the government is closing down mills and industries one after another and retrenching workers in the name of the free market economy. The just rights of the workers and employees are being curbed everyday, they said.

They also demanded immediate reopening of Chittagong Steel Mills and cancellation of the plan to construct primary container terminal at Chittagong Port.

The conference was addressed, among others, by Mostafa Faruque, Mahbubur Rahman Ismail, Osman Ali and Naimuddin.

A 17-member committee was formed at the conference with Abdullah Sarker and Mahbubur Rahman as president and general secretary respectively. Other office-bearers include vice-president Mostafa Faruque, secretary — Naimuddin, organising secretary — Osman Ali, finance secretary — Nurul Islam Ranju and office secretary — Zulfikar Ali.

CMS discussion today

The Centre for Micro Studies will hold a discussion meeting on "Criteria for Nominating Members of Parliament by Political Parties" today, says a press release.

The keynote paper "Vote For Banana Tree" will be presented by Abdullah Siddiqui. A select group of eminent persons including senior advocates, professors, politicians, retired secretaries and journalists will participate in the meeting as discussants.

The discussion meeting will be held in the auditorium of TTT, House No: 59 (N), Road No: 122, Dhanmondi.

JS body on Water Resources Ministry meets

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources Ministry at a meeting yesterday reviewed progress of the implementation of its previous decisions, reports UNB.

Held at Sangsadd Bhaban with committee chairman Abdul Monin in the chair, the meeting discussed the schemes proposed for inclusion in the Annual Development Programme of the next fiscal.

The meeting formed a three-member sub-committee that will visit the sites of Coastal Rehabilitation Projects (CPR) undertaken by Water Development Board. It will investigate whether the project works are going on satisfactorily or not.

Lead poisoning may cause damage to children's brain

Lead poisoning may cause massive damage to the brain and nervous systems of children in Bangladesh, with its effects more extensive for malnourished children from low-income families living close to heavy traffic areas, reports BSS.

According to several studies sponsored by International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), lead levels in children were extremely high in children with Psycho-motor delay and behavioural problems, indicating lead poisoning.

A total of 49 children from Tejgaon, Mohammadpur and Keraniganj and nine others admitted in the ICDDR,B hospital were studied to find out the blood lead and cadmium levels in children as an index of the exposure to these toxic elements in the environment.

It was found that concentration of lead in them were significantly higher than those in the hospital. Blood lead levels in children of Tejgaon industrial area were much higher than those of Keraniganj and Mohammadpur.

The blood cadmium levels were also higher in children from the study areas than those from the hospital. Cadmium levels were significantly higher in children from Keraniganj than all other areas.

All children from the three study areas showed high blood lead levels.

According to the study report both lead and cadmium levels in the blood of children from high risk areas are alarmingly higher with adverse health effects. Gasoline, paints, ceramics and batteries are a few examples which may have caused such a problem in the environment for the children.

On the other hand, high lead in the hospitalised children indicates general contamination of the capital city where children are exposed to cadmium through inhalation of smoke and contaminated soil and dust from the industrial emissions and sewage sludge.

Another study found hospital wastes being disposed of in common dustbins in the city are hazardous and toxic which were posing a significant threat to human health and environment as well.

The study conducted to examine medical waste management system in Bangladesh and identify the potential impacts of medical wastes to human health and environment showed that the hospital staff at all levels were not aware of the methods of safe disposal and handling of hospital wastes.

Moreover, waste disposal practice was found to be quite

unsafe as both clinical and non-clinical wastes were being disposed together. The laboratory analysis showed the presence of infectious wastes and the risk of severe contamination of the environment due to such practice.

A total of 28 government, private and diagnostic centres at large, medium and small categories were included in the study which in its observation stressed on proper waste management strategy to ensure safety of human health and environment. "There is an urgent need for awareness-raising programmes on health and environmental hazards of hospital wastes," the study observed.

Another study found that most of the health problems of the slum dwellers originated from the prevailing unhygienic environment of the slums as well as their working and eating habit.

Gastic pain, dysentery, skin diseases, diarrhoea, jaundice, fever, cough, general weakness, pneumonia and measles are common health problems for dwellers of the slums.

Since they are unable to avail services of qualified doctors for economic reasons, the study said, they depend on the "faith healers" as they believe such diseases are caused by the "evil spirit."

SAARC states urged to review 'policies of confrontation'

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad Thursday urged the SAARC member countries to review "policies of confrontation" to accelerate the present trend of cooperation in the region, reports UNB.

"Borders did not help in solving problems, rather it increased them," he said addressing the inaugural session of a seminar on "SAARC: Present and Future", organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in the morning.

Presided over by CPD executive chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan, the inaugural session of the seminar was also addressed by Director General of Research and Information System (RIS) for the Non-Aligned Countries Dr VR Panchamukhi and President of the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) of Nepal Dr Mohan Man Samjhu.

Emphasising on a "strong SAARC is at a crossroad. We now have to take stock of what we have achieved, and decide

where we would like to see ourselves in the next century."

Saying that where regional economic cooperation had already achieved remarkable successes in Europe, South East Asia and elsewhere, he asked: "Why should our region be left behind?"

The Foreign Minister said the people of the region would be disappointed if SAARC failed to deliver results as expected. "The member states have already set the goal of achieving SAFTA by 2001."

Azad said scope for informal political consultations of SAARC provided a valuable mechanism for the countries to come together. "The dialogue initiated during the tenth summit resulted in more confidence building."

Mentioning that the Delhi-Lahore bus service has a meaning that goes beyond mere symbolism, he said that the long-expected Dhaka-Calcutta bus service would begin soon opening up another horizon of cooperation in the region.

"These developments need to be further strengthened," he said observing: "Regional cooperation is no longer a matter of choice for South Asia. The process of globalisation leaves us with no other option."

He said cooperation should not be scheme by scheme, rather it should be a package of schemes.

Dr Panchamukhi, a former president of Indian Economic Association, said the SAARC forum is moving but it needs to be faster to protect the region from the negative impacts of globalisation.

Dr Mohan Man Samjhu said regional groupings are the manifestations of how the smaller and weaker economies protect their economy.

He blamed political mistrust as the greatest problem for the backwardness of the region. Although the progress of SAARC was slow, the body for cooperation is still needed for a stable situation in South Asia, Dr Samjhu said.

Freedom fighters' rally in Mymensingh

Freedom fighters from six districts of greater Mymensingh will assemble at a grand rally in Mymensingh today, reports APB.

Freedom fighters of all unit commands of the districts — Mymensingh, Tangail, Jamalpur, Kishoreganj, Netrakona and Sherpur — arranged the gathering at Mymensingh Town Hall at 2 pm, said a press release.

Chairman of the Central Command Council of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Principal Abdul Ahad Chowdhury will attend the rally as chief guest. Convenor of Mymensingh district unit command Nazim Uddin Ahmed will preside.

Dhaka North Lions Club president

Selim Afzal has been re-elected president of the Lions Club of Dhaka North for 1999-2000, says a press release.

He was elected at a general meeting of the club on May 12. Lion Afzal has long been associated with the social service movement. He is also a writer and a cultural activist.

Obituary

Shamsunnahar Begum, 71, mother-in-law of BFDU president Amanullah Kabir died at BIRDEM hospital yesterday, reports BSS.

Shamsunnahar was admitted to the hospital on May 5 following jaundice, hepatitis and renal complications.

She left behind her only daughter Rasheda Kabir, five grand children and a number of relatives to mourn her death.

The namaz-e-janaza of the deceased was held at Furfura Mosque and she was buried at Dar-us-Salam graveyard yesterday afternoon.

The qukhwant of Shamsunnahar will be held at her 16/a, Dar-us-Salam residence on Monday after Asr prayers.

Begum Roushan Ara, wife of late Sirajul Huq Chowdhury, died of old age ailments in New DOHS on Thursday evening. She was 94, says a press release.

She left behind four sons, eight grandchildren and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

Her namaz-e-janaza was held at the New DOHS Mosque at Mohakhali after Jumma prayers yesterday and she was buried at the Banani graveyard.

The qukhwant of Rowshan Ara will be held tomorrow after Asr prayers at the youngest son's residence at 127, New DOHS, Eastern Lane-5, Mohakhali.

One arrested from inside DB office

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was arrested from inside the Detective Branch (DB) office premises at Minto Road in the evening yesterday, police said.

The arrested was identified as Swapan Mondal Sarker alias Milton, aged around 25, a resident of city's Siddheshwari area, according to police.

DB personnel arrested him when he was roaming inside the DB office premises suspiciously, police said.

A general diary was filed with Ramna thana in this regard yesterday.

'City slums won't be evicted indiscriminately'

By Staff Correspondent

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim has assured the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) of not evicting the city slums indiscriminately.

The assurance came when some representatives of ADAB, Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP) and various grassroots organisations met the minister on Thursday to express their concern at the government's plan to evict slums.

Earlier on May 6, the home minister told newsmen in a dialogue programme in the city that "strict measures would be taken for removing the slums which have become dens of criminals".

On behalf of the delegation, the ADAB president Dr Kazi Faruq Ahmed apprised Nasim about probable economic fallout in case of slum eviction. The delegation also expressed concern as the non-government organisations have already made Tk 150 or investment for the slum dwellers.

Kibria asks Lions Clubs to help propel economy

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday called upon members of the Lions' Club to help propel the national economy and reduce poverty by strengthening lions movement across the country, reports BSS.

The finance minister was inaugurating the Third Annual District Convention of Lions Clubs International District 315-B1 Bangladesh at a local hotel yesterday afternoon.

Presided over by District Governor Engineer Iqbal H Khan, it was addressed by Lions Muslim Ali Khan, RM Khan, MAM Saleh and Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman.

Kibria commended lionism and said members of Lions Clubs could play an important role in achieving economic prosperity of the country. He sought the cooperation of members of Lions Clubs in ending poverty and assured them of cooperation of the government in this regard.

Sajeda says

Govt for allout support to female workers

NAGARKANDA, Faridpur, May 21: Forest and Environment Minister Syed Sajeda Chowdhury today called upon the people to remain alert against all kinds of anti-peace, activities, reports BSS.

"We will make the country economically solvent through peaceful atmosphere," she said at a function organised for distributing sewing machines among women and disbursing loan among the trained youths of the Thana in the Thana Parishad auditorium here.

She said the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was relentlessly working for equal distribution of national resources so that the women can contribute more to the nation-building unitely.

"The government will continue to provide allout support to women to ensure their participation in nation building activities," she added.

Sajeda Chowdhury expressed the hope that these women and youths would play a positive role through self-employment projects like fisheries, livestock and vegetable cultivation.

Earlier, the minister donated money for the development of mosques and temples under the Thana. The DC and the SP of the Thana and the TNO of Nagarkanda were present on the occasion.

New body of architects sworn in

By Staff Correspondent

An 11-member Executive Committee of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh was sworn in at a ceremony at the Russian Cultural Centre auditorium in the city recently, says a press release.

Minister for Housing and Public Works and Civil Aviation and Tourism Engineer Mosharraf Hossain administered oath of the newly elected committee.

Office bearers of the committee are Rabiul Hussain, president, M Mobashsher Hossain, vice president, ASM Ismail, general secretary, Kazi Golam Nasir, joint secretary, Sajjadur Rashid, treasurer and members Abul Hasnat Foad, Albab Ahmed, Dr Khondakar Shabbir Ahmed, Luva Nahid Chowdhury, KM Mostapha Khalid and Sanaul Haq.



Samajtantrik Sramik Front staged a rally in front of the National Press Club on the occasion of its 4th national conference yesterday. —Star photo

JS body backs crash programme to increase power generation

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry Thursday backed the government bid to cut down on procedures to increase power generation as early as possible, reports UNB.

Meeting sources said the standing committee asked the ministry to complete necessary process within two months to establish new power units and transmission lines under the crash programme.

The crash programme includes setting up of new power generation units within six months through unsolicited foreign or local offers, which is opposed by some quarters within the government and also by the donor agencies.

The meeting, chaired by standing committee chairman Chief Whip Abdul Hasanat Abdullah, unanimously decided that steps would be taken immediately to set up new power units and transmission lines and to repair and modernise the old ones.

It asked the authorities concerned to submit a report at the

next meeting of the JS committee on the success of the recent action programme to save electricity.

The committee also directed them to keep the media informed about their day to day progress in implementing the action programme.

The programme, taken a month ago, includes snapping of illegal power connections, snapping the lines of the defuncted consumers and attaching Power Factor Improvement (PFI) devices at the industrial units.

However, according to sources, the Power Development Board (PDB) and the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) have failed miserably in the drive due to "reluctance of some officials" in the two organisations.

So far, very few illegal lines were snapped and not a single connection of defuncted consumers was snapped. Also, not a single PFI was installed by the industries.

The standing committee also asked the institutions concerned to implement the Col-

lection Import Ratio (CIR) to reduce huge system loss by PDB and DESA.

The committee was of the view that system loss would decrease if revenue collection against the electricity supplied could be increased.

It asked the concerned institutions to submit a separate report on their progress of reducing system loss at the next meeting of the standing committee.

The meeting praised the Rural Electrification Board (REB) as it has no system loss.

The standing committee discussed irregularities relating to the import of defective electric meters. It was informed that cases have been filed against the suppliers of such defective meters demanding compensation.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam, Imran Ahmed, AB Tajul Islam, M Zillul Hakim, Abdul Mukit Khan, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury attended the meeting.

New techniques to cut water use in rice growing: IRRI

MANILA, May 21: New techniques are being developed to lessen water usage for growing rice by up to 25 per cent, the Philippine-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) said here Friday, reports AFP.

Cutting the use of water in growing rice is considered a priority because water demand in Asia is expected to increase sharply over the next 25 years, IRRI said in a statement.

Water demand will rise by more than 50 per cent in South-east Asia and India and by 40 per cent in China, all major rice-growing areas, the institute said.

Experts warned that the growth of cities and industries in Asia had increased their demand for water, forcing rice farming to become "water efficient."

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a network to which IRRI is affiliated, has revealed the new techniques.

Among the new rice techniques are "wet seeding" where seeds are soaked before being sown, and which is already in use in some Asian countries like the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand.

Other techniques include "intermittent rice irrigation" where fields are merely irrigated regularly instead of being kept flooded, "land levelling" where adjoining fields are kept to the same level, and better management of weeds and cracked soils.

CGIAR scientists will discuss these and other developments in a mid-term meeting in China from May 24 to 28, IRRI said.

IRRI scientists and members of various national rice research institutes will also discuss ways to use geographic information to help stabilise rice yields and alleviate poverty in Eastern India at a conference in Uttar Pradesh from May 24 to 26, IRRI added.



Bangladesh Water Partnership (BWP) organised a two day long workshop on National Water Vision for 2025, which ended in the city yesterday. Seen in the picture from left are Tauhidul Anwar Khan, Member Secretary (BWP), Dr. A T M Shamsul Huda, Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, Qamrul Islam Siddique, Chairman, BWP, Q K Ahmad, Chairman, BUP, Dr Ramesh Bhatia, member, Global Water Partnership-Technical Advisory Committee and Dr P S Rao, Regional Vision Co-ordinator, South Asia.