

British cyclist arrives in city to raise funds for cancer

Jan Owen, a British citizen arrived in the city yesterday competing 'The High Road to Dhaka Expedition', by cycling 4,619 km from Lahore, Pakistan via India and Nepal to raise funds for cancer treatment, reports BSS.

The British Acting High Commissioner, Stephen Turner, received Owen at the British High Commission in Baridhara in the afternoon at the end of his charity cycle ride. Members of the High Commission staff and the British community here also warmly welcomed the brave cyclist after his six-month long expedition.

Owen started the expedition from the Pakistani city of Lahore before crossing into India near Amritsar. He then climbed into the Himalayas, passing enroute Kulu, Simla, Chansali and Askot before entering Nepal. He arrived in Pokhara using mountain roads and reached Kathmandu using a series of high altitude roads. He crossed into India again and reached Bagdogra before proceeding to Darjeeling. Finally he entered Bangladesh at Haldibari on his way to Dhaka.

The High Road to Dhaka Expedition, organised and coordinated by the One Planet Expedition, is an attempt by Owen to raise 10,000 pounds sterling for 'The Shooting Star Appeal'.

The Shooting Star Appeal was launched by Wrexham Maelor Hospital in Britain to raise 2 million pounds sterling to build and equip an integrated specialist cancer treatment facility, which will include a specific area dedicated to a women's clinic.

Rivers in Ganges and Southeastern Hill basins swell further

Almost all the rivers in Ganges and Southeastern Hill basins swelled further amidst incessant rainfall in last 24 hours till 9 am yesterday, reports UNB.

According to Flood information centre, a significant 75-mm rainfall was recorded at Dalia while 60 mm at Kurigram, 43mm at Kanaighat and 23mm at Panhpukuria during the period.

However, rivers in Brahmaputra and Meghna basins continued to recede at all points.

In the Ganges basin, the Padma was flowing 6 cm above its danger mark, although the river registered a fall by 3 cm at Bhagyakul point. It marked a rise by 17 cm at Pankha, 21 cm at Rajshahi, 17 cm at Hardinge Bridge point.

In the same basin, Mohananda at Chapainabagan rose further by 22 cm and Goral at Goral Railway bridge by 17 cm. All the rivers were flowing below their respective danger levels.

In the Southeastern Hill basin, Halda recorded further rise by 14 cm at Narayanhat and 25 cm at Panchpukuria. Sangu rose by 20 cm at Bandarban while Matamuhuri recorded a fall by 6 cm at Lama.

Obituary

Mohammad Abdul Jabbar, elder brother of Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, died at his village home in Sunamganj Wednesday. He was 78, reports UNB.

He left behind three sons, four daughters and a host of relatives.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Burakhal in Jagannathpur thana yesterday.

Nahid Rahman, daughter of former director of relief and rehabilitation department Mafizur Rahman, died of blood cancer yesterday morning at her Banani residence. She was 29, reports BSS.

Nahid was a lecturer of the Education and Development Institute, Uttara.

Her *namaz-e-janaza* was held at Banani mosque after Asr prayers and she was buried at Banani graveyard.

Her *Qualkhawani* will be held on Sunday after Magreb prayers at her residence at House No. 6, Road number 2/A, Banani.

Classmates, friends and relatives have been requested to attend the *Qualkhawani*.

Death anniversary

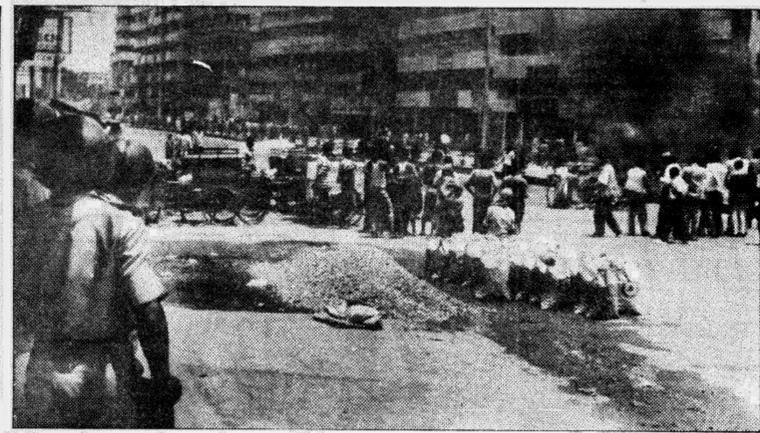
The 5th death anniversary of Khandaker Azizur Rahman, a leading participant of the Language Movement in 1952, former Chairman of Gaibandha Porashava and ex-MLA of Jukta Front, will be observed today.

A *milad mahfil* will be held at his V Aid Road residence in Gaibandha town, says a press release.

The first death anniversary of Hasina Khan, wife of A Samad Khan, Retired Divisional Manager, Bangladesh Railway will be observed today, says a press release.

A *doz mahfil* will be held at their Uttara residence after Asr prayers and a *milad mahfil* will be held after Magreb prayers at the Banani graveyard mosque.

Family members of the deceased seek blessings from relatives, friends and well wishers for eternal peace of the departed soul.



Police and passers-by watch as a rickshaw and tyre is put on fire in front of the BNP office during hartal hours yesterday. —Star photo

Arsenic problem should be solved with "village approach"

BARISAL, July 8: UNDP-World Bank South Asia Water and Sanitation Programme Coordinator Dr Babar N Kabir has suggested "village approach" to fight the mass scale arsenic contamination in the ground water in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He was addressing the inaugural session of the two-day Media Workshop on Arsenic, organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNDP, Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) and Barisal Press Club here on Tuesday. FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury presided.

Barisal Press Club President SM Iqbal, Deputy Civil Surgeon of Barisal Narendra Nath, Sub-Divisional Engineer of Department of Public Health Engineering Nurul Huda Chowdhury, Sharmeen Murshid of Brotee, Shahabuddin of NGO

Forum for Drinking Water and Bakhtiar Rana of FEJB also spoke.

Dr Babar described arsenic contamination problem as a macro one because of its magnitude and scale and said, but the solution should be explored at the micro level as its nature varies from village to village, and hydro-geological nature of the respective ecological zones.

He said, it cannot be regionalised and one has to test every tubewell across the country.

Therefore, he argued, solution of this mass problem lies in the village approach. Indigenous knowledge of the locality should get priority in the mitigation measures, he added. Dr Babar said there should be a shift in the whole mindset and no one can solve this problem alone as 59 out of 64 districts have already been affected by the contamination.

He said Bangladesh has been formulating programmes for

mitigating the arsenic contamination problem on emergency basis.

Dr Narendra Nath said concentration of arsenic has been found to be very high at several places in Barisal division. He said that 80 per cent tubewells in Sapania village under Sadar thana of Barisal district were found to be contaminated. He suggested launching of massive research work on arsenic contamination problems and raising capacities of the national institutions in this regard.

Quamrul Islam Chowdhury emphasised the need for raising awareness among the people and disseminating mitigation measures, especially messages and information on arsenic problem.

A total of 23 local journalists and nine Dhaka based journalists took part in the Media Workshop and field-trip which ended here yesterday.



UNDP-World Bank South Asia Water and Sanitation Programme Coordinator Dr. Babar N Kabir Addressing the Media Workshop on Arsenic organised by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNDP, Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) and Barisal Press Club at Barisal on Wednesday. FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury presided.

CPI(M) forms 'Super Secretariat' in WB

By Sakyasen Mitra

CALCUTTA, July 8: The CPI(M) party has formed a new committee in West Bengal. Known as the 'Super Secretariat' this committee consists of the West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, Binoy Choudhury, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, Sullen Dasgupta, Anil Biswas, Biman Bose and Binoy Konar. The job of this committee is to solve all the internal squabbles and problems plaguing the party at present.

The CPI(M) state committee and the other top leaders of the state are also apprehensive of a number of other factors. These include the selection of the candidates for the 13th Lok Sabha elections in September. District and Panchayat level leaders have already expressed their opinions regarding the nomination of candidates. Something that had never happened in the past.

Even leaders like Jyoti Basu and Binoy Choudhury are apprehensive that there will be a number of rebel candidates in certain constituencies this time. Already a problem exists regarding certain sitting members of the Parliaments, MPs like Hannan Mollah in Uluberia, Tarit Topdar in Barrackpur and Ajay Mukherjee in the Krishna Nagar constituency are facing problems in their own places regarding renomination. They have every possibility of facing a rebel CPI(M) candidate in their own constituencies. Places from where they have been selected for two or more terms. The Super Secretariat will try and solve the problems in these areas. In other places, Panchayat leaders of a constituency have openly stated their affinity for a particular candidate and have asked the

state committee to finalise the name.

A situation that had never occurred in the past. Being in power for the last 23 years have provided the platform to the corrupt within the party to build up a strong base for themselves. Even though the party still talks of intra party discipline being its main strength, doubts have really crept in about how much it remains.

During the filing of nomination for a council election in the Dum Dum municipality six aides of the Transport Minister Subhas Chakrabarty have filed theirs as independent candidates. They have even gone on record saying that they only accept Chakrabarty as their leader and nobody else. Something that was quite unbelievable three years back. As a result the CPI(M) at the moment have no option but to form something like the Super secretariat. Even then doubt remains whether it will be able to solve these intra party squabbles. The craze for power as reality eaten away the roots of the CPI(M). The roots which had made it so strong in the first place itself.

BGMEA calls for more BRTC buses for women workers

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) yesterday urged the BRTC authorities to ply six more buses to facilitate movement of thousands of women garment workers living in Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Rampura and other areas of the city, reports BSS.



Jamaat-e-Islami brought out a procession in support of the hartal yesterday. —Star photo

Yusuf asks all int'l agencies to work together

Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Alhaj Salahuddin Yusuf has appealed to the developed countries and international agencies to work together for common future, a message received from Tokyo said yesterday, reports BSS.

The appeal was made while he was addressing the opening session of an international seminar on "South to South Co-operation into the 21st century to meet reproductive health, population and development challenges in Africa and Asia" held at the UN University of Tokyo on Tuesday.

The two-day seminar was organised by UNDP and supported by UNFPA and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

The health minister emphasised the need for additional resources to address the challenges of population growth and stated that this was an area in which the north would need to contribute significantly.

The health minister is also the chairman of 'Partners in Population and Development.'

Unknown group threatens Shaheda Obaed

By Staff Correspondent

Unidentified persons claiming to be members of some "Shuvra Group" on Tuesday threatened to kill Prof Shaheda Obaed, wife of jailed BNP leader KM Obaider Rahman, unless she pays Tk 50 thousand as toll.

In this connection, Prof Shaheda filed a CD (No 373, Date July 6, 1999) with the Ramna thana yesterday.

"During the last few days, some unidentified people have been demanding toll and threatening me over telephone," Prof Shaheda Obaed said in the CD.

The GD was filed after she received a letter by post demanding a toll of Tk 50 thousand.

"You must reach Tk 50 thousand to Anwar Hossain, owner, Prodan, Orna House, 19/20, Hawkers' Market, Groatia Bhaban, Bangabandhu Avenue at around 8 pm," said the letter sent by the toll-seekers yesterday.

"If you fail to make the payment you will be slaughtered."

They also warned her not to inform police of the matter. "If you inform the police or if any one of us is arrested, your body will be eaten up by dogs," the letter said.

However, the police is yet to take any measure in this regard.

When asked whether he has any plan to look after the issue, an indifferent OC of Ramna police Rafiqul Islam said yesterday that he had nothing to do about the complaint.

ASHK Sadique condoles death

Education Minister ASHK Sadique yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of elderly Jessore Awami League leader Montaz Uddin Sardar, reports BSS.

Sardar, vice president of Sharasha Thana unit of the party and a close relation of Tabibur Rahman Sardar, MP, died at Jessore CMH on Tuesday at the age of 70.

In a condolence message, the minister also conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the peace of the departed soul.

Hasina, Blair

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Tony Blair observed that an excellent relationship was existing between the two countries and hoped the Bangladesh community living in Britain would further cement the ties to the mutual benefit of the two peoples.

The British premier mentioned that the Bangladesh Festival was being held in London, which he said would consolidate the cultural ties between the two countries.

Hasina thanked Blair counterpart for extending help during the devastating floods in Bangladesh.

She said her government was striving hard to alleviate poverty and bring smiles to the faces of the teeming millions.

The Prime Minister thanked Blair for inviting her to pay official visit to the UK and also for agreeing to inaugurate the Bangladesh Festival.

She expressed her confidence that ties between the two countries would continue to grow further in future.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hassa Chowdhury, Dr SA Samad, Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami, High Commissioner AH Mahmud Ali and Sheikh Rehana were present on the occasion.

Bomb attack Govt to take legal action against those responsible

The government will take legal actions against those responsible for Wednesday's bomb attack in which a police constable was killed, said an official handout, reports UNB.

Issued by the Home Ministry, the handout termed the incident "a serious threat to democracy."

It said the main opposition BNP brought out a torch procession at about 7:45 pm Wednesday in support of their Thursday's hartal.

"When the procession reached the Zero point in Gullistan area, some processionists hurled a number of powerful bombs on a contingent of Dhaka Metropolitan Police who were on duty to maintain law and order," it said.

The bomb attack left constable Mohammad Farhad Khan, 28, dead and a number of others, injured.

Nayek M Delwar Hossain and constables Mohammad Qayum, Sree Hari Roy, Lutfar Rahman, M Shamim, M Abdul Matin, Mohammad Selim, Wazed Ali, Moslemuddin, Ruhul Amin, Atiqullah, Mohammad Bellal Hossain, Mohammad Ruhul Amin and Mohammad Touhid and five pedestrians were injured seriously in the explosions.

Among them, Nayek Delwar and constables Qayum and Sree Hari were sent to the Combined Military Hospital in a critical condition.

Seriously injured constables Shamim, Abdul Matin, Selim and Wazed Ali were sent to DMCH and constables Moslemuddin, Ruhul Amin, Atiqullah, Bellal, M Ruhul Amin and Tahmid admitted to the Rajarbagh Police Hospital.

The handout also called upon the police forces to carry out their duties with utmost restraint in the face of extreme provocation.

The government expressed deep sympathy for the bereaved families of the deceased and injured policemen.

Jadu Mia's birth anniversary today

The 75th birth anniversary of renowned politician Mashur Rahman Jadu Mia will be observed today, reports BSS.

The national committee for the observance of Jadu Mia's birth anniversary in a press statement recalled the contribution of the late leader to the country's progressive movement and ensuring welfare of the poor and the downtrodden, a press release said.

3-wheelers

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Of its odd design and a small 80 CC engine. It uses motorcycle tyres, which make it unsafe for speedy movement.

The improved version of Mishuk will have 125 CC four-stroke engines and smaller tyres used in baby taxis. The main frame has also been made rugged.

But the new model is awaiting approval of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority for about one year. Priced at Tk 85,000 a piece, nobody knows when the new Mishuk will roll onto the city roads.

Before the budget, importers had demanded that import duty on 'completely knocked-down' three-wheelers be fixed at 7.5 per cent and VAT on the sale of four-stroke ones be withdrawn. They said this would keep the price down and encourage import of pollution-free vehicles.

However, the authorities paid no heed to the demands and slapped a 25 per cent import duty on four-stroke engines in addition to VAT.

Meanwhile, Uttara is still selling two-stroke baby taxis from its stock, but has raised the price to Tk 125,500 from Tk 115,500.

The existing two-wheeler taxis will take another eight to 10 years to be completely phased out. But experts say, the level of pollution caused by these taxis can still be reduced to about one tenth just by using the right quantity and quality of lubricant.

The makers recommend mixture of two to three per cent two-stroke lubricant with fuel. But the baby taxi drivers mix as much as ten per cent. This creates more smoke than expected," said Hossain.

Police barracks

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stables Sri Hari and Abdul Matin, were shifted from Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) on Wednesday night. The rest were shifted to Rajarbagh Police Hospital.

Earlier on Wednesday night, hundreds of policemen from the barrack went on more-than-an-hour-long rampage, setting at least three motor vehicles on fire and damaging more than a dozen after word spread that Farhad was killed.

They also put up barricade on the road in front of the barrack.

A good number of local people and riot policemen, preferring anonymity, told the Star at the barrack yesterday that a number of agitating policemen attempted to set their uniform on fire.

However, DC of Riot Police (South) Aminul Islam denied that any such incident had happened. It was not a mutiny at all," he said.

The DMP commissioner Md Shamsuddin yesterday said, "They (policemen) were emotional... they demanded justice and security through the agitation."

During a visit to the police barrack, some anxious relatives of the riot policemen were found waiting at the barrack premises to know about the whereabouts of their near and dear ones.

"I have come here to know the whereabouts of my brother-in-law, a driver of the riot police, as he did not go home for his lunch. He usually has his lunch with his family members," said one anxious relative.

"We never reacted like this before, but this time it was too much for us," said a riot policeman, who did not want to be named.

"The government did little regarding safety of police personnel. We have to take heavy risk and we have lost our on-duty colleagues in the recent past," he said, referring to the killing of Constable Tajul in a bomb attack on February 11 this year.

A subedar of the Riot Police Division filed a murder case with Ramna thana in connection with the killing of Farhad, accusing 32 leaders and activists in opposition BNP and 250 unidentified persons Wednesday night.

After the inauguration, various Bangladeshi foods were displayed and folk songs performed at Darbar Court premises in presence of a good number of Bangladeshi and British nationals.

BNP blames

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said, "The entire area has long been controlled" by the ruling Awami League, he said.

He said BNP believes in democracy and never violated democratic norms since it came to power.

He demanded immediate formation of an inquiry commission headed by a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court to probe incident.

Bhuiyan said Home Minister Mohammad Nasim's statement in parliament yesterday implicating city BNP Convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka in the incident is "false, fabricated and motivated."

He said the Home Minister's statement clearly proves that the government committed the crime in a pre-planned way. Ruling party "terrorists" are also responsible for the killing of one person at College Gate in the city during hartal yesterday, he alleged.

Mannan Bhuiyan said incidents of violence are being created by the government to divert the course of the anti-government agitation and mislead the people.

He urged all concerned to remain alert about it and build a vigorous movement to topple the government.

He also congratulated the people for "spontaneously observing hartal" yesterday.

Speaking at the press briefing, Sadek Hossain Khoka strongly protested the Home Minister's statement and said neither he nor any Opposition activist was involved in Wednesday's bomb blast.

Activists of the ruling party came out from its central office and exploded the bomb, he claimed.

Jatiya Party Presidium member Kazi Firoz Rashid, Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General Mohammad Kamruzzaman, IOJ leader ARM Abdul Matin, Jappa chief Shafiqul Alam, Proddhan, PNP President Shaikh Shawkat Hossain Nilu, NDA Chairman Nurul Haq Majumder and DL leader Saifuddin Ahmed Moni also spoke at the briefing.

'No security of people'

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said there was no security of the people including the teachers in the country due to failure and misrule of the government, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday, the BNP leader expressed deep concern over the incident of dacoity in the house of Dr Ershadul Bari, Dean of Law Faculty of the Dhaka University.

He said the law and order situation in the country had deteriorated so seriously that the miscreants did not dare to commit dacoity in a house in the university campus, which was a restricted area.

He criticised the Home Minister for expressing self-satisfaction in Parliament over the improvement of the country's law and order situation and said nobody could hide the real fact through verbose and propaganda.

Bhuiyan said the numbers of burglary, dacoity, mugging, abduction, murder and rape increased so much during the last three years that these had broken the all-time record.

He said due to politicisation of the police force and using it for harassing the opposition, the force could not perform its normal duties.

Bangladesh Festival

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position in the world as a self-respecting nation. I want cooperation from all countries of the world in the journey. In our road to progress, the United Kingdom will always remain with us, she hoped.

She said the festival will be a testimony to the everlasting bond between the United Kingdom and Bangladesh.

The festival was inaugurated with the hope that it would provide an opportunity to the people of Britain to see the rich and diverse culture of Bangladesh. The three-week extravaganza will also be taken to Bradford and Manchester to enable Bangladeshis in those areas to have a feeling of home.

The festival will focus on the age-old traditional culture of Bangladesh including *Palagan, Jarigaan* and *Pat Chitra*. The festival is being organised by the Arts Worldwide, a UK-based non-governmental organisation to promote the traditional and folk art and culture in the United Kingdom.

The Beximco, Bangladesh Biman and some British companies are sponsoring the festival. Bangladesh will be transported culturally to more than 20 UK venues including some of London's most prestigious art venues like Queen Elizabeth Hall.

UNB adds: Referring to textile exhibition at the festival, Hasina said that it would bring one to "the creativity of our weavers through embroidered quilts and Jamdane saraces."

Termining the festival a blend of Bangladesh's ancient tradition and modernity, Hasina told Blair that it would bring him to the richness and pride, courage, creativity and imagination of Bengali people.

She said the tune of Bengali folk songs, traditional music of *dholak*, drums and flutes of various types will present the evergreen Bangladesh—the country of songs, paddy and festivals which will never be defeated by the sorrow, poverty, worn-out drought and natural calamity.

After the inauguration, various Bangladeshi foods were displayed and folk songs performed at Darbar Court premises in presence of a good number of Bangladeshi and British nationals.

Two N'ganj brothels

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During a visit to the area yesterday, the sex workers were seen idling for customers, some roaming around the narrow passages. But most of the girls were seen staying inside their rooms.

Talking to The Daily Star, some of the inmates said that they would give up their profession if properly rehabilitated.

"If we are forcibly evicted from the brothel, we will make the whole town a red-light area," Sathi a leader of the sex workers said. "Rehabilitation of inmates of Tanbazar and Nimitoli will not solve the problem. If you are honest and want to solve it, rehabilitate all the sex workers in different areas in the country," Sathi said.

None came to this profession at her will and none wants to cling to it," she added.

Sathi (27) said she was forced to adopt this profession when she was only 13. Mother of a 11-month-old girl, Sathi maintains a six-member family comprising her mother, sisters and brothers in Bagerhat. "My sisters and brothers do not know what I do here. My father is no more but my mother knows about my profession," she said.

"You give me the assurance that I will be accepted again in the society and my daughter will get education in a good school? I will then gladly give up the profession," she added.

Josna, another sex worker at Moimuddin's building at Tanbazar brothel, said that the sex workers who are not being rehabilitated have the right to live like others in the society.

She said the government is obliged to ensure security to sex workers.

"No one comes to the profession willingly," she said adding, "our social atmosphere is pushing us to indulge in flesh trading."

However, all the sex workers of the two brothels demanded that the government should not evict them without proper rehabilitation plans and arrest immediately those responsible for the killing of sex worker Jesmin.

According to a government intelligence agency report, there are as many as 3,400 sex workers in the two brothels. Tanbazar houses 2,800 sex workers and Nimitoli 625.

Seventeen owners of 21 buildings at Tanbazar and Nimitoli brothels earn as much as Tk 1.25 crore every month, the report said.

Some of the brothel owners said about 6,000 sex workers are living there and about 40 per cent of them are registered with the district administration.

However many of the local people said the profession will not disappear miraculously if the brothels are closed down.

Some clients interviewed by The Daily Star cited an endless variety of reasons for visiting brothels -- boredom with their wives, experiment, fulfilling emotions etc.

An owner of a building in the brothel,