

## Media workshop in Khulna

## UNDP-WB expert favours easy solution to arsenic contamination

KHULNA, July 13: UNDP-World Bank South Asia Water and Sanitation Programme expert A K Sengupta has favoured easy and cheaper solutions to the mass-scale arsenic contamination in the groundwater across Bangladesh, reports BSS.

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

Civil Surgeon of Khulna Dr Mohammad Sukuruddin Mridha, FEJB members Badul Alam, Bakhtiar Rana, Hasan Hafiz and Abdur Rahman Khan, Khulna Press Club President

Humayun Kabir Balu and general secretary Manik Saha also spoke.

Sengupta gave an account of the state of arsenic contamination in the groundwater of West Bengal in India and a comparative picture in Bangladesh. He said detected in 1983, the spread-out is very little in West Bengal compared to the mass contamination in Bangladesh where it was detected much later.

The UNDP-WB expert said there are some pockets of arsenic in West Bengal but the spread-out in Bangladesh is very heavy.

He said in India people themselves have sealed the arsenic-tainted tube-wells even before the arrival of the officials of various agencies but in Bangladesh the number of arsenic affected tube-wells is huge.

Sengupta said water analy-

sis is a great problem and testing such a huge number of tube-wells is a big task for any agency in Bangladesh.

He said solution to the arsenic contamination problem lies either in going to the deeper sources of water side by side arsenic removal programme or alternative use of surface water.

Dr Mridha underscored the need for spreading health education among the masses to face the arsenic problem which has already hit 59 out of 64 districts.

Quamrul Chowdhury emphasised the need for collective efforts of the various agencies, professional groups and civil society bodies to mitigate this disaster-like problem.

A total of 26 local journalists and 15 Dhaka-based media men took part in the workshop followed by a field trip to different areas of Khulna.

## Reinstated in job after sixteen years

Chowdhury Sanwar Ali, former Deputy Secretary of the Home Ministry, was reinstated in his job on Monday after 16 years following the decision of the review committee set up at the order of the High Court.

Sanwar Ali was given forced retirement in 1983 during the Martial Law regime of Ershad when he was Director of Rural Development Board. He filed a writ petition in the High Court Division in 1997 challenging the validity of forced retirement order of 1983 Martial Law government.

A high Court Division bench comprising Justice K M Hasan and Justice Tofazzal Islam ordered the government to form a forum to review the petition of Chowdhury Sanwar Ali. A high-powered review committee formed at the order of the High Court Division gave a decision of reinstating Sanwar Ali with his service seniority and all arrear salaries. The decision was approved by the court.

Sanwar Ali after suffering an ordeal of 16 years got back first gear as the going was and the ride as bumpy as possible.

Right from Jatrabari upto Hatchkola the pot-holed road was full of traffic and the choice was simple to reach the city was to skip the traffic, take the wrong side or even a ride on the pavement, following the examples of others.

We followed their cue. But riding on the pavement near the Hardeo only invited more trouble as the condition of the path was no better than the roads. At one place near the community centre at Hardeo glass factory next to a childrens park, the place had been turned into a convenient open air public toilet. Even the rickshaw peddlers avoided the mess.

The only other choice left seemed to be the use of the wrong side of the road. The traffic policemen were simply helpless to stop the madness on the part of everyone. The city seemed far away as everyone tried to find a swift, and faster way back to the city.

The vehicles on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway were moving at a snail's pace. The reason for this is the badly damaged sections on the approaches to the city at Jatrabari and Sayedabad. The effect of digging and re-digging by sewerage and telephone companies alike had left its effect on the roads already wearied by the heavy traffic. Added to this was the monsoons which had set on before any re-

## An endless journey back to the capital

By Special Correspondent

It was an endless journey back to the city negotiating through a mess of traffic, moving on a lunar surface-like tarmac of a road that links the capital with the south, including the Chittagong port.

It took an hour and a half for the rigorous ride on a motorcycle from Chashara in Naryanganj. Normally the distance of only 17 km should take 15 minutes to negotiate. But it often lasts for more than two hours. This time can be reduced further if one is ready to risk a ride on the pavement or to even take the wrong side of the road.

When this correspondent along with a Daily Star photographer dared to negotiate the traffic yesterday afternoon on a motorcycle from Chashara, all kinds of challenges faced them as they tried to make back to the city on time.

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pair work had been done on them.

It was nightmarish to find space between the meander of trucks and buses, their exhausts emitting heavy smoke of sulphur mostly because they were running on first gear.

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## Lakhs remain marooned

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they are afraid," said Shafana, a mother of three children, coming from Ziaur. She said there was no boat and she had to brave the swirling water with her children.

Many people were seen carrying their domestic animals on their shoulders. "We need more boats to rescue those people from this situation," said Rafiqul Islam, an elderly man who along with his family of four was heading for shelter at nearby Moinamoti High School and College.

"The water rose up to our waist in two hours and we climbed on the roof. We decided to move out yesterday morning," Shuman from Devpur told this correspondent at the shelter.

The roaring sound of gushing water could be heard from half a kilometre away. Only tops of palm trees were seen above the swirling water in the entire eight kilometre stretch up to Ebdarpur.

While thousands struggled to reach shelters, men with nets were seen along the submerged highway, trying to catch fish which escaped from hundreds of ponds and fish farms in the area.

At the Moinamoti High School and College, 2,000 men, women and children were crammed in 20 rooms. Members of the armed forces have set up small temporary units to supply purified water. Inmates of the shelter said they were farmers, rickshaw pullers, labourers and small traders who had never seen a flood.

Officials said they are opening more shelters at local educational institutions and at high places.

About one hundred families were seen making makeshift shelters on the Gumi embankment where high officials of the district administration gathered to escort Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razak and Law Minister Abdul Matin Khosru who had just arrived in speed boats.

## Training programme on X-ray Diffractometry ends

Plasma Plus, a centre for technology transfer in science and medicine in its May-June-July schedule of "Continuing Education in Science & Medicine" organised intensive training courses on "X-ray Diffractometry and Thermal Analysis" and their application in soil research," says a press release.

Jointly organised in collaboration with A Q Chowdhury and Yellow Page, they were attended by leading scientists from Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI). The programmes conclude Monday with a simple ceremony in which certificates were awarded to the attendees.

## JP leader Nurunnabi Chand dies

Former state minister and Jatiya Party leader Nurunnabi Chand died yesterday at Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital in the city, reports UNB.

Suffering from liver cirrhosis for quite a long time, the JP leader breathed his last at 8:15 am at the hospital, JP sources said.

After his *namaj-e-Janaza* at Dhanmondi Baitul Aman Mosque in the afternoon, his body was sent to his home district Rajshahi for burial.

## Shameless

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dence, sovereignty as well as Islamic values and national wealth will be protected by the party whose members can not restrain the greed for 301 plots, the meeting observed.

The ruling Awami League will continue grabbing national wealth so long it remains in power, it said and called upon the people to participate in the current anti-government agitation to topple it.

The meeting urged the people to make success the Opposition's July 16 country-wide protest day against the conspiracy to stop Islamic education.

BNP leader Abdus Salam, Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Abdul Qader Moliah, ATM Azharul Islam and Jashimuddin Sarkar, JP leader Golam Mostafa and IOJ leaders ARM Abdul Matin and Moulana Emdadul Haq Araiha at attended the meeting, chaired by BNPL leader M Shamsul Islam MP.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement yesterday also condemned allotment of Rajuk plots to ruling party men depriving 13,000 applicants.

The government is now evicting inhabitants of Baridhara to give more plots to Awami League leaders, he claimed.

He demanded immediate cancellation of the allotments for re-distribution of the plots and stoppage of the eviction.

Advocate Syed Ahmed also urged the DU authorities to look into the consultancy issue as there is allegation that the teachers were engaged outside the university by harming their academic duties.

He said many teachers are engaged in consultancy beside their academic duties and are not giving the due share of their income to the university which is a violation of university rules.

Replying to Syed Ahmed, the DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury told the Senate that the university in the out-going session earned Tk 5.5 lakh as share of income of teachers consulting beside their



BNP brought out a procession yesterday protesting the 'false' cases filed against Sadeq Hossain Khoka MP and several other party activists.

## AL terrorists killed

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He said the government since its assumption of power has used the police forces against the opposition and is now trying to confront them to stay in power illegally. Chowdhury said it is Awami League, which has a past record of attacks on police and cited newspaper reports to substantiate his position.

Referring to distribution of government plot, he said the Awami League leaders and activists have started grabbing the wealth of the republic and its people after assuming power. In recent times, they have expedited the process and plot distribution.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in his speech warned that they would paralyse the country if false cases against Khoka and others are not withdrawn immediately.

Describing the July 7 inci-

dent, he said the BNP that brought out a torch procession that evening ended near Golap Shah mazar much before the murder took place. Besides, the bomb explosion occurred at Zero point when no procession was present in the area.

Bhuiyan categorically alleged that terrorists of the ruling party exploded the bomb and they came from the Awami League central office. "Real culprits will be identified if the incident is investigated by a judicial body," he said and demanded constitution of a judicial probe committee and compensation for the bomb victims.

"Our movement is not against the police...our movement is against the misrule of the Awami League government," he said and added that the government is trying to confront us with the police to fish in the troubled water.

## Ershad tells BSS

## Hartal is a means of embarrassing the govt

Former President and Jatiya Party Chief Lt. Gen. (retd) Hussain Muhammad Ershad yesterday expressed his disension over the politics of hartal and said his party was compelled to call hartal as it belonged to the four-party opposition alliance.

"I am not in favour of hartal and I will never be so in future. But hartal is a means of embarrassing the government and I am doing this as part of the alliance's programme," the JP (Ershad-Nazir) chief explained in an exclusive interview with national news agency BSS at his posh Baridhara party office.

He talked to the interviewers soon after his return from the court where he attended a hearing of a case pending against him.

Referring to the opposition alliance, Gen. Ershad, who is still facing a number of corruption and other charges, claimed they have united against the government. "But it will depend on the attitude of the government how long the opposition unit continues," he explained.

The former army general, who was in prison for nearly six years, said every party has to go for coalition to form a government in the future. "As part of the alliance we are now waging movement simultaneously from our platform and JP will take its own course of action depending on the situation," he added.

Replies to a question on the benefit he derived from Awami League soon after his release from prison, his "public and unconditional" support to it and the subsequent sudden shifting from the camp, the former military dictator said Jatiya Party wants to play the role of a "real opposition" in every field.

"I never did politics as the agent of Awami league nor I am pursuing political tailism of

BNP now. My party has done many things independently."

He remarked, "the present parliament has contributed nothing. MPs themselves are showing their disinterest to attend parliament sessions and people feel shy to listen to their parliamentary discussions."

Gen. Ershad, reflecting his own views on socio-political and economic condition of the country and his party's programme, predicted that no party would get absolute majority in the general elections in future.

Referring to the killing of a police constable on the eve of the recent hartal, Gen. Ershad said he was "very much shocked" about the incident. None from my party hurled the bomb to the police constable", he said cautiously avoiding the question on hurling of bomb from a BNP procession.

Gen. Ershad said he was always against terrorism, bombing and hartal. He also criticised the ruling party for bringing out anti-hartal procession that when you distribute something, start it with yourself. Others in the cabinet who got plots are: Forest and Environment Minister Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Kalpa Ranjan Chakma, State Minister for Health Prof M Amanullah, State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam, State Minister for Education Satish Chandra Roy, State Minister for Textiles AKM Jahangir Hossain, Deputy Minister for Education Zinunnissa Talukder, and Deputy Minister for Industries Hasibur Rahman Swapan.

Communication Minister Anwar Hossain Manju's daughter Monija Rahman also got a piece of Rajuk land.

Officials of the prime minister's office (PMO) and their relatives who got plots are: Fahima Khatun, wife of PM's private secretary(2) Obaidul Mukhtadir Chowdhury, APS A F M Bahauddin and Md Ibrahim Hossain Khan; PM's personal assistant Manu Majumder; PM's protocol officer Alauddin Ahmed Chowdhury; Nargis Begum, wife of former DPS Abu Alam Md Shahid Khan; Sowad Khan, son of PM's press secretary Jawadul Karim; and Sultana Nargis, wife of PM's political adviser Dr SA Malek.

Other officials who also got plots are: Md Nuruzzaman Bhuiyan, private secretary to LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman; Mostafizur Rahman, public relations officer of works' minister; Md Rehman Islam, APS to Home Minister Mohammad Nasim; Kamal Abu Nasser Chowdhury, PS to Environment Minister Sajeda Chowdhury; Md Yakub Ali Patwari, PS to former home minister.

Of the 66 MPs who got plots, only two, Ziaul Haque Zia and Nazimuddin Alam, belong to BNP. Golam Faruq Ovi of JP and Kazi Shamshur Rahman of Jamaat are also among the lucky winners. The rest of the MP's belong to AL.

Awami League leaders who got plots, include: Md Kamruzzaman and Abdul Jalil, members of AL president, Nurul Majid Humayun, president of JBL, Siddiqua Rouf Khan, central assistant office secretary of AL, Lutful Hye Sachan, AL leader of Brahmanbaria, Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser of Chittagong, Ferdous Zaman Mukul of Bogra, Nurul Islam Thandu and Mahbub Zaman Bhulu of Rajshahi. Mosleuddin Khan of Manikganj, Fulu Sarkar of Juba League, Kazi Iqbal Hossain, general secretary of Gaibandha, Md Lutfur Rahman of Gaibandha, SM Mannan, Nurul Amin of Awami Shechhashebha League, Mukul Bose, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Mahmudur Rahman, Prof Nazma Rahman, and Sheikh Md Abdulla.

President of AL Laxmipur district AKM Shahjahan, Kamal president, Manikganj district AL Golam Mohiuddin, president, Jhenaidah district AL Ayub Hossain, president Gaibandha district AL Lutfur Rahman, General secretary of Chittagong(South) district AL Mosleh Uddin, Noakhali district president of AL Mohamad Hanif, Golapganj district AL president Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and former general secretary of Satkhira district AL Monsur Ahmed also got plots.

More allottees include Gopalganj AL leader Akram Uddin Ahmed, general secretary of Awami League city unit (North) Sardar Belayetur Hossain Mukul, former Chittagong League leaders Dr Mosaddeq Hossain, Kazi Mizanur Rahman Minto, Abdur Razzaq and Mahfuz Chowdhury, wife of former Chittagong League leader

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net ministers, 62 ruling party MPs, seven officials of the prime minister's office and more than one hundred relatives of Awami League leaders.

It took Rajuk about 18 months to pick the 301 individuals out of 13,000 applicants. According to Rajuk official sources, the selection of these 'lucky individuals' took place in several mock phases. The whole process shows how a few people who have access to the corridors of power are always pampered and get the upper hand over others.

Former minister for housing and public works' Mohammad Nasim had first prepared a list which contained names