

## BNP desperate to capture power, Zillur says

BRAHMANBARIA, July 17: LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman today charged the opposition BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia of adopting the policy of killing people for grabbing state power, reports UNB.

"Begum Zia has become desperate to capture power and has adopted the path of killing by calling hartal," Zillur said while addressing a rally at Champaknagar School premises here.

He called upon the BNP chairperson to give up the politics of hartal, bomb blasts and corpses for the greater interest of the people as well as democracy.

The LGRD Minister said during the last three years BNP and its anti-liberation allies had hatched many conspiracies by creating anarchy and artificial crises to oust the popular Awami League government.

Even those civil forces branded this year's pro-people budget as an anti-people one and called hartal twice against it. But common people have unitedly foiled their evil design," Zillur said.

The present government has established voting rights of the common people and strengthened the local government bod-

ies to accelerate development activities in the grassroots level.

He listed various development programmes including literacy, poverty alleviation and rural development programmes undertaken by the present government.

Zillur Rahman said the bilateral relations with foreign countries have been strengthened and high economic growth achieved due to the government's efficient policies.

"Being jealous of the success of government, they have called innumerable hartals without any issues," alleged the LGRD Minister.

He called upon the people to resist the evil attempt of creating unrest and anarchy by BNP and its allies.

Organised by local Awami League, the rally was addressed, among others, by Advocate Shah Alam, MP, Dilara Harun, MP, and local AL leaders.

Earlier, the LGRD Minister inaugurated the Armit Chemical Industry, laid the foundation stone of Talashahor UP complex and attended the inauguration ceremony of the newly constructed Brahmanbaria Municipal auditorium, said a PID handout.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presiding over a meeting of the National Disaster Management Committee at Ganobhaban yesterday. — PID photo

## Arsenic-hit people getting ready to sue UNICEF, DPHE

People affected by arsenic are preparing to sue the UNICEF and the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) for keeping them in dark about the dangers of arsenic-contaminated tubewell water that the authorities promoted as safe drinking water, reports UNB.

This was disclosed yesterday at a daylong media workshop on arsenic, organised by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) in cooperation with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and UNDP.

The workshop, held at National Press Club, was aimed at sensitising the media people about the dangers of arsenic toxicity and also its contamination mitigation programmes being carried out by the government and NGOs.

Those who spoke at the workshop included Environment Secretary Syed Marghub Morshed, Dr Babar N Kabir of World Bank, IUCN Country Representative Prof Ainun Nishat, Deputy Programme

Manager (Arsenic) of the Health Ministry Dr A Z M Iftekhar Hossain, BIDS researcher Asaduzzaman and FEJB General Secretary Bakhtiar Rana, FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury presided.

Syed Marghub Morshed appreciated the role of journalists in drawing the attention of the policy makers by highlighting the arsenic problem and mobilising public opinion for urgent measures.

Presenting the keynote address, Dr Iftekhar questioned the role of the UNICEF and the DPHE who over the years had promoted tubewell as the prime source of 'safe' drinking water.

He said the promoters of tubewell had considered bacteria-free water as the only parameter in declaring it 'safe', but ignored the presence of harmful chemicals in the groundwater that could come out of the tubewell installed by them across the country.

According to Dr Iftekhar, nearly 70 million people of 54 districts are likely to be affected

by probable arsenic contamination of some 4.5 million shallow tubewells currently serving as the main source of water for drinking and cooking purposes.

The promoters of tubewell culture in Bangladesh should now bear the moral responsibility to inform people about the dangers hidden in the country's underground aquifer, said Dr Babar Kabir.

Prof Ainun Nishat said drinking water must be safe and made available at affordable cost. He underlined the importance of a sustained campaign against arsenic contamination without creating panic among the members of the public.

Some participants also underscored the importance of a 'media-hype' over the lurking dangers of arsenic contamination in groundwater, not only to create public awareness but also to draw the attention of the policy-makers and community leaders for mobilising all-out efforts to mitigate the hazards caused by arsenic.

## 2 lakh marooned

From Page 1

Highways department workers are struggling to restore road link between Comilla and Brahmanbaria, dumping sand barge.

Officials of Water Development Board said the breaches in the Gumbi embankment would be repaired soon.

The district administration with assistance from armed forces so far distributed Tk 4.51 lakh in cash and 107 tonnes of rice among the flood victims.

Meanwhile, Flood Warning Centre said the flood situation in other parts of the country continued to improve as there was rainfall in the last three days resulting in recession in the water levels in major rivers.

## Dr Kamal

From Page 1

licopter for election purpose before the next parliament session and relevant parliamentary standing committees for discussion.

The Election Commission should ask all parties willing to contest any election to furnish declaration of assets of elected MPs, their dependent family members and office-bearers. The political parties should have to declare the mode and source of their earning and expenditure, and political leaders have to file income tax returns with the income tax authorities.

Replying to a question, he said all elections, including those of local bodies, under a neutral caretaker government is not possible. But the provision for holding some major elections, like the city corporation polls along with the national elections under a caretaker administration, can be made on the basis of national consensus.

About the opposition's demand for mid-term polls, Dr Kamal suggested that public opinion on the issue be sought. The mid-term elections should be held if people want it, he added.

He, however, said he wants a democratically elected government to complete its term. Replying to another question, he said he provided ruling party MP Kader Siddiqui with legal assistance as a lawyer, "not to serve any other purpose".

Gano Forum leaders Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Zahurul Islam, Mahfuzul Islam Khan and Sagor Anwar were present during the press conference.

## Defence cargo ship

From Page 1

"We raised the issue at several meetings on port security but to no result," he said.

"If the coast guards are not provided with logistics in addition to a provision for regular patrolling, the menace can not be curbed. Police should also step up their operation," Anis said.

Sources said that hideouts of the pirates are located in areas under the Port and Anwara thanas adjoining Karnaphuli river and the sea.

But police hardly go for raiding those hideouts. They reportedly have 'secret understanding' with pirates, the sources alleged. The Port and Anwara thanas are 'lucrative postings' for a section of police personnel, the sources claimed.

A senior official of Chittagong port seeking anonymity said, "Incident of piracy is a regular phenomenon at the outer anchorage due to lax security".

"It is a national problem. So the government should take adequate measures to ensure security to foreign cargo ships at the outer anchorage as well as at the port jetties," he said.

The attack by pirates on foreign vessel 'MV Karen Cat' on Wednesday night was the latest such incident at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port, port sources said.

The armed pirates did not touch the defence cargo but took away some valuable goods and the anchor ropes from the vessel.

Few days ago, pirates attacked another foreign vessel.

## Showcase

From Page 1

Rahman Hall is headed by hall provost Prof Harunur Rashid. Other members are: Dr Nur-Ul-Nabi, Proctor, and a house tutor of the hall.

The authorities will also issue showcase notices on Zakir, third year student of Management and resident of Mohsin Hall (room-343) and Asif, third year student of Political Science and resident of the same hall for attacking Kamal Hossain, a final year student of Philosophy, in front of DUS snack.

The second inquiry committee in headed by DU Proctor. Other members are: Dr Khairul Hossain, Provost of Mohsin hall and a house tutor of the hall.

on the Karnaphuli near the cement clinker point and took away anchor ropes and other valuables, port sources said.

Anchor ropes are sold on black markets here at high price, sources informed.

Even a signal post was looted by pirates from the port channel recently, a port source said.

Many other incidents of piracy in foreign vessels remain unreported. A few cases of piracy are recorded with the port thana, run with funds from the Chittagong Port Authority, port sources said.

## Imam arrested in W Bengal

CHHINBURA, West Bengal, July 17: The imam of a local mosque has been arrested for his alleged involvement in espionage and criminal activities in Bangladesh, police sources said here today, reports PTI.

Md Zakir Hussain Noori alias Taslimuddin, serving as the imam of the Jama Masjid here for the last seven months, was arrested yesterday on a tip off by the Murshidabad police. The Superintendent of Police, Hooghly, Gangeswar Singh, told PTI here.

He is also wanted for his alleged involvement in crimes in Bangladesh.

Noori was produced before the court today and remanded to police custody for 14 days.

## JS body instructs ministry to supply saplings to MPs for plantation

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Forest at a meeting yesterday directed the concerned authorities to take necessary measures to stop the pilferage and trafficking of logs and animals from forests, reports BSS.

The meeting held yesterday at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with committee Chairman Alhaj Mohammad Tabbari Rahman in the chair.

The meeting also instructed the authorities for supplying saplings of wood and fruit giving trees to all Parliament Members to involve them in tree plantation activities.

It also discussed different development programmes undertaken by the Bangladesh Forest Research Institute.

## Weather

### Moderate rain likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderately heavy falls is also expected at one or two places over Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal divisions during the period.

Met office said day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The country's highest temperature 34.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and the lowest 24.8 degrees at Sathkhira.

The sun sets today at 6.48 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.21 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage
	Max	Min
Dhaka	32.6	27.4
Chittagong	32.2	26.1
Rajshahi	33.6	27.0
Khulna	33.0	25.4
Barisal	32.0	25.2
Sylhet	31.8	25.3
Cox's Bazar	32.0	26.0
	Morning	Evening
	81	75
	77	72
	84	86
	80	74
	96	60
	86	83
	95	92

## Engineers suggest policy makers

### Opt for renewable energy instead of N-power plant

GHORASHAL, Narsingdi, July 17: Engineers at a discussion have urged the planners and policy making bodies to explore the kaleidoscopic avenues of 'renewable energy' instead of opting for the nuclear and other environmentally vulnerable alternatives to meet the country's growing power demands, reports BSS.

"We should prepare ourselves to break the monopoly of natural gas, which is a finite resource. Gas is used to produce 87 per cent of electricity in the country while billion-dollar nuclear power plant will also invite different environmental hazards, the engineers said.

Ghorashal Centre of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) organised the discussion titled 'Service Oriented and Sustainable Energy Planning: Vision 2000 for Bangladesh' at the Training Institute of the Chemical Industries (TICI) of BCIC on the Ghorashal Urea Fertiliser Factory campus here yesterday.

Engineer Mustafizur Rahman, Chief of Ghorashal chapter of IEB presided over the discussion. IEB president Prof M A Hannan, general secretary Eng A N H Akhter Hossain, keynote speaker Eng Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, IEB vice-president Eng Nurul Huda and Eng Khan Mohammad Monzur Morshed, among others, participated in the discussion.

Keynote speaker Eng Mohammad Fazlur Rahman said massive campaign should be launched for energy conservation. He said to maximize efficiency of the equipment, advanced home appliances should be used.

He said VAT (Value Added Tax) and other duties on the energy efficient electric lamps should be withdrawn immediately.

Present cost of a 20W Osram lamp is around Taka 750 but without VAT and other duties the same lamp would be available at Taka 187 only," he said adding "at least 592 MW of power is used for lighting across the country."

Stressing the need for using wind, solar and cogeneration technologies, Rahman said Bangladesh could easily produce 1,000 MW power using cogeneration techniques from the sugar, fertiliser and paper mills which will not only boost income of the respective factories but also add more power to the national grid.

Highlighting prospects of wind driven power plants he said that Bangladesh, enriched with some 1,600 km of uninterrupted sea coast and traditional monsoon wind, is capable of producing power in the coastal region which will be highly environment friendly.

Rahman said within the year 2000 Bangladesh would need at least 3,900 MW of electricity but the energy planners are yet to reach consensus on a long-term objective of the power sector.

## River erosion renders 20 families homeless

JOYPUKHAT, July 17: Erosion by the river Chhota Jamuna rendered 20 families homeless in last one week and threatened 45 others in the frontier village of Chenchra in Panchbibi thana of the district, reports UNB.

A flood protection embankment at Chenchra along the Chhota Jamuna has been facing threats due to strong current from a groyne dam, built by India in 1977 in the border area.

Standing crops on nearly 200 acres in the area are damaged every year by floodwaters in absence of regular repair of the embankment.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to repair the embankment on an emergency basis to protect croplands and the families of the affected village.



Siddiqur Rahman Sardar, president, Fourth Class Employees' Union, SSMC, addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to the killers of Khorshed. — Star photo

## Seminar on challenges of population held

### Need for accelerating female edn stressed to contain birth rate

By DU Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar identified thorns of gender discrimination, huge demographic momentum, maternal mortality, child malnourishment, motherhood in adolescence, access to basic and reproductive health care services, unplanned urbanisation and large scale poverty as factors causing great anxiety in achieving the goals of sustainable development for the country.

These points were noted at a seminar on "Challenges of Population and Development in the next Millennium", Bangladesh Population Association (BPA) organised the seminar at the Academy for Planning and Development in the city yesterday with State Minister for Ministry of Planning Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir in the chair.

They observed that the pressure of over population in the country is causing quite an adverse affect on public health as well as the environment.

Though the birth rate has been reduced to some extent, the speakers said that the population of the country would continue to increase.

The discussants stressed the need for acceleration of women's education particularly among the rural women to control the birth rate of the country.

Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir said that the birth rate has been reduced in some sections of the society. "However the rural people still are not thoroughly aware of the importance of this issue."

He emphasised on proper utilisation of population in various development activities of the country.

Shuyun Xu, UNFPA representative to Bangladesh observed that the world population would reach the 6 million mark when we enter the new century. He also noted that Bangladesh's population will reach 220 million by 2050.

"If we act together at both

government and NGO level", Shuyun Xu said, "we could certainly deal with the entire population and development better in the future. He further said that the UNFPA would provide its strong support to the government, NGOs and people of the country for improvement of reproductive health programmes, including family planning in the forthcoming millennium.

Speaking the seminar, Dhaka University Proctor Dr AKM Nurul Nabi who is also the secretary general of BPA said that BPA was a national forum for establishing link between government and professionals of different discipline having active interest in population and development issues.

He said that the main objectives of BPA are to pursue development primarily at the family and community levels

with focus on poverty alleviation. This will help to make the population issues an integral component of development programmes and function as an important forum to stimulate exchange of opinions and views on population related issues and concerns among the important stakeholders and family.

Calling the population phenomena as a global problem, Dr Nabi said the implications of global population trends should be appraised to be able to appreciate the national situation.

Dr. Syed Jahangir Haider, Shamsun Nehar and Farida Chowdhury presented a case study on "Floating Population of Dhaka City: Determination Factors and Life Style" at the seminar. The study conducted by in-depth interviews with open-ended questions focusing on factors leading to homelessness, life styles and socio-economic and health conditions, identified social and family problems for forcing people from home and to live in city streets.

Another paper on "Health of the Nation: How healthy are the contemporary Bangladesh" presented by Dr AKM K Ghulam Rabbani and Shahadat Hossain recommended for reduction of infant mortality, limitation of family size and ensuement of overall optimum spacing to achieve replacement level fertility in 10-15 years' time and accelerate women's education for improving the health status of the country.

Professor M Kabir of Jahangir Nagar University and system analyst of Election Commission Planning Commission M Madhusudan Sarkar presented the last keynote paper on "The Prospect for Stabilising of Bangladesh's Population: Alternative Scenarios".

Among others, president of BPA Waliur Islam, Secretary of MOHFW MM Reza and treasurer of BPA Abu Yusuf Chowdhury took part in the discussion.

## Sristi study says

### Social, family problems key contributors to floating people

Not natural disasters, but social and family problems are forcing people away from their homes and into a vagabond life on streets of the capital, reports BSS.

A recent study caught this trend, contrary to the common belief, looking into the reasons of homelessness of Dhaka's floating masses.

Also in action are a raft of other factors, according to the respondents, 64 per cent of whom identified 'social problems', 23 per cent 'economic distresses' and 13 per cent natural disasters as reasons for their agonies.

The study, Sharing Resources and Innovations for Sustainable Technical Innovations (SRISTI), followed a qualitative methodology to catch the sentiments of floating population from the pockets of Kamapur Railway Station, Mirpur and High Court mazaars, Sadarghat Launch Terminal and park areas.

The findings of the study were presented today by Dr Syed Jahangir Haider, Shamsun Nehar and Farida Chowdhury at a seminar on "Challenges of Population and Development in the Next Millennium" organised by Bangladesh Population Association.

Quoting from a survey of 1997, the study said there are about three and a half million floating people in the country and the number is picking up pace every year.

The study was conducted by in-depth interviews with open-ended questions focusing on the factors leading to homelessness, the current lifestyle and socio-economic as well as health status.

All the squatters interviewed are from the rural areas, the study said, adding that emigration from rural to urban areas is a continuing phenomenon, giving rise to inflation in unemployed population.

The study which was distributed division-wise, pointed out that about half of the floating population in the capital was from Dhaka division, little over one fifth from Barisal division and the most of the rest were from Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Sylhet divisions.

The government had accepted late in 1996 the ADB formula to increase or adjust power tariff every six months, considering gas price and a devaluation of taka. Accordingly, it had increased power tariff by 18.5 per cent in 1997-98. However, it did not increase the tariff every six months as per the ADB formula.

The donors always insist on raising power tariff to make the power sector profitable. But the sector incurs huge losses due to theft of power and not because tariff is low, sources concerned pointed out.

"PDB loses Tk 200 crore revenue each year due to theft of power. Similarly, DESA loses Tk 150 crore revenue annually," said one source. "If we could bring down the system loss to a tolerable level, power sector would have a good margin of profit."

The average power generation cost of PDB is around Tk 1.4 per unit, average transmission cost is around Tk one and average sale price is Tk 2.5.

with few from Khulna division. Majority of the squatters, 56.6 per cent, changed their abodes between two to four times while 43.39 per cent have changed it only once.

According to the study, 79.2 per cent of the floating population of the city has never attended school and illiteracy runs particularly high among the women.

## Power tariff

From Page 1

The raising of power tariff followed that of gas -- the main raw material for power generation -- in December last. Gas tariff was raised to Tk 56 per unit (one thousand cubic feet) from Tk 47.6.

Besides, devaluation of taka was also considered for the tariff hike. PDB has a huge foreign debt and devaluation of taka reduced its income in terms of dollars.

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## Jamalpur AL

From Page 1

Thana AL committee with its henchmen dissolving the existing committee, and also dissolved the existing district unit of Krishak League and formed another committee with people who were expelled from the party.

All the allegations were discussed in details and found to be correct, meeting sources said.

The meeting also nominated Advocate Shahidullah, Moulana Nurul Islam, Rezaul Karim Hira, Mirza Azam and Tohura Ali to take up the matter with the Prime Minister.

The district committee has been boycotting all functions of Rashed Mosharrar for the last one year upon a decision against his anti-organisational activities.

Rashed Mosharrar told UNB that he was not aware of the decision of his district unit.

Reached by telephone at his residence from Dhaka, Mosharrar said: "Awami League is a democratic organisation. The district unit may have taken such a decision as they have the democratic right."

He said he is heading Krishak League, a vital organ of the party. He questioned the wisdom of the district committee in taking such a decision that might erode the party image.



## Death anniversary of M Muhiuddin today

The first death anniversary of M Muhiuddin, member, Board of Directors, Bangladesh Bank and former Joint Secretary of ERD and father of Rashida Muhiuddin, TV newscaster and Director Public Relations, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, will be observed today, says a press release.

Qurankhuan, milad mahfil and special munajat will be held after Asr prayers at his residence at House No 5/1, Road No 13, Kalyanpur today.

Qurankhuan, milad mahfil and feeding of destitute will also be held at his village home in Muktagachha, Mymensingh.

## Obituary

Md Abdul Malek, son of late Moyeenuddin Ahmed of 82, Shantinagar, died on July 14 at a hospital in Dallas, USA. He was 68, says a press release.

Malek, a leftist politician and cultural activists, left behind his wife, one son, 4 daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

His qulkhawani will be held at his 135, Shantinagar residence after Asr prayers today. He went to USA for attending a conference in Dallas.



Rains have rendered part of badly damaged road at Badda Progoti Sarani almost unusable. — Star photo