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Uncertain future

Angry sex workers march in a procession in the city to protest the government plan to "rehabilitate" them.

—Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Sex workers slam eviction

Basic rights are the need, they say

By Ehsanul Haque

Sex workers from different parts of the country yesterday renewed their plea to the government not to evict them from brothels in the name of rehabilitation programme.

Instead, they urged the authorities to take up a programme which would ensure education, health and vocational training for the sex workers across the country.

The call came at a rally organised by a coalition of 49 non-government organisations (NGOs), demanding human rights for sex workers of Tanbazar and Nimtoli brothels and

to express solidarity with them.

The rally organised at Osmany Uddyan in the city yesterday was attended by several hundred human rights activists and sex workers from Dauladia, Tangail, Madaripur, Paridpur, Jessore, Tanbazar and Nimtoli. A section of floating sex workers, who were previously inmates of now defunct Kandupatti brothel also participated in the rally.

The sex workers holding placards read: We do not want eviction in the name of rehabilitation. Give security of sex workers. We want to live in a peaceful manner etc.

The coalition includes: Naripakha, Coalition for the Urban Poor, Ain-O-Shalish Kendro, Bangladesh Human Rights Coordination Council, Ganashtha Sangstha, Association for Social Advancement (ASA), Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, Proshika, VHSS, Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition (WHC) and Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR).

The rally was addressed by the representative of three organisations of the sex workers —

Durjoy, Ulka and Mukti Narisangha, Tanbazar brothel Women and Children organisation, Human Rights Journalist Association and Co-ordinator on Tanbazar movement solidarity programme.

Snubbing the rehabilitation plan as a political game, Shathi, a sex worker from Tanbazar questioned, "Why our places should be the first target of the proposed rehabilitation programme leaving 12 other such brothels with 50 thousands inmates across the country."

Witnesses said the tremor also triggered a limited water surge in the Bay of Bengal.

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Accused in multiple murder cases held

By Staff Correspondent

An accused in 26 cases, including four murder cases, was arrested from inside a club in the city's Narinda area Wednesday.

Police identified him as Abu Haider Babu, 29, son of Kabir Hossain, a resident of Badda area.

A team of Gulshan police led by DC north S M Mizanur Rahman raided Narinda Club and arrested him at about 7:30 pm. Police also recovered a pistol and a grenade from his possession.

Police said Babu is an accused in four murder cases, including businessman Harun and AL activist Azad murder cases.

Harun was shot dead in front of Badda Club on June 7 and Azad was gunned down outside the district court premises in

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Comilla continues to reel under Gumti water

Improvement forecast for other areas

By Special Correspondent

The flood situation remained unchanged in Comilla yesterday, where at least 300,000 people in five thanas remained marooned since the Gomti burst its embankment about two weeks ago.

The situation elsewhere in the country is likely to improve as the weather was fair and the major rivers were falling yesterday because of a less active monsoon, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said.

The Padma and the Meghna were falling but remained above their respective danger levels at two places. The Padma was however flowing 6 cm above red marks at Bhagyalak and Munshiganj. The river fell by 3 cm at Rajshahi and Hardinge Bridge point and registered slight fall at Pankha and Goalundo. The flood situation in Padma

basin areas from Goalundo to Bhagyalak may improve slightly.

The Jamuna and the Brahmaputra, both flowing below their danger levels at all major points, are falling.

The situation in the Meghna and the South-Eastern Hill basins may also improve, the FFWC said.

The Meghna rose by 5 cm at Bhalirab Bazar where it continued to flow above the danger level. The Surma and Kushiara recorded fall but continued to flow above their danger levels.

In the South-Eastern Hill basin, all the rivers marked fall and were flowing below their danger levels.

The FFWC in its forecast for the next 48 hours said that the Padma is likely to fall at Bhagyalak and flow 1 cm above the danger level. But the

At least 30 people were injured, 15 with bullet wounds when security guards opened fire on the passengers on board a launch in river Amkhola today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said two people, identified as Mizan, 25, and Hanif, 30, who jumped into the river during the indiscriminate firing were missing till filing of this report at 9 pm.

Witnesses said the incident took place when the passengers of Galachipa-bound launch Sagar-II got agitated as the Ansars personnel locked a couple in their cabin and snatched Tk 4,000 from them.

Three of the injured — Sohrab Sarder, Arman Gazi and Mahboob — were rushed to Patuakhali Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

The rest of the injured were admitted to the local Galachipa Thana Health Complex.

On information, police seized the launch from Charbagdi area and arrested five Ansars along with five rifles and ammunition. They are Syed Ali, Selim, Kalam, Biren and Sarib Ali.

Ruthless theft of public money

Rains run through Tk 11 cr renovations at DMCH

By Naimul Haq

Wall and roof plasters are falling while water is leaking at some points despite the just completed Tk 11 crore renovation work at the biggest and busiest government hospital in the country!

Though it may sound incredible, it is happening at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Six heads of departments at the DMCH showed this correspondent during spot visits how plasters were falling in wards, operation theatres (OTs), Intensive Care Unit (ICU), doctors' rooms, bathrooms, corridors and other places.

"I have never seen such a situation during my five years at this hospital. Think about the quality of renovation work completed. They have misap-

propriated a big amount of money," said one of the departmental heads preferring anonymity.

Another departmental head said, "Water leaks through walls in the operation theatres (OTs). It is worse during rains. We are compelled to stand in OTs with water all over the floor and carry on surgery. Can you imagine that?"

A senior doctor said, "They had planned to misappropriate public money in the name of renovation work. It is easy to embezzle funds this way."

Similar allegations were made by doctors and other staff in surgery, casualty, neurosurgery, Gynaecology & Obstetrics, urology and ENT depart-

ments and burn unit and ICU. All of them alleged that the renovation was not done as per the work order.

The DMCH director also expressed utter disappointment over the quality of renovation work done.

According to sources in the health ministry, Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided a loan of about Tk 11 crore for the renovation work. The loan was one of the sub-components of the ADB-assisted Second Health and Family Planning Services.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) under the health ministry was asked to supervise the entire renovation work, done by a private firm.

According to PMU, renovation work started in 1993 and was completed last month.

When contacted, an official concerned in the firm that carried out the renovation work — DDC — claimed, "We never compromised on quality. The work done at DMCH matches the standard maintained by any other reputed construction firm in the country. The allegations are baseless."

PMU Director Nazrul Islam, when contacted, said, "The allegations have no ground. Although the work, our engineers were present to inspect. Until the users (doctors) were satisfied, we insisted on repeating certain repair work. So there is no question of low quality work. DDC had to comply with

the plans submitted by it earlier and we made sure that the work was done properly."

He also said, "I often visited the hospital but there were no complaints."

Asked why wall and roof plasters were falling, he said, "It can happen and can be repaired."

During a spot visit recently, this correspondent saw rain waters in the room of Prof Mazid, head of surgery department. Furniture had to be moved from the room.

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WOODS HOLE, Massachusetts, July 22: The Kennedy family took its grief to sea Thursday to scatter the ashes of yet another fallen son, reports AFP.

The remains of John F. Kennedy Jr., along with those of his wife Carolyn Bessette and sister-in-law Lauren Bessette, were scattered at sea in private ceremony on the USS Briscoe in the waters off Massachusetts.

Senator Edward "Ted" Kennedy led some 15 family members early Thursday morning aboard the navy destroyer for the ceremony near the site of the plane crash that ended the lives of the three July 16.

Television networks broke off their regular transmissions early in the morning to broadcast live footage of the Briscoe taken from local news helicopters.

The son of the slain US president was at the controls of the Piper Saratoga plane, with his wife and sister-in-law aboard, on Friday night when the aircraft, apparently out of control, slammed into the waters off the coast of this northeastern state.

It was his wish to be buried at sea, news reports said.

The Briscoe steamed to a point in the vicinity of where the plane's single engine plane plunged into the Atlantic Ocean, and the burial service was conducted with immediate

family members in attendance.

After about 45 minutes at the site, the Briscoe turned back toward Woods Hole.

Private boats and ships were prohibited from entering a 16 kilometre (10 mile) radius around the Briscoe.

It was not disclosed to what extent navy custom was incorporated into the ceremony. Navy tradition for burials at sea usually involved a benediction, 21 rifle shots, and a salute by assembled officers accompanied by a bugle playing Taps.

The burial and memorial arrangements were reportedly made by the Kennedy clan's lawyer.

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