

The Daily Star

on Friday

VOL. X NO. 80 REGD. NO. DA 781

www.dailystarnews.com

DHAKA FRIDAY APRIL 7, 2000

3rd Millennium

CHAITRA 24, 1406 BS

MUHARRAM 1, 1421 HIJRI

20 PAGES PLUS MAGAZINE PRICE: TAKA 9.00

World Health Day today

By Staff Correspondent
Bangladesh joins the world in observing the World Health Day-2000 today (Friday).

It may be mentioned here that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been observing the day through special programmes since 1948, the year when WHO was launched.

This year's theme of WHO — 'Safe Blood Starts With Me — Blood Saves Lives', focuses on raising awareness on voluntary blood donation.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed in a message on the eve of the World Health Day called upon all adult people of the country to donate blood 'at least once a year to save life of a dying person'.

Anyone may require germless blood for anaemia caused by malnutrition, sickness, child birth, accident and surgery, the President pointed out.

In her message Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina underscored the need for healthcare of the citizens for the cause of building a healthy and stout nation.

She said that the people were suffering from malnutrition and various diseases 'as well as physical and mental problems' due to poverty and lack of awareness and that 'some were facing premature deaths'.

She stressed the need for

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Sharif sentenced to life in prison

Prosecution to appeal to higher court for death penalty



Supporters of deposed Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif make the victory sign and carry his poster after an anti-terrorism court announced the verdict against Sharif yesterday in Karachi. The court sentenced Sharif to life imprisonment and ordered the forfeiture of all his property.

— AFP photo

KARACHI, Apr 6: An anti-terrorism court, set up by deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif to hand out quick justice, sentenced him Thursday to life in prison on charges he refused to let a commercial airliner with the army chief aboard land in Pakistan, reports AP.

US expects fair appeals process

WASHINGTON, Apr 6: The White House today said it was pleased ousted Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was spared the death penalty and called for a fair appeals process for his conviction, reports Reuters.

A Karachi Anti-Terrorism Court found Sharif guilty of terrorism and hijacking and sentenced him to two life sentences, which mean a 25-year prison term and an apparent end to Sharif's political career.

It's not for us to evaluate the

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COMMENT

Asian values have become a matter of intense debate in recent times. As Asian leaders seek to upgrade the continent's position in the world arena, the problem lies in politicisation of values aimed at cherishing cultural hegemony or resisting democratic movements within the country, writes Delwar Hossain

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SOUTH ASIA

Mansoor Mamoon looks at the far-reaching implications of the agreement between India and Vietnam for co-operation in defence and security measures

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PEOPLE

Versatile theatre personality Shimul Yusuf face to face with Ziaul Karim
Noted painter Hamiduzzaman Khan talks about his teenage days to Navine Murshid

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Massive loadshedding in Dhaka

By Staff Correspondent

Supply line, transformer and circuit breaker problems, coupled with loadshedding and low voltage, have made life miserable for people in and around Dhaka.

Areas serviced by the Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority have endured 200-megawatt power shortages daily for the last week, concerned officials said.

An Ulton grid substation circuit breaker cut out Wednesday evening, plunging most of Tejgaon, Mohakhali, Nakhalpara, Kawran Bazar, Banglamotor Link Road and Tejknipara into darkness for almost 24 hours. The power was back on in those areas last night, said authority sources.

A transformer at the Tongi grid 50/75 MVA substation also failed Wednesday night, resulting in severe power disruptions in some parts of Uttara and Gulshan. It is still out of order.

Residents in Postogola, Lalbagh, Kumartuli and other parts of the old city were without power for about an hour when a Siddhirganj-Maniknagar-Ulton power supply line tripped at around 10 p.m. Wednesday.

Kamapur, Khilgaon, Kakrail, Paribagh and Teigaon experienced routine loadshedding yesterday, since one of three transformers at the Ulton 132 KV grid station has been out of order for about two months.

The country endured another 200-megawatt power shortage yesterday. The Power Development Board generated 2,466 megawatts compared to the requirement of 2,675 megawatts.

Ashuganj Gas Turbine-2, Sylhet Gas, Shahjibazar-3, Shahjibazar-6, Shahjibazar-7, Fenchuganj Gas Turbine-1, Fenchuganj Gas Turbine-2, Fenchuganj Steam, Khulna Barge mounted plant-1, Barisal-2, Baghabari Gas Turbine and Ghoralal-4 are still out of order.

Land Commission for CHT formed

The government has formed a nine-member commission to resolve land disputes in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) with retired High Court judge Abdul Karim as its chairman, an official handout said here yesterday, reports BSS.

The commission was formed in line with the landmark CHT peace agreement.

The handout said justice Karim has been appointed for a three-year tenure with salary, allowances and other facilities of a High Court judge.

Rejoinders

Two residents of Dhanmondi lake area have sent clarifications regarding reports in The Daily Star on the government's public land recovery drive.

Sitara Begum stated in rejoinder the report published in the Daily Star on April 6, 2000, stating 'The magistrate said Setara Chowdhury, wife of Justice Abdur Rahman of house 661/A, Road-32 illegally occupied 2.8 katha of public land where she built a six storey apartment complex' is absolutely baseless.

She said she purchased 5.75 katha of land in 1988 through a registered deed of sale from Syud Ahmed. Necessary permission was obtained from the Ministry of Works prior to the sale.

She constructed a two and half story building and has been living there since 1990. In June 1999, Rajuk conducted a survey and did not find any unauthorised occupation or construction and gave a certificate to that effect.

On Jan. 31, 2000, she was served with an eviction notice by the Ministry of Works inco-

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Our new numbers

19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215
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& 812 4966
Fax: 812 5155

April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
7		6:17pm
8	5:44 am	

Prayer Timings

April 7		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
	5:00	5:30
Juma	12:15	1:20
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:20	6:25
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Judiciary to feature in Paris talks

It ranks "among the most distrusted institutions in the country," says WB report

By Inam Ahmed and Shahriar Karim

The judicial system in the country will come under donor scrutiny in the April 13-14 Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting in Paris as the donors feel that the judiciary has become one of the most distrusted institutions.

Several decades of neglect have left crippled the legal and judicial system of Bangladesh. A World Bank report prepared for the Paris meeting said, 'Although the Supreme Court continues to command widespread respect, the judiciary by and large ranks among the most distrusted institutions in the country.'

At the same time, the WB said, high concentration of administrative and jurisdictional roles in the hands of a few officials perpetuates corruption.

Although civil procedural codes lay down rules and time

limits for each stage of a trial, litigants and their counsels generally refuse to observe the legal standards, and judges do not insist that they do so. The resulting delays allow court personnel to charge a price for expediting the process,' the report said.

The Bank has also invalidated the popular belief that shortage of judges has crippled the Judiciary in Bangladesh.

'It is sometimes argued that the number of judges per capita is an important indicator of judicial efficiency and the backlog of cases in Bangladesh could be reduced simply by increasing the ratio of judges per capita,' the WB said.

In fact, the number of judges per capita in Bangladesh is already higher than in Ukraine and Colombia, almost equals Chile and Singapore and only lags behind India and Sri

Lanka. Although it has fewer judges per capita, Singapore achieves higher levels of judicial efficiency, as measured by the cases per judge and congestion rate, than do any of the South Asian countries.

The Bank pointed out that among the mix of factors responsible for the lack of transparency and accountability in Bangladesh's judicial system is an antiquated, rudimentary administrative structure that undermines the ability of the judicial branch to manage and plan its affairs.

'One reason for that weakness is the system that denies the judiciary the authority to develop its own plans and prepare its own budget, a task performed instead by Ministry of Law,' the report said.

It also mentioned that judicial appointments fall within the civil service cadre system

and recruitment is done on the basis of tests conducted by the Public Service Commission (PSC). The Public Works Department maintains court facilities.

'Although they are not masters in their own house, judges, in addition to adjudicating cases, are also required to perform a host of administrative functions such as managing personnel and administering resources.'

The Bank also mentioned the current state of office technology as primitive and said there was no standard for the maintenance of records and the lack of computerised information allowed files to appear and disappear at the whim of court officials.

'As a result, excessive delays plague the system, affecting both its fairness and efficiency.'

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Zilla Parishad Bill placed in JS

The much-talked Zilla Parishad (District Council) Bill, 2000 was introduced in parliament yesterday seeking to form 21-men district councils in all districts except the Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Kashru introduced the bill on behalf of the LGRD Minister.

According to the bill, elected chairmen and members of the Union Parishads, Upazilas, mayors and commissioners of city corporations and chairmen and commissioners of municipalities will elect the district councils.

The 21-men council will include a chairman and 15 members. Five member posts will be kept reserved for women.

The House sent the bill to the Standing Committee on Local Government and Rural Development Ministry for vetting.

17th JS session prorogued

By Staff Correspondent

The 17th session of the Jatiya Sangsad was prorogued yesterday after sitting for eight days when four bills were passed and eight more including a private member's bill were introduced in the House.

Of the bills introduced, four came back to the House after scrutiny by the parliamentary standing committees on relevant ministries.

Besides, four opposition-sponsored private members' bills also came in the order of the day on two consecutive Thursdays, but could not be introduced due to absence of the lawmakers concerned.

Opposition members of BNP, Ershad-led Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami continued

their abstention from the House that began in July last year. However, lawmakers of another faction of Jatiya Party and one member each from JSD and IOJ attended the session.

Before the session was prorogued, Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury announced that he would take a fresh move to bring the Opposition back to the House if it was responded to.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, representing the leader of the House, gave the winding up speech, criticising the BNP-led opposition members' continued absence from the Sangsad and requesting the Speaker to continue efforts to bring them back.

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Transport trouble again

Capital city delinked from the rest of the country for four hours

By Staff Correspondent

Road links between the capital and rest of the country were virtually cut off for over four hours yesterday as transport workers put up barricades at Gabtoli, Kanpur and near Ashulia and stopped plying vehicles protesting arrest of the President of Inter-district Truck Drivers Association.

Barricades were put up at Gabtoli at about 11 am, and then at Kanpur and Ashulia, witnesses and transport workers said.

Barricades were also put up at Pagla on the Dhaka-Narayanganj road, witnesses and leaders of the association said.

Thousands of passengers were stranded at the capital's entry points as angry truckers, joined by bus workers, also damaged other vehicles including autorickshaws and man-handled drivers who tried to sneak through the barricades, witnesses said.

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Stars parade tomorrow

Seven in city

Sports Reporter

Seven cricket stars set their feet in Dhaka yesterday to play in the high-profile day-night match between Asia Eleven and Rest of the Eleven on April 8.

Four Sri Lankans -- Sanath Jayasuriya, Aravinda de Silva, Muttiah Muralitharan and Chaminda Vaas -- were the first to arrive in the capital, which has been under the focus of world media since the ICC's (International Cricket Council) celebrations for the Cricket Week began on April 2. The other cricketers are -- West Indies tearaway Franklyn Rose, Andrew Caddick and Phil Tufnell of England.

Players apart, ICC president Jagmohan Dalmiya arrived from India last evening to join the ongoing campaign to develop the game globally.

During his three-day visit here, Dalmiya will participate in a series of programmes. He will address a press conference at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today. He will also witness the exciting clash between Wasim Akram's Asia XI and Mark Waugh-led Rest of the World XI.

His dynamic colleague David Richards, the chief executive of ICC, is expected to arrive today. Ravi Shastri, the former Indian captain turned TV commentator, reached the city in the morning.

Meanwhile, two ICC ambassadors -- former Pakistan captain Asif Iqbal and ex-Sri Lankan skipper Duleep Mendis -- are already in town, busy attending various development programmes.

Wasim Akram is expected to arrive early in the morning today while five Indians -- Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly,

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Expedite establishment of HR Commission

Speakers at a seminar urge government

By Staff Correspondent

The government is taking too long to create the proposed human rights commission and should expedite the process, concluded participants at an open discussion on the issue yesterday.

Organised by the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, the seminar was addressed by Suranjit Sengupta, the prime minister's parliamentary affairs adviser, ruling party lawmaker Akhtaruzzaman, Khushi Kabir, Prof. Abrar Chowdhury, Debapriya Bhattacharya from the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies and Advocate Nizamul Huq Nasim.

Dr Kamal Hossain, a former minister and chief of the Gono Forum chaired the discussion while Dr. Shah Deen Malik made some opening remarks.

A bill to create the commission was drafted in late 1997 and approved by cabinet in April 1999. It was then sent a cabinet committee for review. The secretariat of the ministry of Home Affairs objected to some vital provisions in the bill, slowing down the process.

'What is important is to mobilise those who want change,' said Dr. Kamal Hossain. 'Our people have been fighting for democracy and human rights since the 1950s. We've been an independent nation for more than 25 years. It's time to build various democratic institutions, braving all impediments.'

Suranjit Sengupta, an Awami League legislator, said the government is constitutionally committed to human

rights, since democracy and human rights are intertwined. However, he defended the government against the accusation of dilly-dallying.

'Sometimes it's better to take time to make a law,' said Sengupta. 'What is the use of making a law in hurry and amend it a month after its enactment?'

Akhtaruzzaman said he sympathised with those who wanted the process to speed up and assured participants he would do whatever he could to move the process forward.

'But you take it from me that the government will create the commission sooner or later.'

Khushi Kabir from Nijera Kori said millions of people living in rural areas have been denied

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Players and officials of Abahani Limited rejoice after emerging champions in the Nitel-Tata national football league championship. Abahani drew with arch-rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club in the title-deciding match at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday. —Star photo