

Int'l confce on arsenic begins at BUET today

BSS, Dhaka

An international conference on "Technologies for Arsenic Removal from Drinking Water" begins at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) today.

The BUET and the United Nations University, Japan are jointly organising the three-day seminar, scheduled to begin from 10 am at the Council Building of the university.

Deputy Minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury will inaugurate the seminar while Vice-chancellor of BUET Prof Nooruddin Ahmed will chair it.

Renowned experts from the USA, the UK, Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, Nepal, India and host Bangladesh will participate in the conference as resource persons.

8 leaders, activists of Barisal city BNP expelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Eight leaders and activists of BNP Barisal city committee have been expelled as they joined the Awami League recently, party sources said.

The expelled leaders are Jafar Alam Sikder, vice-president, Mosaraf Ali Khan Badsha, social welfare secretary, Altaf Mahamud Sikder, health, family planning and population secretary, Syed Zakir Hossain Jalal, food and agriculture secretary, Md. Humayun Kabir Himu, secretary, freedom fighters calls, Rezaul Haq Chisti Bayazid, treasurer and members Mofazzal Ali Khan Mantu and Abdul Jabbar.

Transport strike in 11 districts continues

UNB, Bogra

An indefinite transport strike following dispute among transport workers of Tangail and Bogra paralyzed the road communication between Dhaka and 11 northern districts for the second consecutive day.

Buses of Rangpur, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Joypurhat, Naogaon and Gaibandha districts can not go to Dhaka through Bogra due to the strike began on Thursday. However, the buses of Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Natore districts are going to Dhaka in an alternative route through Sirajganj and Pabna.

Bogra Motor Workers Union leaders said they stopped plying buses and coaches from Thursday as transport workers of Tangail assaulted their colleagues and snatched away money and documents from them on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Tangail Transport Owners and Workers Association in a press conference yesterday denied the charge and made counter allegation of assault on their workers for not paying toll at Bogra.

The leaders said a case was filed under the Public Safety Act with Bogra police in this connection.

18 NAM states for revival of ME talks

AFP, Pretoria

Ministers of 18 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries called yesterday for a revival of the Middle East peace process and the immediate implementation of existing Palestinian-Israeli agreements.

"The ministers expressed their support ... for the Egyptian-Jordanian initiative," the NAM ministers said in a statement, after meeting Thursday in Pretoria on the Middle East conflict.

"In this regard they welcomed the commitment made and support expressed by President (Yasser)

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Khaleda to address rally at Rajbari today

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia goes to Rajbari today to address a public meeting ahead of the next general election.

The district BNP has organised the meeting to be held at Rajbari Railway Maidan in the afternoon.



Devotees offering special *munajat* after Juma prayers at Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday expressing gratitude to the Almighty for the High Court verdict in Bangabandhu Murder Case.

Razing of Babri mosque in 1992 Case against Advani, 21 others dropped due to 'legal defect'

AFP, New Delhi

An Indian court yesterday dropped proceedings against Home Minister LK Advani and 21 others for their role in the 1992 demolition of Babri mosque by Hindu zealots which led to widespread communal riots.

A special court in the northern Indian city of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh state said it was dropping legal proceedings against Advani and two other federal ministers Uma Bharti and Murl Manohar Joshi due to a "legal defect."

According to the court there were anomalies relating to the manner in which the special court was established by a provincial government notification.

The court ruled that it was now up to the state government to issue a fresh notification to re-establish a special court to try Advani and others.

The provincial government in Uttar Pradesh is headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Hence, analysts say it is unlikely that the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, a prominent BJP leader, will move a review

petition for the trial of his own party's home minister.

However, Singh, who was in Delhi yesterday to attend a meeting, assured reporters that he would "follow the law."

The razing of the 16th century Babri mosque by Hindu zealots on December 6, 1992 sparked some of post independence India's worst

Wahid refuses to step down

XINHUA, Jakarta

Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid yesterday reiterated that he will not resign.

The Antara News Agency quoted the president as saying in Yogyakarta, Central Java, that he would remain in power until the end of his term in 2004 despite mounting calls for his resignation.

Wahid repeated his earlier statement that if he resigned, several provinces, including Riau, Aceh and Irian Jaya, would declare their independence.

Hindu-Muslim violence in which 2,000 people were killed.

Advani, sports minister Uma Bharti and human resources development minister Murl Manohar Joshi all stand accused by federal investigators of inciting the crowds to tear down the mosque structure.

Hardline Hindus believe the mosque stood on the site of a temple marking the birthplace of the Hindu God, Ram.

The controversy over plans to build a Hindu temple on the Babri ruins was revived two months ago when Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said the campaign was an expression of "national sentiment and an unfinished" task.

The remark caused a furore in both houses of parliament, stalling legislative business for more than a week.

Analysts say the uncertainty surrounding the latest ruling will relieve Vajpayee, who has rejected demands made by the main Opposition Congress party that the accused ministers be forced to resign from the Indian cabinet.

A.S.M. NURUNNABI

The Dhaka city roads present the following questionable aspects, namely, digging of roads without proper coordination, erection of road dividers, setting up of speed breakers in an unplanned manner, using roads as dumping grounds for building materials, etc.

Indiscriminate and unplanned digging of city roads by various service agencies for laying underground pipelines and cables has been causing serious traffic congestion as well as compounding the sufferings of city people.

Officials of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the licensing authority for allowing street digging for development work, said the dry season up to April is the appropriate time for digging of trenches and therefore they usually allow digging of the city streets in the said period. Different service agencies, however, do their work around the year. The digging continue during the rainy season disrupting usual traffic movement.

DOWN TO EARTH

Questionable aspects of city roads

The DCC officials said that the Corporation had no alternative but to allow various service agencies to dig even the newly carpeted streets because different multi-national agencies disburse funds at various times of the year.

Over the years, it is reported that the DCC was repeatedly urging the various service agencies concerned including T&T, Titas Gas, Dhaka WASA, DESA, and DESCO to complete their digging work in the dry season, considering the wastage of public money in terms of repeated repair of the streets. This unusual practice was however,

continuing despite the appeal.

Some of the important roads which have already fallen prey to the digging operations include SAARC fountain intersection, Bangla Motor intersection, Sonargaon Link Road, Hatirpool, Panthapath, Green Road, etc. There has been no evidence of any hurry on the part of the agencies concerned for early filling of the dug-up roads by sand or bitumen carpeting.

The other problem on the city roads is the road dividers. The DCC constructed the dividers on many important thoroughfares during the

last few months to make separate lanes for rickshaws and autorickshaws. But the plan not only failed to reduce traffic congestion, but also created an anarchic situation on the roads. The purpose of the plan is said to have remained unfulfilled. The rickshaws and autorickshaws care little to use these lanes and use the other part of the road competing with the heavy vehicles. Traffic personnel hardly monitor proper utilisation of the newly created lanes.

Speed breakers on city roads are erected to control the speed of

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Kashmir group drops demand for immediate tripartite talks

AFP, New Delhi

Close aides of Kashmiri Muslim separatist leader Shabir Shah yesterday dropped a demand that India, Pakistan and Kashmiri groups sit together at the same time to discuss the future of the region.

Addressing reporters in the Indian capital, Maulana Abdullah Tari, general secretary of Shah's Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) said: "Pakistan is a party to the Kashmir dispute both historically and geographically."

"Without Pakistan, the dispute will not be solved."

But Tari made it clear that the DFP was not insisting on tripartite talks with Pakistan immediately.

"The process of talks have to start...we are not saying that all three sit at the table together," Tari said.

Tari's statement assumes significance as New Delhi has refused at this stage to invite Islamabad to talks on Kashmir.

However, Saleem Geelani, another close aide of Shah, stressed that all bilateral talks whether it was

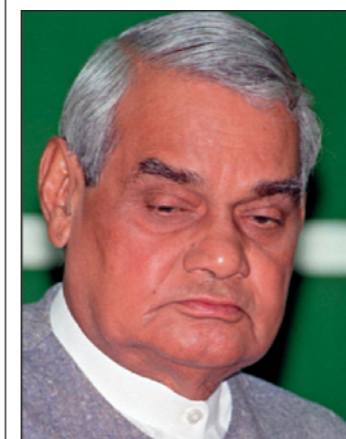
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Election in five Indian states Litmus test for Vajpayee, Sonia

AFP, New Delhi

Five Indian states go to the polls next week in what is being seen as a popularity test for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his 18-month-old coalition government.

The May 10 elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry could also prove crucial for opposition leader Sonia Gandhi, whose grip on the leadership of the Congress Party has never been as firm as she might have liked.



Atal Behari Vajpayee

"I think these elections will answer the question of whether it is good to do business with Mr. Vajpayee," said Mahesh Rangarajan, a political analyst.

Vajpayee's government has been rocked by a recent scandal, triggered by an internet news website, tehelka.com, which secretly filmed senior politicians and civil servants taking cash from journalists posing as arms dealers.

"This is the first post-Tehelka election so it will be some sort of an assessment of what impact it has had on the government's image," Rangarajan said.

The scandal led to the resignation of the ruling BJP party chief Bangaru Laxman who allegedly accepted a bribe of 100,000 rupees (2,100 dollars) and defence minister George Fernandes.

The fallout also paralysed the Indian parliament for weeks, as opposition MPs demanded resignation of Vajpayee and his cabinet.

But corruption in New Delhi is not necessarily a major issue for voters in the provinces, who are more swayed by regional issues and problems of poverty, price rises and unemployment.

Vajpayee heads a coalition of more than two-dozen parties, two of which control incumbent adminis-

trations facing the electorate in Tamil Nadu and Assam.

If they crumble, Vajpayee will be weakened on the national stage.

In Tamil Nadu, the ruling party - a member of Vajpayee's coalition - is facing a strong anti-incumbency wave, with opinion polls predicting a victory for an opposition regional party in alliance with Gandhi's Congress party.

In Assam, a state riddled with separatist movements, another regional ally of the BJP faces an

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Sonia Gandhi

Process of forming full-fledged JCD committee stalled Leaders, activists frustrated

UNB, Dhaka

The process of forming a full-fledged JCD committee has stalled, frustrating thousands of grassroots leaders and activists of BNP student front across the country.

They are learnt to be keeping aloof from party activities for lack of leadership following the deadlock at a vital time when the main opposition party is leading an alliance movement against the government.

President of JCD central body Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu went into hiding fearing police arrest while general secretary Shahabuddin Laltu landed in jail.

The new five-member committee, headed by Pintu-Laltu, announced through press release on December 23 last year could not contribute any momentum to the anti-government movement.

Rather, their threat from a grand students' rally in the capital to topple the government turned out to be the roars of a 'paper tiger,' their critics in the organisation said.

Sources said senior vice-president Manjur Elahi confined his activities in the party office, rarely coming out on the street for agitation.

Joint-secretary of the committee Bazul Basit Anzu, is apparently incapable of running party activities as he suffered bullet injuries in a rival attack after the announcement of the committee.

Organising secretary ABM Mosharraf Hossain is apparently more active than others, but he comes to the campus seldom.

As most activists and leaders are now left without any portfolios, they do not feel the compulsion of doing any activity, insiders said.

Although the grassroots-level leaders and activists are pressuring for declaring a full-fledged committee, both Pintu and detained Laltu want to include their "own men" in the committee.

In DU unit the situation is the worst. Its general secretary Mostafijul Islam Mamun was also arrested on April 23 from city's Kataban area under Section

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Will journalist Tipu remain disabled?



The Daily Star - প্রথম আলো

Tipu Treatment Fund

Donate generously to this Fund Save Tipu from Disability

Send donations to: Savings Account No. 25002111 Dhaka Bank Ltd, Karwan Bazar Branch, Dhaka