

Diarrhoea claims 2 more, 974 hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more people died of diarrhoea while at least 974 patients have been hospitalised across the country in last 36 hours until yesterday evening.

Of the two, one died at the ICDDR, B in Dhaka on Friday and the other in Noakhali yesterday. The situation in Noakhali has deteriorated in last two days.

Three hundred and eleven more patients were hospitalised in Noakhali while 243 were hospitalised in Bholna during this time.

With the death of seven more people, the death toll from diarrhoea rose to 98, while 39474 diarrhoea patients have been admitted to different hospitals in the country since January this year.

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Gen Mustafiz hints at joining politics

BSS, Rangpur

Former Chief of Army Staff General Mustafizur Rahman yesterday said he may opt for politics if that helps him serve the people.

"I am ready to enter politics if that is needed to work for the people," he told a number of meetings during the last two days in different parts of the district.

General Mustafiz who is now here on a private visit, said he was touring different parts of the district to inquire about people's welfare.

Expressing his readiness to do everything for Rangpur, he said, "If needed I will do politics and go to parliament if elected."

General Mustafiz who demanded establishment of a separate division comprising greater Rangpur and Dinajpur districts said he would make effort for the establishment of a gas-based fertiliser factory in the area.

Business leaders to meet Khaleda today

UNB, Dhaka

Business leaders will call on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia today to vent their protest against 'confrontational politics and hartals' and urge for a stable environment conducive to trade and investment.

The meeting will be held at 29 Minto Road at 7 pm.

The business leaders under the leadership of their apex body FBCCI earlier met the President and would meet the Prime Minister soon as part of their campaign for political stability and end of hartals.

Genetically altered babies?

AFP, REUTERS, WASHINGTON

A US-based scientist on Friday denied a published report that a technique developed by his team to help infertile women had produced the first genetically altered humans.

Jacques Cohen, a member of the US team that developed the technique, said the project had not produced children with altered genes, but only with an additional piece of DNA in an area of a cell not known to have any function.

The British scientific journal Human Reproduction reported Friday that the first human babies whose genetic makeup had been artificially altered had been born.

Up to 30 of the children have been born as an unintended result of the experimental technique developed at the Institute for Reproductive Medicine and Science of St Barnabas, New Jersey, the journal said.

In the technique called ooplasmic transplant doctors take an egg from an infertile woman, the egg from a donor woman and the sperm from the infertile woman's mate. The doctors then suck out a little bit of the contents of the donor egg - the cytoplasm - using a microscopic needle manipulated by tiny robotic arms. The cytoplasm is then injected into the infertile woman's egg along with the sperm to fertilise it.

The researchers believe the technique helps women conceive who had been unable to do so because of defects in their eggs.

However, Cohen said the technique did not mean the creation of genetically altered humans.

"If you are a 'DNA purist', you could say that there are some 'base pairs' that were not there before," he conceded.

"But have we altered genes? In other words, have we done gene injection? And have we altered base pairs and have we altered the genomes? No," he said.

The genes implanted by the scientists were taken from mitochondria, tiny structures that float around away from the cell's nucleus.

The genetic makeup of mitochondria is not thought to govern key aspects of the baby's development, like its intelligence, personality or physical form, though scientists say we cannot be certain of this.

The mitochondria from the donor cell were transplanted into patients' eggs because the scientists thought a problem with the mitochondria in the egg cell was the cause of the infertility.

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Hossain also refuted the allegation that the LEL did not submit the subscriber's database and master file claiming that he had supplied those six months ahead of expiry of the contract with BTTB.

He said though BTTB has started sending bills for the month of January it was not possible to say when the bills for February, March and April would be sent to the subscribers.

He urged the government to come forward with effective measures to end the billing crisis and proposed that the Lithi Enterprises would now do the job at a lower rate if needed.

He accused the BTTB of violating the agreement with his firm by filing a case against LEL.

Billing crisis Lithi Enterprises holds BTTB responsible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lithi Enterprises Limited (LEL), the private firm engaged to prepare telephone bills of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) has held the BTTB 'solely responsible' for the billing crisis.

"BTTB is solely responsible for the crisis and the problem would now drag on" said Mohammad Imam Hossain, Managing Director of LEL at a press conference.

Hossain blamed a section of BTTB employees for their indecision, inexperience, and for giving wrong information to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MOTP) regarding bill preparation.

The BTTB would not be able to collect revenue amounting to about Tk 700 to 800 crore for years as it would not be possible to update the bill in such a short period of time, he said.

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Chowdhury Mohsin gets 6th extension of his contract job

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Chowdhury Mohammad Mohsin, who was the Additional Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, has received an extension for a year on contract to the government for the sixth time.

He now posted to the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs as its Secretary, sources in the Establishment Ministry said.

Mohsin has got the sixth extension of his contract job from the President's 10 per cent quota.

He received his first contractual appointment in 1991 this contract as Additional Secretary in-charge of the Civil Aviation Ministry expired on April 30. Sharif Ali has replaced him in the ministry.

Mohsin replaces Mahfuzul Islam, Secretary of the Ministry of CHT Affairs.

Mahfuzul Islam is going back to MOEF, replacing Mamunur Rashid who has been made an Officer-on-Special Duty (OSD) last week following his controversial role in handling the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP).

He sparked off a row with the UNDP, the donor of the 26 million dollar SEMP and also with a number of NGOs who are implementing its various programmes.

Islam has not yet taken charge in the MOEF as he is waiting for the arrival of Kalpanan Chakma, minister for CHT Affairs, now in Rangamati. He is expected to return to the capital tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Mamun is being reportedly lobbying to withdraw the order, making him an OSD. He is attending official business despite the order, MOEF sources said.

FFs blame PM's adviser for split

UNB, Rangpur

Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangsads local unit blamed prime minister's political advisor S A Malek for splitting the country's freedom fighters.

The allegation was raised at a press conference of the district unit of Mukti Joddha Sangsads held at its office on Monday.

In a written statement, they said when the general freedom fighters are united under the banner of Mukti Joddha Sangsads and working with other pro-liberation forces, Dr Malek is then trying to confuse the freedom fighters through forming another body named Sammilita Mukti Joddha front.

They said Mukti Joddha Sangsads is the lone organisation for the freedom fighters, constituted at the directives of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for the welfare of freedom fighters soon after the independence.

Such initiative of Dr Malek will take the freedom fighters far away from the prime minister, they warned.



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia waves to people at the public meeting at Rajbari railway ground yesterday.

Vote for BNP to save country from Indian aggression: Khaleda

REZAUL KARIM, from Rajbari

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday sought vote for her party for 'ensuring development, restoring peace and saving the country from Indian aggression.'

"Sheaf of paddy is the symbol of people's hopes and aspirations, symbol of independence and sovereignty, symbol of peace and development and also the symbol of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman who proclaimed the independence," she told a public meeting at Rajbari Railway Ground.

BNP believes that election is the only way to go to power, Khaleda said. Inshallah BNP and the 4-party alliance will have a landslide victory in the next election and we will form a people's government, she declared.

She also committed to construct the long-cherished Padma Bridge to

ensure a better road communication in the southern region. "We constructed the Jamuna Bridge... today I am assuring you to construct the Padma Bridge. Vote for Sheaf of Paddy to ensure the bridge and development in the southern region, she added.

Terming the ruling Awami League betrayer and subservient to India, she urged the countrymen to choose between her party and the AL in the upcoming general election.

The rally turned into a virtual electioneering projection meeting as thousands of people chanted slogans with "Sheaf of Paddy" in their hands.

Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament was given a rousing reception in the district. Local BNP erected several colourful gates, inscribed with welcome slogans, between Gaonanda Ghat and Rajbari town. The roads were

decorated with colourful festoons, banners and Sheaf of Paddy. Life-size portraits of Khaleda Zia and Ziaur Rahman were placed at many points at Rajbari.

Khaleda Zia in her speech highlighted the border situation in the country, India's 'false' propaganda against the BDR and about the upcoming election. She said Indian troops have taken position across the border and continued intrusion since the AL government assumed power.

UNB adds: Painting a grim picture of almost entire five years of AL rule, the opposition leader said power tariffs were increased five times but they failed to supply electricity to the subscribers.

"Prices of essentials shot up manifold, the government failed to give wages commission to workers

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Arsenic level in 47 dists crosses WHO permissible limit

BSS, Dhaka

A group of scientists in Jadavpur University in Kolkata has observed that groundwater arsenic level in 47 districts in Bangladesh and nine districts in West Bengal of India has already crossed the World Health Organisation (WHO) maximum permissible limit of 50 micro-grams per litre.

The group, led by head of the School of Environmental Studies (SOES) of Jadavpur University Dipankar Chakraborti, said the world's four biggest cases of groundwater contamination are Bangladesh, West Bengal of India, Inner Mongolia of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. They said huge withdrawal of groundwater is taking place because of agricultural irrigation.

"We have made a green revolution at the cost of underground water," a study of the SOES observed.

Exploring the state of the diffusion of available techniques for removal of arsenic from groundwater, the SOES scientists noted that in the villages of India and Bangladesh even a highly successful technology may not succeed unless it fits in the rural context and is well accepted by the rural people.

"Development of such technology is only possible when a combination is made between technocrats and villagers with proper village level participation," the scientists said.

They said appropriate arsenic removal technologies should be

economically viable and socially acceptable. The techniques available for removal of arsenic from contaminated water are based mainly on four principles, the experts said.

The four basic principles are: a) oxidation of arsenic (III) to arsenic (V) adding suitable oxidising agent followed by coagulation-sedimentation-filtration (co-precipitation); b) Absorption through A1203, iron fillings (zero valent iron) hydrated iron oxide; c) Ion exchange through suitable cation and anion exchanger; d) Osmosis or electrodialysis (membrane filter).

The researchers said the processes used in arsenic-affected areas of Chile and Taiwan at full scale are

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Musharraf may take over as Pak President on Aug 14

UNI, Islamabad

Pakistan's Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf is likely to take over as the country's President on August 14.

Top Pakistani officials have been holding talks for the past one week to find a legal and constitutional route to take Gen Musharraf from the Army House to the President's House, 'Pakistan Observer' on Friday said quoting highly-placed official sources.

The decision in this regard was taken at last week's meeting at the

Army House, which besides, Gen

Musharraf was attended by Director General Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt Gen Mahmood, Director General Military Intelligence Lt Gen Ehsan, CGS Lt Gen Yusuf and eminent law expert and honorary Chief Advisor to the Chief Executive Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada.

Following detailed discussions,

the meeting which continued till late

in the night assigned Pirzada to

work out two or three alternative

legal strategies that could lead Gen

Musharraf to assume the office of

the President of Pakistan in August

Will journalist Tipu remain disabled?



The Daily Star - অসম আনন্দ
Tipu Treatment Fund

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after the installation of local governments, the paper said.

The meeting also decided that Gen Musharraf while still remaining the chief of Army Staff would also assume the office of the President.

It was in this meeting that Lt Gen Usman was elected as the deputy Chief of Army staff without elevation to four stars.

The general is in no way ready to cause any heart burns in the Army ranks by giving arbitrary elevations. The main objective behind the move was to assign some of his duties to the senior most officer while maintaining status quo otherwise, it said.

Pirzada is currently busy working out constitutional modalities. Barring some unforeseen change of mind, Gen Musharraf is likely to assume the office of the presidency on August 14, 2001, the 'Pakistan Observer' said.

After taking over as the President, Gen Musharraf may restore Parliament where the breakaway group of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) led by Mian Azhar has emerged as one of the biggest group.

The restored national and provincial Assemblies are likely to ratify the elevation of Gen Musharraf to Presidency.