

Alcohol blamed for rise in liver disease deaths

REUTERS, London

Deaths from alcoholic liver disease have increased in Britain and more must be done to alert people that drinking too much can kill them, medical experts said yesterday.

A doctor who headed a study into liver disease deaths in the West Midlands region of England said one idea might be to drink containers to carry a health warning similar to those on cigarette packets.

"As a country we don't seem to be drinking any more alcohol than we were 10 years ago but it may be that a small number of individuals may be drinking hazardous levels," study team leader Dr. Neil Fisher, a consultant physician and gastroenterologist, told Reuters.

"What we do know is that if

consumption were reduced, deaths would be reduced."

Fisher said there was a need for greater emphasis and more promotional campaigns about the risks involved.

"One suggestion might be to label alcoholic beverage containers with appropriate warnings against the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption," he said.

The team's findings and comments, which are published in the British Medical Journal, found that during 1993-2000 primary liver disease had increased from six per 100,000 population in the study region to 13 per 100,000.

But the number exclusively resulting from alcoholic liver disease tripled, from 2.8 deaths to eight per 100,000 people.

Although rates of increase in alcoholic liver disease deaths

were similar for white men and Asian men, the Asians were four times as likely to die.

"Previous studies have suggested that Asian subjects are more pre-disposed to developing liver disease as compared to white subjects for any given level of alcohol consumption," said Fisher, who is based at the Department of Gastroenterology at the Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust in Dudley, West Midlands.

"The assumption is that this is probably a genetic phenomenon, or dietary factors might contribute," he told Reuters.

As well as alcohol consumption, the study said that the type of alcoholic drink consumed and dietary or other factors, such as genetic or environmental, might also be involved.



Hospital workers and relatives of victims of the grenade attack site outside the church in Pakistan's historical city of Taxila, some 25 kilometers west of Islamabad, yesterday. A grenade attack on a hospital chapel left at least four dead and more than 20 wounded. (Story on page 12)

DU session Jam

FROM PAGE 1

concerned about the loss of time of students and trying our best to reopen the university at the earliest".

"Taking office on August 1, I met the Syndicate, Deans Committee and the Provost Standing Committee to discuss the prevailing situation and re-opening of the university".

He said, "We have to meet other key bodies including the Academic Committee comprised of heads of departments and institutions and the Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) to discuss the campus situation and reopening of the university".

"The Syndicate will then decide when the university will be reopened".

Prof. Haider declined to fix any probable date for reopening.

"I never said that the university will be reopened by a week. I told the press that the reopening process would begin by a week", he said acting VC said replying to a query.

"We will take examinations with short gaps to avoid session jam".

However, talking to a group of newsmen on Thursday at his office, the acting VC pledged to declare within seven days a date for reopening of the university.

The DU authorities on July 28 also postponed all examinations.

These examinations have to be rescheduled after reopening of the university. If the university remains closed for a month, students might face a session jam of at least six months, said an official at the office of the controller of examinations.

The official said rescheduling of examinations has a rollover effect, leading to session jam. Publication of results is delayed and accommodation problem at dormitories becomes acute.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of students expressed their frustration and criticised the authorities for the 'unwanted' delay.

"We are fed up with the new administration's delay in reopening the university. This is doing great harm to our academic activities," said Mustafizur Rahman, whose MA final examinations have been rescheduled several times due to strike and hartal in the past and the indefinite closure now.

Last year, academic activities were affected from July to October due to strikes called by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal demanding resignation of the then vice-chancellor.

45 intellectuals

FROM PAGE 12

Islam Chowdhury, Dr. Jamal Nazrul Islam, Prof. Anisuzzaman, Hasan Azizul Haq, Prof. Musharrif Hossain, Prof. Mostafa Nurul Islam, Prof. Mozaffar Ahmed, Prof. Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Dr. Mohammad Farahuddin, Prof. Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Kafiluddin Mahmud, Faruq Chowdhury, Mostafa Faruq Mohammad, M Muhiyul Haq, Kalim Sharafi, Mujibul Alam Chowdhury, artist Aminul Islam, Mustafa Monwar, Quaiyum Chowdhury, Umartul Fazal, Mustari Shafi, Prof Anupam Sen, Sharadindu Dastidar, Prof. Sanat Kumar Saha, Mohammad Khaled, Prof. Ali Anwar, Dilwar, Golam Mustafa, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Rahat Khan, Aly Zaker, Abdul Momen, Prof. Syed Manjurul Islam, Mamunur Rashid and Nasiruddin Yusuf.

establishing a democratic and non-communal society.

The repression he suffered and his altruistic sacrifices in the course of this struggle constitute an "illustrious chapter" in the national history.

"His extraordinary success in uniting and inspiring people from all walks of life - first in a struggle for autonomy, for political self-determination and economic development of the people of this country and subsequently for achieving independence made him immortal."

The group of 45 noted that "our duty on Bangabandhu's death anniversary does not end in only expressions of grief and paying homage to him. His conspiratorial killing along with most of his family members constitutes a dark chapter in our national history."

They lamented that the trial of this brutal murder has not been completed even after the lapse of a quarter century. The leading personalities urged the supreme judiciary to complete the process of trial of the "killers".

Termining the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and members of his family "a black chapter" in Bangladesh's history, they recalled that Bangabandhu had fought protracted struggles for

3 alleged killers held in Bagerhat, Satkhira

UNB, Bagerhat

Three suspected murderers, including a member of an outlawed party, were arrested from the district and neighbouring Satkhira Wednesday night.

The arrested were identified as Zahidul Islam, activist of Purba Banglar Communist Party, Iman and Jahangir.

Of them, Zahid was wanted in the SI Altaf Hossain murder case, Iman in the Morolganj BNP leader A Rashid murder case and Jahangir in the Rampal BNP leader Aslad murder case.

Zahid was taken on a three-day police remand on Thursday.

Govt responsible

FROM PAGE 1

started following a verbal order and this is an irregularity."

He alleged that the government is fully responsible for such corruption.

Motia Chowdhury said, "In the last year of AL rule, wheat production target was 18 lakh tons - the highest - and we did not procure more than three lakh tons in that year. But it is surprising that they (the ruling BNP) went for procurement of four lakh tons of wheat with the production target of 16 lakh tons."

Wheat is not grown in Satkhira, she noted and asked how could the government procure the grain from there?"

Abdus Samad Azad, who also spoke at the news conference briefly, said, "The government is fully responsible for the scam and we are demanding punishment of all those involved in it".

AL president member Tofael Ahmed said, "These are rotten wheat, people will die if they eat those."

Sajeda Chowdhury and Abdul Mannan, among others, were also present at the news conference.

Nightmare

FROM PAGE 12

for prospective investors due to the relatively low-priced land on this side. However, there may be a few undesirable effects of such development of this area, a major part of which is low-lying and has so far been used for production of agricultural crops. Due to better communication made possible by the bridges, these low-lying areas are likely to be used for non-agricultural purposes, leading to decreased agricultural output.

Another potentially ominous consequence may be the proliferation of slums, like those on Kamarangir Char, as well as unplanned growth of industries as in some areas of Zinzira and Keraniganj.

In this context, the authorities concerned need to be vigilant that the development of these areas takes place through appropriate planning such that the chaos and confusion of Dhaka City is not repeated there.

Some observers opine that a third Buriganga bridge at Katasur point may be necessary soon to establish proper links with the new satellite townships that may eventually grow on the other side of the river. These townships will undoubtedly help ease the population pressure on the Dhaka City. Such optimistic projections may look far-fetched in the present circumstances but judging from the trend of population growth in the city proper, a diversion strategy for the city population seems to be the only way out if we are to avoid the fate of a doomed city.

Dhaka may lose out

FROM PAGE 12

"For Bangladesh, the Dahej LNG facility represents the greatest threat for gas from Bangladesh," said an industry source with expertise in the Indian market.

"Due to the fast pace of the Dahej project, Bangladesh should be concerned that this project could sign up the quality customers which would make a gas-export project from Bangladesh unfeasible."

Gas from Bangladesh represents the better choice for Indian customers because LNG requires expensive advanced technologies for processing and transportation facilities, resulting in higher-priced gas for customers.

Also, various studies have shown that LNG supplies from Bangladesh would not be cost-competitive.

"It's clear that gas export from Bangladesh to India represents a win-win opportunity," said the industry source.

"Gas export via pipeline will provide substantial benefits for Bangladesh, including millions of dollars in revenues, an improved balance of trade with India, increased energy security by spurring gas exploration, an enhanced climate for increased foreign investments and aid and economic growth."

While there may be many potential customers in India, the number of quality customers is limited. If Bangladesh cannot come out as a viable competitor before the closing of the NTPC's request for proposals by end of October 2002, the Dahej and Hazira facilities will capture the top customers.

The government is waiting for reports of national committees for a decision regarding gas export.

Seeds of evil

FROM PAGE 1

peak season for homegrown wheat was already over.

Upon failing to sell their produce to the public silos between May and June, farmers were forced to release their goods in the open markets at a much lower price, they said.

The void thus created the opportunity for profiteering middlemen with strong political backing to dump imported feed-grade wheat into the public silos, they added.

The government's decision to go for additional procurement at the fag end of the season, especially when overall wheat production this year (16 lakh MT) was less than last year (18 lakh MT), is enigmatic at best.

In terms of food security, the country was not in a state of emergency. The government has over 11 lakh MT of food grains in public silos, which is over one and a half lakh MT more than last year's stock and well above the safety stock level of ten lakh MT.

Additional procurement makes little reason when homegrown wheat is exhausted, observers said.

The food ministry, however,

There is tremendous pressure from donors for exporting gas.

Also international oil companies, particularly Unocal, are suggesting gas export on the plea of limited domestic market and assuring further investment for gas exploration.

One killed, 3 hurt in Sirajganj road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

One person was killed and three others were injured when a Dhaka bound taxicab collided head on with a passenger bus at Tasia on Dhaka-Bogra Highway yesterday evening.

The identity of the dead could not be known. The injured, identified as Anisur Bari, 29, of Mirpur in Dhaka, taxicab driver Morshed Ali, 27, and Sahidul Islam, 30, of Dhaka, were admitted to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

Ullapara police seized both the vehicles.

In Faridpur, seven persons were injured, three of them seriously, when a Faridpur bound microbus carrying them collided head on with a minibus near Bakhunda on Faridpur-Barisal highway yesterday morning, hospital sources said, according to BSS.

The seriously injured persons were identified as Firoz, 32, Zobeda, 68, and the driver of the microbus. They were admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

The microbus was badly damaged in the accident.

justifies its decision, saying that the government wanted to make sure there was no risk of food shortage.

"If we can buy wheat at home with local currency, why put pressure on hard-earned foreign currency for meeting up import bills on wheat," it argues.

Meanwhile, as probe committees at central and local levels have reported irregularities in procurement, the food minister has caused uproar by certifying wheat in a Pabna silo as of good quality.

Even if the imported wheat, allegedly procured and stocked in public silos, is good in quality that does not uphold the principal aim of the government's procurement drive because buying of imported wheat in no way provide any price benefits to Bangladeshi wheat farmers.

Last but not least, alarm bell was set ringing a few months back when two Satkhira food officials were suspended for wheat procurement irregularities. The mischief could have been stopped there had preventive measures been taken then, many said.

Bush won't hesitate

FROM PAGE 12

impractical to wait for every situation to be resolved before launching an attack on Iraq.

Washington has repeatedly threatened to take action to unseat Saddam, whom it accuses of developing weapons of mass destruction.

Britain is Washington's closest military ally, and it is believed that US President George W. Bush would want to call on London's help in any campaign.

British ministers and government officials also have serious reservations about Bush's call for a regime change in Baghdad because they say no alternative set-up has been identified, according to the Independent.

They fear that Britain could be left to lead a huge stabilisation force for "up to five years" in a post-war Iraq.

While they share the United

States' belief that Saddam has acquired weapons of mass destruction, ministers have seen no evidence that he can deliver them in any meaningful way against the West, according to the broadsheet.

Although Blair has stated that London has taken no decisions on military action, he has repeatedly stressed that the threat posed by Saddam must be addressed.

However the British leader is facing increasing pressure at home not to support Bush.

The times said that his Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) are likely to vote against any strike at their annual conferences in September.

"I think there is a high probability of a debate and a vote (at the TUC conference) condemning war against Iraq," the paper quoted an unnamed senior TUC source as saying.

A report from Baghdad adds:

Body to probe power disruption in northern region

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) yesterday formed a four-member committee to investigate the causes of Thursday temporary disruption of power transmission system in some of the districts of northern region.

The committee headed by Chief Engineer of Rajshahi Distribution Zone Mohammad Mazharul Huq will submit its report within next seven days, a BPDB press release said here yesterday.

The disruption affected some of the districts of the northern region and power plants at Baghabari, Syedpur and Rangpur, the release added.

Adverse impact

FROM PAGE 12

limitation of government resources. He said long-term projects like dredging of the Jamuna is too expensive and virtually 'impossible'.

He admitted that he has no records with him that show dredging in this area. As soon as floods began, the WDB sought emergency fund to protect embankments and Tk 70 lakh was allocated, he said.

An official preferring anonymity however said this sort of emergency funds are granted with 'political motives' and all the successive governments did so.

The WDB Executive Engineer in Sirajganj district said "It is not our duty to keep the river channels navigable." He referred to the directorate responsible for dredging of rivers.

People living on the banks of the Jamuna said this year's flood is a different one. It continued for about a month but its intensity lasted a week, leaving nine people killed and about one lakh homesteads and 168 bridges and culverts washed away. It submerged 1277 square km area and caused huge loss of crops and cattle in Kurigram.

Almost a similar situation was observed in Sirajganj where more than six lakh people were marooned. The floods damaged completely a total of 217km-long embankments and 15 km partially. Six solid spurs and one groin were damaged partially.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

late last month, overruling an earlier understanding to that effect.

Sources said, upon her return home Hasina would be briefed by her senior party colleagues about the latest organisational development as well as overall situation of the country.

In another development, AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu told The Daily Star that the party had no plans to bring back some of the former party leaders, including Dr Kamal Hossain, Kader Siddiqui and Mohammad Selim, into its fold.

7 LSDs sealed off

FROM PAGE 1

headed by a man outside the food ministry.

The Bogra district administration yesterday sent the food ministry a copy of its probe report that detected irregularities in procurement.

"There were irregularities...such a huge volume of wheat cannot be purchased in a short time," said an official, seeking anonymity.

However, last Wednesday, the deputy controller (food), Bogra sent a copy of his primary probe report to the food ministry, showing no irregularities.

Since some top BNP leaders are involved in the scam, local political leaders and government officials seem more guarded when talking to journalists.

"The irregularities like setting of a new target way beyond the wheat season and procurement of a huge volume of wheat could not have been possible without the involvement of influential people," said a top BNP leader in Bogra.

The 'Champa Mahal', the resi-

dence of local MP Helaluzzaman Talukdar Lailu, where the ruling BNP's First Joint Secretary Tarique Rahman has stayed lately on a visit to Bogra, has become a centre of speculations.

Ruling party leaders in the district allege that Lailu was involved in the scam. Talking to The Daily Star, Lailu denied the allegations.

Sources in the district administration yesterday said that between July 31 and August 3, about 48,000 metric tons wheat was stockpiled in the seven warehouses.

Between July 28 and August 2, the Sherpur warehouse stored about 1,300 tons wheat and the Mirzapur warehouse 686 tons.

The sources quoted witnesses as saying that July 31 or any day before the deadline was shown as the procurement date in official papers.

This year, about 1,000 metric tons wheat was produced on about 500 hectares in Sherpur Upazila and the food officials there collected only 99 metric tons against its target for 100 metric tons before June 30.

6 of a family die

FROM PAGE 1

cal test to ascertain the cause of the deaths", the SP said.

Autopsy of the bodies has been done at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, but the reports are yet to be handed over to police, sources said. Body fluids have been sent to Dhaka for chemical test, they said.

The SP said an imam (who leads prayer) of a local mosque who had supper with the family told police that he had trouble at night after having the food.

Two-member inquiry committee headed by Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Didarul Alam has been formed to investigate the matter.

Abbas used attend the fazz congregation at the nearby mosque. As he was absent, some persons went to his residence and found the doors shut.

They called neighbours, broke open the doors and found all the inmates lying on beds in two rooms. The horrified neighbours took them to the Sadar Hospital where doctors declared them dead.

Hospital sources quoting the doctors said any mark of injury in the bodies or sign of stomach poisoning was not found in primary investigation.

Appal of gloom has descended in the town as the news spread. Hundreds of people thronged the hospital to see the victims.

A massive police investigation

has been launched. Some sources at Aminpur claimed that Abbas Ali's family had a long-standing feud with a neighbour over ownership of land. The rape case against his son was lodged by the neighbour, they said.

An unnatural death case was filed with Brahmanbaria sadar police station in this regard.

Question paper leakage in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Leakage of a question paper for candidates for posts of assistant teacher in government primary schools in the district has become a talk of the town.

The question paper titled 'Jui' carrying 70 marks was sent to Magura on Thursday in the evening. There were 35 marks each for narrative and objective questions in the question paper.

At the top of the question paper, the name of the sender was written as follows: From Ataur In. Phone No. 88-02-9801873 Aug 08, 2002, 8:21 pm.

A total of 2635 candidates appeared at the examination for 66 vacant posts of assistant teachers in the district.

Bappi's body

FROM PAGE 1

Bappi's teachers and schoolmates, and businessmen and the local people have been demonstrating in Old Dhaka since the killing was revealed on Tuesday, demanding an immediate and exemplary punishment to the killers.

Gloom descended on the area. Most shops and business establishments remained closed yesterday. Signs of grief are evident among all.

The home of Bappi is in an unusual calmness. His mother Roksana Begum fell sick from the shock. She slept most of the time yesterday. She starts groaning whenever she wakes up. She wants to see her son's face at least once for the last time, said Sayed Abdullah Al-Mamun, a relative of Bappi.

Police will produce Shankar, an accused in the Bappi abduction and murder case, before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka this morning, seeking remand. An absconding Shankar was arrested Thursday night.

People of Rugganj caught him at about 7:30pm, when he was roaming in the area. They beat and

handed him over to Rugganj police. Kotwali police brought him to the capital late Thursday night.

Meanwhile, several teams of Kotwali and Demra police stations went on a manhunt for Sharif, another accused. Last night, the teams along with the arrested searched various places in Demra, where Bappi was killed, Kotwali police said.

Acting President of the Awami League (AL) Abdus Samad Azad, AL Presidium members Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Sajeda Chowdhury and AL central leaders Motia Chowdhury, Mukul Bosh and Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin visited Bappi's residence yesterday to express their sympathy with the bereaved.

The Armenitola Govt. High School students will bring out a procession in the area today, demanding an immediate punishment to the killers.

Shipon, Ripon and Sanjeet gave confessional statements before the CMM's court on Thursday.