

**Hasina doubts new president's neutral role**

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina appeared skeptical about the new president's promise to play a neutral role, indicating the sad exit of his predecessor Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury.

"The new President reportedly wanted to be neutral, but who knows what would happen if he tries to play a neutral role," she told reporters before the beginning of an adjourned meeting of Dhaka City Awami League at the party's central office.

In reply to a question, the Awami League chief said she did not feel like attending the swearing-in ceremony of President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban as the new president also "belongs to BNP".

He was made advisor to the caretaker government in 1991 on BNP's recommendation and was linked with BNP's cultural wing JASAS, she reminded.

Referring to former president Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury's unceremonious exit, the former prime minister observed that he was forced to resign by the BNP, adding that the reasons shown by Prof. Chowdhury in his resignation letter did not match with the Constitution.

About the BMA election, she said, "Though the Election Commission has not admitted to vote fraud, the election was not fair and neutral."

Hasina said the authorities are

**Save Uttara lake, cry protesters**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of residents of the Uttara Model Town and environmental activists yesterday demonstrated in the city against Rajuk's shady move to allot plots in the wetland of the Uttara Lake.

At a rally, they demanded protection of the lake at any cost.

A procession started at the Uttara High School and paraded down different roads, shouting slogans against illegal encroachment.

At the rally, organised by the Uttara Kalyan Samity of Sector No. 7 in association with the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, the speakers alleged that Rajuk allotted plots, flouting the Wet Land Protection Act, 2000 and other environmental laws. Rajuk overlooked their repeated appeals, favouring influential people, they said.

**77 more dengue patients hospitalised**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 77 dengue patients were hospitalised in the city yesterday.

Of the hospitalised patients, 22 were admitted to Suhrawardy Hospital while eight to Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital and Bangladesh Medical College Hospital respectively.

Thirty-nine others were taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Mitford Hospital, Mahanagar General Hospital, Central Hospital, BIRDEM, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital, Ibne Sina Hospital, Comfort Nursing Home and All Care Clinic.

The administrative department of different hospitals in the city remained closed yesterday.

The said figure was collected from wards and emergency departments of different hospitals over telephone.

When contacted, the dengue control rooms confirmed admission of only one patient to All Care Clinic.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Sept 7		6-11 pm
Sept 8	5-42 am	

Prayer Timings		
Sept 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-24
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

**WHEATGATE SCAM**

**AL probe bodies not allowed to visit silos**

**No action yet against minister, MPs**

REAZ AHMAD

Non-cooperation by the government has prevented the Awami League-formed probe teams from visiting the public silos that stockpiled Indian wheat instead of the homegrown variety during this year's internal procurement drive.

The committees have already missed the September 5 deadline for submission of reports to Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the House Abdul Hamid.

On the other hand, the government is yet to take any action against one state minister, five ruling party lawmakers and the assistant private secretary to the food minister even ten days after receipt of the official probe report with mention of their names.

However, since the submission of the report to the prime minister on August 27, seven officials have been made officers on special duty (OSDs) for their involvement in the scam.

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The seven officers include, among others, the director general and the additional director general of the food directorate and the private secretary to the food minister.

On August 28, the main opposition Awami League constituted three probe committees with nine lawmakers, three in each, for visits to six districts -- Pabna, Bogra, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Barisal and Satkhira.

But none of the committees could visit the silos, as the food ministry asked all field-level officials not to cooperate with the AL teams.

As the AL committees were not formed by the parliament and consist of only party MPs, the government is not bound to give them entry to public silos, sources in the food ministry told The Daily Star.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Abdul Hamid

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PHOTO: STAR

Poet Shamsur Rahman takes part in a human chain the hunger-striking BUET students formed yesterday on the university campus to press home their seven-point demand, including the trial of the killers of Sabequn Nahar Sony, a BUET student.

**'Reopen DU, accept demands of BUET students'**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) yesterday formed a human chain at the city's Muktangan area demanding immediate reopening of Dhaka University (DU) and acceptance of demands of the BUET (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology) students without further delay.

Protesting attacks on a procession of female students and on journalists at Rajshahi University (RU), the BCU also demanded resignation of the RU proctor.

The BCU activists gathered at Muktangan in the morning and observed the human chain programme from 12:00am to 1:00pm and held a rally afterwards.

Protesting the DU syndicate's

decision to postpone the university's reopening, BCU president Sharifuzzaman Sharif said their demand for reopening the university is in line with the desire of the 28,000 DU students.

He added that the DU authorities, defying the aspirations of teachers, students and their guardians, are keeping the university closed following the order of the government.

The DU authorities had earlier declared reopening of the university on September 12. But on September 4, the authorities indefinitely postponed the reopening without giving any specific reason.

BCU General Secretary M Noor

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**Young man gunned down in Satkania: 3 arrested**

BSS, Ctg

A young man was gunned down by a gang of armed miscreants at Hatiarkul village under Satkania upazila yesterday.

Police identified the victim as Kabil Hossain alias Kalu Soudagar, 32, son of Siddique Ahmed of village Garangia in the same upazila.

According to police and witnesses, a group of five led by one Yasin attacked Kabil in Hatiarkul area at about 11.50 am and shot him in the head. He died on the spot.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot and nabbed three of the gang with the help of local people. They are Kabir Hossain, 20, son of Abul Kalam, Abdul Sabur, 25, son of Faizul Alam and Abdur Rahim, 25, son of Sona Ali of Noakhali, Cox's

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**Series of incidents on campus**

**RU tense over 'partisan' probe committee**

ANWAR ALI, Natore

Tension has reached a high pitch at the Rajshahi University (RU) with the ongoing student demonstration and a row with the authorities over formation of a seven-member probe committee.

General students and the Progressive Students' Jote (PSJ) protested the formation of the committee with the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-aligned teachers who held rallies in favour of the Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadres and teachers responsible for the August 27 attack on students.

On August 27, ICS cadres roughed up at least 30 students, 11 of them female, during the PSJ-enforced hartal on the RU campus.

The following day, the ICS cadres and police beat up at least 50 people, including three journalists, when students were demonstrating against the August 27 attack.

On Tuesday afternoon, the students called on Rafiqul Islam, the students' advisor, and expressed their

grievances.

At least six teachers of the committee took part in processions and rallies, supporting the ICS cadres, they claimed.

On September 3, the RU formed the committee headed by Professor M Abu Bakar Siddique of the law department to investigate the incident. The committee was asked to submit its report as soon as possible.

Other members are Professor Md. Abdus Salam, dean of the geology and mining faculty, Professor Syed Shamsuddin Ahmed, provost of the Mathar Box Hall, Professor Md. Abdul Aziz Mia of the physics and electronics department, RU Syndicate Member Advocate Abdul Hai, Professor Sadequul Islam of the political science department and Khwaja Jakaria Ahmed Chisty, chairman of the science and technology department. Students and PSJ leaders staged a sit-in on the campus Tuesday morning, demanding exemplary punishment to those responsible for attacks and the removal of Proctor Nurul Absar.

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ASM NURUNNABI

The lead concentration in Dhaka City's air during the low-rain period is one of the highest in the world, reports Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) following an analysis carried out recently by its scientists over a 17-month period. In fact, Dhaka City has earned the dubious distinction of being second to none with 463 nanogram (billionth of a gram) of lead per cubic metre of its air during the low rainfall period (November-January), according to the analysis report. Mexico City comes in second with 383 nanogram per cubic metre while Bombay third with 360 nanogram.

Lead has long been recognised as a neurotoxin having adverse effects on children's brain development. Scientific evidence shows that lead retards children's physical and mental growth, causing reading and learning disabilities, hearing loss, hyperactivity and reduced attention span even at low levels of exposure.

Children and adults are both susceptible to lead poisoning through inhalation but children are at most risk. The main sources of human exposure to lead include

**DOWN TO EARTH**

**Hazards to public health in city life**

leaded gasoline, industrial processes such as lead smelting and coal combustion, lead-based paints and leaden pipes or lead-based solder in water supply systems. Many countries have already banned use of many leaden products and have taken measures to control emissions.

Vehicular traffic, however, remains the single largest source of environmental lead pollution in the city, accounting for about 90 per cent of all lead emissions into the atmosphere. Besides posing an immediate health risk through inhalation, vehicular lead emissions

also accumulate in the soil and enter the food chain, contributing to exposure through ingestion for long periods of time. High levels of lead in the blood have been detected in urban areas where gasoline with high lead content is widely used, contributing to large public health costs.

In Bangladesh, unlike many developing countries of the world, all vehicular fuels are leaded. During the medium rainfall period (February-May), the concentration of lead in the air falls to 253 nanogram per cubic metre of air in Dhaka Metropolitan City. The

particulate masses are the lowest at 160 nanogram between June and August, when rainfall is the highest. The people of Dhaka City are reportedly more at risk from lead poisoning during the low rainfall period (November-January).

Countries around the world are at various stages of tackling the problem of human exposure to traffic-related lead emissions. Public awareness of the impact of vehicular lead emissions on health coupled with strong political will to tackle the problem can play a decisive role in phasing out leaded

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**Anonymous letter Bomb attack on Khulna radio station threatened**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An anonymous letter addressed to the regional director of the Khulna broadcasting station of Bangladesh Betar (Radio) threatened to 'blow up the radio station'.

The hand-written letter recently posted from Khulna is full of vulgarities with threats of grenade attack at an unspecified time.

Regional Director (RD) Alfazuddin Ahmed has informed the Home Ministry and other agencies concerned about the matter. He also asked the police commissioner to do the needful about the bomb threat, the first in the history of Khulna broadcasting station of Bangladesh Betar.

Vigorous investigation by police is underway to track down the sender of the letter but no headway has been made so far neither has any suspect been questioned.

The RD fears that the Khulna broadcasting station, where political division among officials, employees and artistes is very pronounced, could very well come under a grenade attack, and added that panic among officers and staff is hampering normal work.

Police commissioner Mokhesur Rahman said security has been stepped up in and around the station. But this correspondent saw only three on-duty constables in a relaxed mood at the station at around 3:00pm on Thursday, and they seemed quite unconcerned about the gravity of situation. A high official of the broadcasting station said police protection is too small to prevent any saboteur from entering the station's prohibited area and no special measure has been taken so

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**Confce of BNP's Rajshahi reps today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will today hold a meeting of its representatives from Rajshahi division at the Prime Minister's residence (former Gano Bhaban) in the city.

BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the conference at 10:00am and also preside over the function.

The representatives' meeting is aimed at further strengthening BNP's organisational set-up at the grass roots. It will discuss the current political scenario and the urgent course of action in the present political and socio-economic context, and set agenda for implementing the party's election pledge in consultation with the representatives.

The BNP has already held such meetings of representatives from Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal divisions.

All representatives have been requested to take their seat by 9:00am. Only invited guests and representative cardholders would be allowed to enter the meeting venue through the west gate of the building.

**Import of ship for scrapping**

**Tk 1.5cr tax evaded by showing forged papers**

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Customs authorities have detected alleged tax evasion of about Tk one crore and a half in the import of a ship for scrapping.

The ship--MV Fenes--was imported recently by Patenga Steel, owned by one Abul Kasem. It is already beached at Sitakunu coast for dismantling.

Customs sources said the tax was evaded by showing the LDT (weight of the vessel) at 8,740 MT against its actual LDT of 13,740 MT by producing doctored papers of the ship's 'trim and stability book' (which contains all relevant information on manufacture of a ship) during duty assessment.

The alleged forgery was detected in an investigation and checking the ship's 'trim and stability' book after higher customs authorities got an anonymous letter about the tax evasion, the sources said.

Usually, when a ship is imported for scrapping, several groups of customs officials including rummage team, preventive officials, appraisers and deputy commissioner of customs examine it.

Meanwhile, in a bid to realise the evaded tax, the customs authorities have stopped dismantling of

another ship -- MV Elisa Prima -- imported by the same owner in the name of another firm, National Steel, custom sources said.

The authorities have also taken steps to 'seize' the revenue deposited against import of MV Elisa Prima to adjust it with the duties evaded against MV Fenes, the sources said.

Defying customs' restriction, the importer had beached MV Elisa Prima at Sitakunu coast few days ago.

The customs authorities have now requested the Coast Guard and the DIG of police to keep the vessel (MV Elisa Prima) cordoned for necessary action, the sources said.

This correspondent tried to contact Abul Kasem at his Agrabad office over phone. Somebody from the others side said, "It is not the office of Abul Kasem, owner of Patenga Steel".

Later, when contacted over mobile phone, Abul Kasem denied the allegation of tax evasion by submitting doctored papers.

He said, "I have not shown less weight through forgery. I agree to pay the revenue claimed by customs authorities if they can prove it through legal way".