



A fire broke out at Jahuri Mahalla slum in Mohammadpur yesterday when Dhaka City Corporation was carrying out a drive against unauthorised shops and thatched houses. At least 45 shanties were gutted in the blaze.

PHOTO: STAR

'Give back my sons'

Wails mother while receiving money from Wage Earners' Welfare Fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anwara Begum, 60, of Brahmanbaria has become almost distracted following the death of her two sons in Saudi Arabia last month.

"Give back my sons. My heart is burning," she wailed in her local language.

"I was told that the government

would bring back the bodies of my sons, but where are they? asked weeping Anwara giving a blank look.

Her husband Ahad Ali also sobbed and tried to console her.

Her two sons Kamal Hossain and Sirajul Islam were among the five Bangladeshis who were killed in a brushfire by a son of their employer in Riyadh on February 5.

The Saudi Police arrested the killer and the victims were kept in the morgue for autopsy.

So, Anwara could not see her sons. Instead, she was given a cheque for Tk 2 lakh from the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund.

Anwara burst into tears when State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Quamrul Islam wanted to know about her present condition.

He also assured her of doing everything for bringing the bodies of her sons.

Achhia Khatun, 30, wife of another victim Belal Hossain, was so shocked that she could not say anything.

Hailing from Laxmipur, she is in a more distressed condition with two adolescent daughters and a handicapped infant son.

Families of six such victims were given Tk 1 lakh each from the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund at the Bureau of Manpower Export and Training (BMET) auditorium in the city yesterday. Quamrul handed over the cheque.

According to expatriate welfare ministry sources, around 3,000 to 4,000 Bangladeshis die abroad every year. Normally the bodies are brought home free of cost by Biman Bangladesh Airlines. Sometimes victims are buried abroad with the consent of their family members.

US Consular Sec to remain closed for brief periods

In a bid to serve the travelling public better, the consular section of the US Embassy will undergo physical renovations and system upgrades in March, April and May, says a press release.

To complete these upgrades as soon as possible, the embassy will close the consular section to the public for brief periods on short notice.

As a result, the public may at times have to wait three to four weeks for non-immigrant visa appointments and some persons with confirmed appointments may have to reschedule their dates.

Besides, some immigrant visa appointments may also be rescheduled. However, emergency services to US citizens will not be affected.

Obituary



Amjad Ali Khan, founder and Managing Director of the Oriental Real Estate Limited, died of cardiac arrest on Tuesday at the age of 57, says a press release.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at the Jam-e Mosque of Dhanmondi Road 7 after Zohr prayers yesterday.

He left behind his wife, three sons and grand children to mourn his death.

His qulkhwan will be held at his residence at House- 34, Road-5, Dhanmondi Residential Area after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) condoled the death of Amjad and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family members. REHAB will organise a discussion meeting and milad mahfil at the auditorium of Hotel Sundarban on March 7 after Asr prayers.

Mosaddaque Hossain

Mohammad Mosaddaque Hossain, a sub-assistant engineer of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority, died at the Sikder Medical College Hospital (SMCH) in the city on Tuesday at the age of 42, says a press release.

Both of his heart valves were damaged. He had an operation on February 22 to replace the valves at the SMCH.

Mosaddaque Hossain is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

He was buried at the family graveyard at his village home at Uttar Kumri-raj under Pangsha upazila of Rajbari district after Asr prayers yesterday.

New co to distribute power in Khulna, Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet committee on economic affairs yesterday approved in principle the formation of North-West Power Distribution Company to distribute power in Khulna and Rajshahi regions independently.

The company will function as a subsidiary body of the Power Development Board.

Like the DESCO (Dhaka Electric Supply Company), the North-West

Power Distribution Company is going to be formed in compliance with the reform preconditions imposed by the donor group in the power sector.

In yesterday's meeting, the energy and mineral resources ministry also made a proposal to disband Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Limited into three while Bakhrabad Gas System Limited into two companies.

The meeting decided to hold further discussion on the matter.

Engrs urged to enhance professional skills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Engineers in the power and water sectors have been urged to enhance their professional skills to reduce system loss and increase revenue earning.

Integrity and greater efficiency of the engineers and transparency in their work are a must to improve the services in the two sectors, the speakers said at the 36th annual convention of the Bangladesh Water and Power Engineers' Association (BWPEA) yesterday.

They said the efficiency of the engineers has gone down and they are not in touch with the people in development activities.

Held at the auditorium of the Institute of Engineers, the function was attended by Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Bir Bikram, as chief guest and State Minister for Water Resources Goutam Chakrabarty as special guest.

Hafiz Uddin said many executive and superintendent engineers of Water Development Board do not stay in allocated houses in rural areas; they always want to stay at the district headquarters and the rest wants to stay in the city.

The minister informed the convention that a water bhaban would be built in the city's Green Road area.

Syed Abdul Moyeed, chairman of

Bangladesh Power Development Board, said the economic progress is linked to the development of power sector.

Discussion on Ashura

The Institute of Hazrat Mohammad (SAW) organised a discussion on its premises in the city on Monday on the occasion of Ashura, with its President Maj. Gen. (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim in the chair, says a press release.

Syed Ibrahim also presented a paper on 'Historic background of Ashura'.

Highlighting the significance of Ashura, the speakers said it teaches us to stand and struggle against falsehood and injustice.

They called on all to make concerted efforts to eradicate corruption, injustice and evil elements from the society.

Prof. Dr M Azhar Uddin, vice-chancellor of Darul Ihsan University, attended the discussion as chief guest and Moulana Mohammad Muhiuddin Khan, an Islamic scholar and editor of the monthly Mashik Madinah, was present as special guest.

Qari Mohammad Obaidullah recited from the holy Quran.

Poverty mapping to help address area-specific incidence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To make a dent in poverty, the government would take a cue from the outcome of a 'Poverty Mapping' now being jointly developed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

"Such GIS-aided mapping will show the magnitude and dimension of poverty at various geographic locations across the country. The outcome of the poverty mapping exercise will help us address area-specific incidence of poverty such as seasonal Monga," State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir told newsmen on the sideline of a workshop on poverty mapping held at LGED in the city yesterday.

The state minister addressed the workshop as chief guest while Head of the IRRI Social Science Division Dr Mahabub Hossain and GIS Specialist Dr SP Kam presented two keynote papers at the inauguration session.

Dr Mahabub said the two-year poverty mapping exercise, jointly

carried out by three government agencies along with the IRRI, would draw a conclusion in June.

The organisers said the project, partly funded by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), would focus on mapping rural poverty to determine target areas for agricultural research and development interventions.

The data could also be used to support other pro-poor interventions, including developing strategies for poverty reduction, they said.

"Rural poverty is of direct concern for policy-makers, planners and implementers of agricultural and rural development programmes. The country has high population density, but the land resources are scarce and dwindling," Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir told the workshop.

Noting that the rural poverty is not spread evenly across the countryside, the state minister said there was a need for detailed information on hot spots of poverty so that the government can target the development programmes more precisely.

Presenting his keynote paper on 'Rural Poverty in Bangladesh: Trends and Detriments,' Dr

Mahabub Hossain explained how they could capture multifaceted dimensions of poverty incidences and their causes.

Prof. Abdul Bayes and Dr Manik Lal Bose are the co-authors of the paper.

The paper showed the level and changes in poverty in rural Bangladesh, based on a sample survey of households in 62 randomly selected villages.

Dr Mahabub and Dr SP Kam analysed the sample survey and also the data generated from 2001 population census and presented upazila-level maps of poverty and the peculiarities of poverty incidences in different areas.

Dr Mahabub Hossain, also a former DG of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), laid special emphasis on capacity-building by the government institutions so that they could implement the poverty mapping programmes once the project term is over.

IRRI Liaison Scientist in Bangladesh Dr MA Hamid Miah delivered address of welcome while LGED Chief Engineer Shahidul Hassan chaired the opening session.



A classroom at Dhaka University remains under lock and key yesterday as the Bangladesh Chhatra League enforced a strike at the educational institutions protesting the attack on prominent writer Humayun Azad.

PHOTO: STAR

DHAKA TODAY

Painting exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of a solo painting exhibition by Ronni Ahmed will be held. Venue: Alliance Francaise Gallery, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.00pm. The exhibition will remain open till March 14 from 9.00am to 12noon and from 5.00pm to 8.00pm daily.

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen two films titled 'The Post Man' (1995) and 'The Cement Garden' (1992). Venue: Society auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm and 8.30pm.

Prize giving ceremony

The prize giving ceremony of children's cultural competition, organised by Bishwa Lolikala Academy on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, will be held. Venue: Seminar room of the Central Public Library, Shahbagh. Time: 4.00pm.

Cultural function

Literary Society of Independent University, Bangladesh (LIUB) will hold a cultural function to mark its first anniversary. Venue: University campus, Baridhara. Time: 10.45am.

Roundtable

A roundtable on 'Russia-Bangladesh relation in the context of Russia's present foreign policy', organised by Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA), will be held with Sate Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman as chief guest. Venue: BILIA auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 2.30pm.

IUBAT seminar

A seminar on 'Housing for all: Technologies for low-income housing development', organised by the College of Engineering and Technology of

IUBAT, will be held. Venue: University campus, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.00pm.

ERF discussion

Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) will hold a discussion on the present economic situation of the country with former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria as guest speaker. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 2.30pm.

Literary discussion

The Centre for Bangladesh Culture will hold a discussion on 'Selected stories and other books' of Ata Sarker. Venue: VIP Lounge of National Press Club. Time: 3.00pm.

Oikya Prochesta meeting

Oikya Prochesta organises an opinion sharing meeting with the representatives of business community and civil society with Dr Kamal Hossain as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club auditorium. Time: 5.00pm.

AL meeting

An extended meeting of Dhaka City Awami League will be held. Venue: 23, Bangabandhu Avenue. Time: 11.00am.

BAPA roundtable

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon organises a roundtable on the proposed government draft on 'Noise pollution (Control) Act 2004' with Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed as chief guest. Venue: Conference room of National Press Club. Time: 11.00am.

CSYO meeting

An urgent meeting of the Central Executive Council of Commonwealth Student and Youth Organisation (CSYO) will be held on the occasion of Commonwealth Day. Venue: CSYO office, Dhanmondi. Time: 10.00am.



Maj. Gen. Md Aminul Karim gives away a prize to a student at the Annual Athletic Meet of Bangladesh International School on the school premises in Mohakhali recently.