

Part of Dhanmondi Club playground rented out illegally

STAR REPORT

Dhanmondi Club authorities have illegally rented out a part of their playground to set up a large hoarding for a yearly rent of Tk 50,000. The advertiser – Abahani and Sign – has already started constructing a 100-foot tall 'right angle display' hoarding by piling on the playground.

Abul Kashem Chowdhury of Abahani and Sign said the 'modern display' will not create any problem as it 'looks good' and is built on a small part of the playground.

Asked if they sought permission from Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Kashem said his company started the work on the basis of a sub-contract given by the secretary of Dhanmondi Club. "We are not sure whether the club obtained permission," he added.

Dewan Shafiqur Rahman Bablu, an official of the club, said they had rented out the space to meet the expenses for their cricket team. The club is operating for 40 years and it has every right to do this, he said.

The club officials have long been

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COST OF GOVT INDECISION

500 IPH staff drawing salary without work

NAIMUL HAQ

About 500 staff of the country's lone Institute of Public Health (IPH), most of them experts and laboratory support staff, are without any work for years in the absence of a government decision on utilising their services.

They are drawing their salaries, allowances and other benefits. A section of them are also taking overtime bills, travel allowances and some other facilities against fake bills, sources said.

Seven out of 10 biological labo-

ratories and plants of the IPH, with a total workforce of 754, have been shut down over the years leaving around 500 staff with no work. The latest closure took place in June 2003.

The IPH staff include experts like bacteriologists, microbiologists and chemists and laboratory attendants, technicians, sample takers, veterinarians, husbandry officers and a host of other categories of employees.

Many of the public hospitals and laboratories badly need these experts, sources pointed out.

The plants and laboratories that

have been closed are Microbiology (Public Health) Laboratory, Biological Production Laboratory, Anti-Sera Laboratory, Tetanus Toxoid Production Plant, Pasteur-cum-Vaccine Institute, Dry Vaccine Laboratory and Vaccine Laboratory.

Moreover, establishment section of the IPH has 141 staff with most of them having nothing to do as the plants and laboratories excepting three no longer operate.

The three still in operation are Drug Testing Laboratory, Anti-Rabies Vaccine (ARV) Plant and

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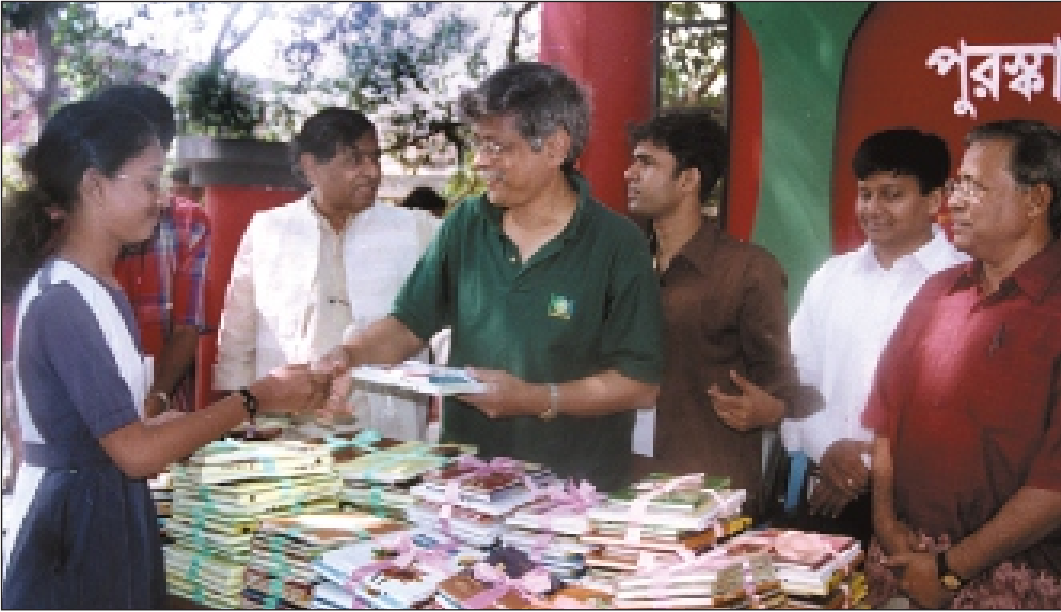


PHOTO: STAR

Winners in the book reading competition arranged by the Bishaw Sahitya Kendro receive books as prizes from Muhammad Jafar Iqbal and Abdullah Abu Sayeed at the Institute of Fine Arts yesterday.

Book reading builds worthy citizens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reading books is the best thing for man and the habit of reading good books builds good citizens and a good society.

This was highlighted by scholars and litterateurs at a prize giving ceremony for the book reading programme, 2004, organised by Bishwa Sahitya Kendro (BSK) with the theme 'Alokito Manush Chai' (we want enlightened man).

Students, guardians, teachers and other elite attended the function held at Bakultala of the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University.

Founder of the BSK Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed congratulated students for participating in

the book reading programme and their guardians for allowing and encouraging them to read books.

"Through the book reading programme, we want to instil in you (students) the dream to be worthy citizens, (who are) needed to build a beautiful country," he said.

Child litterateur Lutfar Rahman Sarker inaugurated the two-day function.

About 24,000 students from 100 schools of the capital took part in the book reading programme in 2004. Students of class V to class X, who completed reading a given number of books, are to get prizes.

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ROAD LINK WITH MYANMAR

Foundation of bridge over Tamru river laid

BDNEWS, Cox's Bazar

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda and visiting Myanmar Foreign Minister U Nyan Win yesterday laid the foundation stone of Gundom-Taungbro Bridge over Tamru river along Bangladesh-Myanmar border to establish a direct road link between the two countries.

The 43-metre two-lane bridge will be constructed as part of the Bangladesh-Myanmar Friendship Road Link Project being implemented by the communications ministry with its own resources, said the ministry in a press release.

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Border fencing top priority, says Indian president

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian President A P J Abdul Kalam yesterday said security along the country's border with Bangladesh is one of the priorities of the government.

"Government has accorded top priority to erection of fence along the Indo-Bangladesh border to check infiltration, smuggling and all anti-India activities from across the border," he said in a joint session of parliament marking the start of its budget session.

The president also spoke of 'special and warm' relationship with Bangladesh and said that India will

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Afghanistan keen to join Saarc, says Karzai

AFP, New Delhi

Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai said yesterday his war-ravaged country wanted to join the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) and become a link between the regional grouping and Central Asia.

"It would be an honour for Afghanistan to be invited to join Saarc. We would like to see it emerge as a great grouping for the development of Central and South Asia," Karzai told a conference in New Delhi organised by India Today news magazine.

The Afghan president said the two regions should link their development efforts to become a global power centre.

"There should be a new vision for the region and efforts made to remove political barriers and, instead of building walls, we must build bridges," Karzai said.

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The world's third largest ship breaking industry on the 10km long seashore in Sitakunda, Chittagong is marked by unsafe working conditions and lack of proper management.

PHOTO: STAR

Ship breaking industry remains largely ignored

REAZ AHMAD

Ship breaking industry fetches an annual revenue of Tk 900 crore for the government and directly employs around 40,000 people but lack of proper policy and unsafe working conditions are greatly affecting the sector.

The industry is the third largest in the world in terms of breaking old ships into scraps, coming next to India and China.

Located on the 10km-long seashore along Sitakunda in Chittagong, the industry comes out on top in breaking the world's largest ships. Shipyards at Alang in India's Gujarat and Shanghai in China mostly break small and medium ships.

The sector feeds raw materials for re-rolling mills in the country, contributes 80 percent of construction iron, and employs about 1.5 lakh people through its backward and forward linkages.

But the ship breaking industry

remains largely informal with almost no application of rules and regulations in regards to labour laws, safety measures and overall working atmosphere.

On February 19, hundreds of unskilled labourers were seen busy working, mostly in hazardous working atmosphere, exposing themselves to all sorts of poisonous gases. Almost no-one of them was wearing any kind of masks, eye-protections, hand gloves or protective boots.

The lone ship breaking industry has also earned the notoriety of providing very little or no care at all for its workforce, most of whom are tender-aged and unmarried hard-up youths from the poverty-stricken northwestern and central-north regions.

Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), a Chittagong-based NGO, has recorded that at least 400 workers were killed and 5,000 others were injured in the industry in

last five years.

The NGO, which is working for the betterment of the sector's poor human rights condition for almost a decade, has held responsible poisonous gas emissions and hazardous working conditions for the accidents.

YPSA Programme Manager Abdullah Al Mamun told reporters, "We certainly don't seek the closure of the industry. We want a congenial and safe workplace for the poor workers, whose parents would be paid in advance by the industry people to get their uninterrupted services in the following months."

A man introduced himself as foreman Khokon at a staff quarters near one of the 32 shipyards in Sitakunda. He admitted that they recruit workers, mostly from greater Rangpur, Jamalpur and other adjoining regions, on behalf of the yard owners, by paying the parents of the workers Tk 400-500 in advance.

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Saarc summit postponed for nothing, says Bhuiyan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the Saarc summit was postponed for nothing and law and order has been excellent in the country for the last seven months.

The minister said the main opposition Awami League (AL) would not win more than 40 parliamentary seats in the next general elections because of its political stance.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a three-day Eid reunion programme attended by Fatulla and Shiddhirganj BNP leaders and

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Prayer Timing		
February 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		