



B K Das Road in the old city is left with a heap of waste only a day after the completion of the special cleanliness drive of the Dhaka City Corporation. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

PM INAUGURATES NATIONAL ASTHMA CENTRE

Over 3 crore patients to get modern treatment

UNB, Dhaka

Over three crore patients with asthma, allergy and respiratory problems will get modern treatment at the National Asthma Centre at Mohakhali in the city.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia inaugurated the centre yesterday.

Speaking on the occasion Khaleda said the government has a plan to set up a full-fledged medical university in the country for a break-through in the medical sector.

She told the inaugural function that the process of appointing 3,174 assistant surgeons has been finalised.

The Prime Minister said her government wants the nation to get out of the vicious cycle of ill health and malnutrition for it is not possible for a sickened population to make contribution to production and development.

Identifying lingering poverty as hindrance to attaining good health, she said the government is working relentlessly to ensure public health, healthcare and alleviate poverty.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organised the

function for inauguration of the National Asthma Centre and foundation laying of the National Academy of Health Management at Mohakhali.

The National Asthma Centre has been set up at a cost of nearly Tk 17 crore. Equipped with modern facilities, it will help more than three crore patients with asthma, allergy and respiratory problems obtain modern treatment, officials said.

The Prime Minister unveiled the plaque of the centre and of the foundation stone of the National Academy of Health Management.

Khaleda reminded the doctors involved in the noble profession that their service is not an object for sale nor is it a means of making money but a profession to serve humanity with dedication and sincerity.

"Earn the affection and respect of the patients and their family members through rendering services and uphold the dignity of the profession," she said.

Referring to the measures taken by her government to expand the healthcare services, she said the number of beds was increased in

the hospitals, health complexes were built around the country, new doctors, nurses and other medical staff appointed during the last three and a half years of rule of the present government.

She also mentioned the promotion of doctors, upgrading nearly 1000 posts of doctors to selection grade and increase in the allowances of the internecine doctors.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister for Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Maj (Retd) M Kamrul Islam, Health Secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal, Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) President Prof MA Hadi, Doctor's Association of Bangladesh (DAB) President Dr AKM Azizul Huque, BMA Secretary General Dr AZM Zahid Hossain and DG, Health, Dr Abdur Rahman Khan also spoke.

Members of parliament, diplomats and a large number of physicians attended the health ministry function.

STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Children identify 1046 'disliked behaviours'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Children in a study on child abuse identified a total of 1046 'disliked behaviours', but not enough is known about the nature and extent of the problem in Bangladesh, according to a preliminary report on 'Children's perspectives on child abuse'.

The report was presented at the conference titled 'National consultation on violence against children in Bangladesh' in the city yesterday.

The study, which began in 2002, was supported by the Government of Bangladesh, Unicef and Save the Children Alliance.

The objectives of the two-day conference are to learn through dialogue, decide on a strategy for effective interventions and identify regional recommendations and finally provide inputs for the UN Study on Violence against Children.

Acknowledging the problem of child sexual abuse and trafficking in the country, Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque said the findings of this conference will help her ministry develop strategies for tackling the problems through framing laws and regulation.

Violence takes a heavy toll on children and often affects the victims' mental, physical and psychological well-being, said Cecilia Lotse, regional director of Unicef South Asia.

The 153 children of the study, who include rural and urban poor and non-poor, say the 'disliked behaviour' they experience happens within the family, in educational settings and in the workplace. These disliked behaviours range from verbal discipline and physical violence to sexual advances.

The team leader of the study, Rachel Kabir, admits that there is still a lot more to know about the children of

Bangladesh. A final report is expected to come out in June.

Cecilia Lotse said the national consultation is very important as it will "provide significant inputs" to a UN Study on violence against children commissioned by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Participants at the conference signed a statement on a canvas vowing to "take the responsibility to prevent all sorts of violence against children in Bangladesh."

About 80 children were present at the conference.

Ulf Risberg of Save the Children Alliance, Secretary-in-charge of the women and children affairs ministry Abdur Rashid Sarkar, Joint Secretary Abul Quasem and Project Director of EPCW Project Dr Yeameen Akbory also spoke.

JCD demands immediate Ducusu election

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the ruling BNP, demanded that the election of the Dhaka University Central Student Union (Ducusu) be held immediately.

Ducusu is a platform for the general students to voice their demand and a shelter for all the students' organisations, said JCD President Azizul Barre Helal, at a rally on the Dhaka University (DU) campus on Sunday.

The DU JCD organised the rally to accord a reception to the leaders of the central committee. It also took out a procession on the campus thanking the BNP high command for forming the fully-fledged central committee.

There is no alternative to Ducusu election to improve the leadership quality, Helal said, adding that Ducusu had successfully contributed to all national movements, including language movement, independence movement and anti-autocratic movement.

Presided over by DU JCD President Hasan Mamun, the rally was also addressed by Sultan Salauddin Tuku, Abdul Kader Bhuiyan Jewel, Amirul Islam Alim and Afsana Akter.

'Unite against fanatics'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a reception ceremony yesterday called on the freedom fighters to be united to restore the spirit of the War of Liberation and establish it in every sphere of life in order to protect the nation from the clutches of fanatics.

The freedom fighters sacrificed their lives for political and economic freedom, social justice, rule of law and democracy, but none of these exist in the country, they said.

Twenty-two distressed freedom fighters were accorded a reception at the programme organised by the Amra Muktijoddha Santan at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers alleged that the Ministry for Liberation War Affairs has turned into a place of agony for the real freedom fighters as non-freedom fighters and fake freedom fighters are ruling the ministry.

"It is our duty to show due honour and respect to the freedom fighters who made invaluable contribution, but we failed to do so," said AAMS Arefin Siddique, president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association.

He said they joined the liberation war not for any personal gain but to free the country from the Pakistani occupation forces. It is a shame for the nation that those brave sons have to lobby the government officials for their living, he added.

"The political parties have failed

to bring any qualitative change to the lives of the common people. The rich have become richer and the poor poorer. Politics has turned into a game of money and muscle," he said.

Prof Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, chairman of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad Kendriya Council, said the government has created a division among the freedom fighters by ousting the elected committee from the Muktijuddha Sangsad.

The freedom fighters have fallen in the whirl of political chaos and thus have been deprived of their just rights and status in the society, he said.

He said, "It is regrettable that we also could not take the political leadership of the country. But time has come to get rid of the current crises by bringing honest leadership to power."

Awami League leader Advocate Abdul Motin Kusrhu called for strengthening the unity of the freedom fighters to establish democracy and the rule of law.

MA Karim, organising secretary of Krishak League, Alhaj Monarul Huq Khan Lablu, secretary general of the Sangsads, and Khan Mohammad Balayat, vice-president of the Sangsads, also spoke.

REB dissolves 2 PBS boards, removes 4 directors

UNB, Dhaka

Rural Electrification Board (REB) on Sunday dissolved the elected boards of two Pali Bidyt Samities (PBSs) and removed four directors of another four following a row over the control of Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL).

The RPCL was launched in 1994 as the first private power company in the country with the equity of the REB and five PBSs.

Initially, the REB owned 51 percent shares in the RPCL and the five PBSs the rest.

Sources said the termination of PBS boards came as a counter move to their decision to offload 18 percent shares to Dhaka PBS-1 and Narsingdi PBS-1.

The two PBSs owned maximum shares and most RPCL directors also came from them.

The RPCL board at a meeting on April 18 also elected Azaharul Ishaque Mollah the new RPCL chairman removing the REB chairman.

Sources said when the RPCL came into being, there was a government decision to gradually divert the REB shares to the PBSs.

RPCL officials claimed diversion of 33 percent REB shares in compli-

ance with the decision took place in the last few years.

The remaining 18 percent shares have recently been sold to the Dhaka and Narsingdi PBSs at the latest RPCL board meeting, they added.

But the REB treated the diversion move of the 18 percent shares as illegal.

The sources said REB officials brought the whole matter to the notice of the Power Division.

The Power Division as a counter move called an emergency meeting on April 20 and decided to remove all the eight RPCL directors representing different PBSs.

However, the REB instead of removing the board members dissolved the boards of Dhaka PBS-1 and Narsingdi PBS-1.

It also removed four RPCL directors, who represented the company as the representatives of Natore PBS-1, Natore PBS-2, Comilla PBS-1 and Moulvibazar PBS.

RPCL officials apprehend the fate of the company's two power projects -- Mymensingh phase-3 and Dhaka North Power Project (DNPP) -- may become uncertain in the wake of the dissolve and removal action.

GARMENTS FACTORY COLLAPSE

Rajuk probe report likely tomorrow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Rajuk's five-member probe committee, formed to investigate the April 11 Savar building collapse tragedy failed to submit its report yesterday due to 'technical problems', Rajuk Chairman Md Shahid Alam said.

"The report has been compiled and it may be submitted tomorrow and we shall then send it to the Ministry of Housing and Public Works," Alam said yesterday.

He said the five-member Rajuk board will be given a copy of the report to make recommendations for prevention of recurrence of such an incident.

Rajuk authorities have decided to establish zonal offices in Savar, Tongi and Narayanganj, the Rajuk chairman said, adding, "It is necessary to expand our offices to cover the 590 square mile of Rajuk jurisdiction."

"We also want to ensure that the

Savar Cantonment Board and the Tongi Municipality stop approving construction of privately owned buildings in those areas," he said.

The nine-storey Spectrum building collapse at Palashbari in Savar killed at least 61 people and seriously injured 85 others in the early hours of April 11.

Legal notice served on factory owners, govt bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On behalf of the dead and injured workers of the Spectrum garment factory at Savar, the Samik Nirapatta Forum (a forum for workers' security) served a legal notice on three factory owners and government organisations concerned on April 24.

The forum, formed in the wake of the Savar tragedy comprising 14 human rights organisations, issued the legal notice on Shahrier Syed Hossain, Altaf Hossain, and Hashem Fakir, directors of the factory that collapsed allegedly for poor construction on April 11.

The notice was also served on the secretaries of the ministries of labour, commerce, industry, land, food and disaster management, environment, and housing including Rajuk chairman.

The notice, signed by a Supreme Court lawyer Nizamul Haque Nasim, asked the government bodies concerned to take legal action against the persons responsible for the accident in which 74 workers were killed and about 200 others injured, says a press release.

The legal notice also called for paying compensations to dead and injured workers and ascertain the reasons behind the incident.

Hasina blames govt for price hike, corruption

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed the alliance government for its failure to check the price hike of essentials, and the slide in law and order situation.

She said the government raised the price of kerosene, diesel, and petrol several times in last three and a half years without considering the sufferings of the people.

Hasina, also the leader of the opposition in parliament, was addressing a huge public meeting organised by the district unit of AL at Rangpur Zila School ground in the afternoon.

Terming the government anti-people, she said incidents of crime, violence, and killing are increasing under its patronisation.

Hasina claimed that the Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) was formed to kill the opposition leaders and activists without trial in the

name of maintaining law and order.

She also blamed the alliance government for widespread corruption in all sectors.

Sheikh Hasina's son Sajib Wajed Joy also addressed the meeting briefly. Joy said he wanted to help his mother in serving the nation.

The situation of the country is very deplorable and he would help his mother in her efforts to develop the country, he added.

Presided over by District AL President Abdur Razzak, the meeting was also addressed by AL General Secretary Abdul Zaili, Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan and Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Jubo League President Jahangir Kabir Nanok and Secretary Mirza Azam MP, Chhatra League President Liakot Shikder, Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu, Swechasebok League President Bahauddin Nasim an Organising Secretary Saifullah.

Earlier in the morning, Hasina accompanied by her son Joy went to Fatepur village under Pirganj upazila to visit her father-in-law's house.

On arrival at the Fatepur, they offered munazat at the graveyards of Joy's grandfather and grandmother. They stayed there for about four hours and talked to their relatives and villagers.

On their way back to Rangpur, Hasina and Joy addressed a public meeting at Pirganj. Hasina told the people that Joy came to his grandfather's house after several years to meet his close relatives.

She said, "Joy is your son. He could not come to you frequently as he remains abroad for education. He will come to you often from now on. You must pray for him."

Joy in his brief speech said, "You pray for me. I will come to you again."

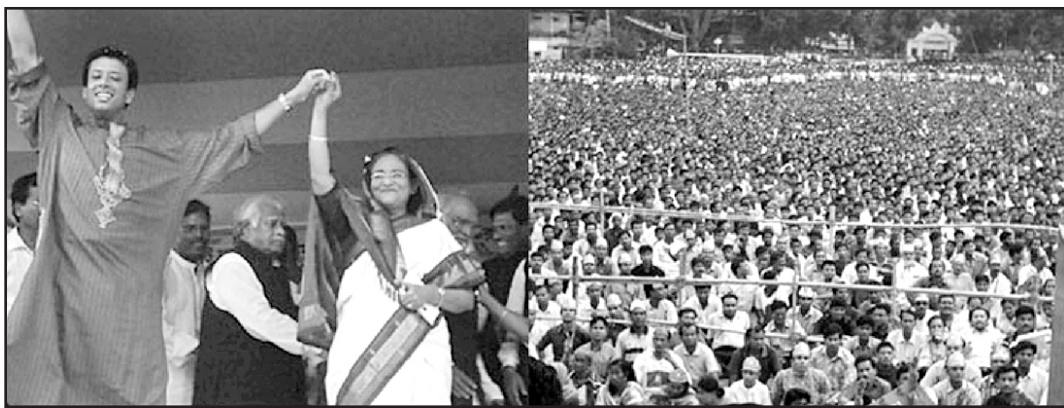


PHOTO: STAR

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina introduces her son Sajib Wajed Joy to the people of Rangpur at a public meeting at Rangpur Zila School ground yesterday.

I have failed to bring NGO fund thru' govt channel

Saifur tells journalists

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said he has been trying for long to bring the donor-funded money to NGOs through government channel, but failed to do it.

"The non-government organisations (NGOs) are realising interest at 22 to 23 percent from its creditors," he told the reporters at a meeting at his office.

"I am also frustrated on the issue," Saifur said adding, "Now, the government is trying to disburse micro-finance to ultra-poor through state-run institutions like, Krishi Bank and Pali Karma Sahayak Foundation."

Replying to a question, he said that he was striving for long days to bring the foreign-funded NGO money under government's monitoring.

He admitted his failure in this regard and asked the reporters to write on the issue for the greater interest of the country.

During the July-March period of the current fiscal, local and foreign NGOs, operating in Bangladesh, received a total of \$212.10 million, equivalent to Tk 12.09 billion overseas fund, according to a newspaper report.

The amount was Tk 17.84 billion in the 2003-04 fiscal.

738 phensidyl bottles sent thru' courier service

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bottles of phensidyl, a contraband item, are now being transported through courier service.

The new method of smuggling phensidyl came to light on Sunday evening when Motijheel police seized 738 bottles in five cartons sent by the Continental Courier Service to Dhaka from Khulna.

Police also arrested three employees of the courier Service -- Mahfuz Alam, Zakir Hossain-1 and Zakir Hossain-2 -- when they collected the cartons from a bus of Eagle Paribahan.

Obituary

Begum Paribanu Jibon Nahar, wife of Kazi Hafizullah, former Chairman of Kaulibera Union at Bhanga Thana under Faridpur district, died of old-age complications at her residence at Shyamoli in the city yesterday at the age of 88, says a press release.

She is survived by her four sons and one daughter to mourn her death. Her quikhwani will be held at her Kaulibera residence in Faridpur on 28 April and at her residence at House No-355, Road No-4, Baitul Aman Housing Society, Shyamoli in the city on April 29 after Asr prayers.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina expressed her deep condolence at her death.

Successful laparoscopic surgery on children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors at the Bangladesh Shishu Sasthya Foundation Hospital performed the laparoscopic surgery on two children, the first of its kind in the country, yesterday.

Assistant Professor Dr Arifur Rahman conducted the surgery at the hospital at Mirpur in the city and the operations were successful, said a press release of the hospital.

Hasan, an eight-year-old boy, and Babu, a three-month-old baby, underwent the surgery and both of them are now safe.

Laparoscopic surgeons Dr Jafrul Hanan Lito and Dr Amirur Rashid Minu assisted Dr Arifur Rahman during the operation.

Laparoscopic surgery is a surgical technique that uses a long, thin telescope-like instrument (the laparoscope) attached to a video camera that projects images onto a video monitor. This allows surgeons to view a patient's organs and internal structures and perform entire surgeries through tiny incisions in the abdomen.

Previously the patients had to go abroad for laparoscopic surgery, which was very expensive. At present, such surgery are being performed on the adults in the country.

Woman dies in accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An unidentified woman was killed in a road accident near Benarashi Pali in Mirpur in the capital yesterday.

A government-owned Volvo double-decker lost control and rammed another parked on the road from behind, sandwiching the woman, aged about 40, at 10:20pm.

The victim, who was crossing the road in between the double-deckers, died on the spot, police said. They sent her body to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

The collision left both the buses partially damaged.

WEATHER TODAY

Kalbaishaki squalls likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet and Khulna divisions and at one or two places over Barisal and Chittagong divisions till 6.00pm today.

Day temperature may fall by one to three degree Celsius over the country, Met Office said.

It also forecast that temporary west northwesterly 'Kalbaishaki' squalls speed 60 to 90 kph or more with hails at places may occur over the regions of Rajshahi, Bogra, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali, Faridpur, Dhaka, Jessore, Kushtia and Pabna.

Highest temperature 36.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 21.0 degree Celsius at Mymensingh and Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:25pm today and rises at 5:27am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.2	22.3	50	63
Chittagong	32.8	25.2	81	65
Rajshahi	33.6	27.5	77	69
Khulna	35.0	27.5	80	80
Barisal	34.6	26.5	79	80
Sylhet	31.8	21.4	91	58
Cox's Bazar	34.5	26.4	72	78

DHAKA TODAY

Exhibition

The opening ceremony of an artistic furniture and handicrafts exhibition, organised by Charon, will be held. Venue: Drik Gallery, House-58, Road-15/A, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.00pm. The exhibition will remain open till May 5 from 3.00pm to 8.00pm daily.

Meeting

The People's Empowerment Trust organises an opinion sharing meeting to mark the Global Action Week with Speaker Mohammad Jamir Uddin Sircar as chief guest. Venue: LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad. Time: 10.30am.

Workshop

The opening ceremony of a two-day national workshop on the Use of ICT in basic education' will be held with Science and ICT Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan as chief guest. Venue: Bhashani Novo Theatre, Bijoy Sarani. Time: 10.00am.

Seminar

On the occasion of World Intellectual Property Day-2005, a seminar on the 'Role of IP in developing countries' will be held. Venue: FBCCI Auditorium, 60 Motijheel. Time: 10.00am.

Jamaat meeting

A meeting of Teigoan thana unit of Jamaat-e-Islami will be held with party Amir Maulana Matur Rahman Nazami as chief guest. Venue: Dhaka Polytechnic Institute Auditorium, Teigoan. Time: 4.30pm.

Lawyers' rally

A rally of Sammilito Ainjibi Samonnoy Parishad will be held. Venue: Supreme Court Bar Association Building. Time: 4.30pm.

Human chain

The Samajtantrik Mahila Forum will form a human chain in protest against the repression on Ahmadiya women community. Venue: Muktangan,

Ramna. Time: 5.00pm.

Rotary Dhaka

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5.30pm.

Rotary Sonargaon

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Sonargaon Dhaka will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Ramna. Time: 5.30pm.

DHAKA TOMORROW

BISS seminar

The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies organises a seminar on the 'Future of Saarc and Bangladesh' with Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan as chief guest. Venue: Institute's Auditorium. Time: 10.30am.

Discussion

The Forum for the Rights of the Elderly, Bangladesh will hold a discussion meeting on the health of the elderly people. Venue: WVA Auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 9.00am.

Roundtable

The Campaign for Good Governance organises a roundtable on the poverty reduction strategy paper. Venue: Citrad Auditorium, Tophkana Road. Time: 9.00am.

Seminar

Bangladesh Mosjid Mission organises a seminar on 'Islam in establishing a society free from drugs and terrorism' with Industries Minister Maulana Matur Rahman Nazami as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10.00am.

Lecture

The World Literature Centre organises a lecture on 'What type of Bangladesh we want.' Venue: Centre's Auditorium, Bangla Motor. Time: 5.30pm.