

'Rapid approval of pvt varsities causes dearth of qualified teachers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Appropriate action should be taken against the private universities that do not comply with the existing rules and cannot maintain minimum academic standard, said the leaders of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh yesterday.

"We are very much in favour of taking action, and the institutions that cannot ensure a minimum standard should be closed down," said co-convenor of the association Abul Quasem Haider at a meet the press organised at a city hotel to

express reservations of different private university entrepreneurs to the proposed Private University Act 2005.

Responding to a point that private universities are responsible to an extent for creating vacuum at the public universities by hiring teachers from there, Haider said, "The government has approved so many private universities in a rapid sequence that it has resulted in serious dearth of qualified teachers."

Association Convenor Commodore (Retd) MA Rahman expressed his strong reservations

to the proposed act and termed it as a law of 'grabbing by force.'

He said the association is against the provisions contained in the proposed act in regard to the formation of syndicate, academic council, finance committee and recruitment committee.

Rahman said the private university entrepreneurs must have absolute authority over the formation of the said bodies in running their institutions, as they invest their money in establishing universities in line with the open market economy.

Pointing to some other terms and obligations such as reserve fund,

infrastructure and appointment of vice-chancellor for setting up of private universities as per new law, he demanded that any changes to the existing act have to be made in consultation with the private university entrepreneurs and sponsors.

The government has recently initiated a comprehensive updating of the Private University Act-1992 to streamline the activities of private universities in the wake of various gross irregularities.

Alimullah Mian, Shahidullah and Dr Anwarul Abedin of the association were present on the occasion.

'Governance is on top of US agenda in Bangladesh'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Charge d' Affaires in Dhaka Judith Chammass yesterday said the issues of governance, corruption, fair election and promotion of trade and investment are on top of US agenda in Bangladesh.

Talking to reporters emerging from a meeting with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, she said Bangladesh is committed to US agenda and there has been progress in all the issues.

"We had nice interactions on bilateral issues and we are committed to carrying out both of our agenda," she added.

This was her first meeting with the foreign minister after Ambassador Harry K Thomas had left Dhaka for his new assignment as Executive Secretary of the US State Department in Washington.

Replying to a question, Judith Chammass said, "I think they (the government) are very committed to seeing progress in those areas and we are doing our best to work with them."

On another query about a new US Ambassador to Bangladesh, she said President Bush has not yet named anyone. "Hopefully it would be done in the near future."

About the possible visit of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Bangladesh, Chammass said she does not have any information on that matter.

CTG ARMS CASE Trial begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Trial of the sensational Chittagong Arms case began at the Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court here yesterday.

The first investigating officer (IO) of the case Ahadur Rahman, also the then Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the Karnaphuli Police Station, gave his deposition before Judge Anwar Hossain.

During the hearing, nine pieces of firearms and ammunitions, each of the items of the arms recovered on April 2 last year, were produced as the evidence before the court for the first time yesterday.

Members of Bangladesh Army, the present custodian of the recovered arms, produced the evidence before the court.

Thirty of the 43 accused were present during the hearing. Twelve of them sought bail but the court granted bail to five -- Bazal Ahmad, Akber Ali, Dilder Hossain, Sanowar Hossain and Ezhar Mia.

Nineteen of the accused, including the five, are now on bail while 12 are in custody. Twelve others, including four main accused -- Hafizur Rahman alias Hafiz, Din Mohammad, Abul Kashem Madhu and Sobhan Hazi -- remained absconding.

The court fixed August 7 for the next hearing.

Robbery at city house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of robbers looted valuables and cash totalling Tk 1.35 lakh from a house at Shaymoli in the city on Tuesday night.

Equipped with sharp weapons and bombs, the gang of four entered the house of Nurul Amin after pressing the calling bell at around 8:30pm and tied up the family members, said Mohammadpur police.

They took away gold ornaments, two mobile phone sets and Tk 35,000.

Nurul Amin filed a case with Mohammadpur police.

AL team apprises Hasina of China visit experiences

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The central delegation of Awami League (AL) back from China has called on Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan yesterday.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jail and Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury were also present on the occasion.

The team apprised the party president of their experiences of the tour. Hasina advised the leaders to make work plan to convey their experience to other front and affiliated organisations of the party. She also suggested them to relate their experience to the grass-root leaders organising divisional workshops.

Team leader Obaidul Qader, after the meeting, told BDNEWS that they have submitted a brief report on the China visit to the party chief.

Again they would sit with the leaders of different front organisations and divisions according to the advice of Hasina within a few days producing the report in full, he added.

Other members of the delegation Abul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Akhtaruzzaman, Abdur Rahman and Bir Bahadur MP were present in the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad forms a human chain in front of the Supreme Court Ainjibi Samity office in the city yesterday marking the 'Justice Day'.

Draft law finalised to protect water bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has finalised the draft of 'River, floodplain, water reservoir, and canal control act 2005' to reclaim and protect the natural water bodies from illegal grabbers.

Under the draft law, the violators would be put into jail for a period of minimum six months where as the maximum punishment is five years imprisonment with a fine up to Tk 3 lakh.

The draft was finalised at an inter-ministerial meeting with Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmad in the chair.

The proposed law prohibits setting up of any permanent establishment within 50 meters of port area and 10 meters of both banks of the river.

It also empowers the authorities concerned to impose restriction on the construction of permanent establishment even by the owners of the land within the marked area in a bid to stop river erosion and protect the towns.

Speaking at a press briefing after the meeting, Hafiz Uddin said the grabbing of rivers and wetlands was one of the major reasons for prolonged floods in

the country last year. He said the proposed law will protect the rivers from grabbing and help reclaim all canals in the capital and other cities.

"No body will be allowed to cause inundation by earth filling. The floodplains and the natural flow of the rivers and canals will be protected," he added.

"Risk of flood is increasing due to earth filling of rivers, canals and other wetlands. Slight rains have been causing waterlogging and creating immense sufferings to the people," the minister said.

The draft law will be placed before the cabinet meeting soon, the meeting sources said.

Information Minister M Shamsul Islam, Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Agriculture Minister M K Anwar, Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah al Noman and Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas were present at the meeting.

Secretaries and other representatives of ministries concerned were also present on the occasion.

'Free judiciary from corruption'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad, a forum of pro-opposition lawyers, yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Supreme Court Ainjibi Samity office as part of its programme to observe the 'Justice Day' in all courts across the country demanding a judiciary free from 'corruption' and 'influence of the executive.'

The parishad also demanded rule of law, separation of the judiciary from the executive and appointment of honest and meritorious judges in the Supreme Court.

It also organised a meeting at the Supreme Court Ainjibi Samity Bhaban seminar room with Supreme Court Bar Association President Advocate Mahbubey Alam in the chair.

Addressing at the meeting Mahbubey Alam said, "The country's judiciary is now facing image crisis as the government appointed 34 judges in the High Court (HC) in two phases considering their political affiliation."

Supreme Court Bar Association Vice-president Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud said, "Instead of the Chief Justice, the senior most judge of the HC should be given the authority to form benches."

Former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru, former MP MA Halim, Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad leader Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder, Shah Md Jahirul Haque, PC Guho, Nuruzzaman Nur, Abdulla Abu, Tania Amir, Abdur Rahman Haqdar, and Nazmul Hossain spoke at the meeting.

Ensure maternal safety at workplaces

Demands Karmojibi Nari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karmojibi Nari, an organisation of working women, yesterday demanded arrest and exemplary punishment to those responsible for the death of a newborn baby at a garments factory.

Bilkis Akhter, a worker of Chittagong Young International BD Garments, gave birth to the baby at her workplace at the end of last month, but the baby did not survive. Bilkis was forced to work during her pregnancy, as she was not allowed to go on maternity leave.

The Karmojibi Nari formed a human chain at Muktangan in the city in protest against the incident and demanded four-month paid

maternity leave for the women workers.

It also demanded immediate measures to set up childcare centres and ensure maternal safety at workplaces.

"It is a clear violation of labour law and the ILO convention," said Shirin Akhter, president of the organisation, at the programme.

She also called on the authorities to trace the victim as she went missing after the incident, and provide treatment facilities and adequate compensation to her.

Karmojibi Nari leaders Rokeya Rafique Baby, Arifa Akhter Anu, Sabnam Hafiz and Firoza Begum also spoke.

'Raise awareness to eliminate POPs'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called for raising awareness to eliminate Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), a group of toxic substances that are causing adverse effects to human health and the environment.

A project of the Directorate of Environment organised the workshop on 'Draft Bangladesh National Implementation Plan (NIP) for Phase-Out of POPs under Stockholm Convention' at the IDB auditorium in the city.

The project is funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) in cooperation with UNDP.

According to the draft, Bangladesh will take initiative to control the releases of POPs from pesticides and industrial chemicals into the environment.

The draft recommends upgrading regulatory and legal frameworks for proper management of POPs, developing structure for long-term monitoring programme, ensuring inspection of probable contaminated sites and increasing awareness about the adverse effects.

Bangladesh would implement the NIP by involving different government, semi-government and non-government organisations, since the management of POPs compound needs active participation of public and stakeholders.

The prioritised actions will be

legislation provisions for POPs, establishment of a UNEP standard laboratory, safe storage and destruction of the stockpiles.

NIP Project Director Afrin Akter presented the draft plan at the workshop.

"In our country it is not easy to remove the problematic factors hurriedly, which is possible in the developed countries. Awareness building and concerted campaign are essential to control the POPs," said Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam as the chief guest.

State Minister for Agriculture Fakrul Islam Alamgir said the developed countries, which exported the toxic chemicals, are now pressing the poor and developing countries to take action to protect the environment.

Bangladesh is one of the 150 signatory countries to the Stockholm Convention on POPs.

Presided over by Director General of Department of Environment Khan M Ibrahim Hossain, the inaugural session was also addressed by State Minister for Environment Jafurul Islam Chowdhury, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmood, Health Secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal and Assistant Resident Representative of UNDP Shireen Kamal Sayeed.

At a press conference at the Madhu's canteen, the student combine also protested the university authority's decision to change the names of Fazlul Haque Hall and Salimullah Hall.

The students combine would stage demonstration on the campus today, form a human chain on July 10, lay siege to the Vice Chancellor's office and submit memorandum on July 12 and a solidarity rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on July 15 to press home their demands.

FUEL PRICE HIKE

Govt body yet to submit report on revising bus fare

Several city bus services raise fare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of recent fuel price hike, the bus service operators in the city have increased the fare arbitrarily, sparking protests from the passengers.

The government formed a committee in the second week of the last month to assess the need for revising the bus fare and submit a report within 10 days, but it is yet to submit its report.

Several city bus services are now charging higher rate, leading to altercations between passengers and bus staffs. The additional fare ranges between Tk 1 and 2 depending on the distance.

The government had fixed the existing bus fare in 2003 -- Tk 0.72 per kilometre for 52-seat buses and Tk 0.75 for minibuses.

Two types of bus service, known as seating service and local service, are now operating in the city. Several seating services have now

raised the fare on the pretext of fuel price hike and the new rate is now almost double the rate charged by the local service.

But the transport owners claimed that they are not charging higher than the rate fixed by the government.

M Abdul Hamid Sharif, convenor of the Urban Transport Companies Association of Bangladesh, said, "The bus operators are not taking extra fare, they have only adjusted the fare according to the government decision."

A total of 1800 buses, including 180 CNG-run and 1620 diesel-run vehicles, are plying 34 routes in the city under the association, he said.

The government committee on the transport fare, headed by the then Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) Chairman Farruk Ahmed, was formed by the communications ministry on June 8.

Dr MA Momen, the new chairman, said he is now looking into the

matter. "The date of submitting the report has already been extended till July 8," he added.

The other members of the committee included representatives from the Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity, Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners' Association and other related bodies.

Saiful Alam, general secretary of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity, said the committee members will take into consideration the price variation of the petroleum products, vehicle's model, distance and many other factors while refixing the fare.

He also said the committee would sit soon to take a decision on revising the bus fare.

Saiful also claimed that no Samity members operating buses on inter-district routes are taking extra fare.



PHOTO: STAR Winners of Fair and Lovely Foundation scholarship pose for photograph with Education Minister Dr Osman Farruk at the Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday. Fair and Lovely Foundation is a social initiative of Unilever Bangladesh.

1,400 docs to be recruited at UZs

PM tells Parliament

UNB, Dhaka

Recruitment of 1,400 more physicians for upazila health complexes is now under process to ensure medicare to the people at the grass-roots level, Prime Minister Khaleda

Zia told Parliament yesterday. Already over 3,000 physicians have been appointed by the present government, she said during the PM's question-answer session.

The Prime Minister informed the House that 3,176 posts of medical

officers and 3,176 of health assistants have been created at the union level to reach health services at the doorsteps of the ordinary people.

Replying to a supplementary from Mojibur Rahman (Jatiya Party), she said that as the recruitment of physicians is processed through the Public Service Commission (PSC), it takes some time for the appointments.

Khaleda said that her government is upgrading 31-bed hospitals to 50 beds while the 50-bed hospitals to 100 beds.

The 31-bed upazila health complexes in 60 upazilas have been upgraded to 50 beds while such upgradation is underway in 71 more upazilas, she told the House.

The Prime Minister said 2,000 nurses and 3,000 health assistants have been given appointments and the creation of 2,000 more posts for staff nurses is under consideration of the government.

Replying to another supplementary of Shamsul Alam Pramanik (BNP), she said trauma centres beside the highways across the country would be set up gradually for urgent treatment of the people injured in road accidents.

Out of the five trauma centres, the trauma centres in Sirajganj and Bhaluka in Mymensingh have been completed while the project in Feni and Bhanga upazila in Faridpur are nearing completion. The trauma centre in Daudkandi upazila in Comilla is under construction.

Listing the government's steps and achievements in the health sector, Khaleda said the government has set it as one of the major targets to reach the basic facilities of health services to the common people as well as to improve their health and nutrition status.

Knee, hip joints replacement operations at DMCH from Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Surgeons at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) will perform knee and hip joints replacement operations on regular basis from Sunday next.

This would benefit at least 300 elderly people who commonly suffer arthritis or painful friction between two bone surfaces, and travel abroad every month for hip or knee joint replacement surgeries at no less than Tk 4 lakh per surgery if performed in India.

An estimate shows that 5 to 10 percent of the population aged 50 years and above suffer from various degrees of arthritis, and most of whom require total hip and knee joint replacement surgeries.

Surgeons concerned including Dr Idris Ali, Dr Shamsuzzaman, Dr Iqbal and Dr Fazlur Rahman have already received extensive training on the complex surgeries and with the latest operating instruments from the UK they will perform the surgeries at the orthopaedic department of DMCH.

"My aim is to transfer the technology to our junior doctors who would be able to perform the surgeries at home at much cheaper rates and reduce dependence on foreign doctors," said Prof M Amjad Hossain, head of orthopaedic department.

In the knee joint replacement surgery, the bones of the knee are resurfaced with metal and plastic implants. The bones of the knee are realigned so that the weight that passes through the knee is equally distributed.

Similarly, in the total hip replacement surgery, the cartilage of the hip joint is replaced with a metal and plastic implant.

According to the surgeons, each implant for hip would cost Tk 60,000 while each knee implant would cost Tk 1,20,000.

No extra cost is involved except a few medicines and other accessories that are regularly required after the surgeries.

Patients who are interested in the surgeries are requested to register their names at Ward 24 in DMCH by this Sunday.

Journalist Zahur passes away

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Veteran journalist Mohammad Zahurul Islam popularly known as Zahur Bhai passed away due to old age complications in the city yesterday at the age of 65.

He is survived by his wife, two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Before joining the Bangladesh Observer as Senior reporter, he worked for now defunct Eastern News Agency (ENA) and the daily News Day.

His body was taken to his village home at Noakhali for burial. Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina condoled the death of Zahurul Islam.

She prayed for salvation of the departed soul and conveyed her deep sympathy to the members of bereaved family.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist, Dhaka Union of Journalist, Jatiya Press Club, Dhaka Reporters Unity also condoled the death.

M Sirajul Haq

M Sirajul Haq, former chief librarian of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), died of brain hemorrhage yesterday at the age of 72, says a press release.

He was hailed from village Gobordhon Boro Bari under Gouranadi upazila of Barisal district. He was also a library affairs advisor in International Labour Organisation (ILO).



Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Temporary light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by gusty wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also expected at places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions, Met Office said.

Day temperature may rise by 1-2 degree celsius over the country, it added.

Highest temperature 34.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Dinajpur and lowest 24.5 degree Celsius at Dhaka, Patuakhali and Bhola.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:50pm today and rises at 5:17am 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	33.0	24.5	79	63
Chittagong	32.0	25.8	83	80
Rajshahi	33.8	25.7	80	67
Khulna	33.0	25.5	90	79
Barisal	32.8	24.6	86	78
Sylhet	33.0	25.5	97	67
Cox's Bazar	30.2	25.0	83	83