



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina consoles the wife of a victim of Habiganj grenade attack and gives financial assistance to her in the city yesterday.

Cancel contracts with foreign oil companies

Speakers demand at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All contracts with foreign oil companies including the Niko-Bapex Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) must be cancelled, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They also demanded that all the information about the country's mineral resources should be discussed in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The roundtable on 'Tengratila Blowouts and Oil-Gas Resources of Bangladesh', was jointly organised by Saptahik 2000 and Action Aid Bangladesh at the National Press Club in the city.

Chaired by Action Aid Bangladesh Country Director Nasrin Huq, the roundtable was moderated by Bangladesh Economic Association President Kazi Kholiuzzaman.

Speakers at the roundtable blamed the government for awarding unexplored Chhatag gas field in the name of marginal gas field to Canadian Oil Company Niko Resources through an unsolicited JVA undermining the national interest.

They said the ministers and government officials responsible for the mishaps including Niko must be brought to trial.

The speakers said the government should formulate a long-term energy policy upholding public interest and checking theft of the natural resources with the collaboration of politicians and bureaucrats.

They suggested awarding of contracts to local gas companies for the exploration and development of the gas fields.

Ruling party lawmaker Sakhawat Hossain Bokul said the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Niko was signed during AL government in 2001, and the present government is just continuing it.

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said the BNP government could cancel the MoU with Niko as it cancelled many other projects of AL government.

"Niko should be kicked out immediately, and all other PSCs with the foreign companies should be cancelled," he demanded.

AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta said, "All persons including Khaleda Zia, ministers and officials involved in signing the agreement must be sued."

AL lawmaker Faruk Khan alleged that the allocation in the gas sector is too little to build up expertise necessary for a national gas and oil exploring company like Bapex.

"Politicians and the bureaucrats are destroying the national companies in a bid to make their own profits through unsolicited contracts with the foreign companies," said Prof Anu Muhammad of Dhaka University (DU).

Contract with the foreign companies either in the form of PSCs or JVA has a link with black money, he

said, adding, "This is the reason for which the government was so interested in extending the provision of whitening the black money."

Dr Hossain Monsur, chairman of geology department of DU, regretted that the blowouts of gas wells were not discussed in parliament although these have caused massive public tension and damaged local ecology.

Presenting the keynote paper, Prof Badrul Imam of the department said all information about the relief well that the Niko is going to drill on July 25 should be made public and ensure that the countrymen do not see any more blowouts.

Faruk Khan, who recently visited Tengratila, feared that the relief well that is going to be drilled, is only 100 meters away from the present relief well, and has the possibility of further blowouts.

Hunger Project Executive Director Badiul Alam Majumder alleged that the government is barring the locals from staging agitation and rallies at Tengratila by the army and the BDR. Two locals were arrested for leading rallies, he added.

Justice Golam Rabbani, Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, Engineer Amanul Islam Khan, Prof Shamsul Alam, Prof Asif Nazrul, BNP MP Syed Moazzem Hossain, Advocate Abed Raza, Advocate Salimullah Khan, Journalist Golam Mortoza also spoke on the occasion.

Alleged 'drug queen' shot dead in city

Tea stall worker dies after receiving a blow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman and a tea stall worker were killed in two separate incidents in the city yesterday.

A gang of assailants gunned down Nazma Akhter Kakoli, 35, at Kafrul in the early morning.

Her family members said accomplices of Shamim, a local hoodlum, killed Kakoli as she refused to pay them tolls.

But police said Kakoli was known as a 'drug queen' and a feud over drug peddling might lead to the killing.

Witnesses said two youths, Hridoy and Azad, shot Kakoli in her chest at point-blank range at about 7:00am when she just came out of her house at Natun Bazar at Section-13 in Kafrul to take her daughter to her school.

"As soon as Kakoli collapsed on the road, I came out of the house and found her lying in a pool of blood," said her brother Liton.

She was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared her dead.

Her father Nurul Islam said the armed cadres of 'Shamim group'

have been demanding tolls from his daughter after she bought a house at Muktijoddha Palli in Kafrul a year ago but her refusal to pay toll made them angry.

On the other hand, the duty officer of Kafrul Police Station said Kakoli was a drug trafficker and arrested with heroin a few months ago.

Other sources said one Manik, who was once a partner of Kakoli in the drug trade might have a hand in the killing as relations between them have deteriorated recently.

In the other incident at New Market, the tea stall worker died after he received a blow from a staff of a shop at about 11:30am over trifling matters.

The dead was identified as Sheikh Alam, 18.

Sujan, an employee of Leather Mahal, was locked into an altercation with Alam and punched him, saying that he did not add enough sugar to his cup of tea.

Receiving the blow, Alam lost his unconscious. He was rushed to the DMCH but the doctors declared him dead.

Police said Sujan went into hiding after the incident.

JANAPROTIBEDAN LAUNCHED 'Raise awareness to protect environment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Raising awareness is a must to protect the environment in the country, speakers at the launching ceremony of a study report said on

HC stays order on erection of 8-storeys at Gulshan, Uttara

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday stayed a government notification permitting the owners of the land plots at Gulshan and Uttara residential areas in Dhaka to construct eight-storey commercial buildings.

The High Court bench of Justice MA Matin and Justice Mamnoon Rahman heard the writ petition filed as public interest litigation by Shirin Shila, a plot owner of Gulshan, challenging the validity of the government notification.

The bench also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the notification should not be declared illegal.

The stay order will remain effective until the rule is disposed of.

The Ministry of Housing and Public Works on September 20 last year issued a notification permitting the landowners of Gulshan and Uttara to construct eight-storey commercial buildings.

The petitioner submitted that the concept of the residential township would be all but destroyed if eight-storey commercial buildings were erected in Gulshan and Uttara residential areas.

Dr M Zahir moved for the petitioner in the court, while Deputy Attorney General Adilur Rahman stood for the government.

Saturday.

Published by the Unnayan Shamannay, the study report titled 'Janaprotibedan 2002-2003: Bangladesher Poribesh' was launched at the National Press Club in the city. It is the Bengali version of the 'People's Report 2002-2003: Environment of Bangladesh'.

Noted economist Dr Atiur Rahman, M Ashraf Ali, Farook Chowdhury and Mahboob Chowdhury edited the book.

The report, published with the support of Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP) under the Department of Environment and UNDP, highlighted the problems of urban areas, specially Dhaka city, and suggested ways to solve those.

According to the report, people have identified several major environmental problems -- bad smell in the air due to flaws in waste management, deforestation, lack of safe water, lack of navigability of the rivers, waterlogging and pollution due to smoke.

The people also suggested some remedial measures such as private-public partnership, usage of alternative source of water and fuel and fish cultivation in open lake, the report said.

Unveiled the cover of the book, Environment Secretary Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury said, "It is not possible to tackle degradation of the environment immediately as the workforce in the ministry is inadequate. Mass awareness can play an important role in protecting the environment."

Director of Unnayan Shamannay Naeem Hasan moderated the programme. Chairman of Unnayan Shamannay Dr Atiur Rahman, Assistant Resident Representative of UNDP Shireen Kamal Sayeed, Environmental scientist and photographer Noazesh Ahmed and Programme Coordinator of PMU-SEMP Babar Kabir also spoke.

Mugging on rise in Ctg city

BDNEWS, Chittagong

The incidents of mugging and snatching are common in the port city as 10 to 15 such incidents take place every day.

In addition to robbery, some nine to 10 well-organised gangs comprising nearly 150 criminals are active in mugging and snatching in the city.

At least 50 auto-rickshaw drivers are involved with criminal acts particularly snatching and mugging in the port city, according to a police source. The information was found through investigation and from confessional statements of the arrested top criminals.

Police stations in the city have no actual record of snatching incidents, as most of the victims do not go to police.

Women have already stopped wearing ornaments while going out. Rickshaw passengers, mostly women, are vulnerable to snatching.

Snatching incidents are also common in the buses and human haulers in which the snatchers travel and rob passengers whenever they get a chance.

None is safe from the muggers as patrol police remain inactive and do not help the victims.

Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) staff quarters from Oli Khan Mosque and its east gate had virtually turned into a safe haven for the muggers.

Doctors and relations of the patients lose their belongings as they frequently fell victim to mugging.

The latest incident of snatching took place on June 28 when muggers intercepted Professor Dr Prabhata Chandra Barua, head of the Community Medicine department of CMCH. The snatchers took away his cell phone, cash and wallet on his way to quarters adjacent to CMCH Principal's residence.

According to city residents, outer stadium, MM Ali Road, Chattershwari Road, Ashkar Dighirpar, Jamal Khan, Sirajudaulah Road, Gani Bakery square, Prabartak crossing, CRB Road, Surson Road, Wasa crossing, Mimi Super Market Road, Love Lane, Kata Pahar, Badamtali crossing, Lalkhan Bazaar and Cheragi Pahar crossing are the most vulnerable spots for mugging.



Prof Muzaffar Ahmed speaks at a roundtable on 'Good governance, Sangsad, Democracy: Problems and Prospects' at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday. The Prothom Alo organised the event.

Majority of newborns dies for lack of treatment facilities

NAIMUL HAQ

On June 6 Pinky gave birth to a male baby at her house in Narayanganj. As the baby appeared pale and had breathing difficulties, relatives rushed the newborn to a nearby private clinic called Life General Hospital.

But the clinic had no facilities to provide life support to a baby at such high-risk. The parents, determined to save their baby, rushed to several hospitals throughout the night. At each, however, they encountered the same disturbing conclusion: no one could help them.

The baby, meanwhile, was in grave danger. It had been exposed to wind, fluctuating temperatures and dust, the most common factors that can instantly kill a newborn.

Finally, the couple landed at Dr Salahuddin Hospital in Dhanmondi, where the baby was immediately put in intensive care with a ventilator to enable breathing. It was a close call, doctors said.

"If the baby arrived ten minutes later he would probably have died. In fact, the infant may have already suffered damages to his brain and lungs," commented Dr Salahuddin, a pioneer in neonatal intensive care, or treatment for newborns born at risk.

Pinky's baby is lucky to have survived. But everyday the majority of babies born with a low birth weight and breathing difficulties die simply because there is not enough trained manpower and available equipment to support them.

Proper treatment of at risk babies can mean the difference between life and death. "The first ten minutes after birth of a baby is the most crucial period that calls for close supervision," described Dr Salahuddin, who has 22 years of experience in neonatal care and now runs the largest complete neonatal unit in the country.

He added, "The most common reason why newborns born to high risk pregnancies face life threat or suffer and live with disabilities is after delivery the baby is not attended by a pediatrician, which is pre-requisite for every delivery. The second most common reason why babies face risks is that delivery wards are not attached with a neonatal unit."

Despite such urgency, there is no complete neonatal intensive care unit in any public hospital in the country. Instead, limited neonatal units are

scattered throughout public and semi-government organisations, or available only in private hospitals.

When contacted, the Director General of Health Services, Dr Abdur Rahman Khan, said, "It is true that [intensive] healthcare for newborns is very scanty at government hospitals. In fact, the country has no recognised neonatologists or separate wards for the newborns."

Meanwhile, the total number of incubators and ventilators, the most essential devices required during emergency for newborns, are 47 and 20 respectively, all of them located in the capital.

Experts said this deficiency is a major factor behind the country's infant mortality rate (IMR), 42 deaths for every 1000 live births, considered one of the highest in the world.

Efforts to address the problem appear to be lacking. The government's Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), a healthcare vision for 2010, lacks a specific plan to address the high infant mortality rate, except for preventive measures.

Even United Nations agencies like Unicef and Unfpa, which have commit-

ted to provide technical support to reduce infant mortality, have no separate programmes for proving neonatal intensive care at public hospitals.

A concerned Unfpa official, Dr Jebunnessa, acknowledged the problem, and said, "Babies who face life risk are referred from all 64 Mother and Child Welfare Centres (MCWC) that we are supporting as part of Unfpa's technical assistance." Nonetheless, such babies must be referred to government hospitals, where the care they need is lacking.

The situation is likely to persist. As of now, there are no graduate neonatologists or newborn care specialists. Only a few such experts are in the pipeline, currently undertaking academic courses at Banghabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and BIRDEM.

Advanced neonatal care facilities exist largely in the capital, in a dozen or so private clinics and public or semi-government institutions.



Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday signed the condolence book at the residence of British High Commissioner in Dhaka while LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury look on.

EXPLOSION CASE Galib denied bail, trial from Aug 30

UNB, Bogra

The Court of Additional District and Sessions Judge yesterday rejected bail to Dr Asadullah Al Galib and set August 30 for beginning of trial against him in an explosion case.

Police had earlier pressed charges against Galib and two others for a blast at a cultural function on Laksmikola Primary School premises on January 18.

Head of Rajshahi University Arabic department and leader of Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh, Galib was arrested in February in connection with a series of explosions. He faces trial in at least seven cases.

Mobile phone sets worth Tk 1cr seized in Sylhet airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet


Mobile phone sets worth around one crore taka were seized at MAG Osmani International Airport in Sylhet yesterday.

Acting on a tip off, the customs officials checked two unaccompanied baggage brought in an Airbus flight of London-Dubai-Dhaka that landed at Osmani airport at 11:15am, and found the goods.

These included 2358 pieces of Nokia mobile sets, 400 pieces of battery and 400 pieces of casings, official sources said.

None could be nabbed in this connection.

Customs officials at Osmani International Airport also seized mobile phone sets worth about one crore taka on June 9.



WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Chittagong divisions and a few places across the country till 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may fall slightly over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 33.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 24.0 degree Celsius at Comilla.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:49pm and rises at 5:19am.

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	30.4	26.8	85	75
Chittagong	32.5	26.0	83	76
Rajshahi	33.5	27.0	75	95
Khulna	31.8	25.9	97	93
Barisal	32.2	25.5	92	86
Sylhet	27.8	26.0	79	95
Cox's Bazar	31.0	25.6	95	90



Margaret Beckett MP, UK Secretary of State for Environment, attended G8+International Legislators Climate Change Forum held on July 2-4. Hasna J Moudud, advisor of Globe Bangladesh, is also seen.