

Coal policy likely to be finalised next month

UNB, Dhaka

The proposed coal policy is likely to be finalised next month as the energy ministry has expedited its move to get it ready.

Official sources said the energy ministry will sit with the country's energy experts next week to accommodate their views on the proposed coal policy.

The country's energy professionals, academicians and experts will be invited to attend the workshop to be organised by the energy ministry in the first week of the next month.

About a year back, during the reign of the immediate past BNP-led four-party alliance government,

the ministry drafted a coal policy and sent it to the Cabinet for approval.

But the then Cabinet sent it back to the ministry for further review and to accommodate more views of experts in the policy so that it could protect the country's interest more, the officials said.

Accordingly, the ministry reviewed the proposed policy and sought opinions of some experts of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

But, in the meantime, the energy ministry's move lost its pace and the whole process got stalled.

The energy ministry's initiative

got momentum when the present caretaker government took over as the Chief Adviser's Office (CAO) took special interest in it.

Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury also hinted recently that his ministry was planning to finalise the coal policy by May.

He said the caretaker government was giving special emphasis on the coal policy to move for developing the country's coal sector, which could be an alternative energy sector to meet the growing demand for energy.

He also said the government would sign an agreement with interested investors in the coal sector after having the coal policy ready.

Dissemination seminar on 'Serve the Essentials' held

Oxfam GB, Development Wheel (DEW) and the Department of Sociology, Rajshahi University jointly organised a dissemination seminar on the report 'Serve the Essentials' at the Darbar Hall in Rajshahi on Thursday, says a press release.

Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Anisuddin Monzur inaugurated the seminar as the chief guest while Prof Hasan Azizul Huq and Principal of Rajshahi Medical College Prof Dr Md Fazlur Rahman were present as special guests.

Programme Manager, Oxfam GB Farid Hasan Ahmed presented the overview of the report while the scenario of essential services in Rajshahi division was presented by Prof Mijanuddin of Sociology department of Rajshahi University.

Anisuddin in his speech stated the recent improvement in essential services apart from discussing the poor scenario of essential services in the northern part of the country.

He urged the deputy commissioners and other service provider institutions to extend their all out support to boost up the existing situation of essential services. He also stressed the need of proper and sensible utilisation of existing resources.

An open discussion was also held where university teachers, government and non-government officials participated and discussed the condition of essential services specially health and education in the South Asia. Civil society members and media personalities also participated in the seminar.

Doctors carry out first 'no-scar surgery' to remove gallbladder

AFP, Paris

Doctors in eastern France said Thursday they had carried out the world's first 'no-scar' surgery, using hi-tech instruments to remove the gallbladder of a 30-year-old patient via her vagina.

The operation breaks new ground in minimally invasive surgery, a technique designed to boost post-operative recovery and avoid the emotional impact of scars, lead doctor Jacques Marescaux told AFP.

His team used a long, flexible tube, called an endoscope, that was equipped with a tiny video camera and minute instruments for snipping tissue and clipping blood vessels. The endoscope, guided by the surgeons via a computer screen, was introduced into the abdominal cavity through an incision in the vaginal wall.

The only "invasion" to the abdomen was a 2mm needle, also equipped with a camera, which provided a second view of the operation and also pumped a harmless gas to inflate the abdominal cavity and thus create a space for the endoscope head to work.

The surgery, carried out at Strasbourg University Hospitals on April 2, was baptised "Operation Anubis," a god in Egyptian mythology. Anubis restored life through mummification, using long, flexible instruments.

The operation is the culmination of a three-year, 7.2-million-euro (9.5-million-dollar) research project, Marescaux said.



Prof Anwar Hossain Prof Shariful Alam

Prof Anwar, Prof Alam new AUST VC, treasurer

Prof M Anwar Hossain and Prof Kazi Shariful Alam have been appointed as vice-chancellor and treasurer of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), sponsored by Dhaka Ahsania Mission, says a press release.

Prof Hossain served Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) for 25 years where he was also the dean of Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. He also served Mosul University in Iraq and Islamic University of Technology previously. He is also the founder director of Centre for Energy Studies.

Prof Kazi Shariful Alam has been serving the Department of Marketing of Dhaka University in different teaching capacities for the last 30 years. He is the president of Bangladesh Marketing Society and Marketing Alumni Association of Dhaka University. He has conducted a number of research works for various government and non-government organisations.



Three girls place wreaths at the grave of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque on Dhaka University campus yesterday on the occasion of his 45th death anniversary.

Tributes paid to Sher-e-Bangla

BSS, Dhaka

The 45th death anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque was observed in the capital and elsewhere of the country in a befitting manner yesterday.

Different political and socio-cultural organisations observed the day with various programmes that included placing of wreaths at the mazar of the great leader, doa mahfil and discussions.

Leaders of Sher-e-Bangla National Memorial Council placed wreaths at the mazar of Sher-e-Bangla in the morning.

The Council also organised a discussion at its office. Freedom Fighter AH Alamgir and General Secretary of the Memorial Council Poet Muhammad Mujib Samad addressed the discussion with President of the Council Poet Muhammad Abdul Khalek in the chair.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed gave separate messages on the occasion paying rich tributes to the memory of Sher-e-Bangla.

In his message, the president said the nation recalls with profound respect the glorious contributions of Sher-e-Bangla to the socio-economic development of the peasantry and the working class.

Dr Fakhruddin described Sher-e-Bangla as a bright star in the history of politics in the subcontinent and recalled his courageous role in the movement against the British colonial rule.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina also gave separate messages on the occasion, recalling immense contributions of the great leader to the cause of marginal farmers and poor people.

They also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

BBC Bangladesh Sanglap today

The 28th edition of BBC Bangladesh Sanglap will be held at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city at 5:45pm today, says a press release.

Adviser to the BNP Chairperson Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah, Awami League Publicity Secretary Asaduzzaman Noor, Prof Ataur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Political Science Association, and Prof Sadeka Halim of Sociology Department of Dhaka University will feature this week's Sanglap panel.

Masud Hasan Khan of BBC Bangla Service will moderate the Sanglap jointly organised by BBC World Service Trust and BBC Bangla Service.

The Sanglap will be aired on BBC Bangla Radio at 7:30pm tomorrow and on Channel i at 8:00pm on Monday.

Appeal for help

Parents of Mariam Aktar, a class nine student of Khilgaon Ali Ahmed High School, have sought financial assistance for treatment of their daughter, who has been suffering from spinal cord disorder, says a press release.

Mariam, a 15-year old girl, had suffered from typhoid when she was only four. And since then her spinal cord has been curving.

Doctors suggested taking her abroad, as its treatment is not available in Bangladesh and following the suggestion they took their daughter to the Christian Medical College Hospital in India where the doctors said that she needs immediate operation.

Her life would be in danger if the operation is not done within two months, according to the doctors.

But it is not possible for poor parents to afford the cost, as it requires Tk 6 lakh.

In this situation, Mariam's parents have made an earnest appeal to generous people to extend a helping hand to save her life.

Contributions may be sent to Jahanara Begum, savings account no. 11814, Sonali Bank, Khilgaon Taltola Branch, Dhaka.

Obituary

UNB, Khulna

Prof Abu Hanif Fakir of Shaheed Suhrawardi College died of cancer at his Balughat residence in the city yesterday at the age of 58.

He is survived by his wife, a son and three daughters.

Death anniversary

Today is the 27th death anniversary of Nikunju Lal Shaha, father of Biresch Chandra Shaha, general secretary of Bangladesh

Puja Ujjapan Parishad, says a press release.

On the occasion, a religious programme will be held at his residence for the salvation of the departed soul.



A billboard at Khilgaon in the city collapses during Thursday night's nor'wester. The picture was taken yesterday.

Drugs cause addiction by 'remodelling' brain: Study

AFP, Paris

A heroin addict aching for a fix years after kicking the habit is not simply weak-willed but may be tormented by enduring changes in the brain caused by the drug itself, according to a groundbreaking study released Wednesday.

In experiments carried out on rats, a team of American researchers at Brown University in Rhode Island showed that even a single dose of morphine physically altered the neural pathways that regulate the sensation of craving.

The change persisted long after the effects of the drug had worn off.

The study, published in the British journal Nature, adds weight to a new theory that sees addiction as a disease which "remodels" brain mechanisms related to learning and memory, the lead author, cellular physiologist Julie Kauer, said in an interview.

The findings also point the way to the tantalizing possibility of a pharmaceutical antidote to addiction, she added.

Kauer's experiments focused on the activity of synapses, the connective junction between brain cells.

So-called excitatory synapses increase the flow of chemicals -- such as dopamine, associated with a feeling of euphoria -- while inhibitory synapses impede such flows.

"You have to have both, because they create checks and balances on the system," she explained.

Previous studies have shown that excitatory synapses are strongly linked to building one's capacity for memory, and that -- just like muscles in the body -- they grow stronger over time with increased activity.

This is a virtuous circle when it comes to learning because the release of small amounts of dopamine creates the incentive to learn more. It also helps hone basic survival instincts.

But the same mechanism

becomes a dangerous magnet for abuse when certain drugs such as heroin and cocaine provoke a similar response.

"If you have ever been really, really thirsty, that same craving may be the same thing that is going on in the brain of someone who is addicted to a drug," Kauer said.

In this context, she added, "addiction is a form of pathological learning" in which the brain has created a rewards system for something that is harmful to the body.

"I would not call it damage -- the circuit is working the way it should.

But it has been remodelled in a maladaptive way," said Kauer.

The Nature study breaks new ground in two areas. It presents the strongest evidence to date that inhibitory synapses are also capable of "long-term potentiation", or LTP, the ability to strengthen and change over time.

And it showed that morphine, an opiate, continued to block LTP long after the drug was absent from the animal's system.



Students who were accorded reception pose with guests, including Brigadier General Nizam Ahmed PSC at a ceremony at Shaheed Anwar Girls College in the city on Thursday.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 34.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Khulna and the lowest of 20.1 degrees at Chandpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:26pm today and rises at 5:26am tomorrow.

The 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	29.9	20.8	76	72
Chittagong	33.8	26.8	76	70
Rajshahi	31.0	23.1	76	72
Khulna	34.5	25.9	75	81
Barisal	33.2	27.0	73	90
Sylhet	28.2	20.3	91	67
Cox's Bazar	33.0	24.3	66	69

BCL leader arrested in Jhenidah

UNB, Jhenidah

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader from his residence at Adarshapara in the district town yesterday afternoon.

A team of Rab-6 arrested Atiqul Hasan Masum, general secretary of district BCL, during a raid on his house at about 4:30pm.

Masum is an accused in a number of cases, including murder case, Rab said.

He is now being interrogated at local Rab office.

Scientists find new diabetes genetic risk factors

AFP, Washington

US and Finnish scientists have identified four new specific genetic variations linked to an increased risk of diabetes in adults, according to a report published Thursday in the United States.

"This achievement represents a major milestone in our battle against diabetes," said Elias Zerhouni, director of the US Federal National Institutes of Health in a summary of the study, which was due to be published yesterday in the journal Science.

"It will accelerate efforts to understand the genetic risk factors for this disease, as well as explore how these genetic factors interact with each other and with lifestyle factors."

Diabetics suffer from a deficiency of insulin, the hormone that helps process sugar in the blood. It can lead to heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and other illnesses as well as blindness.

Obesity and poor diet are seen as major causes of the disease, which has struck rich countries on a massive scale in the past 20 years. Some 21 million Americans are estimated to suffer from so-called Type 2 diabetes, and more than 200 million people worldwide, the summary report said.

A family history of the disease -- a link to the parental genes -- is also a factor.

Another doctor involved in the study, Griffin Rodgers, said in the report that the findings may help in developing new drugs for preventing or treating Type 2 diabetes.

Research such as this latest study by the joint US-Finnish team based on tests carried out on Finnish subjects, "is opening the door to the era of personalized medicine," said Zerhouni.

It brings to 10 the number of specific genetic patterns to be linked to a risk of diabetes.

"Our current one-size-fits-all approach will soon give way to more individualized strategies based on each person's unique genetic make-up," Zerhouni said.

Meanwhile, researchers in Iceland said they had found a diabetes-linked variant in a gene called CDKAL1, according to their paper, published on Thursday in the journal Nature Genetics.



UNESCO launched the EFA (Education for All) Global Monitoring Report 2007 at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city recently as part of Global Action Week (GAW) 2007. The picture shows UNESCO Representative in Bangladesh Malama Meleisea, right, and Secretary to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Mosharrar Hossain, left, holding copies of the report at the launching ceremony. Director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) Rasheda K Chowdhury is also seen.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar
Department of Linguistics, University of Dhaka organises a seminar on 'Contemporary semiotics'. Venue: Room No 3028, Arts Building. Time: 1:00pm.

Roundtable
Campaign on Citizens' Right to Information organises a roundtable on 'Information rights to contain corruption'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Report launch
The report of a survey conducted among truck drivers, rickshawpullers and day labourers will be disseminated. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:15pm.

Shouhardo Dibosh
The inaugural ceremony of CARE Bangladesh Shouhardo Dibosh will be held. Venue: Osmani Memorial Hall. Time: 9:00am.

Art exhibition
The inaugural ceremony of month-long art exhibition will be held. Venue: Saju Art Gallery, DCC North Gulshan Super

Market Time: 5:30pm. The exhibition will run till May 29 from 9:00am to 7:00pm everyday.

Album launch
The launching ceremony of 'Abdus Samad Azad Memorial Album' will be held to mark the second death anniversary of the former foreign minister. Venue: ICMAB auditorium. Time: 6:30pm.

Kite exhibition
Dhakabashi and Bangladesh Kite Federation will jointly organise the second kite exhibition of the Asian countries. Venue: National Museum. Time: 4:00pm.

Roundtable
Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) organises a roundtable titled 'Reviewing the Family Courts Ordinance 1985'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

Rotary Dhaka Central
The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm.