

Exempt physically challenged people from tax

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called on the government to exempt the people with disabilities from tax up to a certain limit and reduce bank loan interest rates for them to ensure their empowerment.

The Action on Disability and Development (ADD) organised the roundtable titled 'Towards disability inclusive national budget' at Cirdap auditorium in the city in association with the European Union and Manusher Jonno Foundation.

Speaking at the programme, Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), stressed the need to reduce import duty on equipment used by physically challenged persons.

He also called for more investment in the education sector and training on developing livelihood

skills. "Once the people with disability become empowered, there will be no need for funds for them."

Presenting the keynote paper, Dr Atiur Rahman showed how poverty causes disability.

According to his paper, physically challenged persons account for 4.2 percent of the people in urban areas while the figure is six or seven percent in rural and char areas.

Dr Atiur Rahman suggested awarding scholarship to students with disabilities up to graduation level and allocating 10 percent of the education budget for their education.

Former finance adviser to the caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan laid emphasis on monitoring whether the funds for the physically challenged people are being utilised properly.

He also said that in the absence of a parliament, the caretaker gov-

ernment should hold consultation meetings with the people on the budget.

Dr M Asaduzzaman, research director of BIDS, observed that the country needs a comprehensive data on the number of people with disabilities and issues causing disability.

Former lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor said the nation needs a pro-poor government who will bring the underprivileged and vulnerable group to the mainstream of development.

Md Abu Yusuf, assistant professor of development studies, Dhaka University, Khandaker Shakhawat Ali, research fellow, PPRC, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, country director, Hunger project, and Dr Quazi Shahabuddin, director general of BIDS, also spoke at the roundtable chaired by ADD Bangladesh country representative Mosharrar Hossain.

Falling iron railing kills minor girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A minor girl died after an iron railing collapsed on her at Eskaton Garden road in the city yesterday morning.

The iron railing enclosing the front-orchard of a four-story building at Nurabad Colony on Eskaton Garden Road collapsed on one and a half years old Sumaiya Akter Shova at 8:00am while she was waiting beside the railing for her grandmother, sweeper of the colony. Her grandmother went to buy Shova banana and bread as her breakfast.

Like other days, Saleha Begum, grandmother of Shova, went to work with Shova in the early morning.

"As I saw the railing falling down on Shova, I ran madly to rescue her but in vain," said a wailing Saleha Begum.

Shova died on her way to Dhaka Medical College. She was buried at Azimpur graveyard in the afternoon.

"Following assurance by the colony authorities that they will be looking into the incident, we did not file any case and buried the body without conducting any autopsy," said Abdul Khaleque, father of Shova.

The rickety iron fence of the orchard had been unsteady for the last several years with no more initiatives from the house owner to fix or remove the railing. The railing was years' old while it was kept upright with the help of several pillars made up weakly. The broken down railing, however, vanished from the scene soon after the death of Shova.

Police sources said that an unnatural death (UD) case under section no 174 could be filed regarding such types of incidents. No punishment could be awarded in the case as it is considered as an accident. Had the autopsy report suggested something fishy, the UD case might have been turned into a murder case, police sources added.

ALI MURDER CASE

Family members get death threats from suspects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members of slain plastic trader Mohammad Ali of Islambagh in Old Dhaka are passing their days in grave insecurity as some associates and relatives of prime suspect of the case are now threatening to kill them if they proceed further.

"They threatened that the streets in Islambagh would be flooded with blood of my two sons-in-law who are handling the case," Rawshan Ara Begum, mother of the murdered, told a press conference at Crime Reporters' Association, Bangladesh in the city yesterday.

More than 50 residents of the locality were also present at the press conference who demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the prime suspect Mohammad Arif and his accomplices and relatives who are now issuing death threats to Ali's family members.

Rawshan Ara urged the caretaker government to ensure safety of her family members and demanded capital punishment of the killers of her son, who was shot dead at Islambagh on the night of April 25.

"Almost every night some unidentified men throw bricks, stones and iron rods to our house while one of Arif's sisters is threatening us openly," she added.

"Police has turned a blind eye to the case. They are yet to arrest Arif, also accused in several murder and arms cases," said Ali's sister Mantaj.

"They failed to extract any information about the murder although after three other accused in the case were arrested earlier," she added.

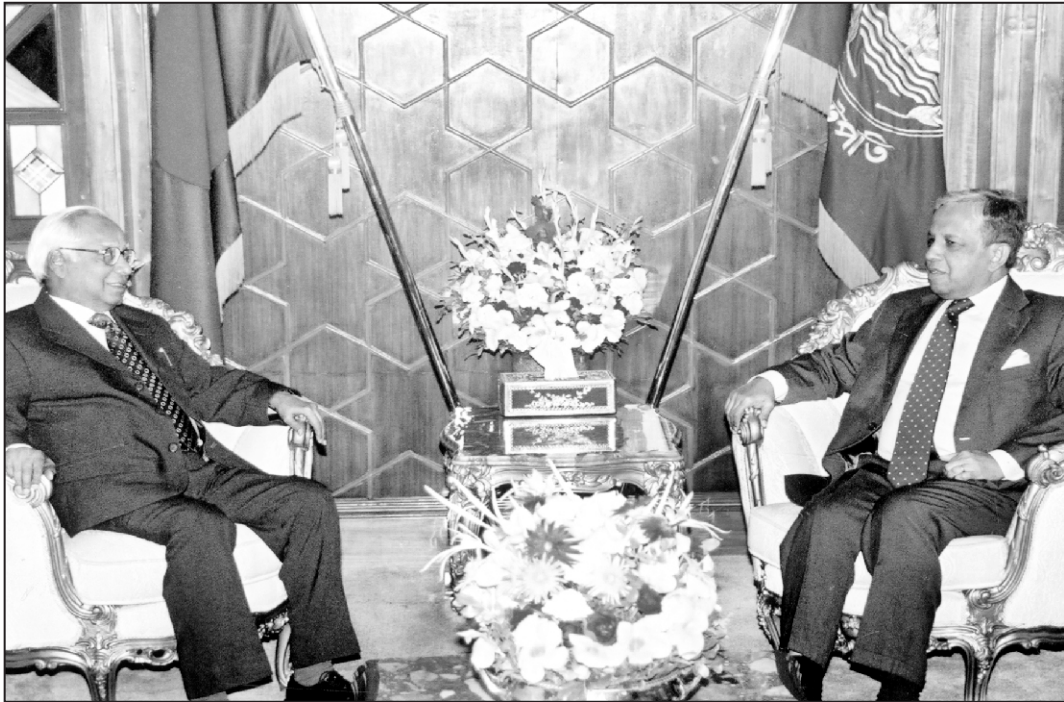
Arif, son of one Suruj Miah at Etwalaghat in Islambagh, allegedly shot Mohammad Ali dead nine hours after threatening to kill Ali for refusing to take power connections from the electric transformers he controls.

Arif was earlier arrested from his house with a cache of arms on February 2, 1995, but was released later, police said.

Woman killed in road crash

Amena Begum, mother of Ruhul Gani Jyoti, a senior reporter of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), was killed in a road accident at Barabari in Lalmonirhat on Tuesday at the age of 72, says a press release.

Dhaka Reporter Unity (DRU) President Alamgir Hossain and General Secretary Shahed Chowdhury expressed deep shock at her death. They prayed for salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed calls on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

BTTB introduces computerised ledger system

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) yesterday introduced computerised ledger management system for the convenience of its subscribers, says a press release.

The system will be effective with the circulation of bills of April, 2007 and all the revenue offices in the capital will come under the system.

With the introduction of the system, the subscribers will get printed bills on the first month of new telephone connection. The subscribers can get information about their payment immediately after paying their bills from the revenue office concerned.

They will also be able to pay their telephone bills collecting printed forms from online. Subscribers' ledger can be updated from any revenue office in the capital. If there is any change in the bills for any specific reasons, the corrected copies can be collected from the revenue offices.

Raw materials of sweater factory gutted in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Huge quantity of raw materials of a sweater factory was gutted in a devastating fire at Khilgaon in the city yesterday.

Fire Brigade officials said the fire broke out at 12:25pm at the tinshed storeroom of Usha Sweater Factory housed on the roof of the six-storied factory at East Goran.

On information, four fire fighting units from Tejgaon and Khilgaon fire stations rushed to the spot and doused the blaze after over an hour of frantic efforts with the help of local people.

Fire Brigade officials could not say from where the fire originated. Rahmat Ullah, manager of the factory, filed a general diary with Khilgaon Police Station mentioning that the fire originated from a

electric short circuit.

Duty officer at the Fire Brigade and Civil Defence headquarters said the loss was initially estimated at Tk 50 lakh.

Panic grips TCB staffs

Meanwhile, panic gripped the officials and employees of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) at Karwan Bazar in the city yesterday after a garbage can at the fifth floor of the building caught fire.

As the smoke comes out of the locked office of Bangladesh Trade Institute on the fifth floor of the TCB building at 4:45pm, officials and employees rushed to the scene and put out the fire breaking open the door, police said.

No casualty was reported in the incidents.

'Make probe reports on river accidents public'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Probe reports on river accidents should be made public and the persons responsible should be brought to book in order to prevent a recurrence of such accidents, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

Public dissemination of probe reports would also ensure transparency in the activities of the probe committees as well as the regulatory authorities of river vessels, they added.

Sheba Bangladesh Foundation organised the roundtable titled 'Preparedness to prevent river accidents during stormy weather' at the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) auditorium in the city.

Former adviser to the caretaker government ASM Shahjahan said probe reports should not be kept a secret in the name of official secrecy.

He proposed forming a commission to find out why so many probe committees have failed to submit reports.

Dr Abdur Rahim of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) identified four factors responsible for frequent accidents of river vessels -- vessel design, operating environment, human factors and enforcement and educational factors.

Vessel design factor involves faulty design and construction,

US army pacific commander meets army chief

BSS, Dhaka

The visiting US Army Pacific (USARPAC) Commander Lieutenant General John M Brown paid a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Moen U Ahmed at the Army Headquarters in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

He spent some time with the army chief and discussed professional matters. US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis was also present on the occasion.

General Brown went to the Armed Forces Division and called on its Principal Staff Officer Major General Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury.

Later, the US Army Pacific (USARPAC) Commander placed wreaths at Shikha Anirban paying tributes to the memory of the members of the Armed Forces who embraced martyrdom during the War of Liberation in 1971.

General Brown arrived here yesterday morning on a two-day visit to Bangladesh, leading a three-member delegation.

On his arrival at the Zia International Airport, he was received by Master General of Ordnance Major General Anup Kumar Chakma.

mechanical failure of vessels and insufficient and flawed navigational instruments in the vessels, while human factor involves overloading and incompetence of the captain, master and other staff, Rahim pointed out.

Lack of weather forecasting facilities and mass awareness is also responsible for river accidents, he added.

According to survey reports, most accidents take place between March and July and in October, he said, adding that the authorities should take additional measures during this period to avoid accidents.

Director General of the

Department of Shipping AKM Shafiq Ullah stressed the need to improve the skills of professionals involved in operating the water vessels and to raise awareness of the people.

Former chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Syed Marghub Murshed, Editor of the Naya Diganta Alamgir Mohiuddin, Adviser to Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies Mesbah Uddin Ahmed and former chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority Dr Reaz Hasan Khondkar also spoke at the roundtable chaired by former chief engineer of LGED Kamrul Islam Siddique.



PHOTO: STAR

Engineer Kamrul Islam Siddique speaks at a roundtable on 'Preparedness to prevent river accidents during stormy weather' at the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are Managing Director of Aktel Ahmad Bin Ismail, ASM Shahjahan and Syed Marghub Murshed.

LIST OF UNAUTHORISED UNIVERSITIES

HC stays UGC decision on four instts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for two weeks the decision of the University Grants Commission (UGC) to include four educational institutions in a list of 56 unauthorised universities.

The UGC in a notice published in several newspapers on May 12 mentioned the names of 56 educational institutions, saying that they were set up and are functioning without the approval from the education ministry and the UGC.

A High Court bench issued the stay order after the four institutions filed a writ petition challenging the UGC's decision.

The HC bench also asked the authorities concerned to explain on what authority the UGC categorised the four institutions as unauthorised universities.

The petitioners are Barrister Rabia Bhuiyan, principal of Bhuiyan Academy, advocate MA Muntakim, vice-principal of New Castle Law Academy, Md Nurul Islam, principal of Dhaka Centre For Law and Economics, and advocate Andaleeb Rahman, principal of British School of Law.

The nine respondents in the petition include the education secretary and the UGC chairman.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed, counsel for the petitioners, told the court yesterday that the four institutions are not universities; they have been operating as coaching centres.

Iftekhar meets Malaysian counterpart

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury had a meeting with his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Bin Syed Jafar Albar in Islamabad yesterday morning to discuss wide range of bilateral issues.

During the meeting in the Pakistani capital, they discussed issues, including the means to expand bilateral trade and economic relations.

The Malaysian Foreign Minister praised the qualities of Bangladesh workers in Malaysia and expressed happiness over the increasing recruitment from Bangladesh.

The Malaysian minister was also happy to learn that Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed might be attending the Lankavi Dialogue in Malaysia upon invitation from Prime Minister Badawi.

Nazrul exponent Shahabuddin passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Shahabuddin Ahmed, an exponent of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, passed away at Dhaka Medical College Hospital early yesterday at the age of 71.

He left behind his wife, two daughters, one son and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Shahabuddin, also a journalist, litterateur and researcher, was the editor of magazines published by Islamic Foundation and Nazrul Academy and of the Daily Mujaddid.

He wrote over 20 books, 11 of which were on poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

His body was taken to Bangla Academy and National Press Club after namaz-e-janaza after Zohr prayers. He was buried at Sahjanpur graveyard.

Prof Dr Md Shahjalal



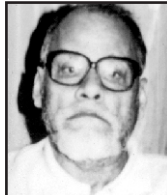
Medical College and Hospital yesterday at the age of 49, says a press release.

He left behind his wife and one daughter to mourn his death.

Prof Shahjalal was buried at his family graveyard in Noakhali after namaz-e-janaza at BAU.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Mosharrar Hossain Mian, deans of faculties, registrar, teachers, officers, employees and leaders of various socio-cultural organisations condoled the death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul. They also conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family.

Death anniversary



says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Maista Chowdhury Para under Kalihati Upazila in Tangail.

Australian plastic surgeons to perform 60 operations for free

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of 11 Australian plastic surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses are visiting Bangladesh on a two-week tour to perform 60 operations for free and work with doctors at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The team from Interplast Australia and New Zealand arrived in the city on May 5 and conducted 200 consultations in one day, from which they picked 60 patients as priority cases who require operations.

The team will also train local medical personnel with planned instruction in the operation theatre and a series of lectures designed to impart the knowledge of Australia's surgical, anaesthesia and nursing expertise to increase the capacity of health services offered in Bangladesh.

The visiting delegation is headed by plastic surgeons Dr Allan Meares and Dr Simon Thomson, who are accompanied by anaesthetists Dr Michel Martyn and Dr Geoff Steele from Melbourne and nurses Phyllis Bell, Marilyn Martin and Gaye Thompson.

The team is also accompanied by occupational therapists Jane Aarons and Alison Hardman who are volunteering the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) in Savar.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference at the Australian High Commissioner's residence yesterday, Meares said they aim to help patients and also to teach Bangladeshi doctors and nurses here because he hopes that one day Bangladeshi doctors will be able to perform these surgeries themselves.

At the press conference, Australian High Commissioner Douglas Foskett said Interplast surgeons "help repair damaged bodies and reinforce the strong links between our two countries. They also demonstrate Australia's commitment to assist those most in need."

Dr Samanta Sen from DMCH and the local team working with the Interplast volunteers were also present on the occasion.

Interplast Australian and New Zealand is a charity formed in 1983 and has delivered over 400 programmes in 22 countries. This is the fifth visit by an Interplast team to Bangladesh.

SAYEDABAD MURDERS

Cops yet to find out clue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the law enforcement agencies could not find out any clue to the Tuesday double murder at Sayedabad until yesterday.

Sarwar, elder brother of Muhammad Badal, one of the victims, filed a case with Jatabari Police Station yesterday in this connection.

Kazi Ahsan Habib, officer-in-charge of Jatabari Police Station, refused to make any comment on the murder while a police officer, on condition of anonymity, said they will be able to arrest the culprits shortly. Raid is being conducted on different spots in the city to arrest the

criminals, the police officer added.

The incident might be an outcome of a longstanding feud between 'Salam Dewan group' and 'Latif-Khaleque-Sabur group', of transport workers, at Sayedabad, transport workers said.

A gang of unidentified assailants gunned down Badal, a grocer, and Zakir Hossain alias Babu, abus helper, at Sayedabad on Tuesday night.

Babu belongs to Salam Dewan group. The murder took place one month after the release of Sabur from the jail.

Family members of both the deceased said that they had no enmity with anyone.

Pakistan tightens security

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistan beefed up security amid fears of further suicide attacks yesterday after a bomber with a bag of explosives on his head and chilling notes taped to his legs killed 25 people.

Tuesday's blast targeting a hotel run by Afghan refugees in Peshawar, near the Taliban-infested north-western border with Afghanistan, has intensified the internal strife facing military ruler President Pervez Musharraf.

"Security has been further tightened across the country," interior ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed Cheema told AFP.

Provincial law minister Malik

Zafar Azam said investigators were "examining the possibility that the hotel was used as a place to spy on Taliban activities and gather information about them."

A message taped to the attacker's severed leg that warned so-called spies for US forces in Afghanistan would suffer a similar fate "points to that," the minister said.

The shabbily-dressed attacker "entered the hotel carrying a sack of explosives on his head," Azam said.

"He came to the counter and asked for food and the man asked him to sit at the restaurant outside where he would be given bread. The attacker walked out and he blew himself up," he added.

WEATHER TODAY				
City/Town	Temperature in celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.0	23.3	73	64
Chittagong	33.0	25.0	71	79
Rajshahi	33.6	22.8	79	67
Khulna	34.8	24.5	74	98
Barisal	33.0	24.4	77	76
Sylhet	32.0	22.5	83	66
Cox's Bazar	32.0	24.0	75	--