

RECEPTION TO INVENTORS OF ARSENIC FILTER

Call to take initiatives to ensure safe water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Just because water is free from arsenic does not mean that it is safe water. Rather, safe water should contain minerals in correct proportions that our body needs.

Dr AKM Munir, one of the winners of Grainger Challenge Prize for Sustainability 2007, said this at a discussion yesterday.

He also said the Bangladeshi people themselves should take the initiatives to solve the problem of how to ensure supply of safe water across the country; no donor agencies would do this for them.

The Institute of Diploma Engineers' Bangladesh (IDEB) organised the discussion at its auditorium in the city and also accorded a reception to Dr Abul Hussam and his brother Dr AKM Munir who won the Grainger Challenge Prize for Sustainability for inventing Sono Filter, a small-scale, inexpensive technique to remove arsenic from contaminated water.

Dr Hussam, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry at George Mason University, USA, said, "If we do not have safe drinking water, everything else becomes irrelevant."

Referring to the Sono Filter, he said, "It is the beginning of a new technology."

Prof Dr Abul Barakat of Dhaka University said the ultra-poor people are worst affected by arsenic contamination in groundwater in the country.

Around 50 crore people of the world are exposed to arsenic while the figure in Bangladesh is 1.2 crore, he said, adding that the problem should be addressed without further delay.

Dr Munir, also the general secretary of Manab Shakti Unnayan Kendra, said they have already distributed 25000 Sono Filters free among the poor people.

The Kendra also has a plan to distribute 20,000 more filters free to the needy community, he added.

IDEB President Rafiqul Islam Bhuiyan chaired the programme while its General Secretary Kazi Nazrul Islam and Justice Ghulam Rabbani also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR

A five-day 'Honey Fair' organised by Apiculture Association began on the National Press Club premises in the city yesterday.

Road crashes kill 6

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 21 others injured in separate road accidents in Dhaka, Faridpur and Sylhet yesterday.

Staff correspondent reports: Three people were killed in separate road accidents in the city yesterday.

The dead were identified as Maya Begum, 35, a pregnant woman, Ashim Shikdar, 32 and an unidentified man aged about 25.

Witnesses said a taxicab hit Maya Begum, a resident of Mohammadpur Geneva Camp, in front of the camp at about 11:30 am, leaving her seriously injured.

Locals rushed her to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared her dead.

A speeding bus knocked Ashim Shikdar of West Sheorapara at Begum Rokeya Sharani while he was crossing the road at around 12:30 am.

He was rushed to the DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries after one hour of his admission.

An unidentified youth aged about 25 was killed on the spot when a speeding bus hit him in front of the Gabtoli police camp in the early hours of yesterday.

UNB from Faridpur adds: Two people, including a baby, were

killed and 20 others injured in a road accident at Jahapur in Boalmari upazila yesterday.

Locals said a woman and an 18-month-old baby died on the spot when a Faridpur-bound bus from Boalmari plunged into a roadside ditch at about 12:30 pm.

Of the deceased, the baby was identified as Puthi, daughter of Mohiuddin of Boalmari, while identity of the woman could not be known immediately.

The injured were admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

Staff correspondent from Sylhet reports: A high school headmaster was killed and his daughter sustained serious injuries in a road accident on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway yesterday.

The accident took place at Tetli area, about five kilometres off the Sylhet city, when a Moulvibazar-bound minibus from Sylhet collided head-on with an auto-rickshaw, leaving Husamuddin, 50, headmaster of Singerkachh High School of Biswanath upazila, dead on the spot. The three-wheeler was damaged.

Husamuddin's 15-year-old daughter was rushed to the MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Drivers of both the vehicles managed to escape.

Campaign for removal of waterlogging begins in Gazipur

A campaign for removal of waterlogging at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) began in Gazipur on Sunday, says a press release.

Gazipur City Corporation in cooperation with the district administration, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and BRRI, has started the campaign.

About 150 workers and employees of BRRI, BARI and the city corporation took part in waterlogging removal activities voluntarily.

Research activities are being hampered at BRRI as the waterlogging problems took an acute form in most of the 45 hectares of research plots of the institute for several years mainly due to unplanned construction of buildings in the adjacent areas without adequate drainage facilities.

Organisers say waterlogging removal activities will continue until the problem is solved permanently in the area.

Similar voluntary services could be initiated in other areas of the country, they added.

BRRI Director General Dr Md Nur-E-Elahi, Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur Syed Mizanur Rahman, Police Superintendent of Gazipur Md Alamgir Alam and Chairman of Gazipur Pourasava Advocate AKM Mozammel Haque spoke on the inaugural session of the campaign while BRRI Director Dr BAA Mustafi and BARI Director Md Nasir Uddin also attended.

Iraq PM wants provincial polls by year's end

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said yesterday he is determined to hold provincial elections by the end of this year as part of plans to delegate more power to the country's divided communities.

"We are determined to carry out provincial council elections this year and it is incumbent on us not to surrender to the challenges we face," his office quoted him as telling the national election commission.

"It does not matter who wins, as long as the victor is a son of Iraq and works in the interest of its people. It is important that the elections are carried out with fairness, benefiting from previous experience."

Although Iraq held its first contested full-term parliamentary elections in December 2005, it has not held provincial elections since January 2005, when most Sunni Arabs stayed at home, leaving many councils vacant.

The holding of local elections has emerged as one of several "benchmarks" of political progress demanded by Washington as a means of resolving the country's various sectarian and ethnic conflicts.



PHOTO: STAR

Eminent economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable on 'Speedy trial of corruptionists and our responsibilities in the fight against corruption' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left are Sujan Dey, Gazi MA Salam and Justice KM Sobhan. Sonali Sangskritik Goshthi organised the event.



PHOTO: ISPR

Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal S M Ziaur Rahman and Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Admin) Air Commodore Abdur Rauf adorn Air Commodore Muhammad Enamul Bari with the Air Vice Marshal Rank badge ceremonially at Air Headquarters yesterday.

AU chief for new UN resolution on Darfur

AFP, Accra

A new United Nations resolution is needed to ensure that Sudan accepts the deployment of a long-awaited hybrid force to Darfur, the head of the African Union commission said Sunday.

Alpha Oumar Konare said in his opening speech at an AU summit in Ghana that progress had been made since the last heads of state meeting in January when Khartoum's ambitions to assume the presidency of the organisation were effectively scuppered by the continued bloodshed in Darfur.

"We have made progress (on Darfur) because Sudan has accepted the hybrid force" of troops from the African Union and the United Nations, he said.

"Now we need to implement it, persuade our Sudanese brothers to implement it. What is lacking today is a UN resolution and fresh resources to deploy our troops on the ground."