

AVIAN INFLUENZA

Fresh outbreak will spell disaster: Experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no difference between avian influenza and bird flu, said UNICEF communication officer at a press briefing yesterday.

The press briefing on 'Bird Flu' was organised by UNICEF at its office in the city.

"In good faith the bodies concerned created confusion... we failed to translate the word in our language," said Shamsuddin Ahmed.

He said the bodies concerned including the ministries of information, health and livestock along with other UN organisations held a number of sessions to contextualise the avian influenza in Bangladesh perspective.

Shamsuddin said the role of media regarding the potential bird flu epidemic should be to accurately and effectively inform the public and not to create panic.

"The role of media is not to



PHOTO: STAR

UNICEF Communication Officer Shamsuddin Ahmed speaks at a press briefing.

scare, but to inform," he added.

During his power point presentation, Shamsuddin apprised of avian influenza or bird flu and its effect on a country like Bangladesh, where poultry is the

source of income for at least 40 lakh families, 1 crore 60 lakh women in rural areas breed fowls and 1 lakh 24 thousand farmers produce corn, fish and other poultry feeds.

Experts fear if there is another outbreak of bird flu in a tropical country like Bangladesh, it would spell a disaster for the public as well for the poultry sector, where the investment is at least Tk 12000 crore, he added.

Stressing on changing the health habits of people, Shamsuddin insisted on keeping the children far from the fowls since a study showed that of the 191 death cases, 40 percent were children.

"No longer is bird flu relegated only to birds, as the virus strengthens and mutates, resulting in a contagion that can move from bird to human," he said, disseminating the comment of Dr David Nabarro, UN coordinator on influenza pandemic.

chapter, that the pandemic in future would cause death of people ranging from 50 lakh to 15 crore.

He said the issue is not a faraway topic now for Bangladesh and people should be aware of it since the scientists are yet to invent any medicine that would cure the disease.

Later he discussed how UNICEF is conducting the awareness programme by involving people from all strata.

"We have involved 'Village theatre' to hold 800 dramas to enlighten the rural people and children, and we have trained up 3.5 lakh people with the Japanese grant worth US \$1.2 billion," he added.

He also apprised the reporters of the steps taken by the government which include formulating and adopting the strategy to prevent bird flu and human influenza pandemic.



PHOTO: STAR

Rampant dumping of all sorts of garbage into the river Buriganga continues to pollute its water. The picture was taken at Shyambazar area in the city yesterday.

'No Australian edn institutions operate off-shore campus in Bangladesh'

Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Douglas Foskett has said Australian universities have an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research.

"All Australian higher education institutions have mechanisms in place to ensure that the quality of their courses and services meets the highest standards," he added.

The high commissioner was responding to recent publication by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of a list of 56 "illegal" branches of foreign universities in Bangladesh, says a press release.

The list published by the UGC may have inadvertently created the wrong impression that a number of Australian universities are operating illegally in Bangladesh.

"To clarify the situation, I can confirm there are no Australian education institutions operating any off-shore campuses in Bangladesh," said the high commissioner.

"I also wish to reassure any prospective student, and their parents, who may be considering an education in Australia, that they will receive a world-class education while enjoying the lifestyle benefits that our country offers," he added.

The high commissioner said it is very encouraging that students from Bangladesh continue to choose Australia as their education destination.

The UGC list names a number of well-known Australian tertiary institutions.

It should be stressed that these are not references to the universities themselves but rather to education agents in Bangladesh who represent these institutions.

These education agents do not deliver any education services in this country.

The Australian High Commission has been working with the UGC to correct any misperceptions regarding the status and presence of Australian educational institutions in Bangladesh, the press release added.



PHOTO: PID

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed gives away Chief Adviser's National Award 2006 in Tree Plantation at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Govt wants credible polls

Says Mainul

Bss, Dhaka

The present caretaker government wants to hold a credible election so that an honest, competent and accountable government may come to power.

The Election Commission (EC) has been reconstituted for this purpose and the government has taken initiatives to separate the EC secretariat from the Prime Minister's office.

Law and Information Adviser Barrister Mainul Hosein said this while talking to a four-member delegation of China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations at his Information Ministry office here yesterday, said an official handout.

During the talks, the delegation members discussed various issues, including the present political situation in Bangladesh, the ongoing reforms activities of

the government and the election and investment scenario in the country.

The adviser said the EC is working to prepare a voters' list with photographs and the general elections will be held before the end of 2008 on completion of voters' enrolment, the press release added.

Elaborating the ongoing reforms activities of the government, Barrister Mainul Hosein said an independent Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has been reconstituted, corrupts have been put on trial under the existing law of the land and the process of separating the judiciary from the executive has been started.

The adviser said an investment-friendly atmosphere is prevailing in the country. The investment procedures are very

simple here, labour costs are very cheap and facilities at the Export Processing Zones are very suitable, he added.

Terming China as a very important friend of Bangladesh, he said, "We need the support and friendship of China," and added, "Bangladesh believes in peaceful relations with its neighbours."

The delegation members appreciated the government for its ongoing reforms activities.

The delegation members are Vice-president of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations Li Shaonian, Director Hu Shisheng, Deputy Director He Xiqian and Research Professor Ma Jiali.

President of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) Faroque Sobhan was present in the meeting.

KCCI president Mortuza released on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

President of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Shaharuzzaman Mortuza was released on bail yesterday.

The police arrested Mortuza, also the member-secretary of Khulna City BNP, from his residence on Friday evening for holding two international passports in two names.

Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rahaman granted the bail to Mortuza at 2:00pm yesterday.

On June 27, Sub-Inspector Shibu Prashad filed a case with Sadar Police Station against Mortuza under the Passport Ordinance of 1973.

Rezaur Rahman appointed DU acting registrar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sayed Rezaur Rahman has been appointed as the acting registrar of the University of Dhaka with effect from June 30, says a press release.

He joined Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) as an assistant director in 1982.

Earlier, he served as the secretary to the vice chancellor and as the deputy director of the Office of the Student Counseling and Guidance.

He is the author of the book 'University of Dhaka: Past & Present.'

He also directed "Jontranar Jothore Surjodoy," the first short film based on the War of Liberation.

RECEPTION TO DR HUSSAM

'Ensure supply of safe water for better health'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chemistry department of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday accorded a reception to its alumnus Dr Abdul Hussam, a winner of the Grainger Challenge Prize for Sustainability 2007.

The countrymen should be aware of arsenic contamination as the level of arsenic in both ground-water and surface water is rising due to various reasons, he said while delivering a lecture on 'Arsenic in Groundwater: Aquatic Chemistry and Development of a Novel Filtration Technology' at the

programme.

Ensuring better health is impossible without sustained supply of safe drinking water, he added.

In most developing countries, most health hazards stem from drinking contaminated water, he said.

Dr Hussam, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry at George Mason University, USA, and his brother Dr Munir, general secretary of Manabi Shakti Unnayan Kendra, won the Grainger Challenge Prize for inventing Sono Filter, a small-scale, inexpensive technology to remove arsenic from contaminated water.

The reception ceremony was held at Mukarram Hussain Khundkar Biggan Bhaban on the DU campus.

Prof Nurun Nabi of chemistry department said the invention of Sono Filter by Abdul Hussam and his brother is a great achievement and countrymen are highly proud of it.

"Their achievement is the result of their hard and sincere research work. The invention of Sono Filter will help save the lives of crores of people in South Asia," said Prof Dr Abu Zafar Mahmud.

The Sono Filter -- an easy-to-make, maintenance-free, two-tiered system that uses sand, charcoal, bits of brick and shards of a widely available kind of cast iron -- removes virtually every trace of arsenic from water within two or three minutes.

Holy Hajj on December 19 likely

Bss, Dhaka

Holy Hajj will be observed on December 19 subject to the sighting of Zilhaj moon, said an official handout yesterday.

Application forms for performing Hajj under government arrangements can be obtained from the offices of the deputy commissioners, upazila nirbhab officers, district and divisional offices of Islamic Foundation and the Hajj office in Dhaka.

Intending pilgrims can deposit money with any branches of Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Rupali Bank, Agrani Bank, Pubali Bank, City Bank, Islami Bank, Al Arifa Bank, Krishibank and Rajshahi Krishibank.

The pilgrims belonging to green category will stay within 800 meters of Kaba Sharif by paying Tk 1 lakh 94 thousand and 577, and those in blue category will stay within 1300 meters of the Kaba Sharif 73 thousand and 402.

Persons willing to perform Hajj under personal arrangements should contact the Hajj agencies directly, the handout said.

Information about Hajj-related matters can be obtained from telephone numbers 8916574 and 7164819 and from website www.bdhajjinfo.org and www.mora.gov.bd.



Maj Gen Ishtiaq new envoy to Turkey

Bss, Dhaka

The government yesterday announced its decision to appoint Major General Mohammad Ishtiaq, ndc, psc, as Bangladesh Ambassador to Turkey.

Earlier, he served as military secretary to the prime minister as well as to the chief adviser of the caretaker government.

In the Bangladesh Army he served in various capacities, including as GOC, Brigade Commander, Commandant, Commanding Officer, General Staff Officer and Director of the Welfare Directorate.

Maj Gen Ishtiaq visited a number of countries, including China, Thailand, USA, Cambodia, UAE, Turkey, Nepal, Romania, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, UK, France, Malaysia, Russia, KSA, Ukraine, Indonesia and Germany.

He did his Masters in defence studies and is a graduate of the Defence Services Command and Staff College and also a graduate of the National Defence College.