

# Call for large-scale intervention by govt, NGOs in tackling arsenic contamination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at the 7th international conference yesterday called for immediate large-scale intervention by the government and non-government organisations in tackling arsenic contamination of groundwater, which has affected millions of people in the country.

The National Arsenic Mitigation Policy 2005 and its Action Plan need to be updated and implemented effectively based on the experiences gathered so far, they said.

They also called for raising awareness and massive people's participation in the efforts to combat the arsenic contamination as the pollutant has already entered the food chain.

Dhaka Community Hospital organised the conference on 'Arsenic Contamination of Groundwater and Its Mitigation: Water Source Management - Risks, Benefit, Affordability and Sustainability' at its auditorium in the city.

The conference adopted the 7th Dhaka Declaration at its concluding session with a call to assess all kinds of risks associated with three major water sources -- surface water, rainwater and groundwater -- and make suitable recommendations for their sustainable use.

Qazi Quamruzzaman, chairman of Dhaka Community Hospital, presided over the inaugural session while Dr Rahima Ali delivered the welcome address.

Presenting a paper on 'Present Groundwater Arsenic Situation in Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra Plain and its Health Effects', Dipankar Chakraborti, an arsenic expert from India, said the situation is getting worst day by day in this region.

"People are using arsenic contaminated water for different

purposes and spreading the poison to everywhere. Now mass awareness is really necessary to get rid of this problem," he said.

Prof Firoze Ahmed of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in his presentation said a survey should be conducted to prepare a detailed map showing the affected areas.

Dr Atiq Rahman, executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), said funds for the mitigation of arsenic

contamination were not used properly. So, little was achieved to this end.

Prof Ahmed Kamal presided over the concluding session attended by academicians, civil society members, political leaders, government officials and representatives from NGOs and donor agencies.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Workers Party of Bangladesh, said the successive governments did not take the issue seriously, causing the situation to deteriorate continuously.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the campaign to combat the arsenic contamination should be turned into a social movement.

Farida Akhter, executive director of Ubining, said women are most affected by it as their nutrition intake is inadequate.

Nurul Kabir, editor of The New Age, stressed the need to highlight the issue through more media coverage in order to raise awareness about it.



Dhaka Community Hospital Chairman Qazi Quamruzzaman speaks at an international conference at the hospital auditorium in the city yesterday.

## Prisoner dies in N'ganj hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A prisoner in Narayanganj jail who was accused of killing his wife died of a heart attack yesterday 13 days into his arrest.

Jailer Nurunnabi Bhuiyan said the deceased Ainal, 35, was taken to the district general hospital after he suffered a heart attack on Tuesday night. He died soon after he was admitted to the hospital.

Ainal, an employee of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA), was married to one Jasmine of Munshiganj. But later he married another woman, which led to a clash with Jasmine.

At one stage Jasmine filed a case against Ainal stating that he tortures her a lot.

Being infuriated at this, Ainal hired three miscreants who sliced Jasmine into pieces and dumped those beneath a field near their residence, police said. Following the incident, Ainal went into hiding.

He was arrested in the city on January 30 and the next day police recovered Jasmine's body.

## TORCHING OF ARMY VEHICLE 2 DU students get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to two Dhaka University (DU) students in connection with the case filed against them on charge of torching an army vehicle and assaulting an army man at Shahbagh intersection during the August violence last year.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shahanaaz Sultana passed the order upon a bond of Tk 8,000 each with two guarantors after they surrendered before the court and sought bail.

The students who got bail are Rashedul Mahmud Habib and Abul Hassan.

The same court issued arrest warrants against them on February 7 as they have been absconding since the case was filed.

On January 22, the government withdrew charges against 18 others who had been charged with the same offences.

The five other students who will now face the trial are Kazi Zahidul Islam Biplob, Deen Islam Angel,

Rafiqul Islam Sujon, Deen Islam and Asaduzzaman Asad.

Earlier, charges were dropped against Muhammad Ibrahim, KM Mahub Alam Shyamal, Enamul Haque, Golam Azam Khomeni, DU correspondent of Banglabazar Patrika Kased Ali, Chanchal Karmakar, ABM Shamsuddoha, Siddique Nazmul Alam, Kamruzzaman, Sohel Rana Tipu, Abdul Karim, Manabendra Dev, Liton Mahmud, Arifuzzaman, Delwar Rahman Dipu, Mizanur Rahman, Rashedul Mahmud and Sarwar Alam.

On January 7, Sub-Inspector Asgar Ali Khan of Shahbagh Police Station, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka.

An army man has filed a similar case separately against the same students with Shahbagh police on August 26 for torching of his vehicle and assaulting him in Shahbagh area.

On January 22, the same IO submitted the final report in the case filed by the army man.

## ROBBERY Three Ctg cops sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) and his two colleagues arrested on charge of robbery were sent to jail yesterday.

Assistant Commissioner Abu Saleh Mohammad Mofazzal Haque, his bodyguard constable Ehsanul Islam and driver constable Abdur Rauf were arrested on Monday on charge of robbery at a businessman's house in the Amirbar area in the port city early Sunday.

The accused were produced before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Kazi Abdul Hasib Md Sayeed in the afternoon as their two-day remand ended yesterday.

The defence lawyers submitted a bail prayer for the accused when the state lawyer protested it. After hearing both the sides, the court sent the accused to jail rejecting the bail prayer, sources said.

A 5-member team of CMP interrogated the accused during the two-day remand at Kotwali Police Station.

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