

Increased arsenic in soil, water may sneak into food chain

Say experts

UNB, Dhaka

Increased arsenic in soil and water may sneak into the food chain, as it is more or less present in all types of crops in the country's arsenic-affected areas with some crops, such as arum, showing much more contamination than the internationally allowable standard, according to a group survey.

"Even water spinach, giant taro and wax gourd showed arsenic concentration higher than the usual one... we should take care now to grow and consume the agricultural crops before the continuum get terribly contaminated by arsenic, similar to what happened in the case of water contamination by arsenic over hundreds or thousands of years," said the survey report presented in a recent international symposium here.

The maximum allowable limit of consumption of arsenic through food by a person is 0.2 mg/kg per day.

A group of scientists, led by Dr Kingshuk Roy, associate professor at Nihon University in Japan, has been conducting periodical field surveys on arsenic contamination

in soil, water and plants in different parts of Bangladesh.

Dr Roy's research team conducted the survey on plants species in different villages of Narayanganj district and found some crops such as roots water spinach (pui shak) and the roots of wax gourd (Chalkumra) having strong affinity to absorb arsenic from soil/water.

The researchers say since the main edible parts (among the studied samples) show organic arsenic more than inorganic, the toxicity level of organic arsenic should be researched and published with more priority so that people could be alerted while selecting those (to produce and consume) by themselves.

"A thorough investigation on the safe/unsafe characteristics of all types of homestead crops should be incorporated into the government's present plan of investigation on the contamination level of groundwater as the food habit of rural people, unlike the city dwellers in Bangladesh, depends on their socioeconomic condition. Moreover, when any natural disaster such as flood or

drought occurs and ruins the main crop of the country, rice, the consumption rate of alternative/particular crops is increased," the research team says in its findings.

The researchers suggested that plants/crops with a high predisposition to accumulate arsenic from surface soil and water (not from a deeper part), should be encouraged to grow throughout the country so that it can mitigate arsenic contamination levels from surface soil. Simultaneously, plants/crops not as predisposed to absorb arsenic or that have the capacity to dilute the concentration level and/or change it to less toxic forms or compounds, should be encouraged to grow in highly affected areas.

They said the part of a plant/crop nearer to the contaminated groundwater has a possibility of higher contamination. Since the root is usually the nearest one (except the root is treated as fruit for tuber crops) to the groundwater and is always in direct touch with soil water, it has a predisposition to be contaminated by the arsenic of groundwater.

So, when water moves toward the upper parts inside a plant, it becomes diluted because of the physio-biological actions of plant tissues and chemistry. Even a plant absorbs arsenic in an inorganic form from soil and/or water, it is converted into organic form within the plant and the amount varies with its movement towards the upper parts of a plant.

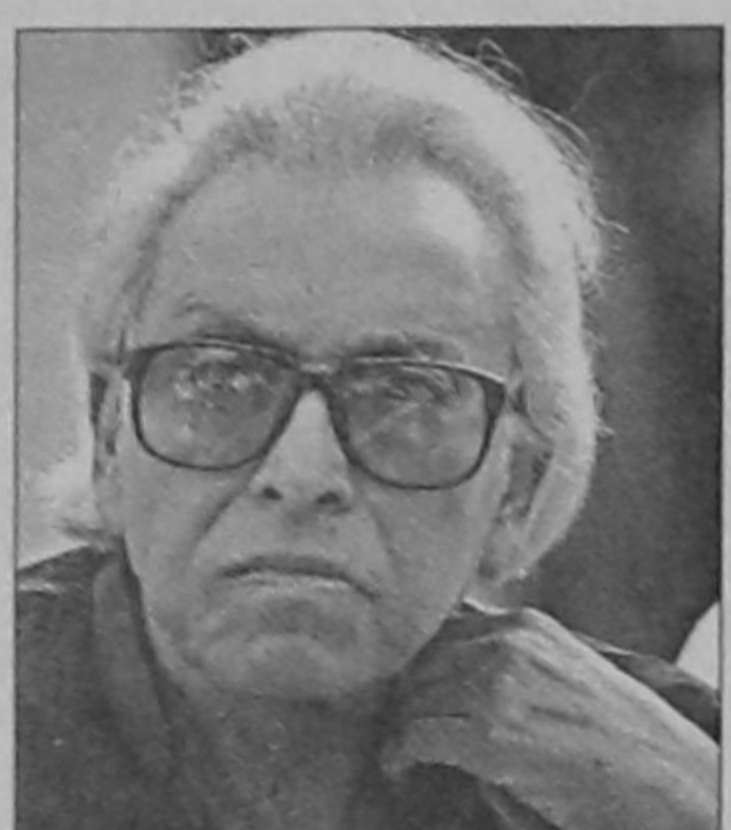
Arsenic contamination of groundwater in Bangladesh has been a serious problem for the last decade, and mitigation and awareness extension works are in practice by different local and international organisations, but not enough, as the crisis continues to worsen.

During the research, Dr Kingshuk Roy was supported by Dr Nobuyuki and Dr Sadao Nagasaka, two of his colleagues from Nihon University, and MIM Zulfikar of Social Development Foundation in Bangladesh.

According to them, although, at this stage, it is difficult to conclude that food-crops/plants in Bangladesh are in danger, it is wise to continue the periodic measurement to avert disaster.



Various socio-cultural and political organisations placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday on the occasion of his 33rd death anniversary. (Clockwise from top right) Awami League, Supreme Court Bar Association, Jatiya Kabita Parishad, Sammilita Sangskritik Jote and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal place wreaths to pay tribute to Bangabandhu.



Shamsur Rahman's second death anniversary tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second death anniversary of poet Shamsur Rahman will be observed tomorrow.

Different socio-cultural organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes to recall the poet's immense contribution to Bangla literature.

Shamsur Rahman, who was born on October 23, 1929 at Mahut Tuli in the city, also took part in various socio-cultural movements and played a vital role in critical moments of the nation.

The poet, who also served as the chief editor of the now-defunct Dainik Bangla, earned a number of prestigious awards at home and abroad.

\$1.6m WB grant to strengthen BBS for quality data

BSS, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) is providing approximately \$1.6 million as grant in the first stage of its technical assistance project to strengthen Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for quality data.

The need for statistical data has become even more important due to the pressure on poor households for the food and fuel price hike.

According to WB sources, the key areas selected in the first stage for the improvement of data quality are living standards monitoring survey, monitoring of trends in employment, improvement of national accounts and basic economic indicators, environmental statistics and gender statistics.

A Technical Assistance Project on Capacity Building of the BBS has already started operation from April this year to meet the crucial need for current statistical data to monitor poverty levels and welfare of the households. It is being implemented by the WB-funded EMATAP project.

Underscoring the need for national statistics, the WB and the government of Bangladesh signed an agreement in May 2006 on a three-stage process supporting the development of national statistical system in Bangladesh.

The first stage is supporting the BBS effort to improve the data

quality in selected priority areas.

The increased capacity will enable BBS to generate estimates of employment, especially in the informal sector, and for women, as these are regarded as an important indicator of well-being and poverty.

The project will also improve the index of industrial production (IIP) and update the register of establishments and putting in place systems to ensure that the register is updated and reviewed on a regular basis.

Two compendiums on environmental and gender statistics will also be completed. Further, the implementation of the project has built-in features to improve coordination, governance, accountability and transparency as well as efficiency, partnerships, monitoring and wider dissemination.

As per the 2006 agreement, the second stage will prepare a medium to long-term strategy for the development of statistics in the country based on Paris 21 guidelines and principles.

The third stage will implement a broad capacity building to strengthen the statistical system in a sustainable way over a four to five year period. The project is expected to make a significant contribution to meet the growing demand of quality data in the country.

Khaleda turns 64

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia turned 64 yesterday.

Hundreds of her followers offered prayers and sent her wreaths to the makeshift jail at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban Complex on the occasion.

BNP and its front organisations observed the party chief's birthday with various programmes. They cut birthday cakes and held milad mahfils.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, MK Anwar, Nazrul Islam Khan, Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal and leaders of the party's front organisations went to the makeshift jail at 9:30am and sent bouquets to Khaleda through the jail authorities.

Later, a milad mahfil was held on the ground floor of Delwar's Nam apartment.

Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal and Tanti Dal cut a birthday cake on Thursday midnight at Delwar's Nam apartment.

Students take oath against corruption

RU CORRESPONDENT

Students of Rajshahi Government Women's College took oath against corruption on Thursday.

The oath-taking ceremony was conducted jointly by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Sachetan Nagorik Committee (SANAC) at the college hall room.

College Principal Prof Suraiya Parvin administered the oath of 1250 students.

Mosharrar Hossain Akhuni, a language movement veteran and member of SANAC, urged the young people to come forward to combat corruption.

If the young people come forward to resist corruption, the country would be in a better position soon, he said.

Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan Sajal, joint-secretary of SANAC, and Prof Abdus Salam, a member of SANAC, also spoke.

Five killed in Sirajganj road accidents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least five people were killed and 17 others injured in two separate road accidents in Sirajganj yesterday.

In the first accident, four people were killed and 12 others injured when a Bogra-bound cement-laden truck that was carrying some labourers skidded off the Dhaka-Bogra highway and fell into a roadside ditch at Bhuiangati at Raiganj upazila at around 5:00am.

Three of the victims were identified as Maznu Mian, 29, Abdul Mannan, 23, and Sohag, 20, but the identity of another victim, aged about 25, could not be known immediately.

In another accident, a motorcyclist was killed and five others were injured when a Sirajganj-bound bus from Enayetpur hit the motorcycle from behind before falling into a roadside ditch at Shomeshpur at Belkuchi upazila.

The injured were rushed to Raiganj Upazila Health Complex, Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital, Belkuchi Upazila Health Complex and Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

NAT'L MOURNING DAY OBSERVED Call to execute court verdict in Bangabandhu murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Mourning Day commemorating the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was observed with due solemnity across the country yesterday.

Different political, cultural and student organisations observed the day by holding separate programmes that included placing of wreaths at Bangabandhu's portrait, hosting of national flag at half mast, feeding the destitute and offering special prayer in mosques, temples and churches.

The organisations also demanded punishment to the killers of the greatest son of the soil by executing the verdict of the court on Bangabandhu murder case.

Leaders of Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League, Workers' Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Zaker Party, Bangabandhu Lekhok Parishad, Sonar Bangla Jubo Parishad, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Goshthi, Islamic Front Bangladesh, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu in the city.

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote laid wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu and on the graves of others killed on August 15 at

Banani Graveyard. It also held a destitute feeding programme and a discussion meeting.

Our Dhaka University (DU) correspondent reports that Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) organised special prayers at DU Central Mosque after Juma prayers. A good number of DU teachers including Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz and top BCL leaders participated in the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Faiz said above all partisan views Bangabandhu should be given a respectable place in the history of the country.

BCL also arranged special prayer, milad mahfil and discussion at different halls after Asr prayers.

Jagannath hall unit of BCL organised a film show on Bangabandhu at the hall compound.

BCL also hoisted national flag at half-mast at its offices and DU halls and its leaders and activists wore black ribbons to express their grief.

Our Staff Correspondent from Khulna reported that the city Awami League (AL) organised a discussion meeting at the party office in observance of the national mourning day.

At the meeting, the mayor-elect and AL city unit president said the people will not forgive the killers of

Bangabandhu.

It also brought out a mourning procession and held special prayer at the party office after Maghrib.

Our Rajshahi Staff Correspondent added that the city and district units of AL observed the day demanding the execution of the verdict of Bangabandhu murder case.

AL leaders and activists led by Rajshahi Mayor-elect AHM Khairuzzaman Liton placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu and held special prayer.

Our Rajshahi University (RU) Correspondent reported that BCL RU unit, Progressive Teachers Society, Bangabandhu Parishad, Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, RU Officers Association and other organisations placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

Our Correspondent from Barisal reported that local AL, its front organisations and family members of six martyrs of August 15 organised two-day programme to observe the day.

The programmes included Qurankhawani, milad mahfil, discussion meeting and blood donation camp.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent added that the day was observed in the district with due respect by different organisations.

Mayor Tayebur Rahman falls sick in jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The convicted Mayor of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Sheikh Tayebur Rahman yesterday fell sick in Khulna District Jail.

Jail Super Solaiman Ali said the detained mayor has been suffering from high blood pressure, diabetes and dental problems for the last few days.

Judge of Additional District and Sessions Judge Court-IV Md Nazrul Islam issued an order to the jail authorities on Thursday to ensure better treatment for the mayor without delay.

Qulkhawani

BSS, Dhaka

Qulkhawani of Anwar Zahid, a noted journalist and former minister, will be held at Azad Mosque in Gulshan after Zohr prayers today.

Friends, well-wishers and relatives have been requested to attend the qulkhawani.

Anwar Zahid passed away at the United Hospital in the city on August 13.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chawabganj

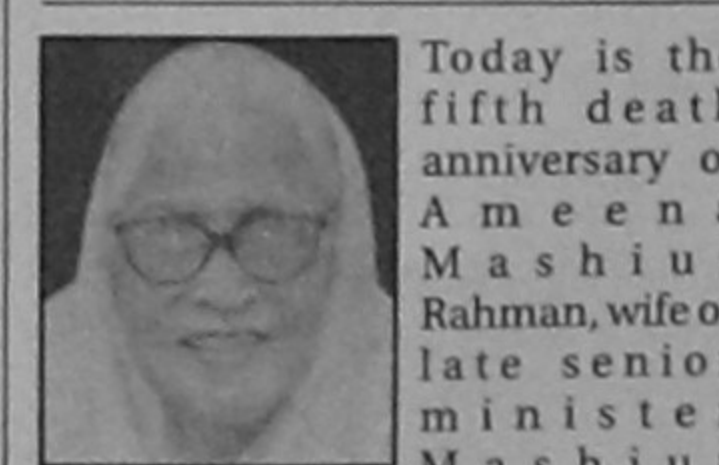
Md Shahjahan Ali, a freedom fighter, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Azmatpur Hudnapara village in Shibganj on Thursday at the age of 56.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and a host of relatives and admires to mourn his death. He was buried at his family graveyard yesterday.

Chapainawabganj district and Shibganj upazila units of Muktiyoddha Sangsad expressed deep shock at the death of the valiant freedom fighter and conveyed sympathy to bereaved family members.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Rahman (Jadu Mia), says a press release.

Popularly known as Shanti Bhabhi, she was a close associate of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan, Bhashani and took part in all progressive and democratic movements.

On the occasion, Qurankhawani and milad mahfil will be held. Food will also be distributed among the destitute.

Relative, friends and admirers have been requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



PHOTO: STAR

BNP leaders and activists gather outside the sub-jail on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex in the city yesterday to greet party Chairperson Khaleda Zia on the occasion of her birthday.



Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

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

Yesterday's highest temperature of 32.8 degree Celsius was recorded at Ishwardi and the lowest of 24.0 degrees at Cox's Bazar.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:31pm today and rises at 5:34am 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	32.0	27.0	85	78
Chittagong	29.4	25.2	92	87
Rajshahi	29.5	25.9	88	94
Khulna	32.4	26.8	81	88
Barisal	31.2	25.0	83	91
Sylhet	32.3	25.6	89	97
Cox's Bazar	30.4	24.0	96	96

DHAKA TODAY

Lecture

Jahangirnagar University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Mohammed Muniruzzaman will deliver Halima Begum and Shaikh Sharafuddin Trust Fund Lecture-2008. Venue: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Conference

Unnayan Onneshan organises a two-day conference on 'Financing for climate change: Challenges and way forward'. Venue: LGED Bhaban. Time: 9:00am.

Rotary Dhaka Central

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

DHAKA TOMORROW

Dialogue

Shikha Shastha Unnayan Karzakram will organise a citizen dialogue on 'Remittance and migrant workers'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Discussion

Media Commission, Bangladesh will organise a discussion on the Right to Information Ordinance. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Art exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of an exhibition on contemporary art from Bangladesh and India will be held. Venue: Galleria Kaya. Time: 6:00pm. The exhibition will remain open till August 28 from 11:00am to 8:00pm everyday.

Dress exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of a dress exhibition titled 'Art of tradition' will be held. Kay Kraft will organise the event. Venue: Drik Gallery. Time: 4:00pm. The exhibition will remain open till August 21 from 3:00pm to 8:00pm everyday.