

VULNERABLE BUILDINGS

Disaster fears shake students of two DU dorms

RAKIB AHAMMED

As Dhaka University yesterday observed the 'DU Mourning Day' commemorating the deaths of students, employees and guests in a building collapse at one of its hall, over 1000 students of two dormitories -- Jagannath Hall and Mohsin Hall -- have now been living in vulnerable buildings amid disaster fears.

In 1985, a total of 39 people, including 26 students and 13 guests, died when the roof of a one-story building collapsed on them at Jagannath Hall.

At present, around 800 students of Jagannath Hall have now been living in a building, which was declared vulnerable in 2006, while some 300 students of Mohsin Hall are also living in 30 rooms in a building, which were declared unsafe by the Buet experts in July this year.

Though the DU administration has taken up the initiative to shift students from the vulnerable building of Mohsin Hall to a safer place by arranging temporary shelter, it has no plan yet to shift the students from the vul-

nerable building at Jagannath Hall.

Expert team from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and Geology department of DU in 2006 declared 'Sontosh Chandra Bhattacharya' building, popularly known as 'East Building' of Jagannath Hall vulnerable to earthquake.

The East Building is located just in front of the 'October Building' that was built on the spot of the building that collapsed in 1985.

However, the authorities are constructing a new five-story building at the hall compound to shift students of the building, but it would take one more year to accommodate students in the building.

Students of East Building have been passing days amid massive panic fearing earthquake and other natural disasters.

On July 28 this year, around 15 students of the building were hurt as they jumped off the balconies and stumbled in the staircases being frightened by the earthquake that shook the city at midnight. Around 50 students of different dormitories of the university were

also hurt in same way following the jolt.

After the tremor, DU syndicate at an emergency meeting decided to shift around 2,000 resident students of three DU dormitories, including the resident of East Building to some safer places at the university. But they could not shift any student to a safer place in the last two months.

Jagannath Hall authorities on August 10 sent a letter to DU high-ups saying that it was impossible to shift the students of East Building to four other buildings as those were conveying students one and half times more than their capacities.

MOHSIN HALL
The syndicate also decided to shift around 300 students from 30 vulnerable rooms of the hall to safer places as some cracks had developed under those 30 rooms in April following the jolt.

The primary report from the Bureau of Research Testing and Consultation (BRTC) of Buet in its report suggested removing students from those vulnerable rooms.

As per the report, the authorities

had decided to set up a makeshift shelter for keeping the disaster-hit students at the hall compound.

Hall Provost Prof Jamal Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that they have started the construction work for the temporary shelter.

"It might take two months more to finish the construction and students would be shifted just after it finishes," he added.

When asked, DU Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz said they are trying to shift students of vulnerable buildings to safer places using their limited funds.

"It would cost nearly Tk 1.0 crore for making the temporary shelter. But we are unable to make any such shelter for Jagannath Hall students right now as we are facing fund crunch," he added.

Five dormitories of DU are aging more than 50 years. Residents of the 87-year-old Salimullah Muslim Hall, Shahidullah Hall and Jagannath Hall and students of the 42-year-old Surya Sen Hall and Mohsin Hall have been passing days amid fear of earthquakes. But the authorities are yet to examine what degree of earthquake these buildings can withstand.



Bangladesh Shishu Academy and National Girl Child Advocacy Forum jointly take out a colourful procession in the city yesterday marking the National Girl Child Day.

Help girl children achieve rights

Says Rasheda K Chy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 9th National Girl Child Day was observed yesterday with different organisations holding programmes to mark the day in the city with the theme 'Punish the takers, free the girl children'.

To observe the day, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum organised a discussion in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation at Bangladesh Shishu Academy auditorium following a rally.

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Choudhury inaugurated the rally hoping to ensure the girl children's security in their everyday life.

The adviser called on all to behave sincerely with girl children so that they can learn the same and help them enjoy their rights properly.

Women and Children Affairs Secretary Rokeya Sultana was present at the programme as the chief guest with National Girl Child Advocacy Forum President Dr Badiul Alam Majumder in the chair.

Vice President of the forum Prof Latifa Akand, cultural activist Mustafa Monwar, former secretary Prof Tahmina Hossain, Bangladesh Shishu Academy Chairman Mushfika Ifat, language movement veteran Dr Halima Khatun, Manusher Jonno Foundation

Executive Director Shaheen Anam, Acid Survivors Foundation Executive Director Monira Rahman, Dhaka Ahsania Mission Programme Director Shafiqul Islam and former chief news editor of BTV Rafiqul Islam Sarkar also spoke.

"The children should learn to think positive from their childhood and should have great dreams in their minds. Marriage in childhood or during the adolescent period cannot resolve the problem at all," said Rokeya Sultana.

Drawing the example of 'Parul', a character of the fairy tale, Mustafa said Parul made her seven brothers wake up from the cursed sleep through her special power, likewise

every girl should be 'Parul' to enlighten others through their love, affection and activities.

"The imaginative power is immense among the children and they should be given the best opportunity to use that power," he added, exemplifying a particular state of India where people use 80 percent of their income for the development of their children.

Monira Rahman said, "We have been living in such a society where a girl child becomes victim only for her feminine identity. The situation must be changed. We have to ensure that under no circumstances, we would allow a girl child to be repressed in the society."

Int'l delegation arrives to celebrate launch of AUW

METRO DESK

An international delegation comprising representatives from the US, the UK, Denmark, Japan, Pakistan, India and Hong Kong arrived in Chittagong yesterday to participate in the events marking the launch of the Asian University for Women (AUW), says a press release.

The delegation members include a number of prominent international personalities -- Lone Dybkjaer, former first lady of Denmark and Danish minister for environment, Jack Meyer, CEO of Convexity Capital and former president of the endowment of Harvard University, and Kathy Matsui, managing director of Goldman Sachs (Japan) Ltd.

The inaugural events include an unveiling of the campus design at the campus site, which was held yesterday; an all-day international symposium on 'Rethinking Rights & Opportunities in Asia' scheduled for October 17 at Radisson Hotel in Dhaka; and the inaugural ceremony that will be held on October 18 at 9:00am at China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, who is also the chief patron of AUW, will preside over the inaugural ceremony while Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus will speak as the chief guest.

Bank guard burnt alive in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A security guard was burnt alive in a fire at Pubali Bank branch in the port city yesterday evening.

The victim was identified as Shah Alam, 50.

Fire fighters sources said the fire broke out at the Asadganj branch of Pubali Bank near rice market in the area at around 6:10pm.

The guard, who got trapped inside the bank during the fire, was roasted alive as he could not come out, they added.

Ailing schoolboy killed in road crash on way to hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An ailing seven-year-old schoolboy was killed in a road accident on way to the hospital for his diarrhoeal treatment in the city yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Siam, a class one student at East West Kindergarten, of Pirerbagh at Mirpur.

Siam was suffering from diarrhoea since Tuesday morning and did not recover from his illness until yesterday.

Maksudur Rahman, father of the victim, was carrying him to the ICDDR'B at Mohakhali in a CNG-run autorickshaw from his residence at around 11:45am.

But he could not even reach the ICDDR'B as a passenger bus hit the CNG autorickshaw from behind in front of the Chief Adviser's Office that threw the boy out of the vehicle, Maksud described.

Siam was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.



Members of an international delegation arrive in Chittagong yesterday to celebrate the launch of Asian University for Women.

Provide teachers with more facilities

Prof Muzaffer urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad yesterday urged the government to provide the teachers with more facilities since they are the change agents of the society who can enhance the quality of education.

Even the salary and the facilities the university teachers get are not that attractive, he said.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a seminar-cum-discussion to mark the World Teachers Day 2008 organised by Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU) in association with UNESCO Dhaka Office and National Academy for Educational Management (Naem) at the Naem auditorium in the city.

On teachers' politics, Prof Muzaffer said the teachers could be associated with organisations to establish their rights, but they

should not follow any particular party always.

"There is no retirement for the teachers. So, the government should increase the retirement age or develop a system so that the teachers can engage themselves in teaching even after their retirement," he said.

Prof Muzaffer also proposed introducing a fulltime education TV channel by using the frequency of Bangladesh Television and studio of Bangladesh Open University.

He urged the government to increase the allocation for the education sector in the budget and remove the discrimination in the education system like the English medium system, normal schooling and the Madrasa system.

The meeting presided over by Additional Secretary to the Education Ministry Md Mozammel

Haque Khan was also attended by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) Vice Chancellor Dr AMM Shafiqul Islam as special guest and UNESCO Representative in Bangladesh Malama Meleisea as guest of honour.

Prof Shafiqul Islam said, "We will not be able to attract talented individuals to teaching if the facilities are not increased."

He added that the teachers, who were behind the success in the education system, must be given a solid economic backing and independence.

Prof M Nazmul Haque of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University Prof Kazi Saleh Ahmed, ANS Habibur Rahman, consultant Management Development and Training presented keynote papers at the seminar.

HARASSMENT AT EDN INSTTS UGC to submit draft policy on Nov 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

University Grants Commission (UGC) yesterday finalised the draft of policy on sexual harassment with a view to stopping sexual harassment in the educational institutes.

The committee concerned headed by UGC Member Prof AHM Zehadul Karim will submit the draft to the education ministry on November 10.

UGC organised a view exchange meeting at its office yesterday to assess the draft.

UGC Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said that the policy aimed at recognising sexual harassment as a punishable crime, creating a sense of security among the victims and creating an environment where everybody would be aware of the punishment of such crimes and would refrain themselves from committing those.

UGC member Prof Dr AHM Zehadul Karim conducted the meeting while UGC Member Prof Dr Amena Begum, Jatiya Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association President Advocate Salma Ali and The Bangladesh Observer Editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury were also present.



Awami League leaders submit an application to an Election Commission official for registration of the party at the commission's office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Expedition to Langsisa Re mountain in Nepal begins Oct 26

DU CORRESPONDENT

North Alpine Club Bangladesh (NACB) is set to begin an expedition to Langsisa Re mountain in Nepal on October 26.

A six-member team led by Musa Ibrahim, one of the founding members of NACB, will take part in the mountaineering programme. Other members are Meer Shamsul Alam Babu, Rafiq Uddin Siraji, Rimon Khan, Afrin Khan and Towhidul Islam.

Stating this at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday, Musa said it will be the maiden attempt by the club in its ultimate mission of conquering the Mount Everest by 2010.

It will take around 25 days to be at the peak of 21081-foot Langsisa Remountain, he added.

Musa said the main objective of launching such adventurous journey by the club is to make young generation interested in mountaineering and raising awareness among them about the harmful effects of drugs.

He said the club will launch a talent-hunt programme next year to find out adventurous young males and females to launch the expedition for conquering the Mount Everest. Ahead of the journey for

Langsisa Re mountain, the club will also arrange a cycle rally in the city on October 17 with the slogan 'Unity of young against drug'.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Chairman Shafiq Alam Mehedi is expected to inaugurate the rally on the premises of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Dhaka University.

Besides, the club will launch campaign in different schools, colleges and universities to make young generation interested in mountaineering and avoiding drugs.

4 robbers held

UNB, Habiganj

Police arrested four members of an inter-district gang of robbers at South Rajapur village in Madhabpur upazila early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Abdur Rahman, 30, of Dariapur village, Ali Mia alias Selim, 27, of Adaoir village, Rafiqul Islam, 27, of Debnagar village and Javed Mia, 25, of Deogaon village in Brahmanbaria.

Acting on a tip-off, the police conducted a raid at about 2:30am and arrested the four with the help of local people when the gang was taking preparations to commit robbery in a house at the village.

Bangladeshi art exhibition in Pakistan in Dec

UNB, Dhaka

A month-long exhibition of paintings by Bangladeshi artists will begin at the National Art Gallery in the Pakistan capital of Islamabad in December to project rich culture and image of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) will organise the exhibition in the first week of December. The exhibition will also be held in Karachi.

Renowned Bangladeshi painters will be present at the inaugural ceremony of the exhibition, where about 100 paintings will be displayed.

The painters will also organise a workshop there for the art-loving people and students of the fine arts institutions in Islamabad to familiarise them with the forms of aesthetic and utilitarian values of art and culture of Bangladesh and contribute to people-to-people contact.

Interested Bangladeshi painters have been requested to contact the press counsellor of Bangladesh High Commission, Islamabad (Ph: 0092-3032181960, e-mail: b7hrcisb@dsl.net.pk, fax: 0092-51-2279266) by October 25 for submission of their works.



Women form a human chain at Paltan in the city yesterday marking the World Rural Women's Day. Jibika O Sakhkar organised the event.

PHOTO STAR