

\$70m project to improve city's air, water quality

BSS, Dhaka

Environment ministry with the financial support of the World Bank (WB) has initiated Dhaka Integrated Environment and Water Resources Management project to improve air and river water quality in the capital.

A discussion between State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud and bank's acting country director Tahseen Sayed was held at the ministry yesterday on the components of the project, including the issue of the World Bank's finance.

World Bank's Water Resources Specialist Dr Catherine Tovey, senior specialist on Environment and Water Khawaja M Mainullah and officials of the ministry were present at the meeting.

The WB will provide 70 million US dollar for the five-year project to be launched next year under which steps would be taken to improve environment of the rivers around the Dhaka city, strengthen capacity of the Department of Environment (DoE) to enforce the environmental laws.

Talking to reporters after the meeting Dr Hasan said one of the important components of the project is making the rivers navigable and remove illegal structures and occupiers from the banks of the rivers.

He said about 7 to 8 percent of the total population of the country now live in Dhaka putting tremendous stress on the living environment of the city.

The project will help the citizens take a fresh breath, he said, adding that three more environment projects with the financial support of the WB

are on the cards for implementation.

The first component of the Dhaka Integrated Environment and Water Resources Management project is to enhance the DoE operational performance through strengthening human resources and skill profile and streamlining the existing institutional arrangements.

Under the project a sludge and hazardous waste management feasibility assessment and factory environmental assessment would be conducted.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presides over the cabinet meeting at Secretariat in the city yesterday.

Couple sent to jail for torturing domestic help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A couple who were arrested on charge of torturing a domestic help at their house at Kazipara in the city were sent to jail yesterday.

Monira, 10, hailed from Pabna, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with marks of beating injuries at her body. She was a domestic help at the residence of Ferdous Mohammad Bipul, an official of a buying house, at East Kazipara in the city.

Police said Monira fled away from the house with the help of a local woman and came to us and narrated her agony on Sunday afternoon. Several marks of injuries were found at her body.

Following that police conducted a raid at their house and arrested the couple early yesterday. They were produced before court, which sent them to jail.

Police said in preliminary interrogation Bipul admitted that her wife Kakon Begum used to torture Monira.

Quoting Monira police said the couple used to torture her at any fault. Even she was not allowed to meet her parents and go out from house in last 11 months.

Monira's mother Sumi Begum said Kakon's mother asked her over cell phone to come to DMCH saying that Monira was admitted there as she fell sick.

Sumi Begum alleged that she could not meet her daughter as Kakon did not allow meeting and even they did not pay Monira's salaries.

Police said Monira filed a case accusing the couple in this connection.

There was no rule of law from 1975 to '96 Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafigue Ahmed yesterday said there was no rule of law in the country from 1975 to 1996, as no governments took any initiative to try the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"An indemnity ordinance halting the trial of killer of the father of the nation had been in force during the period from 1975 to 1996. It has even been proved that a government which came to power in 1979 had rewarded the killers of Bangabandhu," he said.

The minister said this while speaking as the chief guest at a discussion organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) at its auditorium to mark the National

Morning Day.

"We have taken initiatives to complete the trial of Bangabandhu murder case," the law minister said, adding that there are now adequate number of judges in the Supreme Court to dispose of this case.

He hoped that the case would be disposed of soon and the killers would be punished. A research should be conducted to find out the motives behind the killing of Bangabandhu and his family members, he added.

The minister also said the government has been trying to restore the Constitution of 1972 in order to establish democracy and a secular society and to promote the spirit of the liberation war.

Adulterated chilli powder seized in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized huge quantity of adulterated chilli powder and other spices from a grinding mill at Khatunganj in the port city yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab in association with the Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution (BSTI) officials raided the grinding mill owned by one Abu Taher Sawdagor at around 12.00noon.

The law enforcers found that chilli powders were being produced from rotten chilli and mixed with husk and brick powder.

They seized 2,460 kg of rotten chilli, 320 kg of chilli powder, one 30kg sack of husk, 480 kg of coriander seeds, 320 kg of turmeric, three barrels of butter oil and two crushing machines from the mill.

However, owner and employees of the mill managed to flee before arrival of the Rab.

China installs 3m security cameras in six years

AFP, Beijing

Police in China have installed nearly three million cameras across the country since 2003 and will extend surveillance to rural areas, the Ministry of Public Security said Monday.

"Since 2003... and up to now, over 268,000 alarm and monitoring systems have been installed in China, and more than 2.75 million cameras have been erected," the ministry said in a statement on its website.

This "exceeds the total of the previous 20 years." According to the statement, the ministry urged authorities to expand coverage in cities and to extend security systems in the countryside.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Institute of Microfinance and Microcredit Regulatory Authority jointly organise a two-day seminar on 'Microfinance interest rate and transparency'. Venue: PKSF auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

Roundtable

Environment and Human Rights Development Society and www.unnewsbd.com jointly organise a roundtable on 'Bangladesh-India border problems and what needs to do'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Workshop

DCCI in collaboration with Bangladesh Investment Climate Fund will organise a workshop on 'Competition law: Why is it important for my business?'. Venue: DCCI auditorium. Time: 11:30am.

Roundtable

Energy and Power organises a roundtable on 'Environment and energy friendly rice parboiling system'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

World Poetry Association organises a discussion on 'Bangabandhu: Bangla and world literature'. Venue: TSC auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.



PHOTO: STAR

Gono Forum stages a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding steps to reduce prices of essentials.

32,500 vacant posts in health sector to be filled up soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam has underscored the need for filling up around 32,500 vacant posts in health sector to ensure healthcare for all.

"The vacant posts must be filled up without any delay to ensure healthcare service to people," he said while speaking as chief guest at a discussion meeting yesterday.

The meeting was organised by Swadhinata Chikitshak Parishad to mark the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the National Museum in the city.

Ashraf also laid emphasis on the reorganisation of family planning services and resumption of community health services.

"Digital Bangladesh does not necessarily mean only connectivity. The main objective of this word is to bring about a change in the country in coming days, he added.

Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, who presided over the discussion, urged the doctors to get rid of PSC with regard to their promotion and transfer.

Speakers at the discussion also called for holding the trial of the perpetrators behind the killing of Bangabandhu,

August 21 grenade attack and the killing of four national leaders on November 3.

State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mujibur Rahman Fakir expressed the hope that the killers of Bangabandhu will be punished soon.

Lawmaker Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin urged the doctors to prevent corruption in health sector.

Dr Badiuzzaman Bhuiyan, Vice Chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Dr Pran Gopal Dutta, Prof Kanak Kanti Barua, and Prof Dr Iqbal R Selim also spoke on the occasion.

Lead poisons over 300 children in China

AFP, Beijing

More than 300 children in northern China have been diagnosed with lead poisoning suspected of being linked to a smelting factory near their homes, state press reported yesterday.

The children, all living alongside the Changqing industrial park in Fengxiang county, Shaanxi province, were found to have as much as twice the safe level of lead in their blood, the China Daily said.

They sleep more than before, cannot concentrate

and react very slowly, the report said, citing local residents.

Normal lead content in the blood is below 100 milligrams per litre, and above 200 milligrams is considered hazardous, but the lead in some of the youngsters' blood was more than 250 milligrams per litre, it said.

Local residents believe that the Shaanxi Dongling Lead and Zinc Smelting Factory, only about 500 metres (yards) from their homes, was to blame for the poisoning, the papers said.

The factory had been

required to help relocate nearby residents, but so far only 100 out of nearly 600 households had been able to move, as most villagers lacked the money for new homes, the papers said.

Many poverty-stricken regions in China's interior have introduced high-polluting industries without the necessary environmental evaluation, in a desperate bid to boost economic growth, the China Daily said.

The country sees tens of thousands of public protests each year, many tied to outrage over industrial pollution.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Anil Kumar Chakrabarty, convenor of Munsiganj Sachetan Nagorik Committee (Sanak) passed away at Laibaid hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 67, says a press release.

He left behind his one daughter, two sons and host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) expressed deep shock at the death of Anil Kumar and conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman in a message of condolence said TIB has lost an active co-fighter of anti-corruption social movement at his death. "TIB will always remember his contribution with due respect," he added.

GM Faruk

DU CORRESPONDENT



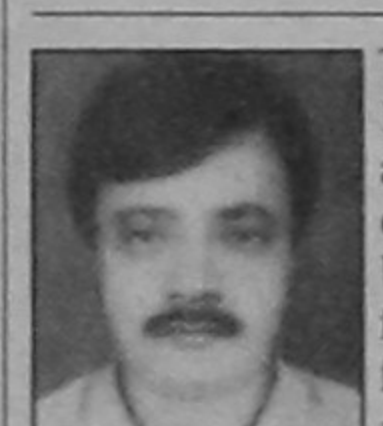
GM Faruk, a founding member of Abahani Krira Chakra, passed away due to cancer at a city hospital yesterday at the age of 62, says a press release.

He left behind his two sons, relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Abahani Limited expressed deep shock at his death.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 10th death anniversary of Monir Uddin, a freedom fighter, says a press release.

All his friends, well-wishers, relatives and admirers have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Rabeya Hashem

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 9th death anniversary of Rabeya Hashem, wife of Abul Hashem, former chief engineer of Water Development Board, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at the Ramna Thana Mosque at Maghbazar in the city after Asr prayers.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Air quality poorer in Malaysia's Borneo after forest fires

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Air quality in Malaysia's Sarawak state on Borneo island edged towards "very unhealthy" levels of pollution on Sunday as wildfires raged in forests and peat-growing land in the state.

The Air Pollutant Index (API) recorded unhealthy levels of between 122 and 197 in four areas on Sunday morning, three in Sarawak and one in southern Johor state, the Environment Department said on its website.

The API considers a score of 101-200 to be unhealthy, while 201-300 is very unhealthy.

According to the Star newspaper, wildfires were raging in more than 1,000 hectares (around 2,500 acres) near the Sarawak-Borneo border, causing thick smoke.

Malaysia was hit with the worst haze levels recorded this year on Wednesday and Thursday, when the API recorded six "unhealthy" areas.

Officials said the haze was

caused by hundreds of forest fires that were blazing in the Indonesian provinces of Kalimantan and Sumatra, and in Sarawak.

Farmers in Indonesia and Malaysia's half of Borneo island burn forests every year to clear land for agriculture, sending plumes of smoke across neighbouring countries.

The haze hit its worst level in 1997-1998, costing the Southeast Asian region an estimated nine billion dollars by disrupting air travel and other business activities.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Norwegian Ambassador Ingebjorg Stofring speaks at the orientation ceremony for 2nd batch of students of master's in Public Policy and Governance as the chief guest on the NSU campus at Bashundhara in the city yesterday. Department of General and Continuing Education organised the orientation at North South University.