



Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of Hindus, begins across the country today. The photo was taken at Ramna Kali Mandir in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

Foolproof security during Durga Puja Says Tuku

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Home Affairs Advocate Shamsul Haque Tuku yesterday said the government would take tough actions for ensuring safety and security of life and property of common people and to eliminate criminals from society.

"We have taken foolproof security measures throughout the country during the five-day Puja festival of the Hindu community so that they (Hindus) can celebrate the festival without any fear and obstruction," he said while visiting the Dhakeshwari National Temple in the city.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad, Director General (DG) of Rab Hassan Mahmud Khandkar and Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) AKM Shahidul Haque accompanied the state minister.

Advocate Tuku said all necessary instructions have already been given to the chiefs of all law enforcement agencies in this respect. He inspected the security arrangements and inquired about the preparations for the puja.

President of Hindu, Bouddha, Christian Oikya Parishad Major

General (retd) CR Dutta, President of Bangladesh Puja Ujapan Parishad Prof Nim Chandra Bhowmik, General Secretary Advocate Satyendra Chandra Bhakta, President of Dhaka Mahanagar Puja Committee Kajol Devnath and General Secretary Nirmal Kumar Chatterjee were also present during the visit.

Later, the state minister visited various puja mandaps at Tanti Bazar, Swamibagh and Ram Krishna Mission Ashram.

He also talked to the leaders of puja mandaps about their preparations and enquired if they had received any security threats.

Death anniversary of 13 executed army officers observed

BSS, Dhaka

Family members of 13 army officers executed under a controversial court martial in 1981 observed their 29th death anniversary yesterday as a recently released documentary sparked fresh debates about the procedures and motive of the trial.

Family sources said they observed the death anniversaries of the 13 officers, mostly 1971 veterans, in a low profile with milad mahfils and prayers as the day coincided with Eid holidays.

Twelve of the officers were hanged for their alleged involvement in the May 30 killing of president Ziaur Rahman after a hasty trial in a military court that completed the trial process only in 18 days.

The 13th officer was hanged two years later as he was 'being treated' for bullet wounds he had received during the May 30 incident in Chittagong.

The army prosecutors, who were appointed to defend the suspected officers and whose ranks ranged between lieutenants and brigadier generals, later called it a 'farical trial' as they were denied the minimal opportunity to defend them in line with Army Act.

The four-episode and 10-hour long documentary titled 'Bloodbath in the Military of Bangladesh (1975-1981)', released in July this year dedicating the last two parts to the 1981 incident, came up with several evidence indicating innocence of the 13 officers.

The documentary, mainly based on interviews of the military people, including investigators and prosecutors, found that the accused were denied their rights for self-defence while the "motivated" investigators used brute force on them to obtain statements they had wanted ahead of and during the trial.

The documentary, produced by journalist Anwar Kabir, was shown as a reference recently before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court during a hearing on a presidential reference on a different issue.

The senior most officer to

walk to the gallows was Brig Gen Mohsin Uddin Ahmed and the junior most was Lt Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan Khan, who was only 23 at that time.

The other officers were Col Nawajesh Uddin, Col M Abdur Rashid, Lt Col AYM Mahfuzur Rahman, Lt Col M Delwar Hossain, Lt Col Shah Md Fazle Hossain, Maj AZ Giasuddin Ahmed, Maj Rawshan Yazdani Bhuiyan, Maj Kazi Mominul Haque, Maj M Mojibur Rahman, Capt Mohammad Abdus Sattar and Capt Jamil Haque.

According to documents and references, the officers were arrested in between June 1 and 3 in 1981 while the court martial chaired by Maj Gen Abdur Rahman began at Chittagong Central Jail on July 10 and ended on July 28.

AL men's attempt to grab hospital land foiled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Locals and police on Sunday foiled an attempt of ruling Awami League men to grab a piece of land that had been proposed for a hospital at Kurarghat in Kamrangirchar on the outskirts of the capital.

Sources said around 20 local ruling party men built a hut at about 12:30am on the land in a bid to grab 26 bighas of land for the proposed 31-bed hospital, a playing ground and a school.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Nazrul Islam of Kamrangirchar Police Station said on information they rushed to the spot and with the help of locals damaged the makeshift hut and drove away the land-grabbers.

Seeking anonymity, a leader of Kamrangirchar thana Awami League (AL) said some local ruling party leaders engaged over 40 labourers to build the makeshift hut.

Locals said in 2006 the then Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of a 31-bed hospital on the land.

AL factions locked in gunfight in Madaripur

Three injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people, including a girl, were wounded in a gunfight between two factions of local Awami League at Karakandi village in Shibchar, Madaripur, on Tuesday night.

The injured were identified as Ayub Ali, 35, Sohad, 22, and Sathi, 18.

The police arrested three people with a gun and two bullets after the clash.

The police and locals said both the groups exchanged several rounds of bullets during the gunfight that erupted around 11:00pm.

Sub-inspector Mohammad Abdullah said they detained upazila AL vice president Samsul Alam Hawlader, UP member Aiyub Ali and Juba League leader Mintu Hawlader.

Sajeda acting AL president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) presidium member and deputy leader of the parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury MP will act as president of the ruling AL until party chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returns home.

Hasina, who left for New York on Monday, would return home on October 1, said an AL press release signed by Mrinal Kanti Das, deputy office secretary of the party.

2 criminals held with firearms

BSS, Savar

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested two criminals from in front of a coaching centre at Savar Bazar Road.

They also seized a foreign revolver loaded with two bullets from their possession.

The arrestees were identified as Aman Ullah, 30, and Mahfuzur Rahman, 18.

SHORTAGE OF CONTRACEPTIVES

Experts fear surge in unwanted pregnancy

ALPHA ARZU

Contraceptives are feared to be in short supply in the country as the government's current stock of some major drugs and devices to avoid pregnancy will meet the requirements of four to six months only, said a high official of health and family welfare ministry.

"If any government has one year's stock then it is considered as safe because purchasing of contraceptives takes at least two years from international sources through many process," the official added.

Sources at the ministry informed that the country has a stock of oral pill for about six months, injectables for four months, intra-uterine device (IUD) for about five months, condoms for more than two years and implant for two months.

According to a survey of the family planning department, average monthly consumption of condoms included 7.6 million pieces, pills 8.6 million cycles, injectables 1.2 million vials, IUD 25,000 sets and implant 20,000 sets.

Only about 13.8 percent of

total requirement of condoms and 6.5 percent of other contraceptive materials are supplied by private sector including drug shops, the survey added.

Health and Family Welfare Minister AEM Ruhul Haque told The Daily Star recently, "As per my knowledge the stock is enough for a year. Anyway, I will check it and take necessary steps in this regard."

However, officials of the family planning directorate said the country had its lowest ever contraceptive stocks only for six months in 2004 resulting in the decline of contraceptive use, and this year will face the second lowest stock of contraceptives.

AJ Faisal, country director of EngenderHealth that provides technical support to public health establishments for reproductive health, has expressed its concern over the shortage of contraceptives.

According to a study titled 'Human and economic impact of shortage or stock-out of reproductive health supplies in Bangladesh' conducted by Human Development Research Centre, 159,800 unexpected

pregnancies were caused due to shortage or irregular supply of three most-used methods of contraception.

Of them, 90,240 pregnancies were lost through menstrual regulations and 22,560 by abortion, while 47,000 children were born.

Prof Abul Barakat of economics department at Dhaka University, who coordinated the study from March 2008 to February 2009, found that total loss caused to sufferers due to a shortage of oral pills, injections and condoms during the period was equivalent to 4,306 million hours in terms of time and Tk 61,353 million in terms of monetary value.

M A Qayyum, director general of the Directorate of Family Planning, however, said there will be no shortage of birth control commodities as procurement contracts for major drugs and devices have already been completed.

The materials will reach the country within a very short time, he added.

"I do not think that the country will face any shortage of contraceptives," he said, adding that the contraceptive devices including oral pills,

injectables, IUD and implant devices, whose arrivals are already underway, will meet the country's demands for next three years.

According to Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007, the country's population has been increasing at a rate of 1.43 percent (2 million) per year and contraceptive prevalence rate has reached 55.8 percent.

Reproductive health experts observed that the shortage of contraceptive supplies would lead to a surge in unintended pregnancy, preventable illness and unnecessary sufferings.

According to Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007, 56 percent of married women in the country are using a contraceptive method. Almost half (48 percent) of them use a modern method like pill, IUD, injectables, implants, condoms, female sterilisation and male sterilisation while eight percent use the traditional method of periodic abstinence and withdrawal.

Pill is by far the most widely used method (29 percent), followed by injectables (7 percent), female sterilisation (5 percent), periodic abstinence (5 percent), male condoms (5 percent), and withdrawal (3 percent).

Less than one percent of women use IUD, implants, male sterilisation, and traditional methods other than periodic abstinence and withdrawal.

Use of oral pills has continued to rise, but a two-decade trend of increasing injectable use was interrupted in 2007.

The 2007 demographic survey showed that overall contraceptive use declined from 58 percent in 2004 to 56 percent in 2007.

It attributed the decline in injectable use from 10 percent in 2004 to seven percent in 2007 to significant shortage in injectable supplies in 2006-07 badly affecting public sector and NGO deliveries of family planning services.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana call on President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban on Eid day to exchange Eid greetings.

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