

Medical study

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The management. "A famous private medical college has put management quota up for 'auction' and Tk 20 lakh taka was demanded against a seat there," an aggrieved parent seeking anonymity said, adding that when meritorious students cannot get admitted because of want of money the others are just buying it and the government is doing nothing in this regard.

While collecting an admission form from Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital yesterday Faria Jabin said, "One of my friends from Viharunisa Noon School and College had to choose a low-quality medical college as her parents cannot afford to pay a large sum."

"My best friend got admitted to a private engineering university as he failed to pay the amount private medical colleges are demanding. His dream of becoming a physician was dashed," said Sumi while collecting a form from Northern International Medical College in the city's Dhanmondi that is charging Tk 9.50 lakh at one go this year.

When asked about the so-called 'development fees', Principal of the medical college Prof Dr Mohammad Anwar Hussain said they had increased

the number of clinical teachers necessitating more expenses.

"Since its inception in 2005 we have received only Tk 10-12 crore from the students' development fees. But the fact is we had to invest around Tk 40 crore to buy a piece of land for the hospital and its equipment," said Dr Anwar.

"Perhaps after two to three years when the medical college turns into a full-fledged hospital we might be able to trim down the development fee," he added.

About regulating the education fee at private medical colleges the government officials however said that a six-member committee headed by Joint Secretary of the Development and Medical Education Abu Taher was formed to look into the matter.

"After three meetings the committee decided to limit the 'development fee' to Tk 8 lakh but it was not implemented," said Khondoker Shefayetullah, director of Directorate General of Health Services.

This year, for the first time, the admission test was held centrally on the same question paper at 38 private medical colleges in an effort to improve the quality of private medical education in the country.

Blast kills 4

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Nikhil, 25, Nazrul, 25, Raihan, 22, Nurul Alam, 26, Lutfur Rahman, 35, Saddam, 18, and Mintu, 35. They were undergoing treatment at a clinic in the city.

Four others were admitted to Sitakunda upazila health complex.

Abdus Sattar Selim, manager of Rahim Steel, claimed they had ensured the oil tanker was free of gas before beginning the dismantling. Still, how the explosion occurred is beyond his comprehension.

Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station, told The Daily Star, "Exactly how many have died and been wounded could be known once the recovery drive ends."

Eighteen workers were killed in various accidents at Sitakunda ship-breaking yards in 2006 and 2007, and 15 the following year, sources said.

The ship-breaking industry in Sitakunda is the world's second largest. Over 30,000 people work at some 70 yards there.

Most of the yards are running without environmental clearances. The working conditions there remain poor though the High Court earlier this year directed the government to ensure safety of the workers.

Ameerah

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at Copenhagen climate summit is disappointing, said Ameerah Haq of Bangladesh, the newly appointed UN Under-Secretary-General.

"We are all disappointed, as we could have achieved much more for our future generation," she told reporters at a press conference of UNDP Bangladesh office at a city hotel yesterday.

Bangladesh took part in the summit actively along with the G-77 countries and it is up to the citizens of the country to carry on the national programmes to combat climate change impacts, she said.

Replying to a query, she said a Bangladeshi personnel is going to be the force commander of UN peace mission in Ivory Coast. Earlier a Bangladeshi held the same position in Sudan.

But Bangladesh as the second-largest troop contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions should get more commanding positions, she said. The UN has a total of 19 peacekeeping missions across the world.

About extra-judicial killings and maritime boundary issue, she said principles of human rights, national and international conventions should be followed in this regard.

Ameerah, the first Bangladeshi woman to reach the highest-ranking position in the world body, will take over her new assignment on January 5 as Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (East Timor). She is the third Under-Secretary-General from the country.

She, however, will not be directly involved with any UN programmes for Bangladesh as per the UN service rules.

Most recently she has served as Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Sudan and Afghanistan and UNDP Resident Representative in both the assignments.

She also served in Malaysia (1994-1997) and Laos (1991-1994). She started her career with the UN in 1976 from Indonesia and has served with the UN for 34 years.

BDR hearing

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accused, said sources.

BDR Director General Maj Gen Md Moynul Islam heads the three-member court. The other members are Lt Col Md Abdur Rouf and Maj Golam Mostafa Al-Mamun.

Deputy Attorney General Md Sohrwardy along with senior public prosecutors Mosharraf Hossain and Manzurul Alam will be present at the court on behalf of the attorney general, said sources.

The trial of the suspected BDR mutineers is being held under the Bangladesh Rifles Order 1972.

The nine accused BDR jawans of 12 Rifle Battalion of Longdu are now in Rangamati jail. They are havidars Sibbir Ahmed, Shohrab Hossain, and Md Shamsul Haque, signalman Abdur Rahman, sepoy Md Abdul Kalam Azad, Md Sakawat Hossain, Md Rasel Kabir, Md Zahir Uddin and Md Sarwar Kamal.

Three cases were filed with Barkal, Baghaichhari and Longdu police stations against 39 BDR jawans on charge of revolt at three of the five battalions in Rangamati following the February 25-26 mutiny at the Pikhana BDR headquarters.

Mushrooming

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European Union countries by 2012.

"New ship-scrapping yards are mushrooming because Bangladesh will be the easiest place to scrap those oil tankers," says Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director of the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA).

Upon a writ filed by BELA, the HC directed the government on March 17 to take several measures including shutting down the shipyards running without environmental clearance in two weeks and not allowing any unclear ships inside Bangladesh territory.

However, the Supreme Court stayed the HC order as the ship-breaking yard owners association appealed against it. Against this backdrop, the government didn't take any move to ensure workers' safety or protect the environment. It rather let local influential people to build new ship-breaking yards destroying the "paraforest".

According to the Environment Protection Act, 1997, the ship-breaking yards have been identified as category Red (extremely dangerous) running without environmental clearance.

The Department of Environment sources say the number of the yards has shot up to 70 which was only 36 in 2008 as per the government's official report submitted to the court.

But none of the yard owners has obtained environmental clearance certificate since the court's directive, although some of them have applied for it without attaching sufficient documents.

Abdus Sobhan, director, DoE, said, "Over 30 ship-breaking yard industries have applied for environmental clearance following the court order. But none of them had proper papers."

The ship-breaking yards must have ownership of the shipyard land, environment management plan and environment impact assessment report, among other papers, to get the clearance.

Sobhan admitted that the number of ship-breaking yards has increased over the last few months.

He however could not give any official figure as to how many new ship-breaking yards have been built since issuance of the court directive.

In the same directives, the court also clearly imposed a

bar on any Greenpeace-listed toxic ship's entry into the waters of Bangladesh.

The court ordered the DoE to implement the directives within two weeks from receiving the order and directed the government to form a committee to monitor the implementation process.

Asked about the latest status of the HC order, Syeda Rizwana said the SC stayed only one directive of closing down the ship-breaking yards in two weeks if they don't have environmental clearance.

"So we appealed to the court to implement the other directives like forming the monitoring committee, ensuring pre-cleaning of toxic ships and submitting probe reports of the workers died recently in shipyard accidents," she said.

"But the court has yet to give any directive on it," she added.

Some 30,000 workers are engaged in ship scrapping in Chittagong's Sitakunda, which houses the world's second largest ship-breaking industry after China.

At least 250,000 people in the country live off the industry directly and indirectly, according to experts.

Last year 84 vessels were scrapped in Sitakunda. Scrapping a ship takes one month to one and a half months depending on its size.

The recent report of a survey conducted by two internationally reputed organisations, Greenpeace and International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), says on average at least one worker is injured a day and one dies a week.

The report styled "The Human Cost of Breaking Ships" published last December simultaneously from Bangladesh, India and Switzerland says over 1,000 workers died in the last 20 years in Bangladesh's ship-breaking yards. The figures do not include the deaths from diseases caused by toxic fumes and materials workers are exposed to all the time.

Globally some 700 ships are scrapped a year, mainly in five countries -- China, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Vietnam and Turkey.

With the global fleet growing fast, from 15,000 ships in the 1960s to 62,000 in 2000, and with the ships built before 1970 being sorted out for decommissioning, the number of ships to be condemned for scrapping will also rise in future.

One stabbed to death

Assailants not known

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A private tutor was stabbed to death and left on the highway in the city's Khilgaon area yesterday.

Deceased Sajjad Hossain, 45, was a resident of house 478 on DIT road in Malibagh of Ramna. His name was Chandan Kumar Chakravarty before he converted to Islam.

Sub-inspector Mohammad Aslam Hossain of Khilgaon Police Station said informed by the locals police recovered the body left on the Khilgaon Highway near Shamsheer Tower around 1:30am and sent it to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Victim's brother-in-law Golam Sarwar said, "Sajjad who hailed from Savar was a house tutor. He finished tutoring at a house near the post office on Khilgaon Highway around 11:30pm."

The morgue sources said the body bore seven stab wounds in the chest and abdomen.

Police and family members could not ascertain the motive behind the killing.

Sajjad converted to Islam as he married Sarwar's sister Poly about four years ago and earlier he was married to Tihi Chakravarty Mili who is now in India, Golam Sarwar added.

The victim's maternal uncle Nibir Kumar Moitra at DMCH however claimed that Chandan was a Hindu and he never converted to Islam. Chandan has always kept his lineage connection, added Nibir.

As both Poly and Nibir claimed the body, police said they would not release it before the matter was settled.

Thailand to begin Hmong deportation tomorrow

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand will begin repatriating more than 4,000 ethnic Hmong refugees to communist Laos on Monday despite strong international opposition to the move, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said yesterday.

The New York-based international rights group said that armed forces had been mobilised for the deportation from a camp in northern Phetchabun province where the Hmong are being held.

"The first wave of action to clear the camp will happen on Dec 27 night, and the deportation can start on Dec 28 morning," according to an email sent to AFP by HRW Thailand analyst Sunai Phasuk.

No crossfire

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enforcers to be hit by bullets when criminals open fire on them to evade arrest?" the home minister questioned, reports the private television channel ATN Bangla.

Sahara made the remarks on a query regarding the High Court's verdict that asked the government to stop extra-judicial killings. Sahara was speaking at an orientation and annual prize-giving ceremony at Milestone School & College in Uttara in the afternoon.

The home minister also affirmed that no one, including members of law enforcement agencies, would be spared if they were involved in any kind of criminal acts and corruption.

Earlier, on November 17 the home minister claimed that no incidents of 'crossfire' had taken place in the country since the Awami League government took over.

Language hero

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freedom fighters at Lohajuri High School in Katiadi Upazila of Kishoreganj.

After delivering a speech as the chief guest in the programme, Matin was distributing crests among 38 freedom fighters and suddenly sank to the ground unconscious at 5:00pm. Freedom fighter Taramon Bibi (Bir Pratik) was present as the special guest on the occasion organised by Lohajuri Union Unnayan Sangstha.

He was rushed to Katiadi Upazila Health Complex from where he was shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital, Dhaka. His wife Gulbadon Nesa Monika and his personal doctor Mukter were with him during the incident.

Doctors at the health complex said Matin was suffering from hypoglycemia (reduced blood sugar).

Earlier, Matin and Taramon Bibi inaugurated a Shahid Minar and visited the eye camp on the playground of the school. The function started at 4:00pm with local AL leader Nurul Islam in the chair.

Passengers help

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jumped on the man, who officials say was trying to ignite an explosive device.

"It sounded like a firecracker in a pillowcase," said Peter Smith, a passenger from the Netherlands. "First there was a pop, and then (there) was smoke."

Smith said one passenger, sitting opposite the man, climbed over passengers, went across the aisle and tried to restrain the man. The heroic passenger appeared to have been burned.

Afterward, the suspect was taken to a front-row seat with his pants cut off and his legs burned. Multiple law enforcement officials also said the man appeared badly burned on his legs, indicating the explosive was strapped there. The components were apparently mixed in-flight and included a powdery substance, multiple law enforcement and counterterrorism officials said.

The White House said it believed it was an attempted act of terrorism and stricter security measures were quickly imposed on airline travel. The incident was reminiscent of Richard Reid, who tried to destroy a transatlantic flight in 2001 with explosives hidden in his shoes, but was subdued by other passengers.

Multiple law enforcement officials identified the suspect in Friday's attempted attack as Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab. He was described as Nigerian.

One law enforcement official said the man claimed to have been instructed by al-Qaeda to detonate the plane over US soil, but other law enforcement officials cautioned that such claims could not be verified immediately, and said the man may have been acting independently inspired but not specifically trained or ordered by terror groups.

All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation was continuing.

The man was being questioned Friday evening. An intelligence official said he was being held and treated in an Ann Arbor, Mich., hospital. The hospital said one passenger from the flight was taken to the University of Michigan Medical Centre in Ann Arbor, but referred all inquiries to the FBI.

Melinda Dennis, who was seated in the front row of the plane, said the man involved was brought to the front row and seated near her. She said his legs appeared to be badly burned and his pants were cut off. She said he was taken off the plane handcuffed to a stretcher.

One law enforcement official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said Mutallab's name had surfaced earlier on at least one US intelligence database, but he was not on a watch list or a no-fly list.

The flight began in Nigeria and went through Amsterdam en route to Detroit, said Rep Peter King, R-New York, the ranking GOP member of the House Homeland Security Committee. A spokeswoman for police at the Schiphol airport in Amsterdam declined comment about the case or about security procedures at the airport for Flight 603.

Indian jails

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are wanted in India, have been arrested and detained in Bangladesh over the years, added the sources.

Recently, Secretary on home affairs Abdus Sobhan Sikder visited India and held bilateral talks with his Indian counterpart Gopal Krishna Pillai and discussed, among others, exchanging the prisoners held on various charges.

Both the secretaries signed three pre-treaties on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, exchanging prisoners and bilateral agreement on combating international terrorism, which would be ratified during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India next month.

According to the transfer of prisoners treaty, both the countries have agreed that Bangladesh nationals detained in Indian jails and Indian nationals detained in Bangladesh jails could take the opportunity to serve their detention in jails of their respective countries.

Talking to The Daily Star the home secretary said the treaty has been signed so that the prisoners of both the countries could have social integration and meet their relatives by serving detention in their own countries.

253. Schiphol airport, one of Europe's busiest with a heavy load of transit passengers from Africa and Asia to North America, strictly enforces European security regulations including only allowing small amounts of liquid in hand luggage that must be placed inside clear plastic bags. After the attempted attack, passengers to the US were being frisked at the gate as an added security measure, said KLM spokeswoman Mirjam Snoerwang.

A spokesman for the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, Akin Olukunle, said all passengers and their luggage are screened before boarding international flights. He also said the airport in Lagos cleared a US Transportation Security Administration audit in November.

"We had a pass mark," Olukunle said. "We actually are up to standards in all senses."

Delta Air Lines Inc., which acquired Northwest last year, said a passenger caused a disturbance, was subdued, and the crew requested that law enforcement officials meet the flight.

Passenger Syed Jafri, a US citizen who had flown from the United Arab Emirates, said the incident occurred during the plane's descent. Jafri said he was seated three rows behind the passenger and said he saw a glow, and noticed a smoke smell. Then, he said, "a young man behind me jumped on him."

"Next thing you know, there was a lot of panic," he said.

Federal officials said there would be heightened security for both domestic and international flights at airports across the country, but the intensified levels would likely be "layered," differing from location to location depending on alerts, security concerns and other factors.

Passengers can expect to see heightened screening, more bomb-sniffing dog and officer units and behavioural detection specialists at some airports, but there will also be unspecified less visible precautions as well, officials said.

The FBI and the Homeland Security Department issued an intelligence note on Nov. 20 about the threat picture for the holiday season, which was obtained by The Associated Press. At the time, officials said they had no specific information about attack plans by al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups.

President Barack Obama was notified of the incident and discussed it with security officials, the White House said. Officials said he is monitoring the situation and receiving regular updates from his vacation spot in Hawaii.

Prisoner

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forcibly and robbing the passengers by first blinding them with hazardous substances. But the order did not mention anything about the way it should be done, said on-duty sergeants and police officials investigating crimes.

Several on-duty sergeants and police inspectors of DMP said, according to the information they have, drivers have direct or indirect hands in most of the incidents of mugging involving CNGs.

"If drivers are now able to lock up passengers like a prison van then such criminal activities will be carried out anywhere anyone with the increasing degree of insecurity of the passengers," said a traffic inspector requesting anonymity.

Moreover, he said, in emergencies like vehicles catching fire or drivers hurt, passengers should be able to get off the vehicles as soon as possible.

"Over the last few weeks as we observed CNG auto-rickshaws with doors on passenger side, we have discussed this matter among us and felt strongly that the passengers should be able to lock and unlock the compartment in which they travel," said the traffic inspector.

Deputy Commissioner, Traffic (west) Selim Mohammad Jahangir admitted that the way CNG owners fitted the lock system on the newly introduced doors is a threat to the safety of passengers.

"I am going to discuss the matter with my senior colleagues," said Jahangir.

There are around one lakh drivers according to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority driving 14,269 CNGs in the city in several shifts every day.

Cold wave

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Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions and the regions of Sirimongol, Mymensingh, Tangail, Faridpur, Madaripur, Comilla and Feni, and the northern region, including Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts, has left the normal life in disarray.

According to the meteorologist, the dense fog that overcast the skies in many regions in the last couple of days might continue for the next few days. "There's a possibility of further fall in temperature when the fog will disappear," he said.

He said the ongoing mild to moderate cold wave started on December 21 and its intensity might not deepen further in the next few days but it will continue.

The country's lowest temperature of 6.09 degrees Celsius was recorded in Jessore on Friday.

Thick blankets of fog disrupted movement of all modes of transport in many areas.

Dense fog also disrupted flights at Zia International Airport and Shah Amanat Airport in Chittagong in the last two days, said a civil aviation official.

Meanwhile, various social organisations and NGOs have started distributing warm clothes among the poor in the cold-hit areas as part of emergency response to the cold wave.

According to UNB's Rajshahi correspondent, the sufferings of the poor people in the district have aggravated, as they are not getting warm clothes.

Elderly people and children of the poor families in the cold-hit districts are the worst victims, as they cannot afford to buy warm clothes.

In Lalmonirhat, the government has so far distributed 5,000 blankets although the number of poor is over 2 lakh in the district.

BSS adds: Five people died in the last two days due to cold-related diseases in

Police arrest

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Rahman, 30, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with bullet in his back.

Savar police said a patrol team of law enforcement agency signalled a Savar bound minibus to stop on suspicion near Amin Bazar around 2:00am.

But the bus driver ignored the signal and the robbers started firing from the bus targeting the policemen.

The patrol team started chasing the bus and stopped it damaging the tires while firing at it near Bakutia area of the highway.

Policemen fired seven bullets to nab the robbers while the latter fired around eight from the bus, said Saiful Islam, Sub-inspector (SI) of Savar Police Station.

The robbers tried to escape the scene but bullet-hit Mizan failed.

Mizan, however, denied his involvement with the incident and said some six to seven miscreants took him on the bus at gunpoint around 1:00am from Jatrabari area.

There were no passengers on the bus, said SI Saiful adding the robbers were attempting to start hunting for prey on the highway using the bus.

Lalmonirhat district.

The victims are Shyamal, 65, of Rajpur, Mazeda Begum, 60, of Talpatti, Rahim, 80, of Kocha Bari, Mohen Chandra, 67, of Harati and Babu Moni, 5, of the same area.

The people of char areas and day laborers of the district are suffering due to the shivering cold.

DCC

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Khoka admitted mosquito menace is on the rise, and said efforts are on to tackle this.

On the shortage of adulticide, he said they are going to get 25,000 litres of it within a few days. This will solve the problem for a certain time.

Procurement of more adulticide is in process to solve the problem, totally, themayor added.

Other sources in the DCC said it will take two more weeks to get 25,000 litres of adulticide.

There are allegations that spraying of larvicide in different areas has not yielded desired results as field level workers of the DCC did not do their job properly.

This happened as officials responsible for monitoring field workers' activities showed reluctance to do so on various excuses like lack of transport and allowances.

Khoka said steps are being taken to strengthen monitoring of the field level work.

One official said shortage of manpower is also a reason for the failure to combat mosquito menace. At least 10 field level staff are needed for an effective drive in each DCC ward but there are only five-six now.

The corporation has 564 staff for the field level work using 390 fogger machines, 532 hand sprayers, 50 wheel-mounted machines, 6 ULV and 8 power sprayers.

Describing the sufferings due to increasing mosquito menace, a resident of Section-12 of Pallabi, Nayan, said, "I moved to the sixth floor of a rented flat from the ground floor to save my family members from mosquito bite, but it did not work."

A resident of Moghbazar, Tito, said, "I use both mosquito killing coil and hand spray at a time but that cannot save us from mosquito bite. So, we have to use mosquito net just after evening."

Meanwhile, sales of coil and hand spray have gone up several times, shopkeepers said.

Court summons

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none of them showed up.