



Opposition BNP stages a demonstration in the city yesterday protesting repression on journalists and in support of June 27 hartal. (Story on Page 1)

Audacious behaviour of BLDA chief condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Alumni Association (Buetaa) yesterday condemned the audacious behaviour of the Bangladesh Land Developers' Association (BLDA) president at a high level meeting of the government recently.

In a press release, Buetaa trustees said they are shocked by the indecorous behaviour of BLDA President Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam at the meeting attended by the state minister for public works, Detailed Area Plan (DAP) review committee members and civil society members.

Such attitude of the BLDA representatives is tantamount to a threat to the safety of flood flow zone in the Dhaka city, Buetaa said.

The Detailed Area Plan for Dhaka city was drafted by some advisory institutes and the review committee examined it. The plan was designed to keep the city free from floods and make it liveable.

Road crashes kill two

METRO DESK

Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Dinajpur and Jhenidah yesterday.

Our correspondent from Dinajpur reports: A sexagenarian was killed in a road accident on the Dinajpur-Rangpur highway in Kharol upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Dabir Uddin 65, son of late Bajet Ullah of village Purba Shadipur of Kharol upazila.

Kharol police quoting witnesses said the accident occurred when a Rangpur-bound BRTC passenger bus hit him in front Power House in the Dashmail area while he was crossing the Dinajpur-Rangpur highway, leaving him dead on the spot.

Our correspondent from Jhenidah adds: A man was crushed to death under the wheels of truck at Moheshpur village in the upazila.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Wahab, 65 son of Fakir Chand Mondol of Keshobpur village in the upazila.

Locals and police said Wahab was run over by Jibon Nagar-bound truck while he was crossing the Datta Nagar road under Moheshpur upazila.

Village response teams to help conserve tigers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Forest Department and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) has formed ten Village Tiger Response Teams (VTRT) to help conserve tigers that enter villages adjacent to the Sundarbans.

The teams—eight in Chandpur, one in Patharghat and one in Golakhali will provide assistance to villagers until the forest department team reaches the spot with equipment to catch a tiger and release it in the forest.

The main tasks of the VTRT are to respond to villagers' call if there is any report on tiger sighting while patrolling the area and ensure that people stay indoors during risky hours of nightfall.

The team members will also control the crowd that forms

when a tiger strays into a village until the forest department officials reach there with more help and equipment.

If the crowd is not kept under control, there is little chance of saving a tiger from sure death.

With the help of the villagers, VTRT will conduct safe operation to retrieve a dead body taken away by tiger from any village.

To strengthen the concept, the WTB and forest department are now in the process of forming 18 more teams—six in Satkhira, four in Sharankhola and eight in Khulna ranges—in the most tiger prone villages under the Sundarbans Tiger Project.

With the assistance of VTRT, the project aims to extend assistance to all tiger related incidents in the Sundarbans.

The team members will also control the crowd that forms

SATURDAY'S CLASH Buet to take action against students responsible

DU CORRESPONDENT

The authority of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) is taking punitive action against students who were responsible for the clash over suspension of classes for watching World Cup football on Sunday.

The authority yesterday formed a probe committee to investigate into the clash between two students groups that forced the administration to shut the institution for an indefinite period.

"We cannot allow violence among students over watching World Cup football matches," Buet Vice-Chancellor Prof AMM Shafiuallah said.

The committee was formed through an emergency meeting attended by the heads of the department, provosts, deans and other officials. Buet VC chaired the meeting held at his office.

A professor whose name was not disclosed in the interest of investigation will lead the probe committee that has been asked to submit its report as soon as possible.

Prof Shafiuallah said the probe committee will identify the people responsible for the clash and the disciplinary body of the university will recommend action against them.

"We are trying to resume academic activities soon," Prof Shafiuallah replied to query. However, he could not confirm whether the institute will open before the probe committee submits report.

After the meeting, the VC told reporters that the probe committee will also recommend a possible time for reopening the institution.

Meanwhile, female students of the university left their only dormitory by 10:00am yesterday following orders of the authority. Male students left their eight dormitories by 10:30pm on Saturday night.

The students clashed when junior students barred the seniors from attending classes. The juniors were demonstrating for suspension of academic activities at the university till the World Cup football matches were over.

Arsenic in water poisons 77m Bangladeshis: Report

AFP, Dhaka

Up to 77 million Bangladeshis have been exposed to toxic levels of arsenic from contaminated drinking water, and even low-level exposure to the poison is not risk-free, The Lancet medical journal reported.

Over the past decade, more than 20 percent of deaths recorded in a study that monitored nearly 12,000 people in the Araihazar district of the capital Dhaka appear to have been caused by arsenic-tainted well water.

By some estimates, between 35 and 77 million people in Bangladesh have been chronically exposed to arsenic-contaminated water as a result of a catastrophically misguided campaign in the 1970s.

Millions of tube wells were drilled in the aim of providing villagers with clean, germ-free water. Many wells were inadvertently dug into shallow layers of soil that were heavily laced with naturally occurring arsenic.

The UN's World Health Organisation (WHO) has called Bangladesh's arsenic crisis "the largest mass poisoning of a population in

history."

Several previous investigations highlighted the health risks of contaminated groundwater, but they failed to explain how much of the tainted water a person may have drunk and what level of contamination was enough to cause sickness.

In the new study released Saturday, physicians checked the volunteers' overall health and took blood and urine samples every two years. They also took samples of local well water to monitor for arsenic levels.

After six years, 407 deaths had occurred from all causes, 21 percent of which could be attributed to arsenic concentrations above the UN's recommended threshold. Of deaths linked to chronic disease, 24 percent were associated with exposure to the poison at such levels.

The death rate rose in line with the exposure.

Bangladesh authorities reacted cautiously to the study.

"To be frank, I have my doubts about these findings -- I would like to examine their methodology more closely," Bangladeshi Health Minister

AFM Ruhal Haque told AFP on Sunday.

"Arsenic is a problem in Bangladesh, there is no question about that, but the risk that contaminated groundwater poses to the majority of the population has been blown out of proportion by this study," he said.

"Tube wells are problem, but the government has been testing all wells, and when we find a contaminated one, we clearly mark them and stop villagers using them."

The government is distributing a new peat filter which can purify arsenic contaminated water in the worst-affected areas of the country, and it is expanding its surface water cleaning and distribution network, he added.

The study found that when compared to those exposed to the lowest arsenic levels (less than 10 microgrammes of arsenic per litre of water), people with levels of 10-50 microgrammes had a 34 percent higher risk of death.

Those with the highest level of exposure (between 150 and 864 microgrammes) had a 64-percent higher risk of death.

But even exposure at relatively lower levels carried a risk, a finding that is important for other countries -- there are more than 70 of them, including the United States, India and Mexico -- that face a serious arsenic problem.

In the study, 23 percent of the volunteers were exposed to water with up to 10 microgrammes of arsenic per litre, which is the UN recommended maximum.

Twenty-one percent were exposed to concentrations of between 10 and 50 microgrammes, with 50 microgrammes the current Bangladesh standard.

Thirty-one percent were exposed to between 50 and 150 microgrammes; and 25 percent to between 150 microgrammes and the maximum tested level, of 864 microgrammes.

Chronic exposure to arsenic is linked with cancers of the liver, kidney, bladders and skin, as well as heart disease.

Given the long-term effect of arsenic, taking a temporary break from exposure was no solution, for the risk of death remained the same, the researchers found.

PM

rejoins office today

UNB, Dhaka

After three days of complete rest following a minor operation on her leg, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will resume work today.

Hasina underwent a minor operation on Friday. Dr Kamal Bosh carried out the procedure. On the suggestion of her surgeon, the prime minister went for full rest till Sunday.

A Prime Minister's Office (PMO) official told UNB that as part of her schedule on resuming work, Hasina is scheduled to preside over the regular cabinet meeting at 11:00am today.

Besides, P A Sangma, former speaker of the Lok Sabha and General Secretary of the Nationalist Congress Party of India, will call on the prime minister at Ganobhaban this morning.

Physiotherapy students begin fast unto death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Physiotherapy Student's Union (BPSU) will begin a fast unto death today protesting the government's inaction in establishing Bangladesh College of Physiotherapy.

The hunger strike will be held at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city, said the students at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) yesterday.

Apart from hunger strike, students of nine physiotherapy institutions will lay siege to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) at Mahakhalia on Wednesday to realise their demand.

Earlier, the students staged hunger strike thrice and every time the health ministry officials assured them of establishing the college.

They said foundation stone of the college was also laid on June 10 in 2009 at Mahakhalia and Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhal Haque assured them of beginning the establishment process of the college by July 9 this year.

But no step has been taken yet in this regard, they said. The physiotherapy course was initiated in 1972 but there is no separate public physiotherapy college in the country, they said.



Former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal lights lamps in front of a portrait of poet Sufia Kamal at a programme at the Biam auditorium in the city yesterday marking the 99th birth anniversary of the late poet.

Tribute paid to poet Sufia Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 99th birth anniversary of renowned poet Sufia Kamal, a pioneer in the women's rights movement, was observed yesterday.

Different socio-cultural organisations held various programmes, including discussion and cultural function, to pay tribute to the poet.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad arranged a discussion at Biam auditorium, with its president Ayesha Khanam in the chair. The Parishad also awarded Artist Quayyum Chowdhury at the programme for his outstanding contribution to art and culture.

Chhayanaut organised a cultural programme at its auditorium in the evening.

In the morning, family members of the poet and leaders of Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote placed wreaths at the grave of the poet at Azimpur Graveyard.

Born in Barisal on June 20, 1911, poet Sufia Kamal dedicated her life to empowering women. She was at the forefront of all political, social and cultural movements during her lifetime to establish human rights and achieve women's emancipation.

She took part in all political movements that defined the future of the country since 1947. Her role in the struggle leading to the 1971 Liberation War, anti-autocratic movement in 1990 and the anti-collaborator movement in 1992 are memorable.

Poet Sufia Kamal was instrumental in establishing the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Chhayanaut and Kachi Kanchar Mela.

She received Independence Day Award, Ekushey Padak, Bangla Academy Award, Deshbandhu CR Das Gold Medal, and many other national and international accolades.

The poet passed away on November 20, 1999.

Check population growth for sustainable dev AK Khandakar tells workshop

UNB, Dhaka

Planning Minister Air vice Marshal (Retd) AK Khandakar yesterday stressed the need for checking growth of the country's population to ensure sustainable development.

"Additional population growth is a major barrier to the country's development. At any cost, we have to bring back the population growth rate close to zero," he said while addressing a daylong workshop on Saturday.

National Planning and Development Academy (NPDA) organised the workshop titled 'Sixth five-year planning: Strategies and challenges' at the NPDA auditorium.

Chaired by NPDA Director General Dr MA

FM leaves for France

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni left Dhaka for France yesterday on a three-day visit.

Later, she will also visit Spain from June 23 to 25.

During her stay in France, she will meet Minister for Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner, President of Texworld Michael Scherpe and President of 'France-Bangladesh Friendship Group' Paul Giacobbi, who is also an MP of French parliament.

On June 23, Dipu Moni will have a bilateral meeting with the foreign minister of Spain.

She is expected to return to Dhaka on June 29.

Official sources said Bangladesh enjoys excellent bilateral relations with both France and Spain.



Planning Minister Air vice Marshal (Retd) AK Khandakar speaks at a workshop titled 'Sixth five-year planning: Strategies and challenges' at the NPDA auditorium in the city yesterday.