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in Short

Vital clue to blindness discovered

BBC ONLINE

An international team of researchers have found a clue to one of the leading causes of blindness, which they hope could eventually lead to a cure.

Age-related macular degeneration affects 500,000 people in the UK and is incurable.

The study in the journal Nature found an enzyme known as DICER1 that stops functioning, resulting in the illness.

The macula is a part of the eye which sits in the centre of the retina and is responsible for the fine detail at the centre of the field of vision.

As the disease

STOCK CRASH, PRICE SPIRAL
PM blames it on BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has blamed BNP for the ongoing stockmarket crisis and price hike of essentials.

"BNP has created issues for calling hartal by manipulating the share market and hoarding essential commodities," said Hasina at the weekly cabinet meeting yesterday.

After the meet held at Bangladesh Secretariat, the premier also discussed the issues with ministers, cabinet sources said.

She directed the authorities concerned to identify the culprits behind the crises and take stern actions.

"Pro-BNP businessmen hoard rice and contribute to the rise in prices. They [BNP] then get an issue and call hartal in protest at the price hike," prime minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad quoted her as saying.

The main opposition's stance is self-contradictory, Hasina said.

The premier told ministers that the BNP resorts to share market manoeuvring but subsequently criticises the government for the scam. The evil practice cannot be allowed to continue, Hasina said.

The ruling Awami League chief also said yesterday's hartal was in no way justified since the government fulfilled their demands. She said the hartal ahead of World Cup Cricket has damaged the country's image.

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They have been in front of Salimullah Muslim Hall of Dhaka University for about a hundred years. Suddenly the DU authority felt "their branches may fall on pedestrians anytime," and decides to cut down the trees. The felling had already started when the photo was taken yesterday noon.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

5 robbers beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A mob beat five robbers to death at Kathalia in Sadar upazila early yesterday while they were fleeing after committing a robbery.

Police could not confirm identities of the deceased immediately.

Their bodies were sent to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies, said Md Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Narsingdi Sadar Model Police Station.

Locals said a gang of 12 looted the house of Ponir Hossain at Biranchar in Arahazar of Narayanganj.

Neighbours made

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IMF tags 10 conditions

Govt has to lift ceiling on lending rate, cut SoE losses to get loan

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government must fulfil 10 conditions in the current fiscal year including withdrawal of the ceiling on lending rate and reduction of loss incurred by three major state owned enterprises to get International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans.

Setting the conditions last month, the IMF said the loan proposals are likely to be placed before the IMF Board meeting this month if the government clears its position in this

regard. Bangladesh Bank (BB) in 2009 capped the interest rate at 13 percent on loans of the commercial banks to encourage investment and cut the cost of business. The IMF said the ceiling should be phased out by March.

The IMF conditions are based on the commitments the finance minister made in his last two years' budget speeches.

To get a \$1 billion loan as budget support, the government has held a

series of talks with the organisation in the last few months. The government has to meet the conditions by the end of this fiscal year to get the loan which will be disbursed in three years.

In efforts to fulfil the conditions, Finance Minister AMA Muhith held discussions with the ministries concerned when officials of some ministries projected their reservations about some of the conditions.

However, the minister has made

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Proposals soon for changes in constitution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendments yesterday decided to recommend necessary changes to the republic's charter as soon as possible.

It met at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban after a break of over three and a half months.

Briefing reporters at the JS media centre in the afternoon, Suranjit Sengupta, co-chairman of the JS body, said, "We have discussed some fundamental issues today and hope to reach decisions at the next meeting in consultation with the leader of the House."

He, however, would not elaborate on what they had discussed at the meeting. He only said constitutional issues including the sovereignty of parliament are already in the public domain.

The meeting was adjourned till 2:30pm tomorrow for the absence of the law minister, who had to attend a cabinet meeting yesterday.

Suranjit said people are worried about the delay in going about bringing amendments to the constitution.

"We do not want to keep people in anxiety any more," he observed.

The House formed the 15-member special committee on July 21 last year and assigned it to examine the

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MPs worried over border killings, rise of crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both ruling and opposition lawmakers in parliament yesterday voiced concern over border killings, law and order slide and the sorry state at police stations across the country.

They demanded that the government take effective measures to address the situation.

However, Home Minister Sahara Khatun claimed law and order is better than any time in the past and necessary measures are being taken to improve it further.

On border killing by Indian Border Security Force (BSF), the minister said Indian government has assured Bangladesh of stopping such killings.

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Firefighters dousing the blaze after a bus is set afire at the capital's Gulistan during hartal hours yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Mubarak faces fresh pressure to quit

Opposition says concessions made in talks not enough; US calls on future Egypt leaders to uphold treaties

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak came under fresh pressure yesterday to step down as opponents said concessions made in landmark talks were not enough to halt a revolt against his 30-year rule.

The government shortened by an hour a curfew imposed in three cities amid anti-regime protests to between 8:00 pm

(1800 GMT) and 6:00am, cutting the restriction by an hour, state television said.

The curfew, in effect since January 28 in Cairo, Alexandria and Suez but widely ignored, has run on previous nights from 7:00 pm to 6:00 am. It was first announced nationwide, but later reduced to cover

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MORE ON PAGE 7

ONLINE POLL

Do you find any justification in not withdrawing Monday's hartal called by BNP despite the cancellation of the plan to build new airport in the Arial Beel?

Yes (36.71%)
No (60.88%)
No Comments (2.42%)

TOTAL VOTES : 662

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with the prime minister that BNP is behind the stock market scam and price hike of essentials?

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