

Try bubble desk

FROM PAGE 1
It comes as part of a complete office design that includes a giant communal desk, eight Ficus Panda Trees, a cloakroom and a kitchen.

It ensures the worker remains detached from the sneezes and banter of daily office life.

The thinking behind the bubble desk is that offers the worker privacy while still being connected to a large, communal desk.

It is a modern take on partitioned office space popular in the 1980s and which offered privacy but no visibility or sense of connection to colleagues.

The trees are designed to compensate for the lack of scenery and are rooted into beds of soil buried out of sight.

So far two French companies, Pons and Huot have taken on the office design by Potgiesser.

Steve Bays from Century Office, an office design and supply company based in Essex, said: 'I can see the benefit of the bubble desk in large public areas such as libraries where people want to shut themselves away and read or something, but I'm not sure it would work in an office.'

People like to talk, to consult with each other. You don't want to have to go and knock on your colleague's cocoon to talk with them.

Bangla

FROM PAGE 1
Pakistani politicians regarding East Bengal.

Liaquat Ali Khan, who owed his seat in the assembly to a quota from East Bengal, warned Dhirendranath thus: "He should realise that Pakistan has been created because of the demand of a hundred million Muslims in this subcontinent and the language of a hundred million Muslims is Urdu... The object of this amendment is to take away from the Mussulmans that unifying force that brings them together."

It was Bhupendra Kumar Datta who rose in vigorous defence of Dhirendranath's proposal. As he noted: "Urdu is not the language of any of the provinces constituting the Dominion of Pakistan. It is the language of the upper few of Western Pakistan... It cannot be questioned that Bengali is the spoken language and known to the majority of the people of Pakistan. Besides, it is the richest language in the whole of the subcontinent in every sense of the word."

Bhupendra's remarks brought an indignant response from the non-Bangalee Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Let me assure my honourable friend that he is sadly mistaken when he says that there is a Bengal state. There is no such thing as a Bengal state. There is only one state and that is the state of Pakistan... There is only one state and there shall be one language, the state language and that is Urdu... I am sure the time is not far off when every member of the Pakistan state will be well conversant with the state language, which is Urdu."

Khwaja Nazimuddin then made a clearly misleading statement in the House. Professing to speak on behalf of the people of East Bengal, he said: "I think there will be no contradiction if I say that as far as inter-communication between the provinces and the centre is concerned, they feel that Urdu is the only language that can be adopted."

Muhammaed Hashim Gazder, a member from Sind, was a little more blunt in opposing Dhirendranath's motion. In this view, "Through this amendment looks very innocent on the face of it, through it runs the danger of breaking Pakistan... Sir, we do not want that our Pakistan should be broken up by an innocent looking amendment. I, therefore, appeal to this House to throw out this amendment."

Legal mandate

FROM PAGE 20
foreshores, regulate river uses and coordinate government agencies dealing with rivers.

Environmental group Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) along with a civic movement group Jonoudyog organised the discussion on the draft law at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

The draft of National River Protection Commission Act, 2013, which got the final nod from the cabinet last month, will empower the commission only to make recommendations on river conservation with no executive power.

Government agencies, including the water development board, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and the environment department, are concerned with rivers but have no one accountable for their protection, said Poba chairman Abu Naser Khan.

This has left the scope

for blaming each other without holding anyone responsible, he added.

A High Court judgment in July 2009 asked the government to form a river commission in three months.

Now, after three and a half years, the government is forming a commission that does not have representation of experts on rivers and the environment, noted the chairman.

Human life and civilisation are dependent on rivers, said Prof Ahsanul Hoque of Dhaka University, adding that the destruction of rivers will bring about disastrous consequences.

MM Shafiqullah, former vice-chancellor of Buet, echoed the view.

Advocate Monjil Morshed said some powerful vested interests grab rivers in business interests.

Among others who spoke on the occasion was Monowar Hossain, retired secretary of the BIWTA.

Govt's 'alternative'

FROM PAGE 1
engaged in the project but it fell flat.

"Enough is enough. The ship will sail. We will build our bridge. Our determination about this has not diminished," said Matia.

Whatever be the bridge's future, it would come at a high cost since any commercial financier would charge high interest rate. The WB's offer was only 0.75 percent.

Meantime, many inside the government wonder what pushed the government to reject the loan when the finance minister was making another attempt to sort out the issues.

They fail to understand why one single man -- Syed Abul Hossain -- became more important to the prime minister than the nation's hope and ruling Awami League's pledge.

A top official in the Prime Minister's Office quipped, "With Abul there [the communications ministry], it was bound to happen."

Many in the government now criticise Finance Minister AMA Muhith for what they say "hoping for the WB's loan that was not there, which delayed the project for a year". They feel that otherwise the government could have gone ahead to firm up alternative funding.

Getting a signal from the government's highest level that Abul Hossain will be spared under any circumstances, Muhith finally wrote to the WB president requesting to withdraw the government's request to the WB for bridge financing.

The government spoke about alternative financing at different times. But a few in the government, including the finance minister, continued their efforts to construct the bridge under the WB-led arrangement.

They even lobbied to convince the government's highest level to go for the WB funding even if it meant not sparing Abul Hossain.

Following the WB's cancellation of the funding in June, the group convinced the government's highest level and succeeded in re-engaging the WB in the project in September through strong diplomatic efforts.

The government committed to the WB about conducting a fair probe into the allegations of corruption conspiracy, but it did not include Abul Hossain in the FIR lodged by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Though the prime minister wanted the WB to decide on the bridge financing by January, the finance minister was willing to take more time for holding further talks with the global lender about the complex issues in the project.

Muhith on January 24 said though they wanted a decision from the WB by January, they will wait for some time.

The finance minister

sent a letter to the WB president on January 28 seeking his appointment in February to discuss the bridge financing, Muhith told reporters the next day.

When the government became sure that the WB would not finance the project unless Abul is included in the FIR, it sent the WB a letter withdrawing its request to the WB for the bridge loan.

The prime minister on January 30 held a meeting with Muhith and Communications Minister Obaidul Quader and decided that the government would withdraw its request to the WB for financing the project.

The next day, the finance minister wrote to the WB president informing him about the government decision.

A government official said the finance minister had a plan that if he got the WB president's appointment, he would have held talks with him about the WB financing. He then would have held discussions with the prime minister to make a final decision.

Re-elect AL

FROM PAGE 1
The prime minister was addressing a mammoth public rally at Bera College ground after inaugurating a 70-MW power plant built by the Power Development Board here.

Hasina, also the president of Awami League, congratulated the people of Bera for turning down Matiur Rahman Nizami, the infamous Al-Badr chief during the Liberation War, in the last general elections.

About the ongoing trial of war criminals, she said the present government had pledged to people to try the war criminals to free the nation from a stigma. "We have kept our commitment through the verdict against Bacchu Razakar by the International Crimes Tribunal."

In this connection, she said the country moved backwards for several years due to the rule of anti-liberation forces after the assassination of Bangabandhu in 1975.

The leader of the opposition is engaged in a tricky game to save the war criminals, she complained. "So I call upon all to remain alert about her [Khaleda Zia] conspiracy."

Hasina said the AL government in 1996 had started the work to move the country forward, but it was stopped when the BNP-Jamaat alliance government took over in 2001.

Returning to power in 2008, the AL government resumed its work to take the country to the "highway of development," she added, urging people to cast their vote for her party again for the continuation of the development work.

State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku also addressed the rally.

7 killed

FROM PAGE 20
Monowara, 60, wife of Kanal Sarker, Mohon Mia, 50, son of Sonamoddin, Rokeya, 35, daughter of Afaj Uddin, Nur Johan, 52, wife of Gedu Mia, and Shahton Begum, 50, wife of Golam Ali.

All of them hailed from Uttor Kaliakoir of Singair in the district and were going to see a spiritual leader at Kakrol of Shibalaya, said injured Kariman Begum.

Police seized the bus but its driver and conductor had fled, the OC said.

The dead bodies were sent to Manikang morgue for autopsy, the OC added.

Moudud

FROM PAGE 1
Jatiya Press Club.

On the Padma bridge issue, the BNP leader said construction of the bridge was not the government's main objective, rather they wanted to take a bribe of Tk 2,400 crore.

"Whatever they do, they [government] will not be able to build the bridge within their tenure. They will just lay the foundation stone of the bridge," he added.

The whole government, not just a minister, is involved in the corruption, mentioned Moudud adding, the government has proved that by saying goodbye to the World Bank.

The government has not yet been able to disprove the allegations made against it, which indicates that the allegations are true, he argued.

Shirin Sultana, general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal, spoke at the programme. International Dialogue Aid Foundation organised the discussion styled "Stop political harassment and restore caretaker government."

Loan request

FROM PAGE 1
her recent article in The Washington Times, the opposition leaders said former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain should rather be charged for sedition.

"Due to his [Syed Abul Hossain] corruption, the country could not get the loan from the World Bank," Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque told a sit-in before the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Zia Nagorik Forum, a pro-BNP platform, organised the sit-in demanding the release of BNP leaders including its acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir.

"People believe that the prime minister and her family members are also involved in the corruption," he mentioned.

Terming the recent violence created by Jamaat-Shibir men a "soft political movement", Faroque said the government is facing difficulty in tackling such a programme.

But the government won't be able to stay in power once the BNP starts its agitation, he warned.

The BNP leader accused the government of torturing the opposition by its law enforcement agencies.

The parliament has turned into a "one party House." The opposition lawmakers have filed about 1,000 adjournment motions, but the Speaker did not accept any one of those. Besides, the ruling party lawmakers are very busy in making indecent comments about the BNP chairperson and her family members, he complained.

The opposition, said Faroque, wants to join the House, but they (opposition) cannot proceed on due to the irresponsible acts of the ruling party.

Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal President Moazzem Hossain Alal and member secretary of BNP Dhaka city unit Abdus Salam also spoke at the sit-in.

The government on Thursday withdrew its request to the World Bank for the \$1.2b Padma bridge loan.

Anything possible

FROM PAGE 1
Launched on November 14 last year, Lal Sabuj (Red and Green) School has 29 students, boys and girls aged between nine and twelve, mostly coming from different slums in Rayerbazar.

From 3:00pm to 5:00pm every day, four to five of the young volunteers teach these kids in turns. Sitting on a big piece of polythene on the ground in the middle of the park, the children learn Bangla and English alphabets, numbers, popular rhymes and general knowledge, among other things.

They get their books, notebooks, pens and school dress -- red T-shirts inscribed on the back "Lal Sabuj School" -- from their *Bhaia*s and *Apas*. The money comes from the young volunteers' monthly subscriptions.

There is no weekly holiday, but the kids can have one, though not every week, if they can convince the *Bhaia*s and *Apas* that they need one.

Some of these children used to beg or collect plastic bottles in the park and its surrounding areas before they were persuaded by the volunteers to come to the school.

"You can be so many things if you study. You can become big," says 10-year-old Mehedi Hasan, explaining why he comes to the school. He wants to be a teacher.

His father is a day labourer and elder sister a garment worker. Talking to this correspondent at their Ali Shah slum in Rayerbazar on Wednesday, the sister, Madina Akhter, said she was glad her brother was learning something.

"It is a big opportunity for people like us. It will do him [Mehedi] good," she added.

One of the brains behind the initiative is AR Khan Bappy, who completed his HSC last year and is planning to get admitted to Dhaka University.

He has with him a team of 31 volunteers -- 24 in Dhaka and seven in Chandpur, his hometown. The group has

four female members, all in Dhaka, studying at different universities.

"We wanted to do something for the people and the country. And we thought this was just one way of doing that," Bappy said.

But getting it started was not easy. After they decided to launch a pre-school programme, their first challenge was to get students.

"So we carried out campaigns in different areas, including Shahbagh, Mohammapur and Rayerbazar. We also went from door to door to convince the families to send their children to our school," said Bappy, 20, who lives with his parents at Azimpur in the capital.

One of the female members is Jannatun Nahar Maya, a BBA student at Daffodil University at Dhanmondi.

One day in early November last year she was taking a walk in the park when one of these children came begging for money. In a casual conversation, she asked them if they wanted to study.

They did want to, she was told. "But we are very poor and our parents cannot send us to school."

She thought it would be good if she could do something for them so that they would not beg. She left her phone number with them so they could call her, just in case.

A few days later, Bappy along with some of his friends approached some of these children in the park. As he was already planning to open a school for them, Bappy asked them if they would come to school if they were taught for free.

They would. They gave Maya's number to Bappy and told him about the conversation they had with Maya a few days earlier.

Bappy called her, shared his plan and found she too was thinking along similar lines. So they came together and decided to teach these kids.

"When the children are

done with the basics, we will take them to government primary schools for admission and try to support their studies as much as we can," says Bappy, leader of the group.

The history of the group goes back to 2009, when Bappy was a class ten student studying in Chandpur. He and two of his classmates wanted to do something for the poor in the area. So the three friends set up an organisation called Social Development Organisation (SDO) on March 26 that year. Again, nothing formal, no registration nor any office, but the SDO has since been distributing food, clothes and medicines among the poor in Chandpur and later in Dhaka since 2010 when Bappy left Chandpur on completion of his SSC.

He does not have the exact amount of the money they spent on charity but says it could be about Tk 1 lakh. This includes about Tk 40,000 spent on the school over the last three months, according to their notebook records.

Some of the money came from relatives and family friends but most of it came from members' subscriptions, which is now Tk 150 per month. It was Tk 50 in the beginning.

On naming the school Lal Sobuj, Bappy says: "They are the colours of our national flag. It reminds us that we wanted to do something for the country."

The school is already drawing some attention from those who go to the park. Some of them buy some tiffin for the kids sometimes, others promise help.

Help is yet to come, but Bappy thinks it will eventually arrive. Even if it does not, his group will do as much as it can on its own to help shape dreams of such children.

Twitter hack

FROM PAGE 20
amateurs".

He said it appeared similar to recent attacks on the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

The US newspapers reported that their computer systems had been breached by China-based hackers.

Lord said in a blog post Twitter had discovered unauthorised attempts to access data held by the website, including one attack that was identified and stopped moments after it was detected.

Lord did not say who had carried out the attack, but added: "The attackers were extremely sophisticated, and we believe other companies and organisations have also been recently similarly attacked."

"For that reason we felt that it was important to publicise this attack while we still gather information, and we are helping government and federal law enforcement in their effort to find and prosecute these attackers to make the internet safer for all users."

Internet security specialist Graham Cluley warned Twitter's announcement that emails would be sent to users may prompt a spate of spam emails "phishing" for sensitive information.

He says people should be cautious about opening emails, which appear to be from Twitter.

Another expert in online security, Professor Alan Woodward from the University of Surrey, warned users to be wary of messages sent them by the hackers via Twitter itself.

Netanyahu asked to form coalition

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli President Shimon Peres was expected to task Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with forming a new government after two days of intense talks with parties elected to the new parliament.

On Thursday, Peres concluded the second day of back-to-back meetings with representatives of all 12 parties voted into Israel's 19th Knesset in last month's general election.

Jeweller's looted

in N'ganj
16 hurt as fleeing robbers blast cocktails

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Armed robbers looted gold ornaments worth around Tk 1 crore from a jeweller's in the city's Tanbazar yesterday.

At least 16 people were injured when the robbers blasted around a dozen hand-bombs to make their escape.

Four masked men burst into Reefat Jewellers at Selim Market around 7:00pm. Holding employees and buyers at gunpoint, they smashed showcases and made off with the ornaments. It all took them only a few minutes, said Billal Hossain, an employee of the shop.

Of the injured, two were admitted to Narayanganj General Hospital, while the rest were given first aid treatment.

Monjur Kader, officer-in-charge of Narayanganj Model Police Station, told The Daily Star around 1:30am today that a case had been filed against some unnamed people over the robbery.

According to the case statement, the robbers had taken away around 250 tolas of gold (86 tolas = 1 kg) worth around Tk 1 crore.

Meanwhile, the district's jewellery shop owners began an indefinite strike yesterday in protest at the heist.

Journos

FROM PAGE 20
During the raid, policemen harassed the on-duty journalists and staff in the name of enquiring about their identities.

"Conducting such a raid without any prior permission and specific allegation is unacceptable to us. The raid on the daily's office is a threat to free and independent journalism," mentioned the journalists.

They regretted similar raids conducted last year and called upon the members of the law enforcement agencies to refrain from such activities in future.

Signatories to the statement included presidents of both the factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Ruhul Amin Gazi, secretaries general Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and Shaikat Mahmood, presidents of both the factions of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Omar Faruk and Abdus Shahid, general secretaries Shaban Mahmood and M Baker Hossain, president of National Press Club Kamal Uddin Sabuj and general secretary Syed Abdal Ahmad, president of Dhaka Reporters Unity Shahed Chowdhury and general secretary Elias Khan.

SSC exams

FROM PAGE 1
has dropped by 1.16 lakh.

Some 6,68,268 male and 6,34,935 female students will take the SSC and equivalent examinations at 2,758 centres. Of them, over 9.89 lakh students will appear in the SSC exams.

About 2.25 lakh students will take the Dakhil (secondary level of madrasa) exams while around 88,360 candidates will sit the SSC vocational exams.

The exams start today with Bangla 1st paper for the SSC and SSC vocational students, while the Dakhil candidates will take their only Bangla exam.

Exams in all subjects except for Bangla 2nd paper, English 1st and 2nd papers, mathematics and higher mathematics will be held under the creative question method introduced in 2010.

Under the Dhaka education board, a total of 293 overseas students will also sit for the exams in seven overseas centres.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will visit Azimpur Govt Girls School centre today.