

# POLICE POUNCE ON PROTESTERS



Clockwise from top left, Activists of left-leaning parties at loggerheads with police in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday during a march to the energy ministry, protesting gas price hike. Law enforcers beating up a protester. Police spraying water to disperse demonstrators. A protester lying on a street in the area after he was beaten by cops. A group of protesters vandalising a bus. A picketer jumps on a water-cannon vehicle.

PHOTOS: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Doctors given immunity in draft healthcare law

Say experts, journalists, lawyers calling it discriminatory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft medical care protection act giving healthcare providers "immunity" for negligence in treatment during "any act in good faith" has come under serious criticism from health experts, journalists, and lawyers. They said this would make for a "draconian law" where common people will be deprived of justice.

The draft "Medical Care Protection Act, 2016" says, "Any act accomplished under the law in good faith will not be considered a crime and complaints cannot be filed to the court against him/her for the act."

Criticising the provision, Supreme Court lawyer Abdul Baset Majumder said, "Those who remain in power and apply power are often found having immunity. None is above law and should enjoy immunity."

Doctors sometimes give wrong treatment, and all should be equal to law, he said.

The comments came at a discussion on the draft act, organised by Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad (Swachip), a pro-ruling party doctors' forum, at Jatiya Press

Club in the capital yesterday.

The health ministry drafted the law against the backdrop of attacks on healthcare providers -- doctors, nurses, hospital assistants, and other caregivers -- by patients' relatives, who accused them of negligence or wrong treatment. The healthcare providers also responded by going on work stoppage or strikes, affecting healthcare.

Swachip Secretary General Prof MA Aziz said the country's healthcare providers worked amid various limitations and tried their best to serve.

Some of them might be negligent, but that must be dealt with in a systematic manner, not in a manner that sets doctors and patients against each other. Deputy Attorney General MotaHER Hossain Sajuj appreciated the initiative of enacting such a law but opposed the discriminatory provisions.

According to the draft act, negligence of healthcare providers will constitute a cognisable crime, but it will be bailable and negotiable, whereas threats to the healthcare providers, hindering their jobs, assaulting them or destroying any properties of the care-giving institution will be considered crimes, and they will

be cognisable, non-bailable and non-negotiable.

These are discriminations, said MotaHER Hossain.

Former health minister AFM Ruhul Haque said the law should not be meant to protect doctors, but to improve healthcare and relationship between the service providers and recipients.

He said the Bangladesh Medical & Dental Council (BMDC), a regulatory body for doctors, should handle the major aspects of healthcare or negligence. The law should differentiate clearly the crimes to be dealt with by BMDC and the court.

Ruhul Haque, also a former president of Swachip, advised doctors to stop taking bribes from pharmaceutical companies. "There is an increasing trend. We should look into it seriously. Doctors are earning a bad name for this."

Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar, journalist and novelist Rahat Khan, health rights activist Prof Rashid E Mahubub, and Bangladesh Health Reporters' Forum President Toufiq Maruf also spoke at the discussion, chaired by Swachip President Prof Iqbal Arslan.

## ATTACK ON JOURNO Duja wants expulsion of BCL men within 24hrs

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Journalists' Association (Duja) yesterday issued a 24-hour ultimatum to the DU authorities to expel the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists who beat up a journalist on Tuesday.

Duja President Forhad Uddin and General Secretary Forrukh Mahmud, in a statement, also demanded that the BCL central committee dissolve the Bijoy Ekattor Hall unit committee of the pro-Awami League student organisation.

In the early hours of Tuesday, some BCL activists went on a rampage for around four hours at the dormitory, chased away resident teachers and vandalised the hall provost's office to accommodate their activists to the dorm for its common room. Duja said some 12-15 BCL men covering their faces with cloths beat up Imran Hossain, campus reporter of the UNB, while returning to his room after covering the incident.

The attack was launched as per the direction of the hall unit President Fakir Rasel Ahmed and General Secretary HM Nayan Howladar, said the statement.

After the incident, Nayan claimed that BCL men assaulted Imran over misbehaving with them. "But I can't take responsibility as they did it without my permission."

### Correction

In a news item headlined "1.7pc underage girls raped each day" published on March 15 in The Daily Star, it was inadvertently mentioned that around 1.7 percent of girls under 18 were found to be raped every day last year. Actually, an average of 1.7 girls under 18 were found to be raped every day last year. We regret the error.

## Haors need extra care President tells views-exchange meet

BSS, Kishoreganj

President Abdul Hamid asked the authorities concerned to take extra care while planning development initiatives in environmentally delicate low-lying haor region, as he wrapped up a three-day visit in Kishoreganj, his birthplace.

"Climate change is now an important factor in development, so we must take pragmatic steps in chalking out development plans considering environmental features of particular areas," he told a views-exchange meeting with senior citizens, local representatives and officials yesterday at his hometown of Astagram.

He particularly drew everyone's attention to the haor region's topography saying no infrastructure should disrupt the natural water flows in the low-lying flood plains there.

"Haor people...witnessed massive development but the geographic features made the region largely unsuitable for mega (development) projects," he said.

Locals also highlighted various problems and sought the president's intervention to resolve those. The president said, "Since then I'm trying to do something good for you though I failed to do many things till date that gives me pain always."



## FF heirs get Indian scholarships

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The High Commission of India handed over scholarship cheques to the descendants of the freedom fighters at Bangladesh National Museum yesterday.

The function was jointly organised by the high commission and the MuktiJuddho Academy, said a press release.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith as the chief guest, State Minister for Water Resources Lt Col (ret'd) Muhammad Nazrul Islam and Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla were present among others at the event.



A rally under the banner of Bangladesh Kreta Bhokta Odhiker Sangrakkhan Foundation and Bhejal Protirodhd Foundation in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club, in observance of World Consumer Rights Day yesterday.

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