

## Green activists demand formalin-free fruits

UNB, Dhaka

Different environmental organisations yesterday demanded the government ensure chemical-free fruits for people.

The green activists came up with the demand during a human-chain organised in front of Dhaka University's Fine Arts Faculty.

"The government doesn't feed people... they earn their own livelihood, and they pay tax. So they demand chemical- and poison-free fruits," said Abdus Sobhan, general secretary of Paribesh Bachao Andolan (POBA).

The seasonal juicy fruits like mango, lychee, jackfruit, pineapple, and blackberry have started arriving in the market, but people are unsure whether those are formalin-free, he said.

The fruits laced with formalin cause various diseases, including respiratory problems, asthma,

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A broken tree branch sticking out right over the walkway beside the capital's Ramna Park, close to Hotel Ruposhi Bangla. During a recent storm, a few trees like this one have been broken in the area, posing a threat to passersby. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Public transport a discomfort for half of female commuters

Says ActionAid Bangladesh study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 56 percent of women are reluctant to use public transport in the capital due to a lack of proper facilities, revealed a study yesterday.

It also said 25 percent women found lack of safety on the city roads and 28.5 percent tend to return home before dusk.

The findings of the study on 200 women titled, "Gender Responsive City Structure", conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh, were disclosed at an event at its office in Dhaka, marking International Safe Cities for Women Day.

The study also shows 22.5 percent of women brought allegations of harassment by co-passengers, drivers and their helpers.

Some 93.5 percent of women do not use public toilets while 42 percent think that the city's parks are not safe for them.

Around 96 percent do not feel safe using public toilets while 54 percent talked about lack of facilities. Only 5.5 percent use such toilets with males' help, according to the study.

About footpaths, 71.5 percent of respondents said sidewalks and footpaths are occupied with construction materials and hawkers' makeshift shops.

Forty six percent respondents mentioned about the absence of road crossing facilities like zebra crossing, footbridges or underpasses.

Among the women, 17.5 percent talked about violation of traffic rules by drivers and people, 17 percent about reckless driving, and 52.5 percent about bad traffic management.

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# Haor relief inadequate

Convention told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens yesterday demanded that the government increase relief allocation for flood-hit people in the country's north-eastern haor region.

Their other demands are: declaring the areas "affected areas", postponing lease of jalmahals (water bodies) in the region for the next one year, ensuring alternative livelihoods, and punishing those allegedly involved in irregularities in the construction of embankments in the areas.

The demands were made at "Haor Convention" jointly organised by Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Socialist Party of Bangladesh (SPB) at Moni Singh-Farhad Trust Bhaban in the capital.

Starting from the end of March, the early flash floods destroyed over one million tonnes of crops and huge amount of fish and livestock in the affected areas, covering seven districts, including Sylhet, Sunamganj and Netrokona.

Rights activist Advocate Sultana Kamal said the recent flood not only

damaged crops in the areas but also hampered everyday life of people.

Termining the government relief initiative for the affected people "ridiculous and disgraceful", Sultana Kamal, also chairperson of the Transparency International Bangladesh, said providing Tk 500 and 30 kilogrammes of rice per month is not adequate enough for a flood-affected family.

"I would like to ask the authorities how a five-member family can survive with a kg of rice by ensuring three meals a day for all the members, and how they will meet their daily demands by the money they get," she said.

CPB President Mujahidul Islam Selim said, "I expect the government will soon postpone the lease of jalmahals for the next one year so that people can live on fishing."

He also said the construction of dams in the haor areas should be done through engaging local people.

Eng Mohammad Inamul Haque, former director general of Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, said there is no policy to lease open jalmahals.

But influential people in connection with corrupt government officials get the lease by erecting enclosures in the haors, he said, adding, the illegal practice damage reproduction of fish and ecosystem.

Columnist and writer Syed Abul Maksud said powerful people are attracted to the haors for its vast open space. "The way haor lands are being grabbed, I am afraid markets and brick kilns will be established there soon. We don't want such development."

Professor Emeritus of Dhaka University Serajul Islam Chowdhury said the problems of haor region will not be solved until the government brings solution to water sharing issues with India.

Khalequzzaman, general secretary of SPB; Dr MA Matin, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon; Mustafa Jabbar, president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services; Dr Anwar Hossain, professor of Bangladesh Agricultural University; and several affected people in the haor areas, also spoke.

## A joyful day with pets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Muhatasim Mubassir has never seen a macaw up close before.

But the fourth grader was all smiles yesterday as he not only got to see a blue-gold macaw, but the bird also sat on his arm.

"I feel very excited," said the class-IV student of Bangladesh Elementary School. "I got to see many domestic and foreign birds. I also learnt many things about pets."

Like Muhatasim, children, their parents, bird and animal lovers in the port city got an opportunity to enjoy and spend a day with various pet birds, fish and animals at a "Pet Animal Carnival" yesterday.

The display was held at Premier English School in the city's Panchlaish area, organised by the school and Chittagong Bird Breeders' Association.

"This exhibition is an opportunity to know about pets and how to take care of them properly," said a visitor Rinki Sharma, while her daughter was busy making new friends.

An avid bird lover Mahmudul Hasan, a businessman, was busy showing a young girl his pet Cockatiel. "I feel happy while taking care of my bird. It also helps me to relax after a long day at work."

Sarwar Hossain, a member of Chittagong Bird Breeders' Association, said, "Through the exhibition, we

wanted to show the differences between pet and wild animals so that no one tries to catch wild birds or animals."

"We encourage breeding of pet birds as it is income generating and can save wild birds," he added.

Asif Chowdhury, director of the school, said, "We organised the exhibition to provide information about nature, birds and animals." He said students from four schools took part in it.



A girl is all smiles holding a bird on her palm at the pet carnival yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Around 70 varieties of pet birds including Red-rumped parrot, Love Bird, Sun Parakeet, Rubino Rosella, African grey parrot, Racing Homer, King pigeon, Lahore pigeon, American Fantail and Pouter enthralled visitors.

Also, around 20 types of fish and 12 types of dogs were exhibited at the carnival.

## BANANI RAPE

### Police to collect Nayem's DNA samples

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police will collect DNA samples from Nayem Ashraf alias Halim, an accused in Banani double rape case, to confirm whether those match with the DNA samples of one of the victim's clothes that she handed to investigators of the case.

"Seeking court's permission is underway. It will be a vital evidence to prove him guilty if the samples match," a top official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday said on condition of anonymity.

One of the two female private university students, who were raped in The Raintree Hotel in the capital's Banani on March 28, did not wash her gown she wore that night. She handed it to investigators after filing a rape case with Banani Police Station on May 6, thinking it would help the duo get justice.

The gown was later sent to forensic laboratory of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for analysis. However, another victim did not hand over the clothes as she had washed

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Badruddin Umar gives a lecture as part of a lecture series on "Independent Bangladesh: Socio-economic-political changes" at the capital's Bangladesh National Museum yesterday, which was organised by Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation. On his left are Prof Hasibur Rahman and Dr Ahrar Hossain.

PHOTO: STAR

# AL lacks courage to accept criticism

Says Badruddin Umar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers yesterday at a programme criticised the government for limiting democratic freedom and freedom of speech in the country.

"...the government's oppression and attack on people's freedom continues," politician and columnist Badruddin Umar said at a lecture series programme at the capital's Bangladesh National Museum.

Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation organised the programme.

In his speech, Badruddin Umar said during the Liberation War, people could never imagine that the successive governments will bring immense sufferings to them through their misrule since 1972 to as of today.

"People thought that after the country won freedom, food, shelter, medical treatment, education, job and security will be ensured. But none of those were," he said in his written speech.

Criticising the then government after the Liberation War, the left-leaning politician

said the draft constitution was scripted in English, not in Bangla although people of the country had waged movement and sacrificed their lives till 1947 to 1952 to make Bangla the state language.

He also said Awami League is not such a political party that has courage to accept their criticism or failure and to acknowledge it.

"They blame others and carry out propaganda to suppress their mistakes and failure although they remain in power," Badruddin said, adding that AL's such mentality is yet to change. Dr Ahrar Hossain, director general of Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation, said the government is now controlling everything -- what should be uttered or what should not be written.

"The government is also saying that limiting democratic rights is not a problem for the country if development is ensured," he said.

Prof Hasibur Rahman who presided over the programme said there is no scope at present to speak freely. He also said their criticism is part of building a new Bangladesh.

## Bangladeshi worker jailed in Singapore for raping

UNB, Dhaka

A Bangladeshi worker was sentenced to 17 years in jail and 24 strokes of the cane for abducting and raping a woman at knife point in broad daylight at MacRitchie Reservoir in Singapore, reports The Straits Times.

The convicted is Pramanik Liton, 24, a construction worker.

Delivering his verdict after a three-day trial, Justice Choo said the victim's evidence was "clear, cogent and consistent", while Liton's was "bizarre and incomprehensible."

In an unusual turn on Thursday, Liton told the court he did not have sex

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