



Like Friday, thousands of leaders and activists joined the 21st council of Awami League yesterday. The event ended at Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reelected president and Obaidul Quader general secretary.

Exhibition highlights AL's journey of 70 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid the festivity surrounding 21st National Council of Bangladesh Awami League (AL) in the last two days, a large influx of visitors also roamed at a corner of the historic Suhrawardy Udyan, dedicated to an exhibition on the party's history.

Organised by the party's research wing, Centre for Research and Information (CRI), the exhibition signified the lifelong struggle of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, apart from the heritage and history of AL.

There were ten exhibits under different themes such as -- walk with the leader, road to 21st council, light after darkness, face of ALBD, 7th of March, ALBD regional footprints, ALBD in front of a mirror, and quotes for future leadership.

In a session called "Let's Talk", members of younger generations were privileged to ask their questions and raise concerns directly to party leaders and government ministers.

"I have learnt a lot. It's a very nice and well decorated council. I got the opportunity to ask my questions to the ministers," Sanjida Khanom, a

student of Dhaka University, told The Daily Star.

Photos of Bangladesh's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy were placed at the "walk with the leader" corner.

The "road to 21st council" board displayed the history of the party since birth, while the "light after darkness" segment showed the brutal killing of Bangabandhu and his family members on August 15, 1975.

The "7th of March" corner was decorated with quotes from Bangabandhu's historic speech.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahria Alam; State Minister for ICT Zunaed Ahmed Palak; State Minister for Information Dr Murad Hasan; Fazilatunnesa Bappy MP, and Awami League's publication and publicity wing's Deputy Secretary Aminul Islam Amin took part in the youth engagement session moderated by Nahim Razaq MP.

They called upon the youth to help the government realise its vision to be a poverty-free, developed country by 2041.

Groundwater levels fall drastically around Rohingya camps

UNDP study says

BSS, Dhaka

Water levels around Rohingya camps have fallen by around 5 to 9 metres because of excessive dependence on groundwater in the areas where the forcibly displaced people have taken shelter in Cox's Bazar, according to a recent study of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

"To supply water to the Rohingyas, around 5,731 tube-wells were installed between August and December 2017. This excessive dependence on groundwater is lowering the water levels in the area," said the study report titled "Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities".

It reveals that freshwater options in the affected areas are extremely limited, particularly in Teknaf (Cox's Bazar) and Naikhongchhari (Bandarban), where the bedrock surface at 25-30 metres below ground level makes deep tube-wells a costly option for locals.

Irrigation wells are slowly drying up as the water table is falling as a result of watershed destruction and a significant reduction in the recharge of groundwater reserves, the study reveals, adding that continued pressure on the aquifer may result in salt water intrusion rendering it unusable.

About the impacts of Rohingya influx on land and agricultural production, the study shows that between August 2017 and March 2018, over 100 hectares of crop land in Teknaf and Ukhiya were damaged by refugee activities, in addition to 76 hectares of arable land that has been occupied by Rohingya settlements and humanitarian agencies.

Around 5,000 acres of land have been rendered useless because of sandy soil flowing down from the mountain slopes, which are being used for refugee housing purposes. Grazing lands have also been destroyed.

Teknaf has always faced a lack of freshwater for agricultural production. Faecal contamination is now present in more than four-fifths of sources, and 93 hectares of arable land around the Rohingya camps cannot be cultivated. An additional 380 hectares of land cannot be cultivated either, owing to lack of water for irrigation, according to the study.

In Teknaf, one in every three people was involved in fishing. Since August 2017, a ban has been in place on fishing in the Naf River, for security reasons, putting significant pressure on around 30,000-35,000 fishers and their families.

The study says many fishers have been compelled to work as wage labourers, but the surge of Rohingya workers has led to lower job availability and lower daily wages and that is why the fishing communities of the Naf River are likely to be among the groups most affected by the Rohingya crisis.

The Rohingya influx is also taking a heavy toll on environment in Cox's Bazar. According to the Cox's Bazar Forest Department, the influx destroyed about 4,818 acres of forest reserves worth USD 55 million.

KERANIGANJ FACTORY FIRE

19yr old victim succumbs to injuries; death toll now 22

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another victim, who suffered burn injuries in the December 11 fire at a Keraniganj plastic factory, died yesterday morning -- raising the death toll to 22.

Sahezul Islam Shaju (19) succumbed to burn injuries at the Intensive Care Unit of Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute in Dhaka around 8:15am, Dr Samanta Lal Sen, coordinator of the institute, told The Daily Star.

Shaju had been undergoing treatment at the institute with 70

percent burns since the fire incident occurred at the Prime Pet and Plastic Industries factory in Chunkutia of Keraniganj, he added.

Two more injured are on life support at the institute while eight are in critical condition at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

A devastating fire engulfed the factory on December 11. Firefighters recovered one charred body from the factory and rescued 33 who were hospitalised.

Later, 21 more succumbed to their injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Sheikh Hasina National

Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute.

The factory had been operating without permission for years. It had a single gate for entry and exit and no emergency exits whatsoever, said survivors and fire officials.

Locals alleged that the authorities concerned turned a blind eye to the lack of safety measures at the factory even though it had been producing disposable plastic cups and plates for around 10 years.

Keraniganj upazila administration sealed it off on December 13.

Relatives of the victims demanded stern action against the factory owner.

U-loops for easing

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A feasibility study was carried out at the time, and the number was brought down to 11 as Ashulia and Gazipur are under other administrations.

SM Salehuddin, chief adviser of M/S Humayara Enterprise, who was involved in the feasibility study of the project said traffic congestion happens at all the turning points and intersections of the city.

They observed that vehicles start making U-turn from the middle lane or left lane -- blocking the main flow of traffic, he said. "We will separate them with a barrier from 200ft behind."

A vehicle that wants to go straight would be able to do so uninterrupted due to the U-loop, he said.

It is possible to ease 30 to 40 percent of traffic congestion through U-loops, he said.

Intent to save rivers

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November last year to second.

BR has long been working to replace Kalurghat Bridge, constructed in 1931, initially designated as a railway bridge. Later in the '60s, it was modified and turned into a rail and road bridge.

In November last year, BR finally decided to construct a dedicated railway bridge with a dual gauge track. Earlier, it had decided to replace the old bridge with a new one -- a single track and two-lane road.

Review of the feasibility work for the bridge is now underway, a BR official said.

Md Shamsuzzaman, however, said the problem centring Garai Bridge has been resolved. He did not elaborate further.

Secretaries to the Road Transport and Highway Division, Bridges Division, railways ministry, Local Government Division, shipping ministry; member (physical infrastructure) of planning ministry; BIWIA chairman; chief engineers of Roads and Highways Department and Local Government Engineering Department, and BR Director General are expected to join today's meeting.

Inaction makes situation

FROM PAGE 5

of Environment, said the Medical Waste (management and processing) Rule of 2008 prohibits approval of medical establishments without proper waste management system.

"The city have no medical units that have proper medical waste management system," he said, adding that they often serve notices on them. "We cannot take actions considering the necessity of health services," he added.

WHAT RMCH SAYS

Saiful Ferdous, a deputy director of RMCH, claimed that they separate 90 percent of the recyclable items and syringes.

"Separating medical waste as per recommendations is not always possible due to a lack of skilled staff," he said, adding that the hospital has only 75 trained cleaning staff and 210 workers were hired on daily payment basis.

CLINIC OWNERS' VERSIONS

Mokhlesur Rahman, general secretary of the local unit of Bangladesh Private Hospital, Clinic and Diagnostic Centres' Association, said they signed an agreement with the city corporation in 2014 for taking their regular waste to the designated points and hazardous items to RMCH incinerator.

As the incinerator does not function properly, they send all types of wastes to the designated points. "It is harmful, but we have nothing else to do," he said.

About separation, he said, "If we don't separate those waste as per order, our licences would not be renewed."

PRISM'S PROJECT GOING ON

Under the agreement, PRISM is installing an autoclave, an incinerator, an effluent treatment plant and a burial point for human body parts on 33 decimal of land given by the RCC at the landfill.

PRISM official Majharul Islam, however, said they will only dispose of the solid waste.

The project at Tk 2 crore is likely to be completed by February next year, he said.

PHOTO OF THE DAY

AMRAN HOSSAIN



Amid the chills of winter morning, dewdrops on leaves glistening in the lazy sunshine is a sight to warm the heart. This photo was taken in Cumilla.

Land Sale... Land Sale

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2	Supply of Medicine (Re-tender)	Tk.1000

Interested bidders may obtain Tender Schedule from the Purchasing Department on submission of a letter on their respective letterhead up to **January 08, 2020** during office hours. The quotations will be received up to **02:30 pm on January 09, 2020** and will be opened on the same day at **03:00 pm** in presence of the bidders, if any.

Pan Pacific Sonargaon authority reserves the right to accept/reject any tender in part or in full or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Purchase Manager, Tel (880) 2 9128008, Extn: 4164

Hammad Hassan's janaza today

CITY DESK

The namaz-e-janaza of Hammad Hassan Shibli, son of late Major General Mahmudul Hassan, will be held at Dhaka Cantonment Central Mosque at 9am today.

His second janaza will be held at Belabo upazila field in Narsingdi after Zuhr prayers.

Hammad (44) died due to a cardiac failure on December 13 at his residence in Austin, Texas in the US.

Three die in road accidents

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around 12pm. Quoting witnesses, the OC said Asaduzzaman fell on the road when a Dinajpur-bound speeding bus hit his vehicle from behind. Then the bus driver ran him over, killing him on the spot.

On information, police with help of locals recovered the body and handed it over to his family after completion of legal formalities.

A case was filed in this connection, the OC said.

Two persons were killed in a road crash at Kashipur under Airport Police Station on Dhaka-Barishal highway in Barishal Metropolitan area on Friday midnight, reports our Jhalakathi correspondent.

The deceased were -- battery-run auto-rickshaw driver Siddik Hossain (55), son of Md Haider Ali from Babuganj upazila of Barishal, and Lokman Hossain (39), son of Abdur Rof Bapari of Rampatti under Airport Police Station.

Siddik was going towards the airport with passenger Lokman when their vehicle collided with a high-speed BRTC bus coming from the opposite direction. The driver died on the spot while Lokman died on the way to Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital, said Jahid Bin Alom, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Police has detained the bus, but the driver and helper managed to flee, added the OC.



People walk on a long stretch of sandbags laid on a dried up Karnaphuli riverbed to board a ferry anchored in the river. Every day, hundreds from Patiya, Boalkhali and Karnaphuli upazilas in Chattogram make this journey due to drastic decrease in navigability in the river, caused by siltation and emergence of shoals in winter. This photo was taken from Shah Amanat Bridge recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN