

Don't want dev at cost of trees

Environmentalists continue protests to save trees on Saat Masjid Road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The locals are protesting against Dhaka South City Corporation's move to fell trees in the name of infrastructure development and beautification works at Saat Masjid Road in Dhanmondi.

They held a human chain yesterday in front of Dhanmondi's Abahani field under the banner of Saat Masjid Sarak Gach Rokkha Andolan (Movement to save trees on Saat Masjid Road).

The trees are being cut from Jigatala to near the Abahani playground under a Tk 9.62 crore project, aiming to develop different infrastructures, including the beautification of islands, footpaths and road medians, and the construction of public toilets, under DSCC.

The project, which commenced on September 20, 2022, is scheduled to be completed by June 30, 2023.

DSCC has cut over 600 trees under this project, including 20-25 year old Banyan trees. They have also started cutting trees on Mirpur Road, said Amirul Rajiv, one of the organisers of the movement.

The Daily Star has also independently verified that DSCC is cutting trees on Mirpur Road as part of the same project.

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said, "If the authority wants, they can do this development by protecting all the trees. But, they didn't. We demand that DSCC cease felling trees. Otherwise, we'll plan a larger movement."

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STOP KILLING TREES... Protesters gather near Dhanmondi's Abahani field yesterday to save trees from being felled as part of a development project of Dhaka South City Corporation. Over 600 trees, including 20-25 years old Banyan trees, have already been cut down. The poster highlighted in this picture emphasises the importance of preserving the environment. The message is clear: progress should not come at the cost of natural resources.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

AIRPORT ROAD

Traffic to be limited for seven hours from Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vehicular movement in front of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport will be restricted for seven hours from Friday night due to the ongoing construction of the flyover in front of the third terminal of the airport.

Traffic will be restricted from 11:00pm on Friday to 6:00am on Saturday, according to a circular of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh yesterday.

Traffic movement on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Balaka Bhaban and Dhaka airport points was also restricted for seven hours from Friday night (April 28) for the construction.

Last week, an official, wishing anonymity, told The Daily Star that such restriction of vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway will remain effective every Friday for another three months.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

'Journalism is not a crime'

Foreign diplomats urge greater media freedom

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Journalists should not be punished or face criminal charges just for doing their job, said foreign diplomats, marking the World Press Freedom Day yesterday, calling for upholding the free media that is essential for promoting human rights, democracy and social justice.

They made the remarks at a discussion titled "Shaping a future of rights: Freedom of expression as a driver for all other human rights" hosted by the US embassy in Dhaka at the American Center.

Representatives of the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) in Bangladesh, which comprises the embassies of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and US, and journalists attended the event.

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'Repeal DSA right away'

Demands victims' network

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Victims of the Digital Security Act yesterday demanded that the act must be repealed immediately after Law Minister Anisul Huq stated that the act should only be amended.

In a statement released yesterday, the DSA victims' network stated that the DSA is one of the most oppressive and restrictive laws in Bangladesh, and goes against the fundamental rights of its citizens.

It also mentioned that around 66 children have become victims of this act, and it is being used against citizens in 60 percent of cases.

The body stated that the law should not be reformed only for journalists. Rather, it should be repealed with immediate effects.

The statement also mentioned the case of Jagannath University student Khadijatul Kubra and others who

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Bangladesh slips 1 notch to 163 in press freedom index

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh has slipped one notch in this year's World Press Freedom Index, prepared by Reporters Without Borders, also known as Reporters sans frontières (RSF).

Bangladesh ranked 163rd out of 180 countries. The country was in 162nd position last year, according to the report released yesterday.

India has dropped 11 notches to 161st from 150th. Norway topped the Index for the seventh year in a row while North Korea placed at the bottom.

Meanwhile, Myanmar ranked 173rd, Pakistan 150th, Sri Lanka 135th, and Nepal 95th.

According to the 2023 World Press Freedom Index -- which evaluates the environment for journalism in 180 countries and territories and is published on World Press Freedom Day [May 3] -- the situation is "very serious" in 31 countries, "difficult" in 42, "problematic" in 55, and "good" or "satisfactory" in 52 countries. In other words, the environment for journalism is "bad" in seven out of ten countries, and satisfactory in only three out of ten.

More than a fifth of the 168 million Bangladeshis live below the poverty line and have little access to mainstream media. The internet plays a growing

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'Misuse of DSA must be stopped'

Says info minister; journalist leaders demand amendment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Claiming that the misuse of the Digital Security Act (DSA) has reached an extreme level, editors and journalists leaders yesterday demanded that the law be amended.

They made the demand while speaking at a discussion marking World Press Freedom Day, organised by Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud, who was the chief guest at the event, also said the misuse of the law should be stopped.

"Digital Security Act was enforced to protect all. Many journalists also filed cases under the act against yellow journalism... But the misuse of the act must be stopped," said Hasan Mahmud.

DSA was enforced to protect all. Many journalists also filed cases under the act against yellow journalism... But the misuse of the act must be stopped.

HASAN MAHMUD

"Filing cases for no reason and immediate arrest after a case is filed should be stopped," he added.

Speaking about the journalist leaders' demand to exclude journalists from the act, the information minister said, "I think it's not advisable to exclude a specific quarter from any law. But we should also make sure that the law is not misused against any quarter or any people."

Samakal Editor Mozammel Hossain said, "At present, we have to deal with two issues. One is the repressive laws, and another is terrorist attacks. District and upazila based journalists are coming under attack while practising independent journalism and exposing corruption."

Jugantar Editor and former president of Jatiya Press Club Saiful Alam said, "If there are no healthy and independent media, it is difficult to deliver the output of freethinking to the audience."

Former president of Bangladesh Federal Union

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DSA CASE

Prothom Alo editor gets bail till Aug 16

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman until August 16 in a case filed against him under DSA.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after Matiur Rahman's lawyers submitted a bail application.

Before that, the lawyer submitted another petition, seeking the court's permission for furnishing bail bond. The judge allowed the lawyer to submit the bail bond upon a bond of Tk 20,000 with two guarantors.

The judge fixed August 16 for full hearing on the bail petition, said Additional Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal.

On April 2, the High Court granted a six-week anticipatory bail to Matiur.

The bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md Aminul Islam passed the order after Matiur appeared before it.

A lawyer named Abdul Malek Mashiur Malek, 61, filed the case against Matiur, reporter Samsuzzaman Shams, an unnamed assistant cameraman, and unnamed others on March 29 with Ramna Police Station.

Malek accused them of using print, online, and electronic media to tarnish the image and reputation of the state, according to FIR.

The case was filed under the sections 25, 31 and 35 of the DSA.

Bangladesh tops South Asia in child marriage

Says Unicef report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 51 percent of girls in Bangladesh are victims of child marriage, according to a Unicef report released yesterday.

Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of child marriage in South Asia and the eighth highest prevalence in the world, with approximately 34.5 million girls married off before they turn 18, and over 13 million married off before they turn 15, said the report, prepared based on Bangladesh 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey's data.

Sheldon Yett, Unicef Representative to Bangladesh, called for urgent action to protect girls from the danger of child marriage and ensure that they have the opportunity to grow up to their fullest potential.

"Millions of girls are being robbed of their childhood and denied their fundamental rights," said Sheldon.

The report said conflicts, climate-related disasters, and the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 are helping to increase the drivers of child marriage worldwide, making it difficult for girls to access healthcare, education, social services, and community support that protect them from child marriage.

Unicef Executive Director Catherine Russell said, "We have proven that progress to end child marriage is possible. It requires unwavering support for vulnerable girls and families."

Time to rethink HIV prevention approach

Experts tell conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is a need for rethinking the traditional HIV prevention approach in terms of integrating them with broader sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) of the people, especially sex workers, the transgender population and people with drug dependency, Dr Sharful Islam Khan, head of programme for HIV and AIDS (Infectious Division) at icddr,b, said at an event yesterday.

"There is a need for a coordination among all disease programmes to ensure efficient use of resources to get better and sustainable outcomes," he said at a conference titled "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Bangladesh".

icddr,b organised the event at a city hotel to showcase research and innovation ideas for solving SRHR issues.

"Traditional interventions on HIV, for example, primarily provide services related to the prevention of STIs and HIV. But the key populations suffer from diverse SRHR burdens which are often neglected and unexplored," Dr Khan said while presenting the keynote.

He stressed evidence-based policy making decisions in this regard and informed that icddr,b under the AdSEARCH project will establish a surveillance system on SRHR with the key populations, which is even absent in global arena.

At the day-long conference, young researchers presented their proposals and innovative ideas.

Speaking as chief guest, Secretary of Health Services Division Anwar Hossain Howlader urged physicians to ensure proper care to patients.

Two eminent gynecologists -- National Professor Shahla Khatun and Prof Ta Chowdhury -- and public health experts Halida Hanum Akter received SRHR Excellence Award 2023. Seven best abstracts and three innovative concepts were also awarded.

16 more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 16 patients were hospitalised with dengue in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new ones, the total number of dengue cases rose to 1,053 this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Some 74 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment in hospitals.

The total number of deaths in dengue was 281 last year while the total number of cases was 62,382, of which 23,162 were outside Dhaka, according to the DGHS.



Two passengers, two umbrellas, and one rickshaw-puller -- all smiles -- despite the rain. Rain drenched the capital yesterday afternoon, bringing much-needed relief to Dhaka commuters after a hot summer morning. This photo was taken in Dhaka University area.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Hefajat leader Mamunul gets permanent bail in five cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted permanent bail to Hefajat-e-Islam leader Mamunul Haque in five cases filed in 2021.

The cases were lodged with Paltan Police Station in Dhaka and Hathazari Police Station in Chattogram over violence and preventing police from discharging duties during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh in March 2021.

The HC bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md Aminul Islam passed the order.

Mamunul cannot be released from jail as he is arrested in several other cases. He was arrested on April 18, 2021.