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Thimphu to sign hydropower deal with Dhaka soon

Says Bhutanese envoy at meeting with president

UNB, Dhaka

Bhutan and Bangladesh are close to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in hydropower between the two neighbouring countries.

Ambassador of Bhutan Rinchen Keuntsy said this during a courtesy meeting with President Mohammed Shahabuddin in Bangabhaban yesterday.

Press secretary to the president Joynal Abedin briefed reporters after the meeting.

President Shahabuddin said signing a bilateral MoU on cooperation in hydropower will strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

He said the excellent relations between the two

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina waves at people at Dhaka airport after a VVIP flight of Biman, carrying her, landed at the airport at 10:05am. The premier returned home from London yesterday after her 15-day official visit to Japan, the US and the UK.

PHOTO: PID

PM returns home after foreign visit

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home from London yesterday morning after her 15-day official visit to Japan, the US and the UK.

A VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, carrying the premier, landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 10:05am. The flight departed Heathrow International Airport, London at 6:25pm local time on Monday.

On April 25, Hasina left Dhaka for Tokyo on a four-day official visit to Japan on the first leg of her official three-nation visit. She went to Japan at the invitation of her Japanese counterpart Kishida Fumio.

During her stay in Tokyo, the Bangladesh PM met Emperor of Japan Naruhito, held summit meeting with Fumio.

She and her Japanese counterpart witnessed the exchange of eight instruments, mostly

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'There are only 37 trees left'

Environmentalists protest through songs in Dhanmondi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Saat Masjid Road was abuzz with a unique cultural programme yesterday evening, as environmentalists gathered to protest against the recent tree felling in the area. Through the folk songs, they highlighted the urgent need to preserve nature and protect the environment.

They also held a human chain on the road near Abahani field to protest the ongoing tree felling.

The event drew a crowd of concerned citizens who joined in to raise their voices against the reckless destruction of trees in the locality by the Dhaka South City Corporation.

Chief Executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association Syeda Rizwana Hasan, social activist Shireen Huq, coordinator of Saat Masjid Road Tree Protection Movement Amirul Rajiv, and Coordinator of Green Voice Alamgir Kabir, among others, spoke.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan said, "We have submitted a memorandum to the mayor, but we haven't heard anything back. There are currently only 37 trees remaining on Saat Masjid road [from Jigatala to Shankar]."

Shireen Huq said, "It is the responsibility of the city mayors to protect the trees of this city, but they are the ones felling trees instead."

Amirul Rajib said, "We will stay the night here to protect the remaining trees. We won't let them (DSCC) cut any more trees."

The trees are being cut from Jigatala to near the Abahani playground under a Tk 9.62 crore project, aiming to develop different infrastructures.

It is the responsibility of the mayors to protect the trees of this city, but they are the ones felling trees instead.

SHIREEN HUQ

SAAT MASJID ROAD

Trees felled flouting rules

DSCC did not take necessary permission to cut trees, say forest department sources

MOSTAFA YOUSUF and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The lush greenery of Dhaka is slowly disappearing, and in some instances the perpetrator behind this devastation is none other than the Dhaka South City Corporation.

DSCC's tree-felling frenzy is not just environmentally disastrous it's also illegal under existing provisions, as the city authority has been cutting trees without obtaining the necessary permission from the Forest Department, according to the department sources.

The Forest Department can file a lawsuit against the city corporation for this infraction, confirmed inside sources there, but whether they will exercise their power is another matter entirely.

Meanwhile, environmentalists have said it's time to hold DSCC accountable for their reckless actions and protect the green lungs of the city before it's too late.

Trees are being cut in the name of infrastructural development and beautification works at Saat Masjid Road in Dhanmondi, despite the fact that permission must be obtained from the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) under Section 5 of the Forest Product Transit Rules 2011.

Md Saidul Islam, the divisional forest officer of Dhaka Social Forestry, said he cannot recall whether the DSCC sought permission or not. "As per the rules, it

is mandatory to seek permission from our department before cutting any trees," he added.

However, a Forest Department official, who wished to remain anonymous, said they never received any application from the city corporation for cutting the trees on Saat Masjid Road. The official also said the Forest Department could sue any individual or agency for violating the rule.

Dhaka has lost 56 percent of its green coverage over the last three decades, according to a study conducted by Jahangirnagar University's Department of Environmental Sciences last year.

This is a cause for concern, particularly in light of recent record-high temperatures. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) recommends that a city must have 25 percent of green coverage out of its total area.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, the chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said, "In urban planning, it is not mandatory to put the divider in the middle of the road. They are doing it on the pretext of beautification or facilitating vehicular movement. However, it serves no such purpose."

"Public interest and people's expectations must be prioritised in projects that are implemented with public money," added Rizwana.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Man dies after being hit by bus in Jatrabari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man died after being hit by a bus in Dhaka's Jatrabari area yesterday morning.

The identity of the deceased, aged around 50, could not be known immediately.

The man died on the spot after a bus of Turag City Service hit him as he was crossing the Jatrabari Chourasta around 11:30am, said Nur Mohammad, a sub-inspector of Jatrabari Police Station.



Activists form a human chain near Abahani field yesterday, to protest the recent tree felling on Saat Masjid Road. Holding up banners and posters that highlight the importance of preserving nature, they send a strong message that development cannot come at the cost of the environment.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

YUNUS' ORGS HC drops 3 petitions from cause list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday dropped three writ petitions filed by two organisations, which were established by Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, from its cause list.

Of the three, Grameen Kalyan filed two petitions in 2017 and Grameen Telecom Trust submitted one in 2020 challenging the legality of government's action for charging around Tk 1,100 crore as tax since 2012-2013 to 2016-2017 fiscal years.

Yesterday, the HC bench led by Justice Farah Mahub dropped the petitions from its cause list saying that the hearing of the petitions can be held

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Recruit doctors to 16 vacant posts in jails

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to recruit doctors for 16 vacant posts in prisons across the country to ensure proper medical treatment for prisoners.

Secretaries to the ministries of health and home, and the inspector general (IG) of prisons have been directed to comply with the order and to submit a compliance report to the court by June 6.

The HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Mohammad Shawkat Ali Chowdhury passed the order while hearing a writ petition filed by SC lawyer Md JR Khan Robin on February 18, 2019, seeking necessary directives on this issue.

Earlier, the office of the IG of prisons submitted a report through its lawyer to the HC bench, saying that a total of 125 physicians have been appointed on deputation in the prisons and 16 posts of doctors are vacant there.

On November 15, the bench asked the government to appoint doctors on deputation to vacant posts at the prisons in order to provide treatment to prisoners and to submit a report after complying with the order before it.

MITU MURDER

Trial against former SP Babul to continue: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the way for the lower court concerned to run trial proceedings against former Chattogram SP Babul Akhter in the case filed over his wife Mahmuda Khanam Mitu's murder.

The HC bench of Justice SM Kuddus Zaman and Justice Shahed Nuruddin also rejected a revision petition filed by Babul challenging charge framing of the case, Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi told The Daily Star. He said there was no legal bar for the trial court to continue the trial proceedings of the case following the HC order.

Mitu's father filed the case accusing eight people, including Babul as the prime accused, on May 11 last year.

Lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir appeared for Babul during the hearing.

21 more hospitalised with dengue

UNB, Dhaka

Twenty-one more people were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till yesterday.

Of the new patients, 15 were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Seventy-seven dengue patients, including 62 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 1,144 dengue cases, 1,056 recoveries, and eleven deaths this year.

PRAYER TIMING
MAY 10

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-10 12-45 5-00 6-36 8-00
JAMAAT 4-45 1-15 5-15 6-40 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION