

Stand up against militancy, terrorism

PM urges Islamic scholars

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the hajj pilgrims and Alem-Ulema (Islamic scholars) to contribute in building a modern and knowledge-based developed nation by keeping the children away from militancy and terrorism.

The premier made this call while inaugurating the Hajj Programme-2023 (1444 Hijri) at the Hajji Office in the capital's Ashkona area as the chief guest.

She said Islam is a religion of peace and Islam ensures the rights of people. "Those who are involved in militancy and terrorism they have no religion," she added.

Hasina urged the hajj pilgrims to pray that Bangladesh and its people are protected from any man-made or natural disaster. She also asked them to pray that the development and the current progress of Bangladesh would continue in the future.

The first hajj flight is scheduled to depart from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for Saudi Arabia at 2:45am today.

This year, a total of 122,221 pilgrims from Bangladesh are going to perform the hajj. The number of hajj pilgrims from Bangladesh was 57,585 last year due to the Covid-19 restriction.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, 127,198 pilgrims from Bangladesh performed hajj in 2019. The hajj is expected to be held on June 27 depending on the sighting of the moon.



Youth activists from Fridays for Future Bangladesh and YouthNet for Climate Justice gather in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday, calling on G7 countries to cease financing fossil fuel-based power projects and shift their investments towards renewable energy sources. This plea takes centre stage in anticipation of the upcoming 49th G7 Summit, held in Hiroshima, Japan, where global leaders will convene to address pressing environmental challenges.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Stop financing fossil fuel'

Bangladeshi youth activists urge G7 countries

UNB, Dhaka

Youth activists in Bangladesh have called on the G7 countries to immediately halt the financing of fossil fuel-based power projects and prioritise investments in renewable energy.

During a climate strike held yesterday in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital, Fridays for Future Bangladesh and YouthNet for Climate Justice pledged to end fossil fuel financing and reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuel imports, primarily liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The urgent plea came ahead of the 49th G7 Summit, scheduled to take place on May 19-21, 2023, in Japan's Hiroshima. The summit will address regional and global crises, including the pressing climate crisis.

SATMASJID ROAD

A curious tradeoff

DSCC planting flower saplings in place of axed trees, environmentalists term the move illogical

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has faced criticism from environmentalists after cutting down several hundred trees, including Banyan, Nim, Plum, and other varieties, along the median of Satmasjid Road.

In what appears to be an attempt to 'compensate' for the loss, DSCC has now started planting saplings of flower trees in the same spot.

According to a press release issued by DSCC yesterday, the flower trees being planted include Rangan, Kamini, Bagan Bilash, Chandraprova, and Kanchan.

We aim to plant a total of 1500 tree saplings on the median of Satmasjid Road. We hope to complete our efforts to adorn the road dividers with flowering trees within the next two days."

The entire project, including the cost of planting the saplings, soil, sand, cow dung, and fertiliser, is estimated to amount to Tk 10.40 lakh.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), voiced her concerns over felling hundreds of local, herbal, and fruit trees and

The expenditure of Tk 10.40 lakh in planting the flower trees seems to be nothing more than a wasteful misuse of hard-earned public money.

SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN
Chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association



However, environmentalists have strongly condemned this move, describing the felling of large trees and their replacement with flower trees as a tragic waste of public money that lacks any logical justification. Flower trees are not an adequate substitute for the ecological benefits provided by the felled giants, they said.

The press release from DSCC mentioned that the tree saplings are being planted with a distance of four to five feet between each sapling. So far, 650 saplings have been planted, it added.

DSCC Project Director Md Khairul Baker said, "We have already begun planting flower tree saplings on the medians,

replacing them with flower trees.

Pointing out DSCC's promise that more trees will be planted in place of the felled ones, she questioned whether planting 1,500 flower trees like Rangan and Bagan Bilas could truly be considered a tree plantation.

Rizwana emphasised the importance of considering factors such as heat absorption, air pollution reduction and the importance of seeking shade under large trees.

"The expenditure of Tk 10.40 lakh in planting the flower trees seems to be nothing more than a wasteful misuse of hard-earned public money," she said.

'A selfless crusader for secularism, democracy'

Eminent citizens pay tribute to Pankaj Bhattacharya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Politicians, academics, rights activists, and other notable figures gathered at the National Museum to express their condolences and pay tribute to the late Oikya NAP President Pankaj Bhattacharya yesterday.

Described as a lifelong crusader for the establishment of a secular and democratic society, as well as a champion for the rights of marginalised people, Pankaj was remembered as an honest, humble, and fearless politician who dedicated his life to serving the nation.

During the commemoration meeting organised by a group of citizens, mourners expressed their grief through the recitation of poems and the singing of Tagore songs, commemorating Pankaj's contributions as one of the organisers of the country's Liberation War.

Dr Kamal Hossain, president of Gano Forum and a longtime colleague of Pankaj, praised his fearlessness in standing against injustice, even in the face of risk.

"Pankaj fought tirelessly for the rights of the people until his last breath," he said.

Pankaj was a key member of Gano Forum, which was established in 1993, and eventually formed the Oikya Nap in 2013.

He had previously served as the General Secretary of the National Awami Party during the Liberation War and fulfilled his duties until 1971.

Pankaj played a crucial role as one of the leaders of the NAP-Communist Party-Students Union Special Guerrilla Forces, an armed force that fought valiantly during the Liberation War.

Dr Kamal emphasised the importance of spreading Pankaj's ideology and selfless contributions to the nation and its people. He noted that Pankaj was an exceptional individual who could not be swayed by allurements or threats, and his memory would forever remain with those who knew him.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Workers Party, highlighted Pankaj's unwavering stance against communalism and his advocacy for a secular society. He also recognised Pankaj as a vocal advocate for the rights of indigenous groups.

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud echoed these sentiments, stating that Pankaj was a non-



Described as a lifelong crusader for the establishment of a secular and democratic society, as well as a champion for the rights of marginalised people, Pankaj was remembered as an honest, humble, and fearless politician who dedicated his life to serving the nation.

communal man who actively participated in every democratic movement in the country.

Sultana Kamal, a prominent rights activist, described individuals like Pankaj as rare, emphasising his honesty and steadfastness in his belief that politics should not divide people or society. She praised Pankaj for his dedication to the welfare of the common people, without seeking personal supremacy.

Sarwar Ali, a trustee of the Liberation War Museum, recalled Pankaj's unwavering support for victims of communal attacks and his commitment to resisting communalism. He regarded Pankaj as a trusted and true friend of marginalised communities.

Presiding over the meeting, historian Syed Anwar Hossain hailed Pankaj as a true politician who sacrificed his life for the betterment of the common people.

During the commemoration meeting, several other notable figures, including Communist Party of Bangladesh President Mohammad Shah Alam, Oikya NAP central leader ASMA Sabur, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum General Secretary Sanjeeb Drong, Pankaj's brother-in-law Manas Basu, Sammilita Samajik Andolan leader Mohammad Nur Mohammad, thespian Ramendu Majumdar, DU Pro-VC and poet Muhammad Samad, delivered speeches honouring Pankaj's memory.

Muhith was pioneer of environmental movement: minister

BSS, Dhaka

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin yesterday said an eminent economist, diplomat, freedom fighter and former finance minister AMA Muhith was a pioneer of the environmental movement in Bangladesh.

"He was the founding president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), an organisation for the environmental movement. Before this, he was also the founding president of an environmentalist group called 'Parash'. If everyone is environmentally conscious like him, the overall environment of the country will improve," said Shahab Uddin.

The environment minister was addressing a programme of the unveiling and commemoration of the memorial book, titled "Kingbadanti Abul Mal Abdul Muhit", at Diploma Engineering Institute in the capital's Kakrail as the special guest, said a press release.

Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

3-yr-old 'bought' for Tk 2 lakh

Five including human trafficking couple arrested

STAR REPORT

Rab said its members rescued a three-year-old boy in Gopalganj yesterday, more than three weeks after he was abducted from near his home in the capital and subsequently "sold" for Tk 2 lakh in a deal struck on Facebook.

The law enforcers also arrested five people, including the abductor Pijus Kanti Paul, 29, and Sujan Sutar, the man who "bought" the toddler.

The three other arrestees are -- Pijus's wife Riddhita Paul, 25, Pallav Kanti Biswas, 52 and his wife Baby Sarker, 46.

In a press briefing at the Rab media centre yesterday, Rab-2 Commanding Officer Anwar Hossain Khan said on April 26, Pijus lured the child with chocolates and abducted him from near his home in Dhaka Udyan. The boy was

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

3 hospitalised with dengue

UNB, Dhaka

Three more people were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

No cases were recorded outside Dhaka in the past 24 hours till yesterday.

According to DGHS, 127 dengue patients, including 106 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.



PRAYER TIMING		MAY 20	
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib Esha
4:05	12:45	5:00	6:40 8:30
JAMAT 4:40	1:15	5:15	6:45 8:30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION			



In Mirpur's Diabari area, makeshift sugarcane vans line the roadside, impeding the smooth passage of commuters. Adding to the chaos, discarded sugarcane scraps intended for proper disposal now mar the roadside, creating an unsightly scene. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

GAZIPUR CITY POLLS

'They want to kill me, my son'

Zahangir's mother points fingers at AL candidate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Zaida Khatun, an independent candidate in the mayoral race for Gazipur city polls and mother of the suspended mayor Zahangir Alam, made a startling claim yesterday, alleging that there is an ongoing attempt to kill her and her son due to their participation in the electoral campaign.

During a press conference held at her residence in Gazipur's Chhoydana area, Zaida raised concerns about the obstruction they have faced while seeking votes. She expressed her frustration, stating, "My son and I went to people to seek votes. But we were obstructed from doing that. We have been attacked. If I cannot seek votes for myself, how will people vote for us?"

The incident in question occurred on Thursday night when a vehicle carrying

Zahangir and Zaida was attacked in ward-44 of the city. Witnesses and Zahangir's supporters reported that the attackers vandalised their Toyota Land Cruiser Prado and pelted it with bricks. Zahangir, who is coordinating his mother's electoral campaign, accused the supporters of Azmat Ullah, the nominated mayoral candidate from AL, of launching the attack.

Zahangir further highlighted the challenges they faced during their campaign, stating, "Whenever my mother Zaida Khatun and I go somewhere to conduct an electoral campaign, we have been barred in various ways. Some of Azmat Ullah's own and party men are harassing our leaders and workers."

Zahangir, who was denied the Awami League ticket this time, expressed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3