

DHAKA

President joins ASEAN Summit

BSS, Dhaka

President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday joined the opening session of the 43rd Summit of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at the Plenary Hall of Jakarta Convention Center.

The three day summit is being held on September 5-7.

Chairperson of Bangladesh National Advisory Committee on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders Saima Wazed and Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen also accompanied the president at the opening ceremony.

The ASEAN summit will feature the issue of development and strengthening of the organisation's cooperation with external partners and other relevant issues. Additionally, several important agreements related to ASEAN infrastructure strengthening, food security, digital economy and payment ecosystem will also happen at the summit.

DHAKA-N'GANJ Train fare goes up, but services fail to keep pace

SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM, Narayanganj

Schedule disruptions, non-functional fans and lights, and unhygienic toilets are still a common sight for passengers who travel by train on Dhaka-Narayanganj route, although the Bangladesh Railway has recently increased the fare by Tk 5.

Most commuters still have to rely on these trains, as a journey by bus, the alternative public transport on the route, is even more expensive and time consuming.

Besides, due to lack of locomotives, if one misses a train for some reason, they have to wait for at least two hours for the next one, provided the fact it arrives on time. Earlier, a train used to leave the station every 30 minutes.

Commuters on this route have expressed their demands for a lower fare and improved service.

After an eight-month hiatus owing to the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project, train services on this line resumed on August 1 with a fare of Tk 20 hiked from Tk 15 previously.

According to Kamrul Islam Khan, station master of Narayanganj, the reason for the increase is that previously postal trains ran on this route, but now commuter trains operate, which have better facilities than mail trains.

However, passengers are not buying such claims.

"The difference between commuter and mail train for

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



CASE AGAINST YUNUS Defence cross-examines PW

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The defence for Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus and three others yesterday cross-examined prosecution witness (PW) Tariqul Islam in a labour law violation case.

Prof Yunus is the chairman of Grameen Telecom, while the three others are Grameen Telecom's top officials -- Ashraful Hassan, Nurjahan Begum and M Shahjahan.

Sheikh Merina Sultana, chairman of the Third Labour Court of Dhaka, set September 13 for next case hearing as the defence could not complete cross-examining Tariqul, also a labour inspector, yesterday, said court sources.

"During yesterday's hearing, the judge asked journalists to leave the courtroom, saying that only the case-related officials would be allowed inside the courtroom," Barrister Khaja Tanvir Ahmed, a defence lawyer, told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Illegally parked trucks are a common sight on Mayor Anisul Hoque Road. While illegally parked trucks on this road already causes public sufferings, the recent processions for the upcoming Truck and Covered Van Driver's Union election has added to the menace. Now, the road lays almost unusable from 9:00am to 8:00pm, as processions for various candidates keep the public from accessing it. The photo was taken in Tejgaon area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka, Jakarta sign MoUs on energy, agriculture

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and Indonesia have signed two separate memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on cooperation in the energy sector and agriculture.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen and his Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi signed the MoUs in Jakarta on Monday.

Bangladesh also urged Indonesia to ease the market access for Bangladeshi readymade garment products in Indonesia.

The MoU in the energy sector aims to promote the long-term sale and delivery of conventional energy while also facilitating the development of new and renewable energy sources and power plants in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, the agriculture MoU is intended to foster collaboration in various aspects of agriculture, including production, marketing, technology transfer, and the exchange of best practices, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

Expressing his satisfaction over the recent increase in bilateral trade volume between the two countries surpassing US \$3 billion, Dr Momen noted that the imbalance between Bangladesh's import and export volumes can only be reduced by promoting export of Bangladeshi products to the Indonesian markets, especially those in which Bangladesh holds competitive advantage.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Marsudi emphasised on exploring new avenues of collaboration and partnership to build a stronger, more vibrant relationship between the two nations.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Curse of Barapukuria Coal Mine

300 more houses damaged with water crisis adding to woes

KONGKON KARMAKER

The Barapukuria Coal Mine has now become a curse for the people of at least four adjacent villages, where underground explosions caused by coal extraction have left over 300 houses damaged, and the scarcity of pure drinking water has become a daily struggle.

For these villagers, life has become a perilous dance with danger as frequent shockwaves from the mine's blasts rattle their homes and disrupt their daily routines.

To make matters worse, the underground mining has also deprived them of access to clean, safe drinking water, a fundamental necessity for survival.

The affected villagers have reached out to the Barapukuria Coal Mine authorities twice, in May and July, sharing their untold sufferings and seeking resolution. They also joined hands in a human chain at Panchgharia village on July 22 demanding a better life. However, despite their pleas, the Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Limited (BCMCL) has remained conspicuously silent, leaving the residents in a state of despair.

"Our houses are being damaged by the heavy jolts for coal production. We are also facing a drinking water crisis due to the depletion of underground water surrounding the mining area," said Mozahar Ali of Panchgharia village.

Ali, a previously displaced victim of the country's lone coal mine

that started its operation in 2005, said that cracks at houses in four villages started developing a couple of years ago.

"Even, the road connectivity also got damaged in the area for the mining," he said.

Visiting two affected villages



-- Panchgharia and Patigram in Parbatipur on July 22, this correspondent discovered many homes with cracks, and some of them weren't in a safe enough condition to live in.

For instance, Mahbub Rahman Mondal's single-floor semi-concrete house in Panchgharia village has developed multiple cracks.

"The walls, stairs and floor, everything has been damaged due to the shockwaves from the coal

mine. I'm living in the house with my family in constant fear," said Mondal, adding that he feels the jolts day and night.

The affected people under the banner of Bhumi and Basatbari Raksha Committee have been urging the coalmine authorities to

find a solution to their problems.

Forhad Ali Mondal, member secretary of the committee, told the newspaper that at least 300 families of two villages were affected as their houses were cracked badly.

"Many tube wells in the area have been dried up for depleting water level. Situation usually worsens during the dry season every year," Mondal said.

"This area has become inhabitable," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

DENGUE OUTBREAK Death toll crosses 650 11 more die, 2,782 new cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the 11 new dengue deaths, the total number of fatalities this year rose to 657.

The number of dengue cases also rose to 1,35,716 with 2,782 new cases yesterday, of which 62,440 were from Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

A complete lack of planning, coordination, and accountability among the government bodies has emerged as the narrative of Bangladesh's fight against the Aedes mosquito, according to entomologists.

The starting point for any definitive large-scale action is a policy that would serve as a guideline, but Bangladesh's Vector Management Policy is still being drafted by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said authorities concerned failed to chalk out an early plan and take proper action during the lean period which is the main cause of such a severe outbreak this year.

The city corporations also failed to fulfill their roles properly in eliminating aedes mosquitoes.

Experts stressed that patients need to be immediately hospitalised if they experience severe stomach aches, breathing difficulties, severe weakness, bleeding from gums or nose, and vomiting.

If a patient is not hospitalised within 24 hours [of these symptoms surfacing], they may go into dengue shock syndrome, they added.



Perhaps it is the absence of a comically large "No Parking" sign. Or perhaps the driver forgot they came here with a vehicle. Whatever the reason may be, they have chosen to illegally park on the footpath, leaving little room for pedestrians to use the road. The photo was taken on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

MINORITY RIGHTS

Movement on streets needed: Rana Dasgupta

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To revive equal rights and dignity for minorities in the country, there is no alternative to waging movement on the streets, said Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha Christian Oikya Parishad general secretary Advocate Rana Dasgupta.

"There are 22 lawmakers from minority communities in the incumbent parliament. But we still don't know what role they have played in protecting the rights of minorities," he said.

"They [the lawmakers] have forgotten us [minorities] after going to parliament. That is why, we will have to demonstrate on the streets instead of depending on lawmakers," he added.

Rana Dasgupta shared these statements at two separate meeting with leaders of Sree Sree Madhwa Gaudiya Math and Rama Kalibari Management Committee, on their respective temple premises in the capital yesterday, said a press release.

JANMASHTAMI

3-day programmes announced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sree Sree Prabhu Jagatbandhu Mahaprabhak Math in Dhaka has chalked out programmes to celebrate Janmashtami.

The religious festival of the Hindu community marking the birth anniversary of Lord Sree Krishna will be observed today across the country with due fervour and excitement.

The three day celebrations will begin today on the temple premises in the capital's Tikatuli area, said the festival brochure.

The programmes include candle lighting, colourful procession, discussions, recitation from the holy books, singing religious songs and offering special prayers.