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CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT

Act before it turns into a humanitarian crisis, urges PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for international support for the worst-affected countries by climate displacement, to prevent the situation from turning into a humanitarian crisis.

The prime minister said this in a video statement that was played at the high-level segment on "Climate Impact on Human Mobility: A Global Call for Solutions" during the 114th Session of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Council held virtually.

She said it is estimated that climate change could displace 216 million people by 2050. Among these, 40 million alone would be in South Asia.

In Bangladesh, 20 percent of its population lives along the coastal belt.

"Sea-level rise, salinity intrusion, frequent floods, and severe cyclones make them vulnerable to forced displacement. Such displacements are happening at a faster pace than we think," she warned.

She said those displaced or trapped due to climate change need to have access to basic services, social protection, and livelihood options.

"The adverse impacts on their host communities also need to be addressed in an inclusive manner," she said.



Two buses sideswipe each other as they race to get more passengers. The photo was taken in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Blockade today, hartal tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP is set to start its eighth spell of blockade today, imposing a 24-hour nationwide blockade on roads, rails, and waterways.

The blockade begins at 6:00am and will continue until 6:00am tomorrow morning.

The party also called for a 24-hour hartal, which will start right after the blockade ends.

On Monday, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi made the announcement.

BNP-Jamaat and its allies have previously staged blockades in seven phases to mount pressure on the government to quit power and hold the next general election under a non-partisan government.

Those blockades saw a low presence of traffic on streets, with occasional incidents of arson attacks on public transport.

Meanwhile, in Gazipur's Dhirasram area, SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Food safety a fundamental right

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the country is self-sufficient in food production, ensuring food safety is the biggest challenge at the moment, speakers said at a seminar yesterday.

The seminar titled "Ensuring the availability of safe food quality in accordance with government laws and regulations and consumer rights" was jointly organised by Consumers Association of Bangladesh and Friends in Village Development in Bangladesh.

It was held at Krishibid Institute in the capital.

Speaking as chief guest, AHM Shafiquzzaman, director-general of the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection, said though mangoes available at markets are said to be safe, people are not sure if they are adulterated.

Meanwhile, super shops are selling eggs at higher prices, claiming they contain omega-3. However, that's also questionable as consumers do not have much opportunity to verify these claims, he added.

"Many counterfeit products are being sold in the market. We need a social movement to prevent this," he mentioned.

Conducting raids won't solve the problem. Rather, coordinated efforts to raise awareness in this regard can

help ensure food safety -- an essential consumer right, he added.

CAB President Golam Rahman said, "Agencies like Food Safety Authority and National Directorate of Consumer Rights Protection should be strengthened to ensure food safety."

Emphasising that laws alone cannot mitigate the problem, CAB General Secretary Humayun Kabir said, "Raids by Directorate of National Consumers Rights Protection have significantly contributed to solving the problem. However, the problem will persist if authorities concerned don't plan combined efforts."

Not all foods can be termed "unsafe", said Sheikh Md Ferdous Ararat, law officer of the Food Safety Authority.

"It is true that some food products have become very unsafe. Nevertheless, strong laws are in place and we are working to enforce them," he added.

Reazul Haque, deputy director of Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution Reazul Haque said, "Complaints should be made upon suspicion based on evidence."

Jannatul Ferdousi, assistant director (finance) of Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection; Mamunur Rashid, project head of Welt Hunger Hilfe Bangladesh; and officials of CAB and FIVDB, also attended the seminar.

JOINING POLLS

BNP must decide within two days

Says EC Alamgir

STAR REPORT

BNP needs to inform the Election Commission within the next two days if they want to join polls, said EC Md Alamgir yesterday.

Mentionable, the last date for submitting the nomination papers is tomorrow.

The EC is open to adjusting the election schedule "within the constitutional limits" to facilitate parties who are still undecided to join the election, he said.

"If necessary, we will reschedule the polls."

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Those who can't accept Tarique as leader will join polls

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leaders, who cannot accept the leadership of the party's Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman, will take part in the upcoming election, said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday.

Even they (those BNP leaders) are making new political platforms, he said while addressing reporters at the secretariat. In reply to a reporter's query about whether there is a level playing field, Asaduzzaman said, "You will see whether it is there."

Asked about the imprisoned BNP leaders, he said no one has been arrested without a reason.



An open-heart surgery has transformed two-year-old Umaiya's life, thanks to Basic Needs Program, a US-based charity organisation who funded her treatment.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Healing the LITTLE HEARTS

NILIMA JAHAN

Over 30,000 babies are born annually in the country with congenital heart defects, with only 3,000 of them having access to surgeries, according to Bangladesh Journal of Cardiac and Thoracic Anaesthesiology, 2023.

The main reason behind this imbalance is usually the treatment costs that mount from Tk 1 lakh to Tk 4 lakh -- a financial burden low-income families often fail to sustain.

Yet, Nusrat Jahan Rima, a two-year-old from a marginalised household in the remote Rowmari upazila of Kurigram, was fortunate enough to avail surgery.

Born with a substantial ventricular septum defect, Rima's parents failed to understand her condition initially until she was diagnosed by a doctor in Rangpur who recommended urgent surgery.

The doctors had asked the family to arrange Tk 2 lakh for the surgery. However, the family was only able to gather Tk 40,000, even after collecting funds from local schools and markets.

That was when the family came across Basic Needs Program, a US-based charitable organisation who promised to take care of the expenses.

"The surgery was done last year and the cost was about Tk 2.5 lakh, of which the charity donation covered Tk 2 lakh," said Asma, Rima's mother.

Around 80 others like Rima, including 10-year-old Rafi from Ramu; 17-year-old orphan Linda from Rangpur; six-year-old Ayesha from Barishal; and 2-year-old Nure Jannat from Dinajpur, were also able to avail open-heart surgeries with aid from the charity.

The surgeries are being done since 2021 in partnership with National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital and Research Institute, Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Evercare Hospital Dhaka.

Furthermore, 60 children underwent successful cardiac catheterisation at Shishu Hospital during this period.

Dr Richard Hubbard, a US-based pediatric cardiac anesthesiologist who founded the organisation and

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Workers set up pointed iron fences on the boundary walls of the chief justice's residence in the capital's Kakrail yesterday. The residence came under attack during a clash between BNP activists and law enforcers centring the party's October 28 rally.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Star journo wins DRU Literary Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star's journalist Helmul Alam



Helmul Alam

yesterday received the Dhaka Reporters Unity Literary Award-2023 in the research category.

Three journalists won the DRU Literary Award and 38 received literary honours in a ceremony at the Sagar-Runi auditorium in DRU.

Eminent poet and Bangla Academy Director General Mohammad Nurul Huda handed over the awards to the winners. Each awardee received a certificate, crest and prize money.

Helmul, a senior SEE PAGE 4 COL 7