

CHILDREN FESTIVAL KICKS OFF AMID FESTIVITY
Build up social movement against child labour: President

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid much enthusiasm and spontaneity among children, 'Bangladesh Children Festival 2006' began yesterday at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC) in the city.

The entire area of BCFCC and its premises were bustling with thousands of children from over 40 schools across the country at the inaugural day of the festival.

Under the theme 'We will build Bangladesh as dreamt of, the festival will present before the children the nation building materials of the country that will help them dream of a prosperous country and inspire them to embody those dreams.

The festival authorities arranged science exhibition, space theatre, book exhibition, clothing exhibition, bird fair, theme park, puppet and muppet (giant replica of animals) show, magic show, public speaking, debate, painting competition and cultural programme.

With a view to fostering the latent talent and free thinking ability of children, the festival is aimed at creating a sense of patriotism among the children, said the organisers.

Addhayan Shishu Foundation in association with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Bangladesh Shishu Academy organised the festival that will remain open for all from 10:00am to 9:00pm till March 1.

President Iajuddin Ahmed inaugurated the festival in the morning and it was opened for all including the underprivileged children at 3:00pm.

"We arranged transport for the street children so that they can visit the festival, enjoy and take part in different activities," said event manager Kawser Mahmud.



PHOTO: PID

President Iajuddin Ahmed addresses the inaugural ceremony of Bangladesh Children Festival 2006 at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

School going children were seen entering different pavilions in queue with curiosity to know about the country, its liberation war, tradition and historical places while the science exhibition was crammed with different projects of young scientists from different schools. Bangladesh Astronomical Association, Parjatan Corporation and Jubok Tourism arranged all these events.

Muna, a student of Mirpur Bangla High School, while taking part in the space ship making game, told this correspondent that the school authorities brought them to the festival.

"I am very happy for being here because I have learnt many things from the exhibitions of the festival. It would be great if it is held every year," she added.

Adults can also enter the festival with a charge of Tk 5 as entry fee. All the proceeds from the entry fees

will be donated to Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital.

UNB adds: President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday called for properly grooming children through developing their latent talents for the welfare of the country and nation.

He was inaugurating Bangladesh Children Festival 2006 at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

The President also called for building up a social movement against child labour.

"It is our moral obligation to ensure children's rights and their security in society," he told the function.

Minister for Women and Children Affairs Begum Khurshid Zahan Haque attended the programme as special guest.

At the outset, the President thanked the organisers for contrib-

uting to children's welfare, including protecting their rights and creating congenial environment for bringing them up as ideal citizens.

He said prosperity lies in children, which could be tapped through ensuring proper care and environment for them.

He termed family as the 'secured shelter' for children and 'first school of development' and said, "That's why families have to give importance on their physical and mental development."

Iajuddin said the whole world is very much aware of proper development of the children at present and Bangladesh is no exception.

He said Bangladesh is one of the 22 countries to have signed the Children Rights Convention in 1990. It also supports UN Children Rights Convention, National Children Convention and all related national and international laws, policies and conventions for the welfare of the children, he added.

The President appreciated the role of Bangladesh Shishu Academy, established in 1976 aiming to explore children's latent talent.

He stressed the family awareness for expediting implementation of the children's rights.

He appreciated different government programmes, including supplying primary textbooks to the students for free and stipend for girls that play vital role in their development.

"The children can be turned into human resources if positive results are achieved from these programmes," he said.

He said all have to be careful in giving preference to children's health, education, nutrition and manners.

Banglabazar bookshops' strike Mar 7
Withdrawal of VAT demanded
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers' Association yesterday demanded of the government to withdraw value added tax (VAT) from imported papers and reduce price of locally produced papers to ensure supply of books to readers at reasonable prices.

"Price of local newsprint now stands at Tk 62,000 per ton while just six months ago it was Tk 42,000," said association President Abu Taher while addressing a press conference at its office in the city.

He said book publishers are also buying imported newsprint at a higher price due to imposition of VAT at the rate of Tk 20,000 to 22,000 per ton.

Similarly, price of one ream of local white print paper has now increased to Tk 850 to 950 form Tk 500 to 600, while an extra Tk 22,000 to 24,000 has to be paid for purchasing one ton of imported white print paper, Abu Taher added.

He alleged that owners of local paper industries are increasing the price of their products at will because of government's imposition of high VAT on imported papers.

Abu Taher announced that all the bookshops at Banglabazar in the city will remain closed on March 7 to press home their demands.

He also threatened to launch further agitation if their demands are not met by the government.

Replying to a question, Abu Taher said the association will soon move for legal action if the government does not pay compensation for the loss of about Tk 1,000 crore that the publishers invested for publishing the new textbooks under the uni-track education system which was later postponed.

Association leaders Tajul Islam, Quamrul Islam and MA Salam also spoke at the press conference.

Rural development a must for economic progress
Speakers tell Cirdap discussion

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion here yesterday underscored the need for further strengthening the local government institutions and building rural infrastructures to achieve more progress in economy.

They said the overall economic progress depends on rural development as most of the people live in rural areas with only access to land and other natural resources for their livelihood.

Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) organised the discussion on "From the Peasant Charter to the ICARRD: An overview of the current trends and emerging issues in Rural Development in the Asia and Pacific Region" at CIRDAP auditorium in the city.

Renowned Economist Prof

Rehman Sobhan, member of the Planning Commission Dr Quazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Secretary of the Local Government Division SM Zahurul Islam, Cirdap Director (Research) Dr Mornaz Uddin Ahmed, Dr Sheikh Maksud Ali and Prof M o h a m m a d M a s u m of Jahangirnagar University took part in the discussion.

Director General of Cirdap Dr Durga P Paudyal presented the keynote paper with Secretary of the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division Rafiqul Islam in the chair.

The speakers emphasised the increased development of the agriculture sector with adequate training for the farmers on modern agri-technologies.

They also called for comprehensive measures at all levels with immediate effect for protecting the cultiva-

ble lands from misuse or abuse to grow more food for millions of people in the region.

The speakers representing various experts' groups and institutions stressed the need for agricultural diversification side by side with a change in food habit to reduce pressure on rice.

Dr Paudyal said time has come for a renewed commitment to agrarian reform and rural development, through identification of new challenges and options for revitalising rural communities to reduce by half the number of poor and hungry people by 2015 as set out by the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The discussion was held ahead of the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development to be held in Brazil from March 7 to 10.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a view exchange meeting with journalists at the Bogra Circuit House yesterday.

3-hour SSKOP work abstention on March 1
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) will abstain from work for three hours and hold a rally on March 1 protesting government reluctance to publish the gazette notification of 40 percent dearness allowance declared last year.

Leaders of the Oikya Parishad urged all journalists, employees and workers in all newspapers and news agencies to observe work abstention from 11:00am to 2:00pm and join the rally in front of National Press Club at 11:00am on March 1.

They blamed non-cooperation of the government to make the activities of Wage Board active.

The decision came from an emergency meeting at the National Press Club yesterday. Leaders alleged that different newspapers are not implementing the 40 percent dearness allowances showing the excuse that the government has not declared gazette notification yet.

Oikya Parishad Co-Convenor Gias Kamal Chowdhury presided over the meeting where Co-Convenors Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Fazle Imam, Member Secretary Ruhul Amin Gazi, Joint Member Secretaries Matjur Rahman Talukdar and Marjural Ahsan Bulbul and Members Abul Hasem, Khairul Islam, Altar Mahmud, Elahi Newaj Khan Saju, Omar Faruk and Sardar Farid were present.

COLLEGE TEACHERS' LECTURE WORKSHOP
Call to further consolidate US-Bangladesh friendship

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a workshop yesterday urged the Bangladeshis and the American people to increase their studies on both the societies and cultures to help further consolidate the existing friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

They said understanding of both the societies and cultures would help the two nations come closer to each other as their social, economic, cultural and political lives are interdependent.

The speakers made the comments at the inaugural session of a two-day workshop at the Development and Planning Academy in the city.

Bangladesh Association for American Studies (BAAS) and the American Centre here are jointly organising the 13th College Teachers' Lecture Workshop 2006.

Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof SMA Faiz addressed the inaugural function as chief guest.

Charge d'Affaires of US embassy in Dhaka Judith A Chammas, Director of the American Centre Jonathan D Cebra, BAAS President Prof AKM Nurun Nabi and its General Secretary Tahmina Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.

Prof Faiz praised the organisers for such an important initiative and said, "We, in Bangladesh, need to reach out and understand Americans, just as America needs to reach out and understand people in our part of the world."

Judith A Chammas said with energy and enthusiasm the teachers have the power to open up young minds and provide their students an awareness of world that celebrates diversity and the power of individuals.

She hoped that the teachers would tell their students about the student advising service at the American Centre, a place where the students can come to get accurate and up to date information about colleges and universities in the United States.

"If the Bangladeshis study the American culture, they will understand the roots of our cooperation and the basis of our friendship," Chammas said, adding, "American history can be seen as a series of acts that have defined conventional wisdom and traditional behaviour."

She referred to the workshop's topics pointing to the idea that both the countries have much in common and said, "We share a love of stories: our two great literatures are a strong basis for our national identities."

Int'l Recreation Club executives



Sanja Saldanha, head of the corporate affairs department of the Partex Group, has been re-elected president of the International Recreation Club Ltd. (IC).

The election was held during the annual general meeting of the club on February 24 on the club premises.

Executive committee members are Carla Pamilar, Jens Stanislawski, Jimmy Ogawara, Kareem Din, Manish Pandey, Martin Axelsen, Renu Paryani and Robert Jones.



Ramakrishna's birthday celebration begins today

A five-day celebration of the 171st birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna will begin on the Ramakrishna Mission premises in the city today, says a press release.

The annual function of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya will start with Swami Aksharananda in the chair and Prof Mozibur Rahman of Stamford University as chief guest.

Swami Aksharananda will preside over a discussion on 'Contribution of Vivekananda for the welfare of the world' with Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest.

Veena Sikri, High Commissioner of India in Bangladesh, will be present as guest of honour and Prof Aminul Islam as special guest.

March 1, 171 st birthday of Sri Ramakrishna, will be observed through special puja, devotional songs and study from the scriptures with Justice Gour Gopal Saha in the chair.

A discussion will be held on 'Sri Ramakrishna: The ideal of harmony' with Health Minister Dr Khondakar Mosharrif Hussain as chief guest and Dr Aminul Islam as special guest. The discussion will be followed by a Drama: Uttaran.

Eminent artiste Kiran Chandra Roy will sing baul song. A discussion on 'Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi: A symbol of affection' will be held with Dr Marufi Khan in the chair and Prof Sumita Naha as chief guest on March 2.

Prof Dr Sadeque Haim of Dhaka University will be present as special guest. Prasad will be distributed on March 3.

Exim Bank donation for cancer hospital

Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Ltd (Exim Bank) Foundation donated Tk 20 lakh to Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH) yesterday, says a press release.

Exim Bank Managing Director Mohammad Lakiotullah handed over a cheque for the amount to Dhaka Ahsania Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam at the bank head office in the city.

Deputy managing directors Ekramul Haque and Sirajul Islam Bhuiyan, vice president Md Humayun Kabir, executive vice presidents Mohammed Haider Ali Miah and Md Karimuzzaman were present on the occasion.

Volunteer consultant Matlubur Rahman Chowdhury and director of Public Relations Division Prof Nurul Islam of Dhaka Ahsania Mission were also present.

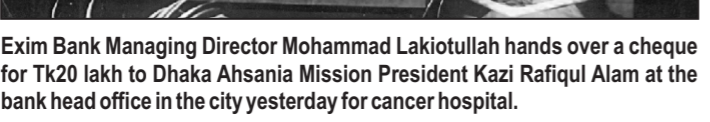
Lakiotullah said Exim Bank considers such donations a part of its corporate responsibility towards the society. The fast growing bank is committed to doing the same in future, he said.

US Embassy shocked at loss of lives

UNB, Dhaka

The US Embassy expressed deep shock at the loss of lives in building collapse in Dhaka and fire incident in Chittagong.

It conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family and also prayed for early recovery of the survivors, who received injuries in the incidents.



Exim Bank Managing Director Mohammad Lakiotullah hands over a cheque for Tk20 lakh to Dhaka Ahsania Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam at the bank head office in the city yesterday for cancer hospital.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met office said.

Highest temperature 37.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 16.4 degree Celsius at Ishurdi.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:00pm today and rises at 6:22am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY

Luncheon meeting

American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh organises a luncheon meeting on 'An inside look at the Harvard fund management company'. Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel. Time: 12:30pm.

Seminar

Stethoscope, a health and medicine journal, and Dhaka Community Hospital organise a seminar on health and medicine. Venue: Dhaka Community Hospital, Baro Moghbazar. Time: 12:00pm.

Protest rally

Save Environment Movement will hold a protest rally demanding punishment to the 'killers of garments workers' in Chittagong. Venue: in front of National Museum. Time: 10:30am.

Death Anniversary



Today is the second death anniversary of Mariam Shaheen, former country manager (Nepal) of Bangladesh Biman, says a press release. On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at Soangaon road mosque in the city after Asr prayers today.