METROPOLITAN/NEWS

The Daily Star

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 freethinking 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 lajuddin 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

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

astyear 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

the societies and cultures would help They blamed non-cooperation of the the two nations come closer to each other as their social. economic. cultural



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

nation.

function

COLLEGE TEACHERS' LECTURE WORKSHOP

UNB adds: President lajuddin

Ahmed vesterday called for prop-

Friendship Conference Centre

Minister for Women and

Children Affairs Begum Khurshid

Zahan Haque attended the

thanked the organisers for contrib-

At the outset, the President

Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University

Charge de Affaires of US embassy

n 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

such an important initiative and said,

"We, in Bangladesh, need to reach out

Prof Faiz praised the organisers for

Prof SMA Faiz addressed the inaugural

programme as special guest.

Call to further consolidate

function as chiefquest.

occasion

world."

against child labour.

School going children were will be donated to Ahsania Mission seen entering different pavilions in Cancer Hospital.

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

BSS. Dhaka

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 'se-

cured shelter' for children and 'first school of development' and said, "That's why families have to give importance on their physical and mental development.

lajuddin 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.

erly grooming children through He stressed the family awaredeveloping their latent talents for ness for expediting implementation the welfare of the country and of the children's rights.

He appreciated different gov-He was inaugurating ernment programmes, including Bangladesh Children Festival 2006 supplying primary textbooks to the at the Bangladesh-China students for free and stipend for girls that play vital role in their The President also called for development. building up a social movement

"The children can be turned into human resources if positive results "It is our moral obligation to is achieved from these ensure children's rights and their security in society," he told the programmes," he said.

manners.

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

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 perton. 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 govern-

ment dose 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

Int'l Recreation **Club** executives

Sanjay Saldanha, head of the corporate affairs department of the Partex Group, has been reelected president of the nternational Recreation Club Ltd.

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.

Rural development a must for economic progress

Zahurul Islam, Cirdap Director (Re-

search) Dr Momtaz Uddin Ahmed, Dr

Sheikh Maksud Ali and Prof

Mohammad Masum of

Jahangirnagar University took part in

Durga P Paudyal presented the keynote paper with Secretary of the

Rural Development and

Cooperatives Division Rafiqul Islam

Director General of Cirdap Dr

the discussion.

n the chair.

technologies.

Speakers tell Cirdap discussion

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion here vesterday 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

Renowned Economist Prof

Rehman Sobhan, member of the ble lands from misuse or abuse to Planning Commission Dr Quazi grow more food for millions of people Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Secretary of in the region. the Local Government Division SM

The speakers representing vari ous 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

The speakers emphasised the ncreased development of the agriculillennium Development Goals. ture sector with adequate training for The discussion was held ahead of the farmers on modern agrithe International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development to be held in Brazil from

They also called for comprehen-March 7 to 10. sive measures at all levels with immediate effect for protecting the cultiva-



PHOTO: STAF Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a view exchange meeting with journalists at the Bogra Circuit House vesterday

Bill passed to formulate building code

initiated by AL lawmaker

In a prompt response to the

lawmakers' demands, Housing and

Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas

said if the owner of the KTS

Composite Mill is found guilty of

keeping the gate locked, he will

Referring to the Saturday's

Mohammad Nasim.

face a stern action.

FROM PAGE 1

Titled the Building Construction (Amendment) Act, 2006, it proposed a number of amendments to the 54-years-old Building Construction Act, 1952

According to the bill, designing or approving or implementing a building construction plan in contravention to any provision shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term that may extend to seven years, or with fine not less that Tk 50,000, or with both.

Before passage of the bill, both the ruling and opposition lawmakers raised points of order and took part in a brief discussion on the devastating fire in the KTS

after investigation," LGRD and repeated building collapses. Cooperatives Minister Abdul PASSAGE AND Mannan Bhuiyan told the House, PROVISIONS participating in the discussion

The bill piloted by Mirza Abbas said the national building code may provide for general building requirements, control and requiations; fire protection; building materials; structural design; construction practices and safety; building services; alteration, addition to and change of use of existing building; sign and outdoor display. It would also provide for matters

incident of building collapse, the relating to administration and housing minister said despite the enforcement of the things above. fact the building had been con-Earlier, the AL and Jatiya Party structed on a flawed plan, the lawmakers taking part in passing the bill alleged that the housing and public works ministry has failed miserably to take action against the officials at fault for lax monitoring of the construction works. "The ministry should rather bring in a new law instead of amending the existing act that was enacted some 54 years ago," AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta said, proposing that the bill should be sent to a selection committee for further scrutiny.



Wage Board active.

The decision came from an emergency meeting at the National Press Club esterday. 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 Sobahan Chowdhury and Fazle Imam, Member Secretary Ruhul Amin Gazi, Joint Member Secretaries Matiur Rahman Talukdar and Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and Members Abul Hasem. Khairul Islam, Altaf Mahmud, Elahi Newaj Khan Saju, Omar Faruk and Sardar Farid were present.



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



On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at Soanrgaon road mosque in the city after Asr prayers today.

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

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

They said understanding of both

between the two countries.

Judith A Chammas said with energy Bangladesh Association for and enthusiasm the teachers have the merican Studies (BAAS) and the power to open up young minds and provide their students an awareness of American Centre here are jointly world that celebrates diversity and the organising the 13th College Teachers' power of individuals. Lecture Workshop 2006

and understand Americans, just as acts that have defined conven-America needs to reach out and tional wisdom and traditional understand people in our part of the behaviour.

Exim Bank

donation for

cancer hospital

Export Import Bank of Bangladesh

donated Tk 20 lakh to Ahsania

yesterday, says a press release.

office in the city.

present on the occasion.

were also present.

future, he said.

Volunteer consultant Matlubur

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

Rahman Chowdhury and director of

Public Relations Division Prof Nurul

Islam of Dhaka Ahsania Mission

universities in the United States.

"If the Bangladeshis study the

American culture, they will under-

stand the roots of our cooperation

and the basis of our friendship,'

Chammas said, adding, "American

history can be seen as a series of

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 identifies.



birthday Ltd (Exim Bank) Foundation Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH) celebration Exim Bank Managing Director

begins today Mohammad Lakiotullah handed over a cheque for the amount to A five-day celebration of the 171st Dhaka Ahsania Mission President birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Kazi Rafiqul Alam at the bank head will begin on the Ramakrishna Mission premises in the city today, 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

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

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 Mosharraf 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: Asymbol of affection' will be held with Dr Marufi Khan in the chair and Prof Sumita Naha as chief guest on March 2. Prof Dr Sadega Halim of Dhaka

University will be present as special guest.

Prasad will be distributed on March 3

Composite Textile Mill in Chittagong and the latest collapse of a multi-storey building in Dhaka.

They demanded exemplary actions against the building owners and the officials concerned in approving faulty construction designs for those buildings.

The main opposition Awami League (AL) lawmakers demanded that a parliamentary probe body be formed with the speaker at the helm to look into the present state of the garment industry and its workers. But the treasury bench did not agree with the proposal.

Lawmakers from both sides however blasted the garment factory owners in unison for what they termed was their inhuman treatment of the workers.

They stressed the need for stricter enforcement of the existing laws to contain the incidents of fire and collapse.

"We are determined to take legal actions against the culprits

government officials remained silent Deputy Leader of the

Opposition Abdul Hamid said there is no instance of the present government punishing the culprits after investigation, be it a launch accident or a disaster at a garment factory causing huge casualties.

"The country can't simply be run amid such a volatile situation," Hamid said.

Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain said the existing laws relating to construction standards are not being enforced. "There is no mechanism to monitor work of the officials responsible for enforcement of the laws," he observed.

Earlier, AL lawmakers Mohammad Nasim and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim taking the floor on points of order criticised the government for its 'indifference' to taking punitive measures against the persons responsible for

The minister told the House that soon a national building code will be formulated.

affected upazilas and the baseline

data were acquired from local

Department of Agricultural

Extension and other government

assisting farmers in the mine area

and has already launched a series

of pilot agricultural projects includ-

ing crop diversification and cultiva-

tion of high yield and early cash

crops to demonstrate to farmers

how new techniques can signifi-

The company has obtained

environmental clearance and is

now awaiting final government

approval. Pre-mining activity is

scheduled to begin later this year

with first coal expected in 2008.

The mine is designed to reach full

production of 15 million tonnes a

Asia Energy plans to invest \$2

billion in the mine and an additional

\$500 million in a 500MW power

cantly boost their income.

year by 2013.

plant.

Asia Energy is committed to

Open-pit mining to hurt farming for 15yr only

FROM PAGE 16

of British mining company Asia Energy in its report styled 'The Impact of Mining Activities on Agriculture'. It says there would be a net gain of at least Tk 154 crore over agricultural output in the area during the mine's lifetime.

The maximum deficit in value of agricultural production occurs in about 10 years and the break even point, when gains equal losses, occurs within 15 years," the report

"Thereafter there would be more agricultural production than if the land is left in its present condition and is undisturbed by mining."

Asia Energy Corporation (Bangladesh) as part of its extensive social and environmental preparations for the mine assigned Dr Chris Johansen, a globally renowned agricultural research and development consultant, together with Md Abdullah Sani, an irrigation engineer, to conduct the study.

The two experts studied 5,192 hectares of mine footprint area of mostly cultivated land and water that will be progressively taken out of and put back into productive use as the mine advances. The remainder of the mine's total land requirement of 5,933 hectares is

not cultivated -- mainly roads, railway and housing.

The area surveyed in the report They calculated the total curcovered the upazilas of Parbatipur, rent annual value of agricultural Nawabganj, Birampur and production in the area that will be Phulbari in Dinajpur. temporarily lost to mining, once the The value of agricultural prodentire mine footprint is acquired, at ucts was assessed by interviews Tk 20.6 crore. with farmers in each of the four

Taking into account that the land acquired for the mine will be phased out gradually, the cumulative loss of agricultural production in the area over the full 38-year ifetime of the mine was estimated at Tk 702 crore.

Increased productivity of farmers in the vicinity of the mine who will be assisted in adopting improved agricultural methods, and cultivation of fast growing tropical fodder grasses, legumes and trees on the overburden and the mined areas that are backfilled will compensate for that lost production within 15 years, the report

Over the 38-year duration of the mine, the value of agricultural products resulting from adoption of improved technology in areas adjacent to the mine footprint would be an estimated Tk 153 crore. The combined value of forage, tree and agricultural products on the overburdened and backfilled areas would be Tk 703

adds.

"It does not have any provision for punishment to the crooked officials," Jatiya Party (JP) lawmaker GM Quader noted.

The housing and public works minister called on the lawmakers to support the passage of the bill. Finally, the bill was passed amid opposition by the opposition lawmakers

crore

offices.



Bangladesh Biman, says a press release.



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.



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:

City/Town	Temperature		Humid	Humidity in	
	in Celsius		percer	percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening	
Dhaka	34.5	22.0	74	35	
Chittagong	31.8	22.2	87	80	
Rajshahi	35.4	16.5	55	35	
Khulna	36.2	21.8	95	43	
Barisal	35.6	22.2	82	50	
Sylhet	31.3	21.4	82	62	
Cox's Bazar	30.8	21.0	95	81	

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 mem-

bers of the bereaved family and also prayed for early recovery of the survivors, who received injuries in the incidents

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.