

'Diversify crops to meet nutrition deficiency'

National Fruits Exhibition opens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar yesterday stressed the need for crop diversification to address nutrition deficiency of people in the country.

He was inaugurating National Fruits Exhibition 2006 at Krishibid Institution at Farmgate in the city. The minister said apart from improving the quality of fruits, efforts should be made to invent such varieties which can grow round the year.

He said due to lack of proper post-harvest technology the farmers do not get appropriate price for their products.

They also face problems in conserving their perishable products, he added.

The minister blasted the officials of the ministry and agriculture extension department for not carrying out research work extensively although the government is ready to provide financial support in this regard.

He stressed the need for reinforcing target-based research and said in many cases the officials concerned lack basic information which is quite undesirable.

Presided over by Secretary to agriculture ministry Kazi Abul Kashem, the inaugural function was also addressed by State Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, Director General of agriculture extension department Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil and Executive Director of Bangladesh

Agriculture Research Council M Nurul Alam.

The speakers said around 20 lakh tons of fruits are produced in the country every year which can meet only one-third demand of the total population.

They said the present fruit intake in the country is only 35-40 grams, where as on an average everyone needs to take 115 grams of fruits per day.

Stressing the need to initiate biotechnology and genetic engineering the speakers said the individuals as well as cultivators should be encouraged to plant more fruit trees.

At the exhibition organised by the agriculture extension department, prizes were given to 12 indi-

viduals and organisations for their first-rate performance in fruit cultivation.

The prize included certificate, foot pump, cash money and fruit trees.

Besides, deputy directors of agriculture extension department in Chittagong, Mymensingh and Comilla received certificates and sets of books on agriculture as these were considered as the major fruit growing districts.

The three-day exhibition will continue till Sunday from 9:00am to 10:00pm daily.

Over 70 varieties of indigenous fruits including Thia, an Afghan fruit produced in the country, are on display at 41 stalls in the exhibition.

13 Bangladeshi fishermen freed from Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday sent back some 13 Bangladeshi fishermen to Bangladesh through Benapole land port.

They were imprisoned in India for a long time.

Port sources and the fishermen said a few fishing trawlers capsized in the Bay of Bengal on September 21 in 2004 due to a storm. The fishermen on board swam to Indian shore where locals rescued them and the law enforcement agencies sent them to jail.

Receiving information, the government of Bangladesh requested the Indian government to hand over the fishermen to them.

The fishermen are Dulam Majhi, Md Milon, Md Julhas, Nantu Miah, Rostam Sardar, Siddiqur Rahman, Md Hiru, Alamgir Hossain, Abdur Rab, Abdur Mannan, Md Afzal, Md Yunus and Abdur Razzaque. They all hailed from Barguna district.

AL leaders attend lunch with foreign diplomats

UNB, Dhaka

Key Awami League (AL) leaders had a lunch with Western diplomats at the Gulshan residence of Italian Ambassador Pietro Ballero yesterday and exchanged views on various aspects of the coming elections, including reforms and voters list.

"It was an informal exchange of views...we explained our party's position on election issues and they listened to us," an Awami League leader, who attended the lunch, told the news agency.

AL leaders Abdur Razzak MP, Tofail Ahmed, Kazi Zafarullah MP, Syed Abul Hossain MP, Abul Mal Abdul Muhit, Saber Hossain Chowdhury and some former diplomats and civil servants attended the lunch.

US Ambassador Patricia Butenis and the envoys of Italy, Germany, Denmark, UK, France and Switzerland were present.

Heroin worth Tk one crore recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered one kilogram heroin and liquors and arrested four drug traders from several places in the city on Thursday, says a DMP press release.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team conducted a drive near the north gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque in the city.

They arrested drug traders Shahid, 30, and Moin Uddin, 19, and recovered one kilogram brown heroin worth Tk one crore in two bags from them.

Another police team arrested drug traders Iqbal Hossain and Hasan Mia and recovered foreign liquors at Khilgaon in the city.

Two killed in Gazipur road accidents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Two people were killed in separate road accidents at Gazipur yesterday.

A Dhaka-bound bus hit a jackfruit seller when its driver lost control at Signboard area on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in the afternoon.

The unidentified fruit seller, 50, was found spot dead and five pedestrians were injured.

The driver was nabbed and handed over to the police and a case was filed at the Joydevpur Police Station.

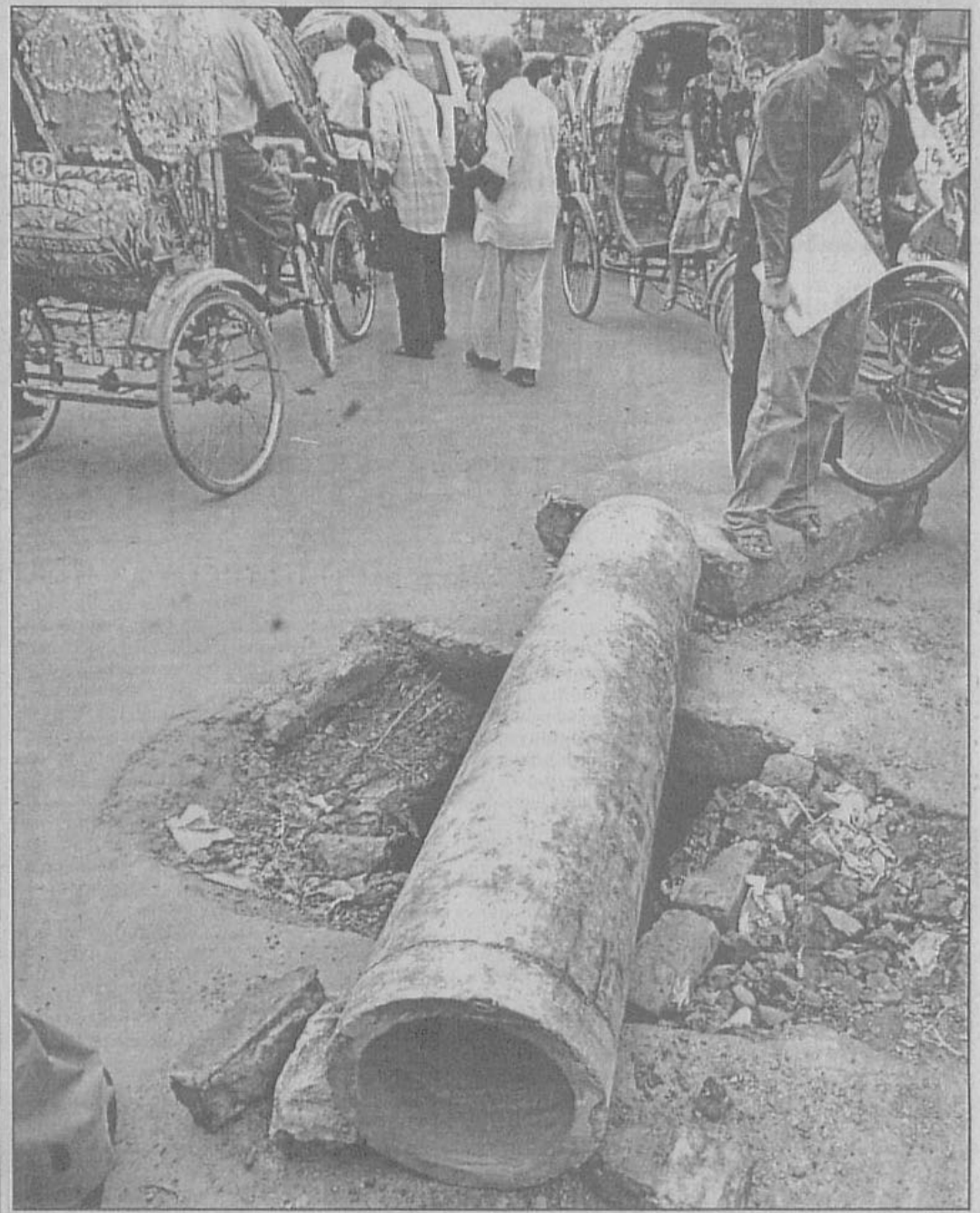
Meanwhile, an unidentified man of around 45 years was run over by a Jamalpur-bound commuter train at 5:00pm at the Joydevpur Jong Rail Station level crossing.

500 gm cocaine recovered, one held in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members arrested one person with 500 gm of cocaine worth about Tk 50 lakh at Puranapur area in Panchbibi, Joypurhat, on Thursday.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab-5 team arrested Asadul Islam, son of Nazrul Islam, from a furniture shop. Later, he gave a confessional statement leading the recovery of the cocaine, Rab officials at Bogra said.



A pipe has been placed over an uncovered manhole on a road in Chankharpul area in the city to warn pedestrians and drivers to keep away from the manhole. Although this has been causing disruption to traffic movement, the authorities remain indifferent.

Prices of essentials continue to rise

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Despite announcement of reduction of tax by 3 percent on some daily essentials in the proposed budget, prices of imported commodities and vegetables marked a sharp rise this week.

Imported garlic is being sold at Tk 150 per kg, as against Tk 120 last week, and local garlic at Tk 110, as against Tk 90 last week.

"One kilogram of gram (chhola) was being sold at Tk 45, Mug at Tk 68-70 and lentil at Tk 58 on Friday, up from Tk 42, Tk 62 and Tk 54-55 respectively last week," said Abdul Mannan, a retailer at Karwan Bazar in the capital.

Among the green vegetables,

prices of aubergine, tomato, ladies finger, pea and cucumber have increased.

Price of potato has increased by Tk one and it was selling at Tk 16, while cucumber and aubergine are selling at Tk 24 and Tk 28 respectively.

However, the price of sugar has decreased and was selling at Tk 46-47 a kg after the duty was reduced to Tk 5,000 per metric ton.

The prices of flour, fish, chicken have increased and those of egg, bean, edible oil and meat remained stable.

In the rice market, retailers said, good quality Nazirshah is being sold at Tk 26 and the inferior one at Tk 23-24, as against Tk 25 and Tk 23

respectively last week. Prices of different brands are also high. A medium-sized hilsa is being sold at Tk 300 while a big one at Tk 500-700.

Beef is being sold at Tk 140-150 a kg while mutton at Tk 230-250.

Two killed in boiler explosion

BSS, Naogaon

Two female workers were killed and two others seriously injured in a boiler explosion at a rice mill at Shahagola Bazar under Atrai upazila of the district on Thursday.

Police and local sources said the explosion occurred suddenly while boiling paddy in the 'chatal' of the rice mill of Mofazzal Khamaru at Shahagola Bazar in the morning.

Boiler worker Rubi Begum, 20, daughter of Osman Ali of Shahagola village, died on the spot, while another worker Zobeda Begum, 35, wife of Nazrul Islam of the same village, succumbed to her injuries on her way to hospital.

Critically injured owner of the rice mill Mofazzal Khamaru, 42, and worker Anwar Hossain, 23, were shifted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital from the local hospital on the same day as their conditions deteriorated further, the sources said.

Healthcare camp on hypertension, cancer held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A daylong healthcare camp and awareness programme was held in the city yesterday to help resist breast cancer and hypertension, says a press release.

Bangladesh Mahila Samity and Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) jointly organised the programme at the YWCA office.

The programme was held under the title 'You are a woman, the main driving force of a family, be careful about death disease cancer and silent killer disease hypertension.' Prof Siddika Kabir of the Society of Hypertension delivered a speech on 'Prevention of cancer and food habit of women' while Dr Golam Mohiuddin Faruq of Bangladesh Cancer Society spoke on 'Different cancer risks of women.'

Chairman of Comfrot Diagnistic Center Kabir Ahmed Bhuiyan, YWCA General Secretary Sabita D Costa and President of Bangladesh Mahila Samity Selina Khalek also addressed the function.

Wife beaten to death for dowry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sharmin Akhter, 19, wife of scrap iron trader Hanif Molla, was allegedly killed by her husband at about 11:00pm on Thursday.

Police recovered the body early this morning from the bedroom of her house at Banargati under Sonadanga of Khulna city. It was found hanging with a rope from ceiling fan.

Police quoting neighbours said she was mercilessly beaten by her husband on that night for refusing to get money as dowry from her father.

Police further said Hanif used to physically torture his wife Sharmin for dowry.

According to inquest report, the body bears deep marks of injuries. An unnatural death case was filed in this regard.

Trafficked girl returns home from India

BSS, Benapole

A teenaged Bangladeshi girl, who was trafficked to India six months back, was handed over to the members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on Benapole border on Thursday.

BDR sources said the girl Nasrin was rescued in Kolkata by an Indian NGO before being sold to a brothel there. She was under the safe custody of the NGO during last six months.

Later, two Bangladeshi NGOs contacted with the Indian NGO and made arrangement for bringing her back home with the help of the home ministry.

Nasrin, 16, daughter of Abdul Matin of Andaria village under Mymensingh district, was taken to India by her co-villager Jharna Begum. Jharna tried to sell her to a brothel in Kolkata.

On receiving the girl from BSF (Border Security Force of India), the BDR members handed her over to the officials of the NGOs Action Aid and Savior.

The NGOs will hand her over to her parents later, the source said.

Five inter-dist robbers arrested in Rangpur

BSS, Rangpur

Detective Branch (DB) of Police arrested five members of an inter-district gang of robbers from different areas of the district in separate drives on Thursday.

Police sources said the robbers were identified as -- Sadequul Islam alias Sada, 32, of Kishoreganj village under Nilfamar district, Ahad Ali alias Rahad, 30, of Sripur village under Mithapukur upazila in Rangpur, Badsha Mia, and Selim, 28, of the same village, and Shahjahan, 30, of Sadullapur village of Gaibandha district.

According to the sources, acting on a tip-off, DB Inspector Arman Hossain held Sada from Rangpur Court premises in the town at 11:00am as he went there to face a robbery case filed against him.

The police, during interrogation, asked Sada to call his associates over mobile phone to meet him a certain place. As he did so, the police raided the spots and arrested the robbers.

The police seized a motorcycle and two mobile phone sets, robbed earlier, from their possessions.

All of the arrested are accused of a number of criminal cases with different police stations.



Muktijoddha Kalyan Foundation stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday protesting police attack on former army chief General KM Shafiullah.

\$111m WB loan to develop local governance system

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) has approved a \$111.5 million credit to support the government's programme to develop an accountable local governance system.

The credit approved on Thursday will strengthen union parishads' (UPs) ability to respond to community needs and deliver services through a transparent fiscal transfers system.

In its first year, the Local Governance Support Project (LGSF) will focus on capacity building in union parishads, particularly regarding financial management and procurement.

Following this capacity building period, UPs will receive additional

fiscal transfers through the government's block grant system introduced in 2004 for strengthening local governance.

This new initiative will increase equitable distribution of financial resources to UPs. It will also strengthen local governments' ability to respond to community development priorities, and build the capacity of union parishads to undertake strategic planning and design, and to manage scheme implementation.

Alongside the block grants, a safety net programme for the rural poor will also be piloted through 15 union parishads.

The credit from the International Development Association (IDA), the World

Bank's concessionary arm, has 40 years to maturity with a 10-year grace period; it carries a service charge of 0.75 percent, said a World Bank press release.

Christine I Wallich, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh, noted that expanding the block grant program of the government provides an important and strategic opening to strengthening local governments and catalysing the emergence of an effective system of local governance.

"The emergence of effective local governments can create space for broader political participation and bring with it a chance for greater accountability of the state to citizens," Wallich said.

Thousands of weapons surrendered in knife amnesty in Britain

REUTERS, London

Thousands of knives, machetes and axes have been handed over to police in an amnesty on weapons prompted by fears of a knife-crime epidemic.

Junior Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker said yesterday it was encouraging that 17,715 weapons had been surrendered in the first week of the amnesty, but he urged that more be given up.

"If you carry a knife out of self-defence, you run the risk of having it turned on you," he said during a visit to Long Eaton in Derbyshire to view surrendered weapons.

"Carrying a knife is illegal and will not be tolerated -- indeed, it could land you four years in prison," he added.

The amnesty is the first in Britain for 10 years. The previous one in 1996 led to 40,000 weapons being handed over.

The latest amnesty, which began on May 24 and runs until June 30, was in part prompted by fears of a growing knife culture in Britain.

Among a spate of recent fatal stabbings have been those of 15-year-old Kiyan Prince, a promising footballer attacked outside his London school, and part-time policewoman Nisha Patel-Nasri.

North Korea preparing missile test: US

AP, Washington

North Korea is accelerating preparations for testing a missile that has the potential to strike the United States, a US government official said yesterday.

A test of the Taepodong-2 long-range missile may be imminent, the official said.

The official agreed to speak but only on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the information.

The official said the Bush administration is very concerned about activities that point toward a test, but declined to elaborate.

Japanese and South Korean officials also have expressed concern in recent days about the reported North Korean missile launch activities. Kyodo News agency in Japan reported that an additional rocket section had arrived at a North Korean launch site within the past two days.

In Tokyo, the Japanese government responded to news reports about a possible test by warning that any such step would jeopardise the country's security.

The reports of a possible launch come after a prolonged hiatus in six-party nuclear disarmament talks designed to create a Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons.

MAGURA KILLINGS Punishment to killers demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday condemned the killings of three people in Magura and demanded exemplary punishment to the culprits.

Of them, Sourav Kumar Saha was stabbed to death in broad daylight at Binodpur Bazar under Mohammadpur upazila in the district on Thursday.

Earlier, the miscreants killed an old businessman Noni Gopal Saha by setting fire to him and Ashok Shah by exploding bombs.

Central leader of the Parishad Nirmal Kumar Chatterji visited the place and condemned the atrocity.