

Hoarders, middlemen responsible for price hike

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A syndicate of hoarders and middlemen with ruling party patronage frequently exploits the consumers by resorting to market manipulation and food adulteration, speakers said at an open discussion yesterday.

In the absence of effective government measures to protect consumers' rights, this syndicate often creates price escalation of essential commodities but go unpunished, they said.

The Bangladesh Consumers' Society organised the discussion at the Press Institute of Bangladesh, with the Society President Quazi Akram Uddin Ahmed.

"It is the middlemen with ruling party patronage who exploit the

consumers," said Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam, secretary general of Jatiya Party (Monju), said, "While the people's purchasing capacity has not increased, prices of essential commodities have been spiralling upward unchecked."

The open market system has been introduced without instituting any regulatory mechanism, resulting in price instability in the market, he said.

Advocate Abdul Hamid, deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, said it is not understandable why the government has started realising new taxes proposed in the budget for 2005-06, which is yet to

be passed.

He said a country faces a bleak future when businessmen turn into politicians and dictate politics.

"We found it meaningless to go to parliament and oppose the anti-people budget as we are not allowed to speak," Hamid said.

Moinuddin Khan Badal, executive president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, said the ruling class people have plundered 70 percent of Tk 1,500 billion foreign aid since 1972 and have been ignoring the people's interest.

Quazi Mozammel Haq, a former lawmaker, said the government has no right to exercise state authority as it has failed to protect the consumers' right.

Form nat'l probe body to identify faulty factories

Trade union leaders suggest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trade union leaders yesterday called for constituting a national probe body to identify the factories with faulty construction, and improve the condition of workplace for the greater interest of garment workers.

They suggested inclusion of the representatives of government, civil society, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, owners and workers in the committee.

The trade union leaders were speaking at a press conference organised jointly by Bangladesh National Council of Textile Garment & Leather Workers, and National Garment Workers Federation at the National Press Club in the capital.

They said the proposed probe body will also investigate how the accident at Spectrum garment factory in Savar happened, who were responsible for the accident, how many workers were really killed and injured, and how many are still

missing.

It will also examine how to ensure proper treatment and effective compensation for the injured workers after an accident.

The leaders called for setting up of a welfare trust to providing financial support of those workers who have become handicapped due to accidents in different factories.

"Over 90 percent garment factory buildings in the country are vulnerable to collapse at any time like the Spectrum building in Savar," said Ray Ramesh Chandra, general secretary of BNC, quoting the survey report conducted by Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad (Skop).

Termining the garment factories as death trap, he said there is no security for 20 lakh workers at their workplaces as most buildings are not constructed properly.

A total of 336 workers were killed and 1500 critically injured in 30 accidents since 1990, but the government and the factory owners are still indifferent to their safety, he

pointed out while reading out a keynote paper.

"Indifference of owners and authorities concerned is primarily responsible for the accidents, while the number of death increases due to lack of equipment for salvage operations," said Aminul Huq Amin, general secretary of Jatiya Garment Sramik Federation.

The leaders alleged that salaries of six thousand Spectrum workers for March and April were not paid even after more than two months of the accident.

They said henceforth April 11 will be observed as 'Safe Workplace Day' every year with a view to commemorate the tragedy of Spectrum Sweater Industries that killed 65 people and injured 87 others, while over 100 went missing.

Trade union leaders Abul Basar, Mamun-ur-Rashid Chowdhury, ZM Kamrul Anam, Badurudozza Nizam, Nazma Akhtar and Dilruba Anguri were present at the press conference.



PHOTO: STAR

Admirers place wreaths at the portrait of poet Sufia Kamal at a memorial meeting at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday.

Sufia Kamal fought for women's rights

Speakers say at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for intensifying the efforts to end violence and discriminations against the women by taking a lesson from the life of poet Sufia Kamal.

They said the late poet dedicated her life for the emancipation of women, and fought for the establishment of their rights in every sphere of life.

The discussion was organised by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad at Cirdap auditorium in the city to mark the 94th birth anniversary of the poet.

Prof Anupom Sen of Chittagong University delivered a commemorative speech at the discussion.

He said, "Sufia Kamal had fought to establish human culture in the family, society and state. But we are far away from her ideology. We have to continue the struggle to restore human culture."

Mahila Parishad Chairman Hena Das said, "We have to ensure women's rights and establish cultural values by taking inspiration

from Sufia Kamal's life."

Parishad General Secretary Ayesha Khanam presided over the discussion.

She said, "We have to take fresh pledge for continuing the struggle against violence and discrimination against women."

"Our freedom and cultural identity are at stake," she added.

The discussion was rounded off with a cultural function.

Osman Farruk Kishoreganj BNP president

BSS, Dhaka

Kishoreganj district unit BNP has been formed with Dr M Osman Farruk and AEM Waliullah Rabbani as its president and general secretary.

The name of other officials and members of the committee will be announced later, a BNP press release said here yesterday.

Voters' ID project is not in operation

Parliament told

BSS, Dhaka

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the Voters' ID and Distribution Project had ended on June 30, 2000.

"The project is not now in operation" he said while responding to a question by BNP lawmaker Mohammad Alamgir Haider Khan (Chandpur-6). Tenure of the project was extended many times but issuance of the voters' ID cards to all was not possible on time, he said.

Replying to another question from BNP lawmaker Mohammad Delwar Hossain Khan, Dulu (Mymensingh-4), Moudud said inclusion in and exclusion of names from the voters' list is a continuous process.

The Election Commission will immediately take a decision whether the present voters' list will be updated or a new voters' list will be prepared before the next general election, he said.

IIRC Office LAUNCHED AT COX'S BAZAR

'Update madrasa syllabus'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for updating the syllabus of madrasa, saying that Islamic education today has failed to keep up with the times.

Muslims must forge ahead with science and technology in order to thwart the worldwide attempt to equate Islam with terrorism, they said.

The discussion was held on the occasion of the inauguration of the office of the Islamic Information and Research Centre (IIRC), a project of the Centre for National and Regional Studies (CNRS), at Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Dr Shamsheer Ali, a renowned nuclear scientist and vice-chancellor of South East University, was present as chief guest while Dr Mahbubullah, chairman of the Sonali Bank, presided over the function.

Dr Ali said Islam is a religion of peace and there is no place for terrorism in Islam.

Adhering to the fundamentals of Islam and practising those does not make one a fundamentalist, he added.

Dr. Ali said Islam believes in communal harmony and Bangladesh is a model of that harmony.

"With education and training, those who are committing wrong out of ignorance of Islam can be corrected," he said.

Speaking as special guest, Moulana Muklesur Rahman, secretary general of the Central Shariah Board of Islamic Banks of Bangladesh, said those who are committing terrorism in the name of Islam are not really Muslims at all.

CNRS Vice-President Sajjad Hossain, CNRS Secretary General Irtiza Nasim and educationist Prof Mushtaque Ahmed also spoke.

FRUIT COLOURING

62 jailed in 6 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry-formed mobile court has nabbed and sentenced a total of 62 people, five of them to six months of jail time and other 57 to one month of jail time with Tk 1,000 fines for spraying artificial chemicals on green mangoes.

Following a report by The Daily Star on adulterated and poisoned food, the home ministry formed a mobile court that raided several fruits markets and arrested those with chemically poisoned mangoes.

In last six working days the mobile court has raided Wiseghat fruit market, Karwan Bazar, Bdada and other places.

"The first five people were sentenced for six months but the rest were sentenced for one month with fines," said Md. Sujayetullah, an official from the CMM court.

"All of them were apprehended with carbide and other artificial chemicals on the mangoes, seriously

health hazardous materials," he said.

Experts say that traders use carbide to artificially ripen the fruit.

All the arrestees were immediately sent to jail under section No. 272 of CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code), the concerned magistrate said.

According to the law, mixing hazardous chemicals is a punishable act for which the offender can be awarded a maximum of six months imprisonment.

The home ministry, following a news item run in The Daily Star with the title, "Food tainted with toxic colours, risky mixings," ordered a raid in the capital to nab people involved with the crime.

Later on the next day, the home ministry began a round-the-year operation to hunt down unscrupulous traders who spray chemical on fruits.

The operation will also take place in other parts of the country.

MADRASA BOOKS

'Genuine bidders deprived of printing contract'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association (BBPSA) yesterday alleged that a section of officials of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is conspiring to deprive genuine bidders of getting the contract for printing board textbooks for primary schools and ebtadaye madrasas for the academic year 2006.

"We now seek intervention from the prime minister so that the NCTB could publish primary and ebtadaye level books in time," said AFM Shah Alam, Vice-president of Board Book Standing Committee of the BBPSA.

At a press briefing, he said the NCTB is yet to award the contract to the lowest bidder even a month after inviting bids.

Alam alleged that NCTB officials are harassing the lowest bidder on the plea of inspection of infrastructure. "NCTB officials earlier declared the infrastructure of the lowest bidder as 'qualified' and then termed it disqualified," he claimed.

They are inspecting infrastructure with the 'ulterior motive of awarding the job to a vested quarter', he alleged, declining to identify the quarter.

The NCTB did not mention estimated cost of printing, binding and transportation of the books in its schedule, but abruptly declared the costs later, he said.

For the first time, the NCTB floated tender under the government's public procurement rules but it violated the terms and conditions under of the rules, Alam alleged.

ROHINGYA

UN body for strong govt initiative to end problem

UNB, Dhaka

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stressed stronger and proactive government initiative for a permanent solution to refugee problem facing Bangladesh for long.

Christopher Beng Cha Lee, UNHCR representative in Bangladesh, made the suggestion talking to newsmen here on the eve of the World Refugee Day, observed worldwide yesterday.

He emphasised formulating a policy and urged experts, policy makers and lawyers to come forward in this regard.

Lee appreciated the role of the Bangladesh government for extending various supports to around 20,500 Rohingya refugees left over at Kutupalang and Nayapara camps in Cox's Bazar, waiting for repatriation to their homeland.

He said refugee situation in Bangladesh is quite different from other countries because around one crore people of the country crossed border and took refuge in India during the Liberation War.

"With this tolerance, it is supporting the Rohingyas for more than last one decade," said the UNHCR representative.

The UN agency has been

providing assistance to the government since 1992 for voluntary repatriation of some 250,000-236,700 refugees, migrated from northern Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Their assistance includes medical, primary education, water, sanitation and skill development training for women in the camps through the government of Bangladesh.

Lee informed that until December 31, 2004, the UN organisation had spent over Tk 429 crore on maintenance and repatriation process of the Rohingyas refugees.

Alongside the UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) also provides food assistance to the refugees.

In the last one decade, most of the refugees returned to their native country while remaining ones have been living in the restricted camps.

Lee said the Rohingyas are not willing to go back to their country for security reasons. The issue is a matter of concern for the UN agency like other civil-society members of the country as well.

"So the UNHCR likes to work closely with the government to solve the problem permanently."



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors at a photography exhibition titled 'International Genocide Exhibition' that began at the Zainul Gallery at the Institute of Fine Arts in the city yesterday.

Genocide photo exhibition begins

DU CORRESPONDENT

A five-day photography exhibition titled 'International Genocide Exhibition-2005' began at the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University yesterday with a call to stop genocide.

Mohammed Shahta Zarab, ambassador of Palestine, formally inaugurated the exhibition organised by the Anti-Genocide Human Rights Organisation.

Photographs of genocide in nine countries -- Bangladesh, Palestine, Japan, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Vietnam, Armenia and Kosovo -- have been put on display.

Addressing the inaugural session, the Palestinian ambassador the Palestine people are still subject to the extreme form of genocide carried out by Israel.

Such heinous crimes against the unarmed Palestinians have continued in order to destroy their dream of freedom, he added.

Jenni Christensen, third secretary of the Delegation of the European Commission, Fazlul Kadir, executive director of the HR organisation, and Anwarul Kadir, general secretary of Bangladesh Philately Association, also spoke.



Obituary

Professor Dr Kazi Abdul Latif, former member of University Grants Commission, passed away at the Samorita Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 82, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife, two sons, two daughters and seven grandchildren.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Dormitory Mosque at Green Road near his residence after Asr prayers on June 23.

Amena Hakim



Amena Hakim, mother of The Daily Jugantar Senior Staff Reporter Poet Halim Azad, passed away at her residence at Madhyanagar of Baktaboli

under Fatulla on Sunday night at the age of 96, says a press release.

Amena, wife of Abdul Hakim, left behind her three sons and two daughters to mourn her death.

She was buried at the Laxminagar Graveyard after a namaz-e-janaza at the Madhyanagar Bazar yesterday morning.

Her qulqhwani will be held at her Madhyanagar residence after Zohr prayers tomorrow.

Death anniversary

Today is the 13th death anniversary of Poet Rudra Mohammed Shahidullah, says a press release.

On the occasion, Rudra Sangsad will arrange a memorial meeting at the Writers' Building at 18, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue at 6:30pm today.

Besides, Rudra Smriti Sangsad will place wreaths at his grave at Mithekhal, bring out procession, hoist black flag and hold milad mahfil. It will also organise discussion and Rudra songs at his village Mithekhal.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

The inaugural ceremony of a two-day seminar on 'Sustainable Tourism Development' organised jointly by World Tourism Organisation and UNESCO in collaboration with Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, will be held with State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin as chief guest. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 9.00am.

DU seminar

Advanced Research Centre on Social Science of Dhaka University organises a seminar on 'Parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh: Challenges in institutionalisation.' Venue: 401, Lecture Theatre. Time: 4.30pm.

Muslim Aid

The certificate giving ceremony of Muslim Aid Institute of Technology will be held with Industry Minister Matur Rahman Nizami as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10.00am.

Conference

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association organises 'LDC conference of trade chambers/associations in the contexts of the US Trade Bill 2005' with Foreign Minister Mr Morshed Khan as chief guest. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 3.00pm.

Global Capsules

The certificate award ceremony of

Global Capsules will be held with Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 7.00pm.

Tagore evening

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy organises an evening of Tagore songs. Venue: National Art Gallery Plaza, Segun Bagicha. Time: 7.00pm.

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen a South African thriller titled 'Second Skin.' Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

Rotary meeting

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Sonargaon Dhaka will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Ramna. Time: 5.30pm.

DHAKA TOMORROW

Tagore evening

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy organises an evening of Tagore songs. Venue: National Art Gallery Plaza, Segun Bagicha. Time: 7.00pm.

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'Cast Away.' Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions till 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and lowest 23.0 degree Celsius at Satkhira.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:49pm today and rises at 5:12am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.8	28.3	71	74
Chittagong	35.8	27.3	74	83
Rajshahi	35.6	25.2	79	56
Khulna	33.2	24.7	80	64
Barisal	34.8	28.0	81	77
Sylhet	32.7	23.2	83	71
Cox's Bazar	34.5	26.8	70	76