

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.

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 Mahabubullah, 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.



PHOTO: STAR
Visitors at a photography exhibition titled 'International Genocide Exhibition' that began at the Zainul Gallery at the

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 provide 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).

Terminating 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 deaths increases due to lack of equipment for salvage operations," said Aminul Hug 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, Baduruddoza Nizam, Nazma Akhtar and Dilruba Anguri were present at the press conference.

FRUIT COLOURING

62 jailed in 6 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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.

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 Rohingya 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."

Amena Hakim



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

under Fatula 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 namaz-e-janaza at the Madhyanagar Bazar yesterday morning.

Her qulhwani 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 Mithekhali, bring out procession, hoist black flag and hold milad mahfil. It will also organise discussion and Rudra songs at his village Mithekhali.

N'ganj Jubo League leader shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Unknown assailants yesterday gunned down a local leader of Jabo League, the youth wing of main opposition Awami League (AL), in the port city.

Mohammed Shahto 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 said 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.

as the identity of the killers.

Police were verifying if muggers killed the Jabo League leader. But sources with Humayun's employer, Jamal & Company, said he did not generally keep money in his possession. Humayun's family members also could not say how much money he had on him when he left house.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (Area-Ka) Nur Ahmed said, "We are yet to learn who killed him and why. But the killers took away his handbag."

Leaders and activists of the local AL and its front organisations rushed to the hospital on hearing the news of the murder.

Narayanganj upazila Jabo League President Advocate Habib Al Mujahid Polu said Humayun was likely to be elected vice president of the unit. He condemned the killing and demanded trial of the culprits.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

The inaugural ceremony of a two-day seminar on 'Sustainable Tourism Development' organised jointly by World Tourism Organisation and UNESCAP 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.

Global Capsules will be held with Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 7:00pm.

Tagore evening

Bangladesh Shilpkala 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 Shilpkala 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 Sylhet.

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:

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