

FIGHTING POVERTY WITH EDUCATION

Children's edn takes priority in Burichang

WASIM BIN HABIB,
Back From Comilla

Poverty could not hold back Maya Debnath, daughter of a rickshawpuller, from continuing her education. She didn't even miss a single class at her school. According to her teachers, she is also doing well in her studies.

Maya, a student of class V at Burichang Government Primary School, also helps her family earn some money as her ailing father Khokon Debnath finds it difficult to make ends meet.

She along with her siblings makes paper packets and sells them to nearby shops. Her younger sister Shikha is also a student of class two at the same school.

Maya lives in a thatched house with her parents, which is located just behind the school. They have no property except this house. But she did not surrender to poverty. She manages to keep her and her sister's education on track through selling paper packets.

Her source of inspiration is her mother. "My mother told me that poor students can also do many things like others through education," said Maya.

"Our schoolteachers also inspire us a lot to pursue studies," she added.

Mohammad Yunus, headmaster of Burichang Primary School, said they give old answer sheets to Maya's family and they made packets from the sheets in a particular time of a day. Maya then sells the packets to different shops, which help meet educational expenses of the two sisters.

Against all the odds, the two sisters did not miss a single class and they are doing well in their studies, he told a group of journalists who visited several schools in Burichang recently under a project titled 'Communication activities for children and women development'.

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) is executing the third phase of the project with the financial assistance of Unicef.

There are many other families like Maya's in Burichang, Comilla, who

give topmost priority to their children's education, although they are suffering from grinding poverty.

The enrolment rate in the schools in Burichang is about 96 percent and the mothers play a vital role in this regard, according to a survey on primary education.

A total of 46,816 children, aged between 6 and 10, are currently enrolled at a total of 137 government, registered non-government and community primary schools where the percentage of girls is higher than that of boys.

The dropout rate has also decreased to 5 percent, it added.

Government scholarship programmes also contribute to the rise in the attendance in the primary schools, said many schoolteachers and parents in Burichang.

If the government increases the number of such scholarships, many parents will refrain from sending their children to workplaces, they observed.

Mohammad Yunus said a total of 59 students, out of 61, have com-

pleted the primary level last year.

He also said the dropout rate of the school is only three percent and the number of dropout has decreased in the last couple of years.

He, however, said the attendance rate decreases during the harvesting period as many parents engage their children in the workfields.

"But we are trying to increase the number and we often hold meetings with the parents to encourage them to send their children to schools," he said.

Upazila Education Officer Sanchita Das said about 96 percent of children in Burichang are now going to school and they are trying to raise the figure to 100 percent.

However, she thinks quality teachers and structural development of the schools have contributed to the rise in enrolment in the primary schools.

"We are trying to enhance the quality instead of quantity," she said.



PHOTO: STAR
Admission seekers come out of the examination halls on the Dhaka University campus after taking the admission test under 'Ka' unit yesterday. Some 24,370 applicants sat for the admission test against 1,303 seats this year.



PHOTO: STAR
Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a view exchange meeting with the leaders of Rangpur district AL at the party's Dhammudi office in the city yesterday.

Police recover shotgun, arrest 5 in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

Police yesterday recovered a shotgun which was snatched by miscreants at Gobindaganj upazila of the district ten days back, and arrested five people in this connection.

On an information, a police team led by Sub-Inspector (SI) Shuresh Chandra, recovered the gun which was hidden under the ground near Tinmatha culvert on Joypurhat-Shibganj Road.

The shotgun was snatched when SI Shamsul Huq and Constable MAAziz were patrolling on a motorcycle on the night of January 15.

When they reached Basail village, a gang of miscreants hit Shamsul with a stick and both the cops fell down from the motorcycle.

The miscreants then beat them up and snatched away the gun.

Police had filed a case with Gobindaganj Police Station in this respect.

Fire at TV assembling unit in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out at a television assembling unit at Pallabi in the city yesterday evening, destroying all electronic equipment and tools.

Fire brigade source said the cause of the blaze, which started at around 5:45pm, could be known immediately. But they suspect that an electrical short-circuit might

have caused it.

The fire fighters brought the fire under control after a struggle for one and half an hour.

Damama Marketing Limited set up the unit on the third floor of a five-storey building. It rented the floor from former lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumder, said an employee of Damama.

The unit was closed yesterday, the weekly holiday.

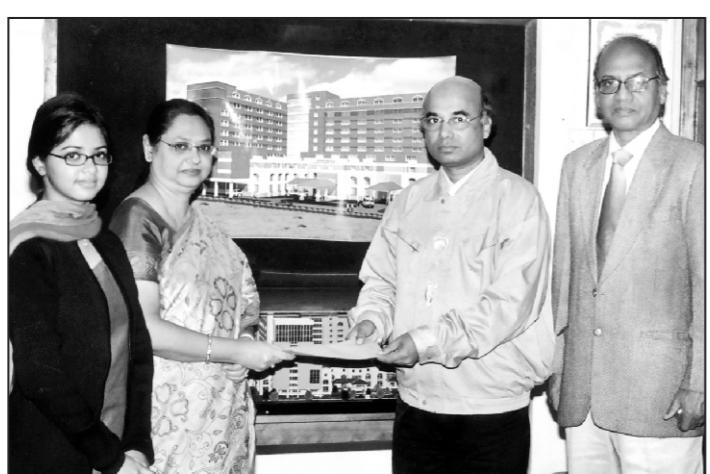


PHOTO: AHSANIA MISSION

Prof Nazneen Afroz of the Department of Geography and Environment of Dhaka University hands over a cheque for Tk 5 lakh to Deputy Executive Director of Dhaka Ahsania Mission M Ehsanur Rahman at the Mission Bhaban in the city yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR
General Manager of Nokia Bangladesh Prem Chand hands over a cheque for Tk 2 lakh to Try Foundation Chairman Zahiruddin Mahmud Mamun at a press conference in the city recently to support a health camp at Pirhaat in Rangpur for the cold-affected people.

DU teacher donates Tk 5 lakh to AMCH

BSS, Dhaka

Professor Nazneen Afroz of the Department of Geography and Environment of Dhaka University donated Tk 5 lakh to Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH) yesterday.

She handed over a cheque for the money to M Ehsanur Rahman, Deputy Executive Director of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, at the Mission Bhaban at Dhammudi, said an AMCH press release.

The donation has been made for dedicating a bed of the hospital in the name of Professor Nazneen's mother late Eva Shamsun Nahar.

Ehsan expressed his gratitude to the donor and hoped that others would extend their hands of cooperation in this noble venture.

Still there is a need for huge money up to Tk 150 crore for completion of the construction and making the hospital fully functional, the press release added.

Two killed in Sirajganj road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least two people were killed and 15 others were injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Pabna highway at Moshipur in Shahzadpur Upazila of Sirajganj district yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place at around 2:30pm when a Pabna bound truck collided head-on with a Dhaka bound bus, killing Saidul Islam, 35, helper of the truck on the spot and injuring 16 others.

Among the injured, an unidentified person, aged about 60, succumbed to his injuries on the way to hospital, while the rest 15 were taken to different hospitals and clinics in Shahzadpur and Sirajganj town.

3 win MHED-Salma Amin Memorial Journalism Award

DU CORRESPONDENT

Names of the winners of MHED-Salma Amin Memorial Journalism Award 2006 have been announced.

They are Shah Alam, Nandai (Mymensingh) correspondent of Dainik Ittefaq, for reporting on human rights, Hasibur Rahman Bilu, Bogra correspondent of The Daily Star, for reporting on environment, and Ismat Marzida Khan, Chittagong stringer of Dainik Samakal, for reporting on children and women's affairs.

The winners will be awarded with crests and cheques at a ceremony soon, said a press release of Media Forum for Human Rights and Environment Development (MHED) yesterday.

Absconding convict held in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Police on Thursday night arrested an absconding convict who was sentenced to life-term imprisonment by a court here in a murder case in 2001.

The arrestee Eman Ali, 50, son of Ejahar Ali, hails from Bathla village under Sadar upazila.

Police said the victim Akbar Ali of village Bathla was killed by miscreants on the night of April 30, 1995.

A case was filed with Sadar thana accusing three people including Eman Ali.

Since then he had been absconding.

A court at Satkhira tried the case in absentia and found him guilty.

The court also acquitted two other accused as the prosecution failed to prove their involvement in the case.

City AL distributes winter clothes

City Awami League (AL) yesterday distributed winter clothes among poor and cold-hit people at its office in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Loin's Club AL leader Shafiqur Rahman Safi and AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader were present and distributed the clothes.

City AL Acting President AKM Rahmatullah, Central Krishak League Organising Secretary MA Karim, Engineer Shamsuzzoha Chowdhury and other leaders were also present.

REUTERS, Oslo

A draft UN report projecting a big rise in temperatures this century is likely to add fuel to the debate about whether the world is facing dangerous global warming, experts said yesterday.

The draft, by 2,500 scientists and due for release in Paris on February 2, is expected to warn of more heat waves, floods, droughts and rising seas linked to greenhouse gases released mainly by burning fossil fuels, scientific sources say.

World leaders, including former US President George Bush, signed a UN Climate Convention in 1992 with an overriding goal of stabilizing greenhouse gases at levels preventing "dangerous (human) interference with the climate system."

However, it did not define "dangerous" and the issue has been a vexed point in efforts to slow climate change ever since.

"The new report should fuel the

Traffic pollution can stunt lung development

REUTERS, London

Traffic pollution can prevent the lungs of children who live near busy roads from developing properly, making them more likely to suffer respiratory and heart problems later in life, US researchers said yesterday.

They found that children who had lived within 500 yards of a highway from the age of 10, had significantly less lung function by the time they reached 18 than youngsters exposed to less traffic pollution.

Someone suffering a pollution-related deficit in lung function as a child will probably have less than healthy lungs all of his or her life," said James Gauderer, of the University of Southern California.

The lead author of the study, published online by The Lancet medical journal, said reduced lung function in later life was known to be a risk factor for respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

The researchers studied the effects of traffic pollution on 3,600 children living in southern California over an eight-year period.

Each year they carried out tests to measure how much, and how quickly, the children could exhale after taking a deep breath. They also recorded the distance the youngsters lived from freeways and other busy roads.

Children who were otherwise healthy but who lived close to main roads had a significant decrease in lung function.

debate" among scientists and in the media, said Jan Corfee-Morlot, who heads work on climate change at the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

"For politicians, the question of what is dangerous is not formally on a negotiating agenda, but it is in the background."

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is expected to predict a temperature rise of 2 to 4.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2100 with a "best estimate" of a rise of 3 degrees C, scientific sources said.

That is a narrower range than the 1.4-5.8C in the previous IPCC report in 2001 – even the minimum 1.4 rise would be the biggest in a century for 10,000 years. Temperatures have risen about 0.6C since 1900.

SLOWER SEA RISE

Among good news, the new report will narrow and revise down forecast sea rises this century to less than half a meter from 9 cm to 88 cm (3.5-34.5 inches) in the 2001 report.

The European Union and many environmental groups want the world to cap any rise in temperatures at 2 degrees C over pre-industrial levels, saying such a rise would cause dangerous changes to nature such as more heat waves.

"The IPCC cannot say what is dangerous because that is a political judgment," said Bert Metz, a climate expert at the Dutch Environmental Assessment Agency.

"But it gives the ingredients for

the politicians to draw conclusions...as the EU has done."

Corfee-Morlot said it might be easier to set targets such as limiting the concentrations of carbon dioxide or temperature rises than to define dangerous benchmarks.

Indeed people say a melting of the Arctic ice is already "dangerous" for their hunting culture, for instance, while Russia might benefit from a slight rise in temperatures because of fewer deaths from cold and higher yields of some crops.

A 2006 report by Nicholas Stern, the chief British government economist, projected a rise of 3 C would mean that between 1 billion and 4 billion more people would suffer water shortages and put an extra 150 million to 550 million people at risk of hunger.

Other experts say the risks have been exaggerated.

"I don't think the IPCC will reflect the sense of catastrophe that has built up in the climate change debate," said Bjorn Lomborg, the Danish author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist."

Under the Kyoto Protocol, the UN plan for fighting global warming, 35 industrial nations have agreed to cut emissions by 5 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

President George W Bush pulled the United States out of the protocol in 2001, saying it would damage the U.S. economy and wrongly exempted developing nations from the first phase.

On the occasion, doa and milad mahfil will be held at his village home at Swarupkathi and Vashantek Minar Mosque in Dhaka to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Obituary

Prof Moyeen Uddin Kamal of Marketing Department of Dhaka University (DU) passed away due to a cardiac arrest at National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases on Thursday night at the age of 52, says a DU press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Mirsarai in Chittagong after a namaz-e-janaza in front of Business faculty on DU premises yesterday.

Kazi Motahar Hossain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Kazi Motahar Hossain, founder-principal of Government Hatem Ali College and former teacher of BM College, passed away due to old age complications at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital on Thursday night at the age of 94.

He left behind his wife, three sons, five daughters and a host of admirers.

His namaz-e-janaza was held in front of Barisal Awami Kumar Hall after Juma prayers. He was buried at Barisal Muslim Graveyard yesterday afternoon.