

Declare southwest region as a 'disaster' area

Three voluntary organisations urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three voluntary organisations yesterday urged the government to declare the country's south-west region as a 'disaster area' since around seven million people of the region have long been suffering from severe waterlogging.

The declaration will help raise more funds for the affected people, observed the three bodies-- Islamic Relief Bangladesh, Concern and Oxfam-- at a press conference organised in Dhaka to present the outcome of an assistance programme.

Funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), the programme was aimed at reducing sufferings of the waterlogged people of Jessore and Satkhira and ensuring immediate supply of essential food items.

Under the programme, the three organisations provided food and supports to 7,500 people of the two districts.

Oxfam Country Director Anil Tambeay urged the government to declare the region as a 'disaster area' to help raising additional funds for waterlogged communities.

He stressed on a permanent solution of the problem after finding out actual reasons and also emphasised on proper rehabilitation of the affected people.

Nurul Amin Bugmer, programme manager of Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Programme of Islamic Relief Bangladesh, presented the keynote paper highlighting the achievements and lessons learned from the programme.

Short-term assistance is not

enough for the affected people, said Nurul adding a long-term intervention is required. "The government should act promptly and intervene as quickly as possible," he viewed.

A beneficiary of the programme, Abdul Karim, also a Union Parishad member of Kultia under Monirampur upazila of Jessore, while sharing his experience at the press conference demanded setting up of high roads and sanitary latrines at the affected areas.

Iftexhar Ahmed Chaudhury, adviser of the Programme Development, Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Unit of Islamic Relief of Bangladesh, Abdul Awal of ECHO and Crerol Crawley of Concern were also present at the press conference.

Amar Ekushey Book Fair begins today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2007, country's largest and historic book festival, will begin today on BanglaAcademy premises.

The Fair Management Committee has completed taking all necessary preparations, including allocating stalls and ensuring stern security measures to avert any untoward incident.

Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Fakhruddin Ahmed is expected to inaugurate the fair at around 2:30pm, said Moimul Hasan, acting director general of Bangla Academy, at a press conference yesterday.

The chief adviser is also expected to inaugurate a monument of Language Movement named "Moder Garab" (Our Pride) containing busts of five language martyrs -- Rafiq, Salam, Jabbar, Barkat and Shafiur.

The monument, a work of artist Md Mafidul Alam Khan, is placed on the fair premises.

Amar Ekushey or "Immortal February 21" commemorates the Language Movement of 1952. On this day, our language martyrs Rafiq, Salam, Jabbar, Barkat and Shafiur sacrificed their lives to establish the rights to our so loved mother tongue, Bangla.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) declared the Day as International Mother Language Day in 1997 and since then the whole world observes the day with utmost solemnity.

This year a total of 400 stalls will be allotted among 255 publication houses and some voluntary, government and non-government organisations like Red Crescent, fire brigade and blood donation centres.

Last year, the number of stalls was 470. This year authorities lessened the number of stalls to provide the visitors more space to roam around on the premises, said Moimul Hasan.

A number of owners of publication houses, who did not get any stalls, expressed their dissatisfaction over the issue, since they used to get stalls in the previous years.

All books, including those published by Bangla Academy, will be sold at 30 per cent discount in the fair. Bangla Academy will publish or reprint 37 books on various issues in the fair that has an allotted budget of Tk 29 lakh.

Sixteen close-circuit TV (CCTV) cameras would be set up at different points of the Academy premises. Apart from deployment of regular law-enforcing agencies, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and intelligence branches members will be deployed at the fair venue.

The fair venue has been divided into five chattras (parts) that have been named Salam, Rafiq, Jabbar, Barkat and Shafiur Chattrar.

The fair was named Amar Ekushey Book Fair in 1984 and the Bangla Academy has been organising it over the last three decades.

Seminars, symposiums and cultural functions will be held everyday at the academy stage where eminent litterateurs and academicians will take part.

The fair will remain open for all from 3:00pm to 9:00pm everyday. However, on Fridays, the fair will remain open from 11:00am with two-hour break from 12:00noon.

On February 21, the fair will continue from 8:00am to 9:00 pm without any break.

The fair venue will be a non-smoking and polythene-free zone.

When asked about continuous violation of fair rules and regulations by participant publication houses, Moimul Hasan said authorities will take necessary initiatives to ensure that publication houses do follow the rules and regulations of the fair that prohibit selling pirated books and books of other publications.

"We are going to take severe actions against those who will flout rules and regulations", said Moimul.

Member Secretary of Amar Ekushey Book Fair Management Committee Fazlur Rahim, director (institutional planning and training department) and Murshiduddin Ahmad Anwar, assistant director of BanglaAcademy, were present at the press conference.

DETENTION OF UTTARAN CHIEF HC issues rule on govt

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued rule upon the government to explain why it should not be directed to produce Shahidul Islam, executive director of Uttaran, a Satkhira-based NGO, before the court to demonstrate that he is not being held without lawful authority.

An HC bench issued the rule following a habeas corpus petition challenging the legality of the detention under the Special Powers Act 1974. "The rule is returnable in two weeks," says the court order.

On January 27, Shahidul was arrested during a joint drive in Satkhira. Later, he was handed down a 30-day detention order and sent to jail on allegations of funding and supplying arms to extremist outfits.

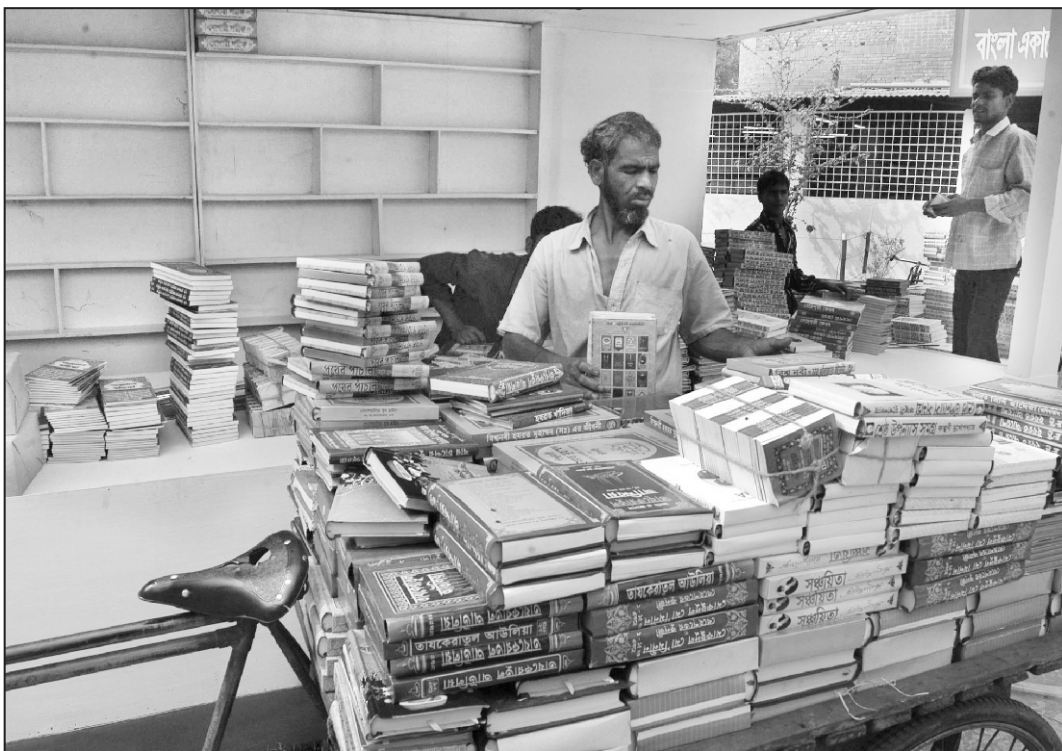


PHOTO: STAR

Copies of new books arrive at Bangla Academy in the city yesterday as the month-long Ekushey Book Fair begins today.

Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

BSS, Rajshahi

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader near Nitpur frontier under Porsha upazila of Naogaon district on Tuesday night.

The victim was identified as Abdul Gaffar, 25, son of late Elahi Baksh of Raghunathpur village under the same upazila.

BDR sources said the Indian border guards opened fire on Gaffar when he went to the border pillar no 231 to buy cows. He died instantly.

Immediately after the killing, the BSF personnel took away the body.

BDR demanded return of the body, but its Indian counterpart did not respond as of 6:00pm yesterday.

Rab recovers 3 revolvers, arrests three

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday recovered three foreign revolvers and 14 rounds of bullets and arrested three people in this connection from Natore, Rangpur and Rajshahi.

Rab members recovered two Pakistani revolvers and 9 rounds of bullets from a place near one Ziaur Rahman's house at Laxmipur under Lalpur upazila in Natore.

In another incident, Rab members arrested Mekaria Hossain alias Tapan Biswas and seized an Italian revolver with 5 rounds of bullets from his house in Guptapara in Rangpur.

Meanwhile, Rab arrested Salam and Liton from Bagha and Charghat with 84 bottles of smuggled Indian Phensidyl.

Yunus may join politics if 'circumstances force'

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There had been a lot of talk about his joining politics or government, he said, adding, "But I kept away from it because if you get into it you get sucked into it. You can't do the thing you want to do."

To a question if he wants to be the president of Bangladesh, Yunus said, "To become the president is not an exciting news for me because it (the post) has no power. It's a decorative post. I am not psychologically tuned to some decorative post."

Asked to comment on the political situation in Bangladesh, he said the country "has gone through a rough period and we were almost heading towards a political disaster. But that has been stopped by the emergency and the caretaker government has been accepted by the people and parties."

He said the people of Bangladesh hope to see a "clean and transparent" general election but while the poll could be clean "the challenge is how to ensure clean people come to a new government."

Asked about the demand of Bangladesh's political parties for early elections and end to the emergency, Yunus said, "Clean people must take part in the elections even if it takes time to ensure that. Otherwise, the same problem will crop up again. Now we have a chance of a lifetime to cleanse our politics."

Asked when Bangladesh will shed the tag of Least Developed Country, he said, "Our politicians do not want to get out of LDC tag because there are certain facilities available with it. But the country should come out of LDC status and it is going to happen soon with economic growth rate of six per cent over the years."

Replying to a question, he said one of the major reasons for Bangladesh's inability to become a manufacturing hub is acute shortage of electricity. "The moment this

3 die in road crashes

UNB, Dhaka

At least three people were killed in separate road accidents in Bogra and Jamalpur yesterday and on

Factory sealed off for producing unauthorised acid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

The joint forces yesterday sealed off an illegal factory for producing sulphuric acid illegally at Sanarpar of Shidhiringanj in the district and arrested two people in this connection.

Sources said the forces led by magistrate Manzurul Mannan raided FA Enterprise that has been producing different chemicals and sulphuric acid to produce detergent without having any government licence.

They arrested general manager and commercial manager of the factory and confiscated the materials.

The owners - Anwar Chowdhury and Ajit Chowdhury of the factory- have been absconding since then.

Italy offers help to CG

UNB, Dhaka

Italian Ambassador Dr Pietro Ballero yesterday offered his country's assistance to the caretaker government whenever needed.

The Italian envoy came up with the offer when he called on Foreign Adviser Dr Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury at his office yesterday, said a Foreign Ministry handout.

The envoy also expressed satisfaction at the steps being taken by the caretaker government.

During the meeting, they also discussed matters of mutual interest, including the possibility of enhancing cooperation in the field of development.

Italy is also ready to support Bangladesh for power generation, the Ambassador said.

The possibility of taking a greater number of manpower from Bangladesh to Italy also came up at the meeting.

Tuesday.

A Bogra report adds: Two people were killed in a road accident at Ranirhat on Bogra-Natore highway in Shajahanpur upazila yesterday.

Police said a Natore-bound truck from Bogra hit a rickshaw van and a bicycle from behind at about 8:00am, leaving bicycle rider Ruhul Amin, 45, and the rickshaw van driver dead on the spot.

Identity of the rickshaw van driver could not be known immediately.

The truck driver managed to escape with the vehicle immediately after the accident.

Another report from Jamalpur adds: A minor girl was crushed under the wheels of a truck near Zia Health Complex on Bozrapur road in the town on Tuesday.

Police and witnesses said Trisha, 4, only daughter of local drug trader Sanwar Hossain Sanu died on the spot, as a fertiliser-laden Sherpur-bound truck ran over her while she was crossing the road.

Local people caught the truck driver Nazrul Islam Munshi and damaged the truck protesting the accident.

Maghi Purnima today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Buddhist community of the country will celebrate Maghi Purnima, one of their major religious festivals, with traditional enthusiasm and solemn devotion today.

The Buddhist community has chalked out various programmes to celebrate the festival across the country, a press release said.

B a n g l a d e s h B u d d h i s t Federation will hoist the national and their religious flags at 6:30am, worship the Buddha at 10:00am, hold a discussion on Buddhism and world peace at 4:00pm and pray for the peace and prosperity of Bangladesh at 6:00pm at International Buddhist Monastery.

Masud Nizami passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent journalist Masud Nizami passed away due to kidney disease and diabetes on Tuesday night at Millennium Hospital at Lalma in the city at the age of 60, says a press release.

He left behind his mother, wife, four brothers, two sisters and a host of friends and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Azimpur graveyard after Asr prayers yesterday following a namaz-e-janaza on National Press Club premises.

Apart from working for the daily Ittefaq, Azad, Millat, Sangram and Krishan, he was the former senior vice president of Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) and Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ). He was also the permanent member of National Press Club and President of Barisal Bibhag Sangbadik Samity.

In separate statements, Information Adviser Mainul Hossain, former minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Presidents of BFUJ Mozammel Haq and Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Secretaries General Ruhul Amin Gazi and Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Presidents Elahi Newaz Khan and Altaf Mahmud and General Secretaries Sardar Farid and Omar Faruque, President of National Press Club Shawkat Mahmud and General Secretary Kamal Uddin Sabuj, President of Barisal Bibhag Samity Syeda Jamila Saleh and General Secretary Ziaul Kabir Dulu expressed deep shock at the death of Nizami.

Hailing his contributions to the society, they expressed sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Shamsuzzaman Khan Benu

BSS, Dhaka

Shamsuzzaman Khan (Benu), a cultural personality, passed away due to a massive cardiac arrest in the city on Tuesday at the age of 61.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and old mother and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Shamsuzzaman Khan was an artiste of great reputation and a famed film, television and stage actor for many years.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at DOHS, Baridhara Mosque after Zohr prayers today.

His body is being preserved for return of his wife and younger brother Ashfaq Zaman Khan (Pinu), who had gone on a visit outside the country on Monday.

His body will be taken to his residence - House No. 325, Road No. 5, DOHS Baridhara at 12:00 noon today.

He will be buried at the Army Graveyard.

Ramiz Uddin Ahmed



arrest on January 29.

He left behind his wife and two daughters.

His quikhani will be held at his residence at House# 34, Road# 15 (new) 28 (old) Dhanmondi Residential Area in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Lutfunnahar



former secretary of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation, passed away at Birdem hospital in the city on Tuesday at the age of 56, says a press release.

She left behind her husband, a son, a daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn her death.

She was buried at Azimpur graveyard after Asr prayers on that day following a namaz-e-janaza at Gulshan Jame Mosque in the city.

A mild malaria, Querkhanti and destitute feeding will be held tomorrow at her Gulshan residence.

Hafizur Rahman Biswas

Hafizur Rahman Biswas, a freedom fighter and educationist, passed away on Tuesday at the age of 71, says a press release.

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

He was buried at his village graveyard at Khalia under Mohammadpur upazila in Magura on that day.

Death anniversary



Today is the third death anniversary of Shailabala Chowdhury, mother of Prof M L Chowdhury, says a press release.

On the occasion, food will be distributed among the destitute at Siddheshwari Kali Mandir in the city.



PHOTO: STAR

Rajuk bulldozes illegal structures along Gulshan lake in the city yesterday.

Rajuk knocks down illegal structures in Gulshan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakkha (Rajuk) recovered part of a 30 feet wide road and demolished several illegal structures in the city's Gulshan area yesterday.

Accompanied by army men and police, a Rajuk team yesterday knocked down two walls and gates of buildings of a real state company built on both sides of the Rajuk road.

Both the sides of the road leading to the Gulshan lake were used as car parking space for the residents of the buildings.

"We issued notices several times asking the company to demolish the walls built on the road, but it did not pay heed," Rajuk Magistrate ASM Emdadul Dastagir said.

The Rajuk team also demolished some tin-roofed structures near the end of the Road-13 and extended portions of a building at Mohakhali by Gulshan-Mohakhali road.

Deposited firearms to be kept in respective PS until Feb 28

UNB, Dhaka

The home ministry yesterday said the firearms (revolver and pistol) deposited earlier by their owners will be kept in respective police stations until February 28 in the wake of promulgating the state of emergency.

The restriction on movement with all kinds of firearms will be in force until February 28 while arms in stock with arms dealers and those licensed in the name of National Shooting Federation/Rifles Clubs are to be kept in own custody by the respective authorities.

A circular of the home ministry said legal action will be taken against the violators of this order under the Arms Act 1878 (XI of 1878).

Earlier, the ministry had ordered the owners of the licensed firearms (revolver and pistol) to deposit their firearms to nearest police stations by December 28 last year on the eve of previously announced general elections to maintain peace and discipline in the public interest.

Later, the time for depositing firearms was extended up to January 5.

CRACK DOWN ON VEHICLES FEB 4 CNG auto-rickshaws rush to install meter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Hundreds of drivers and owners of CNG driven auto-rickshaws thronged the meter supplying companies here in Chittagong yesterday to install or repair meters ahead of the crack down against the vehicles without meters or faulty meters CMP Traffic Department is to start from February 4.

Drivers and owners, however, sought more time for the task since they think the given time is too short and the number of meter supplying companies is too few.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Traffic Department in a meeting with the leaders of concerned owners and drivers associations on January 28 gave an ultimatum for operating CNG-run auto-rickshaws with meters from February 3.

In the meeting CMP DC (Traffic) Abu Sufian made it clear that stern action would be taken against any CNG-run auto-rickshaw that would ply in the city streets without meters from February 4.

However, out of six enlisted companies, at present there are only two - Crystal Agencies at Dewanhat and Standard Limited at Badurtala area- to provide the

three wheelers with meters and accessories required for repairing the damaged ones.

With the two companies making supply of meters and accessories for around 120 vehicles a day, many are failing to install or repair their meters even after several hours' of waiting in long queue, said the sources.

Sohel Khondokar, office executive of Crystal Agencies, said they repaired some 200 meters in the last three days.

Zakir Hossain, a driver waiting in a queue at Crystal Agencies, told this correspondent that he had been waiting in the queue for over nine hours since 3:00am while it was likely to take him three more hours to get the meter repaired.

Partha Chowdhury, who owned three CNG auto-rickshaws, alleged that the meters he bought from a company became out of order only after a few months of the installation.

He said that he did not repair them before, as his drivers did not face any drive by traffic department so far.

WEATHER TODAY				
UNB, Dhaka				
Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of light rain or drizzle at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kusthia and Kusthia in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.				
Moderate to thick fog may occur elsewhere over the country during late night until morning, Met Office said.				
Highest temperature 30.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 14.4 degree Celsius at Srimongal.				
The sun sets in the capital at 5:45pm today and rises at 6:40am tomorrow.				
Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:				
City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in	
percentage	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.0	18.6	92	73
Chittagong	28.2	17.7	93	92
Rajshahi	27.5	14.7	95	76
Khulna	28.0	16.5	100	74
Barisal	28.0	17.0	100	88
Sylhet	27.0	17.2	85	76
Cox's Bazar	27.5	18.7	94	89