

## 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 Tambe 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.

Iftekhar 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.

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

### 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 Bangla Academy 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 Moinul 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 Shafiq.

The monument, a work of artist Md Maifidul 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, Barkat and Shafiq 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 Moinul 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 chattars (parts) that have been named Salam, Rafiq, Jabbar, Barkat and Shafiq-Chattar.

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 literateurs 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, Moinul 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 Moinul.

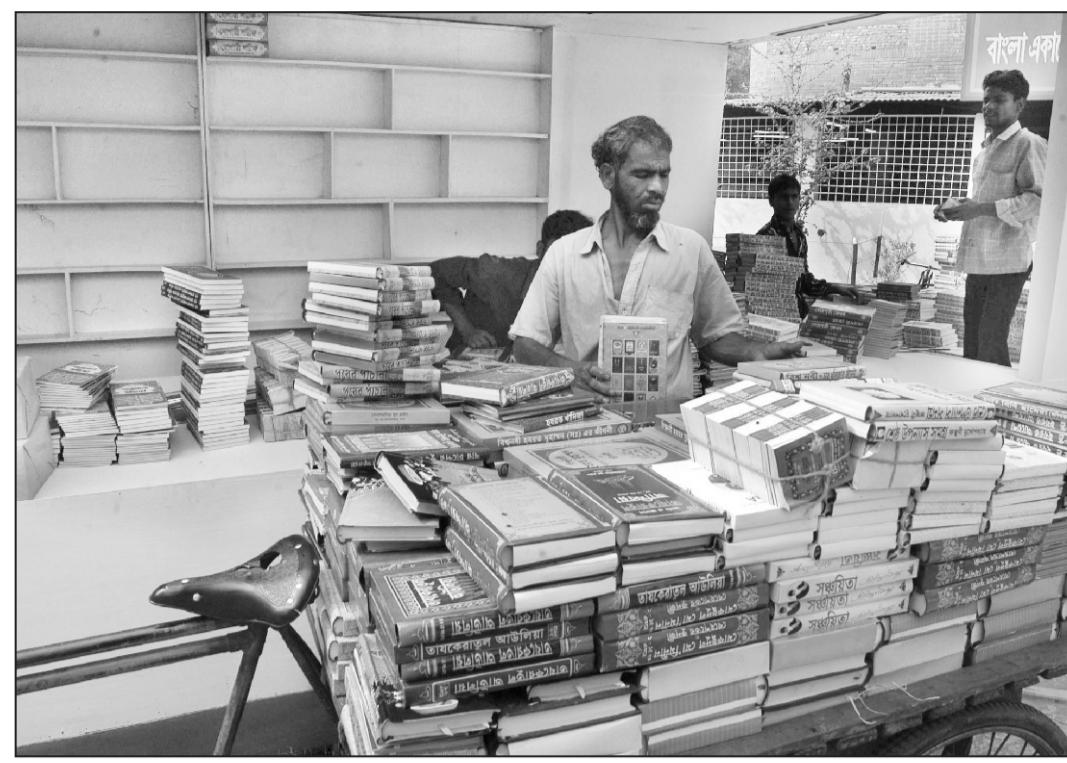
Member Secretary of Amar Ekushey Book Fair Management Committee Fazlur Rahim, director (institutional planning and training department) and Mursheeduddin Ahmad Anwar, assistant director of Bangla Academy, were present at the press conference.

He said that 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."

Replies 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



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

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 Lalmatia 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 Sangbad Samity.

In separate statements, Information Adviser Mainul Hosein, former minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Presidents of BFUJ Mohammad Haq and Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Secretaries General Ruhul Amin Gazi and Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Dhaka Union of Journalists (DU) 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 Abdin 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.

Maghi Purnima

today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Italian Ambassador Dr Pietro Ballerio

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 Iftekhar Ahmed

Chowdhury at his office yesterday.

said a Foreign Ministry handout.

The envoy also expressed satis-

faction at the steps being taken by

the caretaker government.

During the meeting, they also

discussed matters of mutual inter-

est, 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.

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.

Bangladesh Buddhist

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.

Lutunnahar

Lutunnahar

Lutunnahar, former lecturer of Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of Dhaka University and wife of Mia Md Golam Kibria,

former secretary of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation, passed away at Birbhum 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 milad mahfil, Qurankhani 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.



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

PHOTO: STAR

### 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.

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.

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.

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