

Most fertilisers contaminated, substandard

Speakers tell CAB view exchange meet

UNB, Dhaka

The government should immediately launch a massive drive against the fertiliser manufacturers, importers and their agents to save the country's agriculture as most of the fertilisers that are being used by the farmers are found to be contaminated and substandard.

The observation came at a view exchange meeting with journalists, organised by Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) at the CAB conference centre yesterday.

A research paper presented in the meeting said that after examining 17 samples of fertilisers used in the country, the Association found

16 of those as contaminated and substandard.

The fertilisers found contaminated and substandard are - Zinc, Boron, Micro-nutrient, TSP, Mixed fertiliser (NPKS) and Gypsum fertilisers.

"Mainly the mixed fertilisers are highly contaminated with arsenic, cadmium and lead. That's why our lands are losing fertility day by day. Such fertilisers are also very harmful for human health and the environment," Prof SM Imamul Haq of the Soil, Water and Environment Department of Dhaka University told the meeting.

Prof Haq, also Director of Bangladesh Australia Centre for

Environment Research, said the caretaker government should take

immediate measures to save the country's agriculture by ensuring the use of government-specified quality.

"Like the drives against food adulteration, the government can form special teams to work on quality of fertilisers and identify those involved in contamination of fertilisers."

Of the total 138 fertiliser companies registered in the country, some 52 factories are functional and most of these produce substandard fertilisers, he said.

"There are appropriate laws in our country. But the laws need to be implemented properly for ensuring the quality of fertilisers," he said.

CAB President Borhan Ahmed and General Secretary Kazi Faruk also addressed the meeting.

because of the use of contaminated fertilisers, but no effective measures were taken in this regard.

CAB Treasurer Khalilur Rahman Sajal presented another research paper where the officials of Agriculture Extension Department have been accused of not performing their duties properly.

"Fertilisers' production, import, preservation, distribution and marketing, the whole process has become hostage to a group of illegal profit-seekers. For this, indifference of the officials of Agriculture Department is responsible," he said.

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BSEC BHABAN FIRE
Profound shock at loss of lives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different political parties and organisations have expressed profound shock and sorrow at the loss of lives and damage of property in yesterday's fire at Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) Bhaban in the city that left at least two people dead and scores of others injured.

Praying for the salvation of the departed souls, they expressed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

They also urged the authorities concerned to make immediate arrangement for quick and proper treatment of the injured.

They also demanded proper investigation into the cause of the fire and take necessary measures in high-rise buildings to avoid such mishap in future.

In a message, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia expressed deep shock at the loss of lives and damage of property in the fire.

She prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and conveyed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

Khaleda urged the authorities concerned to make arrangement for better treatment of those injured in the incident and prayed for their early recovery.

She thanked the members of Fire Service, Army, Air Force, Rab and Police for conducting the rescue operation.

She also thanked people for their courageous role in rescuing those who were trapped inside the building.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina also expressed deep shock at the death of two people and sympathy for those who were injured in the fire.

In her message she prayed for peace and salvation of the departed souls and expressed deep sympathy to the bereaved families.

She also demanded investigation into the cause of the fire that broke out at around 10:35am.

She also thanked Fire Brigade, Army, Air Force, Rab and Red Crescent for their efforts to put out the flames and conduct the rescue operation.

In a statement, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan expressed deep shock and sorrow at the loss of lives and damage of property at BSEC Bhaban.

Meanwhile, Adviser to caretaker government Geeti Ara Safiya Chowdhury visited the BSEC Bhaban in the afternoon.

She discussed with the officials concerned about the progress of the rescue operation.

She told the journalists that the Ministry of Industries has already formed a four-member enquiry committee to investigate into the incident and the committee will submit its report within the next 24 hours.

Later, the adviser visited Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, Combined Military Hospital and Sharminita Hospital where the injured were admitted.

Maj Gen (Retd) Dr ASM Motiur Rahman, adviser to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Religious Affairs, also visited Dhaka Medical College and Hospital and inquired about the treatment of the injured people.

The organisations that expressed sorrow and concern at the fire incident included Workers' Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Press Club, Dhaka Reporters Unity, Karmojibi Nari, Christian Lekhok Forum, Jatiya Janata Party and Ibne Sina Trust.

Book on right to information launched

DU CORRESPONDENT

Onkru Prakashani published 'Totthyer Odhikar' (Right to Information), a book containing some 60 essays on right to information, at Amar Ekushey Book Fair yesterday.

The book is edited by Robeet Ferdous, assistant professor of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Dhaka University (DU) and Indian journalist Babesh Das.

Prof Sadeque Halim of DU and poet Abus Samad unveiled the cover of the book.

Death anniversary

Today is the third death anniversary of Marium Shammam, former country manager (Nepal) of Bangladesh Biman, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at Sonargaon Road mosque in the city after Asr prayers today.

Rice traders have occupied footpaths of Babubazar area in the city. The picture was taken yesterday.

Student bodies urge Yunus not to join DU convocation

DU CORRESPONDENT

Student organisations and a section of general students yesterday protested the decision of Dhaka University (DU) to confer honorary Doctor of Laws degree on Nobel laureate Prof Dr Muhammad Yunus at the convocation ceremony.

Terming Prof Yunus a controversial person, they urged him not to join the 43rd convocation of the university scheduled for tomorrow.

Earlier, everyone had welcomed the DU authorities' decision to confer the honorary degree on the Nobel laureate and invite him as the convocation speaker when the convocation was scheduled for December 24 last year.

The convocation was rescheduled for February 28, but the student organisations went against the DU's decision as Prof Yunus floated a political party by then.

DCG officials yesterday said the residents of different areas have complained of mosquito menace saying they have not seen any anti-mosquito drive.

But Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said, "Special drive against mosquito is going on ... I myself will conduct the drive in Sonargaon and Magbazar areas today."

He said, "The massive drive will continue in different parts of the city until the middle of March."

The drive includes fogging of streets and lanes, specially the congested and swampy areas and

KILLING OF WOMAN IN LAXMIPUR Six to die, 3 get life

UNB, Laxmipur

A court in Laxmipur yesterday sentenced six people to death and three others to life imprisonment for killing a woman.

The condemned convicts are Abdul Khaleq, Md Montajuddin Ahmed, Abdul Motin, Delwar Hossain, Halima Begum and Amir Hossain. Khaleq was tried in absentia.

The three lifers are Monwara Begum, Rasheda Begum and Abdul Jalil.

The court also fined the lifers Tk 10,000, in default, to suffer one year more rigorous imprisonment.

According to the prosecution, Foyer Nesa was killed at her in-law's house at Indrapur village in sadar upazila on June 12, 1994 following brawls over the money sent by her husband Amir Hossain from abroad.

After examining the records and 22 witnesses, Additional Sessions Judge AFM Johurul Alam delivered the verdict.

Mosquito menace on the rise in city

UNB, Dhaka

Mosquito menace has increased in the city during the last few days despite the special drive launched by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) against the hazards.

DCC officials yesterday said the residents of different areas have complained of mosquito menace saying they have not seen any anti-mosquito drive.

But Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said, "Special drive against mosquito is going on ... I myself will conduct the drive in Sonargaon and Magbazar areas today."

He said, "The massive drive will continue in different parts of the city until the middle of March."

The DCC combatting teams do not go beyond the city area, he added.

Khoka said the local administration of those areas and the Public Health Department should also undertake vigorous campaign against mosquito.

"DCC discussed the matter with the authorities several times in the past without any result," he added.

cleaning water hyacinth and other objects from the ponds and ditches.

Explaining the problems in combating mosquitoes, he said areas surrounding the DCC, including swampy and low lying lands of Cantonment, Peikkhana, Manda, Basaboo, are the ideal grounds for breeding mosquitoes. They swarm to the city during this season of the year.

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"DCC discussed the matter with the authorities several times in the past without any result," he added.

"We will involve leaders of the party at different stages of the party's planning," AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah told The Daily Star after the meeting on Sunday night.

The AL leaders decided to hold a meeting of the party's Central Working Committee on March 3.

The meeting to be continued for several days will review overall situation including the reform issues.

AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader said.

"At that stage party chief Sheikh Hasina intervened to say that they had to sign the deal in a crisis period to strengthen the AL-led grand alliance so that they could foil the planned 'one-sided' election on January 22, said the sources.

Hasina told the meeting to continue such 'intra-party debates' with open mind so that the high-ups could get a real picture of the overall situation.

The AL president initiated holding regular meetings at her Dhanmondi office with a view to modernising the MoU deal with Khelafat Majlis.

The AL leader, however, declined to comment about the debate on the MoU deal with Khelafat Majlis.

The AL high-ups are wary

FROM PAGE 16

Jalil told the meeting that at least three points of the MoU -- including declaring the Kadianis non-Muslim and issuing Fatwas -- had been misinterpreted in the newspapers, meeting sources said.

He had rather tried to bring Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis into 'secular politics' through signing the deal, Jalil said.

The AL presidium members, who declined to accept Jalil's version, said there is no alternative but to admit that the signing of the deal was a direct attack on AL's secular foundation.

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One person was killed and seven others were injured in a road accident at Gamaridala under Sadar upazila in Khagrachhari yesterday.

Police and hospital sources said the accident occurred at 3:15pm when a Mohalchhari-bound speeding jeep, popularly known as alias Chander Gari, turned upside down and fell into a roadside ditch as its driver lost control over the steering.

Driver Mohammad Rafiq, 35, son of Mohammad Aslam Mia of Shabdamia Para village under Sadar upazila, died on the spot.

Abdul Bared, 39, Md Farid Molla, 50, Mohammad Morshed Ali, 35, M Abdus Salam, 90, Abu Khair, 30, Mohammad Shekander Ali, 55, and Obasa Chakma, 34, were rushed to Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital in critical condition, sources said.

The organisations that expressed sorrow and concern at the fire incident included Workers' Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Press Club, Dhaka Reporters Unity, Karmojibi Nari, Christian Lekhok Forum, Jatiya Janata Party and Ibne Sina Trust.

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Khagrachhari road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

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