



Visitors at a fruit festival organised by Dristi at the Teacher-Student Centre on Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Drishti fruit festival held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Drishti, a cultural organisation, organised a fruit festival at the cafeteria of Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) on Dhaka University campus yesterday with a view to upholding the culture and heritage of the Bangladesh.

Cultural personality Atiqul Haque Chowdhury inaugurated the festival where a total of 42 indigenous fruits, including mango, litchi, jackfruit, watermelon, banana and pineapple were put on display.

Bilkis Rahman Dolon, a member of Drishti, said, "We have to encourage commercial fruit cultivation in the country as the indigenous fruits are now at the brink of extinction."

Applying formalin to fruits has become a regular practice in our country which causes serious health hazards to people, she said, urging the authorities concerned to take stern action against the unscrupulous people who use toxic chemicals to ripe fruits.

She also called on the government to take measures to plant fruit trees in different places and beside the roads in the city.

Sammilita Nagorik Jote General Secretary Golam Kuddus, Drishti President Mosharrat Hossain, Shadin Bangla Betar artist Bulbul Mahalanabis, folk singer Fakir Alamgir and singer Ifrat Ara Nargis also spoke.



Labourers travel in a goods-laden truck, risking their lives, although such practices have claimed the lives of 31 people recently. The picture was taken at Konapara in the city yesterday.

Dhaka Strategic Transport Plan needs amendment

Experts tell meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a view exchange meeting yesterday called for amending the proposed Dhaka Strategic Transport Plan (STP).

They said if the STP is implemented, it will increase cost, travel time, expenditure on infrastructure, pollution and accident.

The meeting titled 'Dhaka Strategic Transport Plan: Role of Media' was organised by Save Environment Movement at the National Press Club in the city.

The STP recommended three elevated expressways, which would cost a huge amount of \$614 million, and would have adverse effect on transport system and environment, said Dr Mahbulul Bari, senior assistant manager of transport for London, while presenting the keynote paper.

He said STP findings and recommendations are inconsistent, and these

are also not pro-poor and cost-effective.

"Though STP stresses the need to prepare strategic plan prioritising the pedestrians, the allocation for this sector is only 0.22 percent which is very negligible in comparison to total allocation. Besides, for circular waterway the allocation is only 1.11 percent and although 34 percent of people use non-motorised vehicle, it gets only 0.22 percent allocation," he said, adding that whereas the proposed allocation in STP for underground rail is 63 percent that could carry only eight percent people.

Dr Mahbulul said the pedestrians and non-motorised vehicles are environment friendly and they neither create congestion nor increase travel time.

So they need much attention while designing the traffic system, and the resource allocation should follow it, he added.

"It is the private cars that increase our travel time and cost," Dr Mahbulul said, drawing an example of city's

Mirpur area where the speed of motorised vehicles has decreased 26 percent after banning the rickshaws.

Private cars on that route have increased three times creating traffic congestion and causing financial loss of Tk 70 crore, he added.

Convener of Save Environment Movement Abu Naser Khan said an integrated management system is needed for Bus Rapid Transits (BRT), non-motorised vehicles and pedestrians.

At the same time the existing rail transport system should be improved, he added.

The speakers said the flaws of the STP could be removed in the light of the findings of a research that await approval of the authorities concerned.

Prof Rokhsana Hafiz of Buet moderated the programme where Prof AQM Mahbub and Engineer Shahidullah also spoke.

Father, son electrocuted

BSS, Rajshahi

A man and his son died and three others of the family injured when they came into contact with a live electric wire in Kharkhori area under Boalia Police Station in the city on Thursday night.

The victims were identified as Monwar Uddin, 60, and his son Golam Mostafa, 35.

The injured are Kohinur Begum, 55, wife of Monwar, daughter Nargis, 30, and her husband Golam Mostafa, 36. They were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Quoting witnesses, police said Monwar's son-in-law first came into contact with the live electric wire while working on a fallen electric wire at around 7:30pm. He and his son met the tragic end while they were trying to save Nargis's husband.

Both Monwar and his son succumbed to their injuries on way to the hospital, police said.

Some RU teachers protest UGC move to probe irregularities

RU CORRESPONDENT

Progressive Teachers Society (PTS) of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday denounced the University Grants Commission (UGC) probe body that reached the campus to investigate all kinds of alleged irregularities, corruption and nepotism by the RU authorities during last five years.

They even urged teachers, students, officials and employees not to cooperate with the probe committee.

In a statement, PTS teachers said the committee members were controversial, have been accused of many corruption charges and they were controversially appointed during the BNP-Jamaat alliance government's tenure.

The UGC probe committee includes Prof Sultan Hossain, Prof Ehsanul Haque, Prof Muhammad

Abdur Rahman and Prof Mijanur Rahman.

They said following the movement of PTS teachers the UGC formed the probe body on March 20, 2007 headed by Prof Mahabub Ullah. The PTS had protested then saying most of the committee members were BNP-Jamaat sympathisers and were accused of corruption.

The teachers had urged the caretaker government and the UGC chairman to form a neutral investigation committee headed by a High Court (HC) judge. Yesterday's PTS statement, signed by its 21 steering committee members, demanded immediate withdrawal of this committee.

Sources on the campus said the committee would start their investigation from today and probe the allegations of irregularities, corruption and

nepotism in the appointment of more than 500 teachers, officials and employees during the BNP-Jamaat tenure.

The pro-Awami League (AL) teachers had brought the allegations against previous and present administrators of RU.

To ensure proper investigation, the probe committee is authorised to examine any documents, including classified documents of the syndicate, and question decisions of faculties and other departments concerned, sources said. The committee is also authorised to interrogate anyone and a memo in this regard was sent to the RU Registrar's office yesterday.

RU Registrar Prof Abdus Salam said the committee is supposed to submit their report within one month.

HSC examinee dies in rooftop fall in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An HSC examinee died after falling from a rooftop water tank in the port city yesterday.

The victim, identified as Probal Dutta, 18, son of Bikash Dutta, a resident of Dewan Bazar Masua Jharna Lane under Kotwali Police Station, was an HSC candidate from Islamia Degree College.

Sources said Probal fell down from the rooftop of his four-storied residence at around 12:00noon.

Probal was cleaning the water tank standing on the railing and all on a sudden slipped down.

Seriously injured Probal was rushed to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the on duty doctor declared him dead.



Dr Mahbulul Bari, senior assistant manager of transport for London, speaks at a meeting on 'Dhaka Strategic Transport Plan: Role of Media' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Convener of Save the Environment Movement Abu Naser Khan and on his left are Engineer Shahidullah and Prof Rokhsana Hafiz.

Int'l Public Service Day today

BSS, Dhaka

The International Public Service Day will be observed across the country today in a befitting manner as elsewhere in the world.

This year the theme is "Building trust in government".

Ministry of Establishment in support with UNDP has chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day.

On the occasion, a rally will be brought out from in front of the National Press Club at 10:00am today that will end at Bangla Academy.

A seminar will also be held on the theme of the day at Biam auditorium at 12:00noon.

The objectives of the International Public Service Day are to promote cooperation among government, the private sector and civil society organisations to improve the quality of governance at national and local levels.



Prof Fakrul Alam inaugurates the Prime Bank-JDC Debate Festival 2007 on the St Joseph High School premises in the city yesterday. Josephite Debating Club (JDC) organised the four-day festival.

WB approves \$100m credit to improve quality of education

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank on Thursday approved a US\$100 million credit from the International Development Association (IDA) to support the government's efforts to deepen and sustain reforms in the education sector.

The Third Programmatic Education Sector Development Support Credit is designed to address systemic governance issues in order to make the best use of the resources in improving quality and enhancing access to secondary education, said a press release.

Gross primary enrolment rates in Bangladesh are around 90 percent, and the secondary enrolment rate has more than doubled to 57 percent over the past two decades.

The country has already met the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on gender parity in primary and secondary schooling. However, while access to secondary education has increased considerably, lack of systemic improvement to deal with the rapid expansion has caused quality to suffer.

Bangladesh needs substantial improvement in providing quality education in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and its Education for All targets, said Xian Zhu, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh.

This programme supports reforms aimed at tackling governance problems in secondary education, enhancing quality of secondary school teachers and tying government support to the performance of the institutions.

Zhu said, "We hope this will also lead to greater access to secondary education for all children, specially the poor and marginalised who cannot afford the expenses of secondary schooling."

In secondary and higher secondary education, Bangladesh has a unique system of public-private partnership which combines public financing with private provision of education. The system has a tremendous potential if properly managed.

However, it was subject to many undue influences in the past, which led to a lack of transparency in the recognition of schools for subvention,

recruitment of teachers and production of textbooks. Most importantly, once an institution started getting subvention, there was no incentive for better performance as the support from the government was more or less guaranteed.

To improve governance and address these issues, the government has started implementing a substantive policy reform agenda in secondary education supported by this series of credits.

The programme particularly focuses on increasing accountability and transparency in the use and allocation of resources with greater stakeholder participation and greater resource allocation for poorer and disadvantaged children; streamlining the teacher recruitment process to ensure the selection of best candidates as teachers free from all kinds of influences; and enhancing quality of textbooks through competitive production.

'Govt working for social change'

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury has said the caretaker government is working to make a tolerant and clean society by taking various reform measures.

"The government is working to restore discipline at every sector of the state with taking various steps and those are spontaneously being supported by the people, including the expatriates," he said.

The adviser was speaking at a discussion meeting and award giving ceremony of Atish Dipankar Research Parishad at the LGED Auditorium in the city yesterday.

He said various initiatives like strengthening the Anti-Corruption Commission and the move for constituting Human Rights Commission, introducing citizens' charters and preparing voter list with photographs would help the government achieve its objectives.

Dr Iftekhar called upon all concerned to spread the teachings of Atish Dipankar to every tier of society for building a welfare-oriented state.

Chaired by Parishad President

Poet Golam Kader, the function was also addressed by former adviser to caretaker government CM Shafi Sami, former chairman of Press Council Justice Habibur Rahman Khan, former chairman of University Grants Commission Prof Dr M Asaduzzaman and Jamuna Bank Chairman Nur Mohammad.

Two held with arms in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday recovered arms and ammunition and arrested two criminals in this connection.

Tipped off, a special team of Rab-10 raided a house of one Malek at Jatrabari and arrested Din Islam alias Raju, 22, and Masud, 26.

The arms included one revolver, five bombs and two sharp weapons, Rab said.