

Form taskforce immediately to resolve problems in jute sector

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should immediately form a taskforce to look into the existing problems in the jute industry, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

"The situation in jute mills in Khalishpur, Khulna, has worsened recently. The retrenchment policy has generated great frustration and dissatisfaction among the mill workers," Prof Dr Atiur Rahman said.

Experts, economists and jute

workers and labour leaders took part in the seminar styled 'Jute resources: Ways to resolve problems' held at the National Press Club in the city. Karmojibi Nari President Shirin Akhtar moderated the seminar.

Presenting the keynote paper, Mohammad Shahidullah, director of Karmojibi Nari, said that while Bangladesh has closed down the Adamjee Jute Mills with the World Bank loan of \$2.50 million, India has strengthened its jute sector

with the UNDP-funded project worth \$2.35 million.

Regretting that the budget has no indication to revive the jute sector, the speakers wondered why the jute industry has been losing its past glory when there is a growing demand for jute across the world.

Labour leader Shahidullah Chowdhury said the successive governments did not take any steps to revitalise the industry. "Reforms of other sectors cannot be achieved without reforms in the jute sector,"

he said.

Khaled Rob, former director of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, said concerted efforts should be made immediately to revive the jute sector.

"We have had enough of blame game, we have had short- and long-term policies, we have had committees, but what we need is concerted efforts. We should not forget that the economic and social markets of jute is not small," he said.

He also observed that the biggest problems in the jute industry are fund crisis – the jute mills cannot pay jute growers because they are not provided with the funds on time – and erratic power supply.

Citing the statistics, he said jute and jute products have a market of five to six billion US dollars and that Bangladesh can have viable jute industries if the public and private organisations can take proper initiatives.

He insisted on disbursing Tk 300 crore immediately to jute mills for buying jute in order to protect the market from complete ruin.

Dr Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmad, president of Bangladesh Economic Association, stressed the need to diversify the jute products to dominate market.

He also said that creating job opportunities is a very important issue in developing countries and the government can reduce poverty only by creating jobs, not by retrenching workers.

Saiful Haque, a leader of Khet Major Union, and Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, assistant executive director of BILS, also spoke.



Karmojibi Nari President Shirin Akhtar speaks at a seminar at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her left are Dr Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmad, Mohammad Shahidullah, Taslimur Rahman and Dr Hamida Hossain.

PHOTO: STAR

July 3 declared as Birth Registration Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has officially declared July 3 as the National Birth Registration Day to highlight the importance of birth registration for every child and adult in the country.

LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser Mohammed Anwarul Iqbal formally declared the first ever Birth Registration Day at a discussion at Osmani Memorial Hall in the city yesterday.

The discussion was organised by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives in cooperation with Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the Unicef in observance of Universal Birth Registration Day.

Speaking as chief guest at the discussion, the adviser said birth registration is important for formulating national plan, safeguarding

human rights, and resisting child marriage and child labour.

"If we could attain hundred percent birth registration, it would be easier to prepare an accurate voter list with photographs within a short time," he added.

Speaking as special guest, Unicef Deputy Representative Rosella Morelli said the challenge now is to send the message to average parents on how and why they should register their children.

It needs combined efforts from all involved, a multi-pronged strategy and raising awareness among people, she added.

Terming birth registration important, Country Director of Plan Bangladesh Edward Thomas Espy said as there is limited resource in the country it is a big challenge to achieve the target within the scheduled time.

All have to work jointly and political will is a must to achieve the success, he added.

The speakers said though only seven to 10 percent people have so far come under birth registration, the government is determined to achieve cent percent birth registration by the end of 2008.

People can register their birth free of cost by July 2 of next year, they added.

They said birth registration is now compulsory to get 16 basic services for every citizen.

DCC Chief Executive Officer Saifuddin Ahmed, Deputy Secretary and Project Director M Shafiqul Alam, LGRD Secretary Safar Raj Hossain and representatives from Union Parishad and Pourashava also spoke at the programme.

SELM MURDER Suspect held after 4 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested a suspect in the killing of Selim alias Seru at Lalbagh in the city yesterday, four years after the murder was committed.

A five-member CID team led by Sub-Inspector Arshad Ali, also investigation officer (IO) of the case, went to Rahim Bux Lane in Lalbagh in disguise and arrested Faruque who had been absconding for the last four years.

The IO said that the charge sheet against seven accused has almost been prepared.

Two of the accused, Amir Hossain Prakash and Ripon, were also arrested earlier. But Ripon is now on bail.

CID sources said Selim was killed in Lalbagh on August 28, 2003 as he refused to join a gang of muggers comprising the seven accused people.

Police recovered the body from the rooftop of a five-storey building the next day.

A case was filed with Lalbagh police station, which was later transferred to the CID police.

32 makeshift flower shops demolished at Shahbagh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday in a drive demolished 32 makeshift flower shops at city's Shahbagh intersection and arrested two vendors in this connection.

The arrestees were identified as Shahjahan and Kalu.

The flowers and baskets of the vendors were also seized while a number of them were severely beaten, witnesses said.

"Police came at about 10:00am and seized all my flowers worth Tk 3,000," Raju, a flower vendor, told The Daily Star.

The vendors alleged that their business is going at a low ebb and they have to incur financial loss due to the drives.

Police have been conducting the eviction drives for the last three months, they added.

Low over northeast Bay, adjoining area

UNB, Dhaka

A low has developed over northeast Bay and adjoining area yesterday.

It is likely to intensify further as deep convection is still taking place over north Bay.

Squally weather may affect the ports, said a Met office bulletin.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three.

All fishing boats and trawlers over North Bay have been advised to remain in shelter until further notice.

Prof Yunus goes to Japan July 6

UNB, Dhaka

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus will leave Dhaka for Japan on July 6 on a weeklong visit at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

He is expected to meet Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Foreign Minister Taro Aso and other high officials during his visit.

Prof Yunus will present a keynote address titled 'Feminisation of Poverty: Causes, Effects and Eradication' at an international symposium titled 'Women and Poverty Eradication' at United Nations University, Tokyo.

He will also deliver a lecture on 'Peace and Poverty Reduction' at Hiroshima University, said a Japanese Embassy press release yesterday.

Prof Yunus will also attend programmes to be hosted by the presidents of Yomiuri and Nikkei newspapers and participate in a live programme of NHK Television. He will also meet newsmen at the Japan Press Club and professors of Kyushu University.

President, CA greet Bush

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed congratulated US President George W Bush on the occasion of the Independence Day of his country.

In his message of felicitation, Iajuddin termed relations between two countries excellent, saying that it would strengthen in the coming years.

He hoped that the cooperation in all our areas would further contribute to stronger bonds of friendship between the two countries and closer contact between the peoples.

In a separate message, Fakhruddin said Bangladesh attaches great importance to her relations with the US and want to further expand these relations.

We sincerely appreciate the US assistance and support for the progressive socio-economic development of the people of Bangladesh, said Fakhruddin.

The Bangladesh leader hoped that the much valued and time-tested ties of friendship between two countries would continue to grow in future.

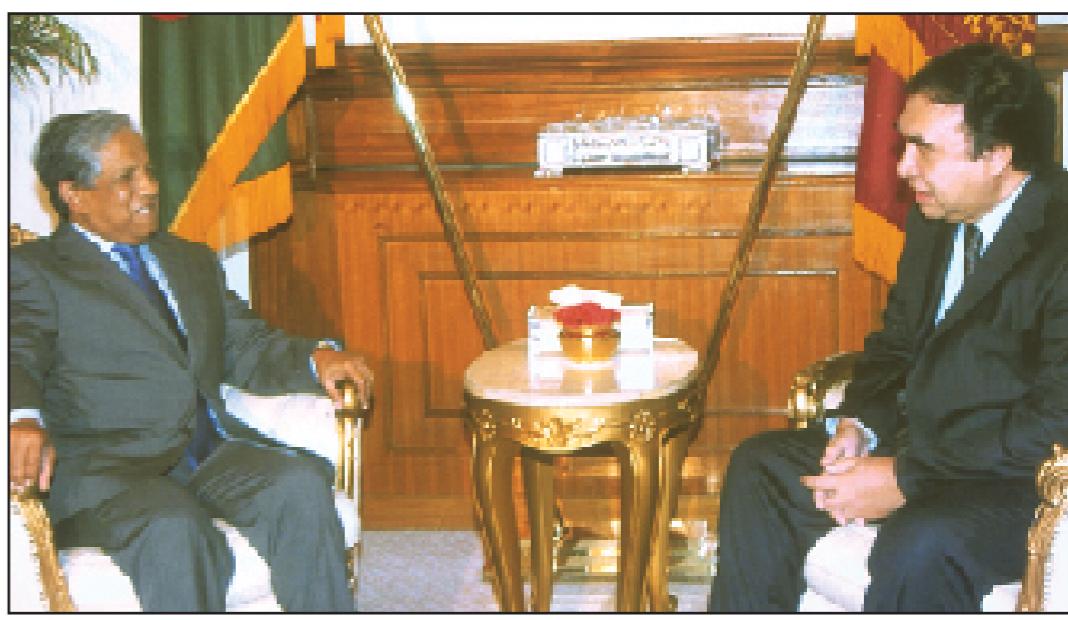


PHOTO: PID
Newly appointed Myanmar Ambassador Nyan Lynn makes a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office in the city yesterday.

Dhaka wants to strengthen ties with Myanmar: CA

Two-nation consultation July 23-24 in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said Bangladesh gives a special importance to the relationship with Myanmar under its Look East Policy to the mutual benefit of the two peoples and the region.

He noted that the recent trip of the Foreign Adviser to Myanmar, which was a high-level visit after the present caretaker government assumed office, "reflects Bangladesh's friendship with the neighbour in the east".

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury visited Yangon in May, when he signed an agreement on direct road link between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The CA made the remarks when the newly appointed Myanmar Ambassador Nyan Lynn made a courtesy call on him at his office.

Fakhruddin said Bangladesh and Myanmar enjoy cordial relations developed over the century on geographical proximity, historical and cultural tradition and people-to-people relations.

Myanmarese Deputy Foreign Minister will come on July 22, according to Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim who was present at the meeting.

The envoy also apprised that Myanmar would very soon appoint honorary consul general in Chittagong for further consolidating the bilateral relations.

He mentioned that now bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Myanmar is worth 50 million US dollars and they are trying to enhance the volume to USD100 million.

During the meeting, the matter of leasing agricultural land in Myanmar to Bangladesh for farming by Bangladeshis came up.

It will be a win-win situation for both the countries. "You have land and we have farmers to cultivate diversified crops," the CA told the diplomat.

The Ambassador said Myanmar has hydropower potential and there can be cooperation in that field as well.

The CA said his government could look into it.



PHOTO: STAR
Two flower sellers sleep in what was their makeshift shop at Shahbagh after the police demolished illegal structures on a footpath during an eviction drive yesterday.