

BBC BANGLADESH SANG LAP
Concern over spiralling
prices of essentials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern over spiralling prices of essentials, speakers at an open discussion yesterday criticised the caretaker government for not taking any action against the syndicate and middlemen responsible for the price hike.

"No action has been taken against those [syndicate and middlemen] who are responsible for the price spiral. The nation has been waiting to see action against the price syndicate," BNP chairperson's adviser Mofazzal Karim said at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap in the capital.

The people hoped that the prices of essentials would come down during the tenure of the present caretaker government, but the prices are spiralling instead, causing immense suffering to the common people, said Jatiya Party (JP) presidium member GM Quader.

The price syndicate and the middlemen are still playing their role in raising prices, he said.

He also said that businessmen are now afraid to open L/Cs, which might also contribute to the price hike.

BBC Bangla Service in conjunc-

tion with the World Service Trust organised the discussion at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. BBC's Shakeel Anwar moderated the event.

Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique, former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), said the prices of essentials have gone up alarmingly as the monitoring mechanism has not been functioning properly in the free market system.

Mofazzal Karim said the caretaker government should have made interventions much earlier to control prices of essentials.

Replying to a question, Prof Arefin Siddique observed that the neutrality of the non-party caretaker government has been undermined due to comments by an adviser that most Jamaat leaders as partners of the previous four-party coalition government might not have any link with corruption.

Rather, Jamaat was involved in large-scale corruption during the tenure of the BNP-led coalition government, the former Duta president said, adding that Jamaat cannot avoid its responsibilities for the massive corruption, which took place in the five years of the coalition government.

Expressing similar views, Awami League presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury said Jamaat was involved in arms smuggling, killing, looting and torture.

If Jamaat leaders have resorted to corruption, they must be brought to book, said BNP leader Mofazzal Karim.

JP leader GM Quader, however, said he does not think that the neutrality of the government has been undermined due to the remarks by an adviser over Jamaat issue.

Replying to another query, both the AL and BNP leaders ruled out any splits in their parties. "People or leaders can quit, but the party will remain intact," said Sajeda.

"Differences of opinion have emerged in the BNP, but it won't split," Mofazzal Karim said, adding that their reform proposals are not aimed at removing anybody from the party.

"But if anybody is caught in the process of purge, we have nothing to do," he added.

All the participants said reforms must be brought to the mindset of politicians first and then in politics and political parties in order to ensure a free and fair election.

MUTUAL TRUST BANK-DAILY STAR DEBATE

Collegiate School, Mohsin College, Cuet become champions

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

The five-day 'Mutual Trust Bank-The Daily Star Debate Contest 2007' ended in the port city yesterday with a call for students to extend their horizon beyond academic studies and make efforts to understand social issues.

The debate competition was divided into three categories -- school, college and university. Chittagong Collegiate School, Mohsin College and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) seized this year's championship in their respective categories.

The runners-up are Silver Bell's Girls' High School, Government City College and Chittagong University (CU).

Takbirul Islam of Collegiate School, Urmi Atandria of Mohsin College and Zinia Akhter of CU were adjudged the best debaters.

Drishy Club organised the competition at the Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC) auditorium under the auspices of The Daily Star and Mutual Trust Bank.

A total of 16 schools, eight colleges and eight universities of the port city took part in the debate held in parliamentary style.

Chairman of Mutual Trust Bank Samson H Chowdhury attended the prize giving ceremony as the chief guest while former adviser to the caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi was present as the guest of honour.

Resident editor of the daily Prothom Alo poet Abul Momen presided over the ceremony attended by Executive Consultant and Founder-Managing Director of Mutual Trust Bank Mosharrar Hossain, Vice-Chairman Dr Arif Ud Daula, Managing Director Kazi Shafiqur Rahman and Drishy Vice-President Rashedul Amin Rashed.

Speaking on the occasion, Samson H Chowdhury called on the students not to be confined to textbooks only. Rather, they should also obtain knowledge from society, which will help them steer the country towards development, he added.

He also hoped that such debate competitions would provide students an opportunity to expand their knowledge base.

Syed Manzur Elahi said, "Reading enriches the mind, but healthy debate and discussion polishes it."

Terming students the 'builders of future Bangladesh', poet Abul Momen called on them to build a society based on logic.

Drishy President Masud Bakul gave the address of welcome while Vice-President Rashedul Amin Rashed gave the vote of thanks.

The adjudicating panel of the final round of the debate comprised Dr Masud Rana, Advocate Mili Chowdhury, Prof Tahurin Sabur of Chittagong University and Chittagong Bureau Chief of The Daily Star Shahidul Islam Bachchu.

Drishy President Masud Bakul and Joint Secretary of Bangladesh Debate Federation Adnan Mannan moderated the debates as speakers.

Five killed in road crashes

UNB, Dhaka

At least five people were killed and 16 others injured in separate road accidents in Bogra and Benapole yesterday.

Bogra correspondent reports: Three people were killed and six others injured in a road accident at Chandmuha in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Two of the dead were identified as Abdus Samad Sarder, 60, of Akail village of Kahalu upazila, Azizul Islam, 45, of Nilphamari. Identity of the other could not be known immediately.

Police said the accident occurred when a bus hit a tempo coming from opposite direction at about 11:00am, leaving three the people dead on the spot.

The injured were rushed to Mohammad Ali Hospital and Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

Another report from Benapole adds: Two people were killed and 10 others injured when a fish-laden truck hit a lorry at Kagajpukur in Benapole yesterday.

Local sources said the fish-land truck hit another truck standing on the roadside for loading jute as the driver lost his control over the steering, leaving one dead on the spot.

Another succumbed to his injuries on the way to hospital.

The deceased identified as Nazrul, 30, and Nabi, 25, were loading jute on the parked truck.

Of the injured, Bijoy, 30, Hossain, 32, Harun, 45, Mahtab, 40, and Mansur Ali, 52, were rushed to Navarong Hospital in critical condition.



PHOTO: STAR

Winners of 'Mutual Trust Bank-The Daily Star Debate Contest 2007' pose for photograph with the guests at the Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC) auditorium in the port city yesterday.

Around 90pc children suffer from iron deficiency

Says IFPRI study

BSS, Dhaka

Iron deficiency is a huge problem in the health sector of Bangladesh, affecting 70 to 90 percent children across the country.

A recent study showed very high prevalence of anaemia ranging from 70 to 90 percent among the young children aged 6-24 months due to deficiency of iron.

The study jointly conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Cornell University's Division of Nutritional Sciences took place mainly in Haiti, but its implications are global.

According to an IFPRI press release received here yesterday, the study is the first of its kind to show that sprinkles, a nutritional supplement, which can be added to children's food, reduce anaemia by more than half.

"Nutrition is effective in reducing anaemia when included in an ongoing fortified food and programme implemented under challenging, real-life conditions in developing countries," it said.

Sprinkles have been tried in other developing countries, such as Ghana and Indonesia and were found to be a very effective way to reduce micro-nutrient deficiencies.

Sprinkles were also tested in Bangladesh, where floods engulf one third of its territory annually, hampering economic development.

According to the press release, pregnant women are next to the

under-2 children in their vulnerability to develop anaemia. Since 2003, a number of research studies have been completed in Bangladesh and some are ongoing to answer questions about how sprinkles can be used in programme settings.

The first clinical trial completed in Bangladesh examined daily versus weekly administration of sprinkles to young children.

The second study, however, examined whether giving 60 sprinkles sachets flexibly over a period of 3 or 4 months would improve anaemia status as well as giving a 60 sachets daily over 2 months in young children.

Both the studies have implications for how sprinkles should be distributed in programme settings. With the impact of sprinkles on decreasing anemia prevalence in children, the needs of a second target group, pregnant women may also be addressed using sprinkles.

In the developing world, the studies showed, iron/folic acid tablets are the main strategy geared to pregnant women to prevent anemia. As recommended by WHO, however, compliance is low due to common gastrointestinal side effects.

According to the key findings of both the studies, sprinkles given either once in a day or a week significantly improved anaemia and iron status indicators.

The percentage of children, who were successfully treated for anaemia

and maintained a non-anaemic status over time, was significantly greater in both the flexible groups as compared to the daily administration group, the press release said.

The studies also found that fortified food aid alone was insufficient to prevent anaemia in infants and young children, even if mothers were advised to complement the donated commodities with locally available iron-rich foods.

This could be due to the fact that foods, such as meat, are too expensive for families to buy on a daily basis and that donated foods are often shared among all family members rather than consumed only by the child.

"Sprinkles are one of the most promising innovations in nutrition today," said Purnima Menon, lead author of the studies and research associate in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University. They offer an inexpensive option that mothers seem to love and children can consume easily, she also said.

According to the experts, who conducted both the studies, sprinkles hold the potential to dramatically reduce anaemia, which undermines the livelihoods of children across the developing world.



PHOTO: STAR

Renowned economist Prof Muzafer Ahmad speaks at a view exchange meeting at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Barrister Amir Ul Islam and on his right is Dr Helal Uddin Khan.

'PROTIRODH AND UNNAYON' LAUNCHED
Community-based movement
can ensure good governance
Speakers tell view exchange meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Community-based movements can establish good governance in the country, said the speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday.

The meeting titled 'Community-based movement: Context good governance and development' was organised by Nagorik Udyog at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Presiding over the meeting Prof Muzafer Ahmad said, "This lively country is blessed with vibrant people. Through unified movements, these people will achieve good governance in the country."

He said for successful community-based movements unity, transparency, accountability and secularism are the most vital requirements.

"To attain success in movements, individuals should be honest in their talks and deeds," he added.

Stressing on transparency and accountability for good governance, Barrister Amir Ul Islam said reform at every institution is needed, but reform does not mean splitting the country.

The people hailed the interim government for its drive to curb corruption, but now people want to see the agenda-wise performance

of the government, he added.

Barrister Amir said there should be ombudsman in all government institutions to ensure accountability.

In the light of the constitution, if all institutions would have worked within a legal framework, then the crisis could not occur, he observed.

Barrister Amir also stressed on ensuring people's participation in democracy.

"The feudal mindset has to be changed. We must recognise the role of people to ensure democracy," he added.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujon), Dr Mohammad Abdul Motin, Bapa general secretary, and Dr Abul Hossain, an anthropologist, also spoke on the occasion.

Earlier, Prof Muzafer Ahmad unwrapped the cover of a book titled 'Protirodh and Unnayon'

authored by Altaf Parvez.

The book documented different movements including, Kansat Andolon, Rajshahi Rokkha Songram Parishad, Garment worker's upsurge on May 22, movements to protest eviction of slum dwellers, and Save the Environment Movement.

During a presentation, the author showed how the people pioneered movements to realise their rights to live.

"Sometimes these people floated community-based movements, sometimes they took assistance from different organisations, but in most cases the people had to face strong resistance from the government," he added.

Altaf said though small and medium non-government organisations assisted people, but NGOs with reputation hardly came to help these people.

WEATHER TODAY

Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at many places over all the six divisions of the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places, Met Office said in a forecast.

It said that day temperature may rise slightly over the country. Highest temperature 32.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sakhira and lowest 24.2 degree Celsius at Comilla.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:43pm today and rises at 5:27am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.8	25.0	83	77
Chittagong	30.0	25.7	88	86
Rajshahi	30.0	25.3	91	--
Khulna	31.5	25.0	87	77
Barisal	31.2	26.0	83	83
Sylhet	30.4	24.8	89	95
Cox's Bazar	31.7	25.9	79	80



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Dr Mirza Nazimuddin briefs about the condition of eminent nuclear scientist Dr S Wazed Miah, husband of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, at Square Hospital in the city yesterday. Dr Mirza says that condition of Dr Wazed has slightly improved.

Hannan Shah says reformists have least support

FROM PAGE 1 involved in the process," Hannan Shah told reporters in his Mohakhali residence in the capital.

After holding a meeting with BNP Secretary General Mannan Bhuiyan on July 25, Shah Abul Hossain, a former state minister, commented that two-thirds of the party councillors already had expressed their support for the 'reformists'.

Hannan Shah however termed the 'reformist' claim as 'false' yesterday, and said there are doubts whether even five percent of the councillors would support them.

Meanwhile, Mofazzal Karim, a 'reformist' and also an adviser to the BNP chairperson, yesterday said Hannan Shah lacks information about the sentiments of grassroots level leaders, as he was behind bars until only a few days ago.

Mannan Bhuiyan on Friday told reporters that they were getting a tremendous onrush of positive responses to their reform proposals from the councillors as well as from outside the party.

He also said they will seek Khaleda's permission for holding the council after completing the necessary preparations for it.

Rejecting Bhuiyan's claim, Hannan Shah yesterday said,

"There is no doubt, those who are claiming they received support from two-thirds of the councillors for their reforms, will fail... I think they are having a pipe dream."

"They [reformists] were even compelled to postpone their views exchange programme with district level leaders as they hadn't got positive responses from grassroots level leaders," Hannan Shah claimed adding that it proves there is no alternative to Khaleda Zia yet in the party.

He said party Chairperson Khaleda Zia will be on a move to resolve all problems in the party and will lead the people to fulfilling their expectations.

Although her movement is 'a little bit restricted', she will solve all the problems soon, he added.

"We all are ready to bring necessary changes to the party constitution but those must be brought through a council when the ban on indoor politics will be lifted," Hannan Shah said.

He said he is contacting district and upazila level leaders and front organisation leaders following the direction of the party chairperson, and asking them not to get confused under any circumstance.

"Written proposals will be sought and a committee will scrutinise the proposals... Later the

councillors will take a decision about the proposals including the terms and conditions for the post of the chairperson," he said adding, "There is nothing to minus or plus."

Hannan Shah however thanked the 'reformist' leaders for saying that the council will be held according to the party constitution.

Citing a reform proposal of Mannan Bhuiyan that says no one can be nominated from the party for the post of the prime minister for more than two terms, Hannan Shah said the proposal is a proof that the 'reformists' are afraid that the majority of the party members would want Khaleda Zia as the prime minister if the party went to power again.

Criticising some advisers to the party chairperson for supporting the 'reformists', Hannan said they should not introduce themselves as advisers to the chairperson anymore.

On the other hand, terming the speeches of Hannan Shah as 'illogical', Nazir Hossain, a former lawmaker and a close aide to the party secretary general, said Hannan Shah could not even win the last election in his constituency due to lack of public support.

39 schoolgirls, teacher fall sick in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Some 39 schoolgirls and a woman teacher suddenly fell sick in their school at Brahmanbaria yesterday morning.

The incident took place at Ashuganj Kamaura Shaheed Smriti High School at around 10:00am.

Civil surgeon Dr Shahiduddin said the symptoms of the students suggest that they fell victim to 'mass hysteria'.

Tanjima Akter, a student of class six, is the first victim who fainted with convulsion and headache, school sources said.

Few minutes later, another student, Nasima Akter, 11, suffered the same symptoms. Thirty-seven other students and the teacher fell ill within half an hour, creating panic among the students and teachers.

On receiving information, local people, including the guardians, rushed to the school.

A medical team from the Civil Surgeon's office treated the students.

Two students, Tanjima and Nasima, were sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

One strangled in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A gang of robbers strangled one person at Ghatail upazila in the district in the early hours of yesterday.

The victim was identified as Acchab Ali, 35, of Paharia village in the district.

Police and sources said a gang of armed robbers numbering about 8 to 10 broke into the residence of Hornmuz Ali, father-in-law of Acchab Ali, at the same village at around 4:00am.

As Acchab Ali tried to resist the robbers, they strangled him.

Following his strangulation, the robbers tied other inmates of the house and looted Tk 16000 in cash, five tolas of gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk 1 lakh.

Being informed, Ghatail police recovered the body and sent it to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

However, police suspect the killing was pre-planned since the robbers spared a number of other valuables which they could have made away with.

Indian murder suspect handed over to British police

AFP, New Delhi

An Indian man wanted for the rape and murder of a British teenager four years ago was handed over to British police yesterday, a jail official here said.

Maninder Pal Singh Kohli, the prime suspect in the 2003 rape and murder of 17-year-old Hannah Foster, was due to fly out of India for Britain later in the day, the official said.

"He was handed over to a team of three people from the British police in the morning," Sunil Gupta, spokesman of New Delhi's Tihar jail, told AFP.

The move followed a court order on Friday clearing the way for Kohli's extradition, which he has been fighting in Indian courts.

He fled southern England days after being named as a suspect, and was arrested in India's remote northeast in July 2004, after Foster's parents travelled to India and offered a reward for information leading to his arrest.

In 2005, Kohli, who worked as a truck driver in Britain, admitted in interviews with two Indian television channels to killing the girl, but later retracted the comments and has been fighting extradition.

In a ruling on June 8, a lower court judge said that there was "a strong case" against Kohli, citing forensic and medical evidence from the British police investigation.