METROPOLITAN/NEWS

Redouble efforts to up food production

Chief adviser urges farmers

UNB, Mithapukur

Assuring necessary government support, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed urged farmers to redouble their efforts to increase production of food by turning single-crop farmland into two-crop land.

"We don't have any alternative to food production as acreage of land is squeezing due to urbanisation, industrialisation and infrastructure development," he told a meeting of representatives of cross-sections of the people at the upazila auditorium.

Fakhruddin, now in Rangpur holding a meeting of the Council of Advisers, said instructions were given to departments concerned to timely supply agricultural inputs like fertiliser, diesel and irrigation to farmers in order to boost boro paddy production this year.

He said the Rural Electrification Board has been the capital Dhaka." provided with money to buy electric transformers to help irrigation for the boro farming. Besides, shops and markets have been ordered to close at 8:00pm to save power for irrigation.

the target of procuring 28 lakh tons

Election won't

be acceptable

keeping Hasina

in jail: Akhavan

Canadian lawyer Payam Akhavan

said here yesterday elections in

Bangladesh keeping Awami League

President Sheikh Hasina behind the

bar will not be acceptable to the

for Hasina, who arrived here from

Dhaka made the remarks at a press

conference at Dilshad Restaurant in

Awami League leaders were present

free, fair and acceptable election.

"To ensure fair and acceptable

election, Hasina should be

released," saying the graft case

against her filed by Azam

cent," he told the press conference.

for international awareness seeking

case, said she is not absconding. "I

will go to Bangladesh as soon as

possible. I am waiting for the time."

8 suspected

held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and

Detective Branch of Police in sepa-

rate drives seized a microbus and a

private car in the last two days and

arrested eight suspected car lifters

microbus from Suhrawardy Medical

College Hospital vesterday and

Members of Rab-4 seized the

A DB team recovered a private

The arrestees are Towhidur

car at South Kuril in the city and

arrested six people from different

Rahman, Biplob Ali Mollah,

Shamsul Alam, Mohammad Mafiz,

DB officials said the gang mem-

bers used to commit robbery and

hijack vehicles identifying them DB

Suruj Mian and Abul Kalam.

from different points in the city.

Saiful Islam.

areas in the city.

officials.

car lifters

"I believe Sheikh Hasina is inno-

He said he will raise the matter

Rehana, also indicted in the graft

at the press conference.

Chowdhury has no basis.

release of Hasina.

Sheikh Rehana, her son and UK

Akhavan said mandate of the

Akhavan, the Canadian counsel

UNB, London

East London.

of fertiliser this year, 3 lakh tons more than previous year's, to support increased agricultural produc-

The fertilisers will be distributed from 12,000 to 14,000 points so that farmers could get it timely.

"Turn your one-crop land into the people. two-crop land and two-crop into three-crop land. Government will provide all-out support to you in increasing production, "he said.

He noted that the incumbent government has prioritised the agriculture sector with increased allocation in ADP. Besides, Tk 350 crore has been earmarked for agriculture research to increase the production of food grains.

Explaining the reason for holding the Council of Advisors' meeting in Rangpur, he said, "We want to take government to the doorstep of common people. Rangpur has been selected as it is far away from

He said the council meeting asked the advisors to identify the problems in the northern region and take effective measures to resolve those. From now on, the advisers will visit different districts He said the government has set and meet people to know their problems and find solutions.

About the coming general election, he said, "We are moving towards the elections to be held towards the end of this year."

He said the Election Commission is preparing a voter list with spontaneous support of

Fakhruddin mentioned that theCouncil of Advisors has approved an ordinance making the Election Commission independent. " Our aim is not only to hold an election in a free and fair manner this year but all elections in the

Presided over by Rangpur DC Khandaker Atiar Rahman, the meeting was also addressed by Moslem Uddin Pramanik for farmers, Shahana Begum for teachers, Abdul Halim for journalists, Shah Mohammad Hafizur Rahman for UP chairmen and Rangpur Municipal chairman Abdur Rouf

The local representatives raised various demands, including establishment of industrial units and

cold storage in the laggard region. The chief adviser said the gov ernment will extend all cooperation if the private sector took initiative for setting up industries.

Call to write off WB, IMF, ADB loans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Global Economic Justice Forum 2008 yesterday placed a 14-point declaration at a press conference at the National Press Club, one day after conclusion of its three-day conference.

The Forum in its declaration called for writing off all loans of World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), IMF and other international monetary organisations.

It emphasised strengthening of local government and establishing good governance removcaretaker government is to hold ing bureaucratic red tape.

"We will have to save our markets from corporate aggression," said Ashraful Alam, executive director, Coastal Development Partnership, while he was reading the Forum's declaration.

He said industrialised countries will have to compensate the countries badly affected by climate change.

the 'permanent members of the United Nations.

Ratan Sarker, executive director of Incidin Bangladesh, Helal Uddin, executive director of Angikar Bangladesh, Mohsin Ali chief executive director of Wave Foundation, Shishir Shill, executive director of People's Empowerment Trust (PET), were present at the briefing.

Renowned economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad inaugurated the three-day programme as the chief guest at Rabindra Sarobar in the city on January 29 with a vow to free society from hunger, illiteracy, unemployment and discrimination,

About 50 local and foreign non-government organisations (NGOs) organised the forum to strengthen efforts to establish economic justice in the world.

The Global Economic Justice Forum 2008 ended on Friday with a vow to establish social and economic justice in society and to The declaration also called for ensure human rights of woman cancellation of the veto power of children and grassroots people.



No change in temperature likely

Dry weather will prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until

divisions and the regions of Jessore, Barisal, Kushtia, Bhola, Comilla

country during early morning, it said, predicting nearly unchanged

and Tangail and it may continue, Met Office said.

night temperature over the country.

major cities and towns yesterday were:

Mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Rajshahi and Sylhet

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the

Highest temperature 26.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yester-

The sun sets in the capital at 5:46pm today and rises at 6:38am

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some

11.5

13.6

08.6

10.6

09.4

09.8

day at Cox's Bazar and lowest 06.4 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

Temperature

in celsius

22.0

21.3

22.4

22.6

22.8

Max Min

26.0 14.9

UNB, Dhaka

6:00pm today.

City/Town

Chittagong

Cox's Bazar

Rajshahi

Khulna

Barisal

Sylhet

Dhaka

Maulana Abdul Awal Khan Chowdhury addresses the National 'Salana Jalsa at Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamat at its Bakshi Bazar office in the city yesterday.

Humidity in

percentage

Morning Evening

100

54

52

71

60

64

50

43

DHAKA

ODAY

Discussion

Ministry of Environment and Forest, and IUCN jointly organise a discussion

to mark the World Wetlands Day 2008. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium. Time: Discussion

Jatiya Neta Bhasha Sainik Shamsul Huq Smriti Sangsad organises a

discussion to mark the 90th birth anniversary of language movement veteran Shamsul Hug. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00am. AL discussion

Bangladesh Awami League (AL) organises a discussion demanding trail of killing of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria. Venue: AL central office. Time: 3:00pm. Discussion

Aiminlife organises an open discussion on future leadership. Venue: National Press Club, Time: 11:00am. **Tribute**

Dhaka Theatre and Bangladesh Gram Theatre jointly organise a discussion to pay tribute to dramatist Selim Al Din. Venue: Bangladesh Mohila Samity auditorium. Time: 6:30pm.

Condition of Saifuddin Manik deteriorates

BSS, Dhaka

Condition of ailing Gono Forum General Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik has deteriorated further.

He is now undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit (ICU) of Comfort Hospital in the city.

Dr Satyajit Dutta at the ICU said Manik is suffering from cancer, which has now spread to different parts of his body. His blood pressure is falling quickly. He was taken to the ICU yesterday as his condition deteriorated.

Manik got admitted to Comfort Hospital on January 24.

METER TEMPERING 14 lime factories pilfer gas worth Tk 3.5cr a year in Narayanganj

UNB, Narayanganj

Tempering of meter and unauthorised gas connection were detected in 14 lime factories at Siddirganj yesterday.

Set up in the late 70s the lime factories have pilfered gas worth Tk 3.5 crore every year, Titas Gas Company officials said.

Factory owners went into hiding when a joint task force of army personnel and Titas Gas officials raided the area at 11:00am. None was arrested. Snapping the lines the task force told the factory workers that their owners should contact the Titas Gas office in Dhaka today with relevant documents.

Babul, owner of Faisal Limes, said the raid to their factories was intended to harass them as they have not tempered the gas meter, which is not possible for them.

Come to aid of mothers, children in hospitals'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Patient Welfare Association at Maternal and Child Health Training Institute (MCHTI) last year provided assistance to more than 11000 mothers and children, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They said the association provided medicines to poor patients and financial help to expecting mothers so that they could give birth to healthy babies.

The seminar titled 'Role of the Patient Welfare Association in helping helpless mothers and children' was held at MCHTI auditorium in the city.

Mahmuda Khatun, general secretary of the association, said it also provides counselling on birth registration, breastfeeding, childcare and how to eradicate malnutrition.

She said the association, which is currently active in 87 hospitals, has been getting fund from the government since 1994 to carry out its social and humanitarian activities.

Beside the government, different individuals and organisations including Rotary Club, Inner Wheel Club and Public Welfare Estate Association are also extending their support to strengthen the activities of the Patient Welfare Association, she added.

As part of its activities, a Children's Play Corner was inaugurated at MCHTI yesterday where some 10 children at a time will be able to play for their recreation.

Speaking as chief guest at the seminar, Social Welfare Secretary MA Hai Hawladar said maternal mortality rate as well as the number of underweight newborn are still very high.

"It is not possible for the government alone to provide total support to huge number of patients in the hospitals, and the individual people and organisations should come forward in this regard," he added.

Director General of social service department Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, MCHTI Superintendent Dr Mohammad Sirajul Islam, Dr Abdur Rahman, Begum Anjuman Ara of Inner Wheel Club, Selina Khan, Prof Monwara of Rotary Club of Dhaka NorthWest also spoke.

Expat donates Tk 5 lakh to cancer hospital

Syed Kamal Uddin Haider, a distinguished pharmacist living in UK, yesterday handed over a cheque for Tk 5 lakh to Dhaka Ahsania Mission

President Kazi Rafiqul Alam at the Mission Bhaban for cancer hospital fund, says a press release. With this fund a bed will be set

up after the name of his sister late Syeda Nargis Ara. While accepting the donation

Rafiqul Alam said, with the support of the government and generous people the hospital is being built.

For timely completion and commissioning Tk 200 crore is needed. If Bangladeshi expatriates living in various countries come forward, we would certainly be able to build the most modern cancer hospital in time, Alam said.



in the city early yesterday.

BBC BANGLADESH SANGLAP

Initiate unconditional dialogue soon

Participants urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should initiate a dialogue with the political parties immediately but impose no conditions to make it successful with a view to resolving the prevailing crises, panellists at BBC Bangladesh Sanglap said yester-

"We are in deep crisis. To get rid of it, unconditional dialogue must be held without further delay," said Awami League presidium member Suranjit Sengupta.

National unity should also be forged through dialogue, he added. The other panellists are Manzurul Ahsan Khan, president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), and Prof Tajmeri SA Islam, vicepresident of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta).

BBC Bangla Service in conjunction with the BBC World Service

2 held with heroin in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of narcotics control department (DNC) seized 2.3kg of heroin from a house in the city on Friday

Acting on a secret information that two heroin peddlers are living at a house in Uttara, the DNC team raided the third floor of the fivestorey building at around 10:00pm and arrested Jalal Uddin, 34, and Jasim Uddin, 19, with heroin.

Jalal is a tenant of the house while Jasim is his nephew.

Fazlur Rahman, assistant director of DNC, said Jalal has admitted that he had been supplying heroin to different spots at Uttara and Jatrabari for the last few months.

He also said one Sharif of Chapainawabganj came to his house onWednesdaywith 2.3kg of heroin. Jalal and Jasim were being

quizzed at the DNC office for more information and identities of others involved in heroin trading.

Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city. Kamal Ahmed of BBC Bangla Service moderated it. Manzurul Ahsan Khan said the

agenda of the dialogue should contain election related issues -how to hold a free and fair election. He suggested that the govern-

ment should also lift the ban on political activities. Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said that if

the government imposes any conditions, the dialogue would not be successful. About the issue of the trial of war

criminals, Suranjit Sengupta said the government could appoint prosecutors and form a special tribunal in a very short time to start the trial.

Trust organised the programme at Manzurul Ahsan Khan demanded immediate arrest of the war criminals in order to protect the country's sovereignty and maintain law and order. If the present government could

> identify the war criminals and punish them, it would be one of the best jobs of the present government, said Prof Tajmeri. The panellists also said the government should arrest all cor-

> > rupt bureaucrats to ensure transparency in the administration. Suranjit suggested that the government should set up an administration reform commis-

> > sion to curb corruption. Prof Ahmad said the number of incidents of petty corruption has gone up in the last one year.

73 new titles arrive at Ekushey Book Fair

DU CORRESPONDENT

A total of 73 new books arrived at the Amar Ekushey Book Fair on the Bangla Academy premises in the city yesterday, the second day of the fair commemorating the supreme sacrifice of Bangalees in

the 1952 Language Movement. Among the new arrivals are 19 novels, 12 books of poem, seven non-fiction books, four biographical books and four books on the liberation war, according to Bangla Academy Information Centre.

Owners of the publishing houses and the Bangla Academy authorities said the sale of books is satisfactory.

A number of visitors said they are looking forward to more new

Talking to reporters, Bangla Academy Director General Syed Muhammad Shahed said the English to Bangla Dictionary published by the academy was its bestselling book yesterday.

About the allegation that some stalls are violating the rules of the fair, he said the authorities have

noticed that some publishing houses are selling books of other business houses. "We have already warned them. If they fail to abide by the rules by tomorrow (Sunday), we will take stern action against

All stalls are selling books at a discount of 25 percent while Bangla Academy is offering a 30 percent discount on its books. A series of seminar styled 'Ban-

gladesh's achievement in art and literature in three decades' began at the fair venue yesterday.

Meanwhile, the two-day National Poetry Festival ended on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. The festival began on Friday with the slogan "The message of poetry is the victory of democracy"

Around 400 poets from home and abroad participated in the festival organised by the National Poetry Council.

Poet Mohadev Shaha and Jahanara Parvin, a young poet, were honoured with National Poetry Council Shamsur Rahman Award at the festival.

Fertility rate comes down to 2.7 from 6.3: Niport survey

SHAMIM ASHRAF

With seven-fold increase in contraceptive use since independence, fertility rate per woman has come down to 2.7 from 6.3, says a survey report of National Institute for Population Research and Training (Niport).

Successful drive in popularising family planning methods, increased education and social awareness, and women's empowerment that earned them independent decision-making power played the key role in bringing down the total fertility rate (TFR), which represents the number of children a woman would have by the end of her reproductive years if she bears children at current rate.

Fertility has declined sharply from 6.3 births per woman in 1971-75 to 2.7 in 2004-2006, according to the preliminary report of Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2007. With the fertility rate going down, the rural-urban difference in

fertility has also narrowed down from 1.3 to 0.4 births between 1996 and 2007, says the report. Under the authority of Niport, a research firm conducted the survey among 10400 households spreading

all over the country from March 24 to August 11 of last year. A total of 11051 ever-married

women aged 10-49 and 4074 evermarried men aged 15-54 in every second household were inter-According to survey,

Bangladeshi women have a pattern

of early childbearing. On an average, women have 23 percent of their births before reaching 20, 55 percent during their 20s and one fifth in their thirties. fertility by nearly two children per women between mid 1980 and early

around 3.3 per births per woman for most of the 1990s, it added. Contraceptive prevalence rate for married women increased from 8 percent in 1975 to 56 percent in

1990. Then there was a plateau at

2007, according to BDHS 2007. The voluntary infertility is a reflection of social awareness and gradual increase in popularity of family planning methods, said Shamima Haque Chowdhury, an associate professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital, Uttara.

"As more and more women are receiving education, becoming solvent and getting power for taking decision, they nowadays want to take babies according to their own

plan," she told The Daily Star. With a major social awareness, the trend of forcing women to take babies is on decrease, she noted.

However, total fertility rate for rural women is higher than that of urban women, says the survey

The rural-urban difference in fertility has narrowed down from 1.3 to 0.4 births as shown in BDHS 1996-97 and BDHS 2007. Fertility rate also varies widely

among the administrative divisions. Sylhet has the highest fertility 3.7 There was a rapid decline in followed by Chittagong 3.2. Barisal has 2.8, Dhaka 2.7 and Rajshahi 2.4. Khulna saw the fastest decline with 2 from 2.8 in 2004.

More than three out of five currently married women want to limit childbearing. Fifty-seven percent of them say

they want no more children while an additional 6 percent of them have been sterilised. The survey report says the desire

to limit births increases rapidly with the number of living children. Vast majority of married women want either to space their next birth

or to limit childbearing altogether. Of the interviewed, 93 percent are currently married while the rest are divorced, separated or widowed.

Ninety-nine percent men are currently married with the rest divorced, separated or widowed. Twenty-three percent of these

women and men live in urban areas while 77 percent in rural areas.

200 shanties gutted in Gandaria slum fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A devastating fire burned down around 200 shanties at Gandaria Rail

Gate slum in the city early yesterday. The flames originated from an earthen oven at about 1:00am and soon engulfed the slum, Shyampur police said adding that no casualties were reported in the incident, but inhabitants lost most of their

belongings. Firefighters from Postogola, Sadarghat and headquarters rushed to the spot on information and doused the blaze with the help of local people at about 2:15 am.

HSBC official arrested on charge of killing wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested an official of a private bank on charge of killing his wife at Gulshan in the city last night.

The arrestee identified as Faimuzzaman Chowdhury, an official of Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Limited, was arrested after his father-in-law filed a case with Gulshan Police Station accusing him (Faimuzzaman) of murdering his daughter Tasmir Hossain

Munni 25. Munni's father Amir Hossain in the case said Faimuzzaman killed his daughter Munni and then hanged her from a ceiling fan

inside their bedroom. Gulshan police recovered the body from Faimuzzaman's residence at Gulshan yesterday afternoon.

World Cancer Day tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

The World Cancer Day will be observed in Bangladesh as elsewhere around the globe tomorrow with a call for timely and proper medicare for the children attacked by the killer disease. Different organisations will

hold various programmes on the day with particular emphasis upon mass awareness for hygiene of the affected children and media's catalytic role in awakening the people against cancer.

Bangladesh Childhood Cancer Society (BCCS) will organise a rally in the morning and a discussion on the issue, a BCCS press release said

President to open Scouts Council

tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka President Iajuddin Ahmed is scheduled to inaugurate the 36th general meeting of the national council of Bangladesh Scouts at the national scouts training centre at Mouchak in Gazipur tomorrow, a press release of the scouts said

President and Chief Scout Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed gave separate

messages on the occasion. In his message Iajuddin said, "scouting is basically a social movement which provides inspiration to the children, juveniles and youths

to become good citizens." Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in his message said, "the ideal of scouting could help the students to become ideal citizens, developing their patriotism and character by imbibing them to serve the distressed humanity." To stand beside the helpless people during natural disasters is one of the major duties of the scouts. The scouts will always carry out this duty with a

Death anniversary

sense of service, he added.



Today is the 10th death anniversary of M Akhtar Ali, a former secretary, says a press release. On the occasion, a

milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayers at his residence (House-14/A, Road-95, Gulshan-2) in the city today. Relatives and admirers have

New venue of Rotary Dhaka

meetings

All regular weekly meetings of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Cosmopolitan will be held at Abasar Bhaban (5th floor), Sugandha Community Center Building, 7-13 Shatmasjid Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka on every Sunday instead of usual meeting venue of Cirdap cafeteria until further notifi-

been requested to attend the mahfil and pray for the peace of the departed soul.

cation, says a press release.