

Adopt modern technology to ensure food security

Experts tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture Adviser Dr CS Karim yesterday said modern technology would have to be adopted in agriculture sector to meet the growing demand for rice and other food cereals.

"We shall have to adopt modern technology in our agriculture to increase production of rice and other crops. Every year an additional four lakh tons of rice is needed for additional people while around 8200 hectares of land goes out of agriculture because of urbanisation," said the adviser as chief guest at a roundtable in the city yesterday.

He said farmers should be trained up so that they can learn how to use modern technology and grow hybrid rice.

"In 1980s, our annual rice production was only one crore ton, but now it is three crore tons and this has become possible because our farmers are accepting modern technology and cultivating hybrid

rice," said the adviser.

The roundtable titled 'Food Security in Bangladesh: Import Dependency Vs Attaining Food Self Sufficiency' was organised jointly by the Media Foundation for Trade and Development and The Equity and Justice Working Group at the National Press Club.

The adviser said the government will continue to give subsidy on fertiliser until the end of the current Boro season and sufficient fertilisers are being supplied through 16000 centres, each of which can provide fertilisers to 500 to 600 farmers.

"We are giving a subsidy of Tk 1200 per bag of fertiliser as its sale price is Tk 300 a bag against the production cost of Tk 1500," he pointed out.

Dr Mahabub Hossain, a noted agricultural scientist, said an increase in food production is a must to ensure food security, but it should be better integrated with traditional knowledge and modern research.

"We should use modern technology to increase outputs from current land and there must not be any further loss of farm land," he said while addressing as special guest.

"Nearly every region of the world has recently experienced drastic food price inflation. Retail prices are up 18 percent in China, 17 percent in Sri Lanka, 10 percent in Latin America and Russia and around 20 percent in Bangladesh," he pointed out.

Economist Dr Atiar Rahman said rice will have to be imported immediately to meet the present food crisis and price spiral.

Political leader AKM Jahangir, former Ambassador Waliur Rahman, journalist Sadek Khan, Equity and Justice Working Group President Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and Media Foundation for Trade and Development Executive Director Kawsar Rahman also spoke at the roundtable.

Proposals to amend guidelines on press accreditation

BSS, Dhaka

A meeting of the Press Accreditation Committee yesterday adopted some proposals to amend the guidelines on press accreditation to make the press accreditation cards of journalists more effective, says a PID handout.

The meeting, held at the Press Information Department (PID), was presided over by president of the committee and Principal Information Officer Iftikhar Hossain.

The meeting stressed upholding the importance and dignity of the press accreditation card.

At the end of the meeting, deep condolence was expressed at the death of freedom fighter and veteran political personality Saifuddin Ahmed Manik. The meeting observed one-minute's silence as a mark of respect to the freedom fighter.

Duta election on Mar 4

DU CORRESPONDENT

Elections to the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), which was postponed twice, will now be held on March 4.

Prof Azizur Rahman of physics department will conduct the elections as the election commissioner.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of Duta executive committee held at the association's office on Dhaka University campus last night, with its President Prof Sadru Amin in the chair.

Appeal for help



The father of a college girl has appealed for financial help to save his daughter who has been suffering from renal failure, says a

press release.

Mosammat Rozina, a first-year student of Galachipa Degree College in Patuakhali, has been on dialysis as both of her kidneys have been damaged.

She is now undergoing treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

According to doctors, Rozina needs to undergo kidney transplantation immediately. Her mother will donate a kidney to her and the operation will cost Tk 4 lakh. But her father Abdul Malik Mia of Chandpara village in Dasha, who lost his grocery shop during the Cyclone Sidr, cannot manage such a huge amount of money.

He has appealed to the affluent section of society to extend a helping hand to save his daughter.

Contributions can be sent to Md Abbas Uddin, Savings Account No.- 34103511, Agrani Bank Ltd, Cox Road Branch, Narayanganj, or Md Harun-or-Rashid, Savings Account No.- 010312100033214, Mercantile Bank, Karwan Bazar Branch, Dhaka.

For further information, please call 01718-590046.

Amit Lal



The father of a HSC student has sought financial assistance for the treatment of his son who has been suffering from stomach

cancer, says a press release.

Amit Lal, a student of Sheikh Borhanuddin College, is now under treatment at Al-Arafat Hospital at Babu Bazar in Dhaka.

According to doctors, Amit needs advanced treatment, which involves about Tk 10 lakh. But his father Murad Lal Beghi, an employee of Bangabandhu Hall at Dhaka University, cannot afford such an expensive treatment.

He has appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save his son.

Contributions can be sent to Yasmin Rani, Savings Account No.- 4277, Agrani Bank, Bangla Academy Branch, Dhaka University, or Raju Lal, Savings Account No.- 61281404, Sonali Bank, Dhaka University Branch.

For further information, interested persons can call at 01913-052182 or 01711-948940.

Get-together of DU '69 batch alumni Feb 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual get-together of 1969 batch alumni of Dhaka University (DU) will be held at Savar on February 15.

Those willing to take part in it are requested to contact Salehuddin Quadri-9893515, Quazi Abdul Mannan-9892838, Abdus Sattar Khan-8810073, Sultana Rebu-9669124, Mustafizur Rahman Khan-9662239, Rafia Aktar Dolly-8812255, and Ferdous Ara Dolly-9675294 immediately for further details.



Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui speaks at a publication ceremony of a book titled '1971: War Crimes and the Reality of the Trial' by journalist and poet Humayun Reza at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday.

'Trial of war criminals possible under existing laws'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The trial of war criminals is possible under the existing laws of the country, speakers at a book publication ceremony said yesterday.

They also called for a movement against the culture of impunity.

The speakers said some vested quarters, including the leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, in a bid to protect the war criminals, are spreading false propaganda that the then government forgave them.

Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

launched the book titled '1971: War Crimes and the Reality of the Trial' by journalist and poet Humayun Reza at the programme at Liberation War Museum in the city.

Justice for Bangladesh Genocide 1971, an Australia-based organisation working to bring the war criminals to book, published the book. Agami Prokashani is the local distributor of the book.

Speaking as the chief guest, Prof Zillur said this book will help the people to know about how and who committed the crimes against

humanity in 1971.

He also hoped that the next generation will be successful in punishing the war criminals.

Anisul Haque, deputy editor of the Prothom Alo, said the book would help create public opinion for the trial of war criminals.

Dr Muntassir Mamoon, Dr Abul Hasan Milton, convener of the Justice for Bangladesh Genocide 1971, Osman Gani, publisher of Agami Prokashani, and Sukanto Gupta Alak, executive editor of the Bhorer Kago, also spoke.

Bangladesh exports skilled workers to Romania

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh, for the first time, is exporting skilled workers to Romania, a West European country.

Of them, 800 will be employed in garments sector while the rest 300 in construction sector.

Forty-three workers have already reached Romania in last two weeks while 25 are scheduled to leave today, said Mojibur Rahman Murad, proprietor of the recruiting agency Al-Abbas International.

Adviser for Foreign and Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas

Employment Dr Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday

bade farewell to the workers at a simple ceremony.

At the programme at Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), he said apart from maintaining the traditional overseas labour markets, the government, is searching for new markets in Europe and American countries.

While talking to The Daily Star, Mojibur Rahman said the minimum monthly salary of the workers is US\$ 450, but there are also some professionals who will draw salary up to

US\$ 3000.

Besides, they will get food, housing and medical facilities, he said, adding that appointment of a counsellor in Romania is very important.

"We have got the jobs verified by Bangladesh Embassy in Paris, as there is no Bangladesh consulate or embassy in Romania," Mojibur said.

As the people of Romania are moving to other countries of European Union for higher salaries, there is a labour market which Bangladesh can catch if steps are taken immediately, he added.

EC to start next round of talks

FROM PAGE 1

As soon as the issue is resolved the commission will have its first talk with BNP to conclude the initial round that began last September.

"If the BNP issue is not resolved on February 12, the Election Commission will begin the second round of talks with other political parties, with whom it already had the first round," an EC source said referring to the commission's plan.

In that case, the EC will have its talk with BNP after the party's internal dispute is resolved, the source added.

The EC, which has been mired in controversies for its handling of the two factions in BNP, is now waiting for the recent unity move to succeed, said the commission source.

"It will be better if they are united," Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday without elaborating on the present status of the commission's electoral reform talks.

Showing 'doctrine of necessities', the EC in last November invited Saifur-led faction of BNP to a talk scheduled for November 22, ignoring objections of Khaleda Zia nominated Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, who claimed his faction was the mainstream of the party.

Delwar-led faction challenged with the HC the EC's move to invite Saifur-led faction's Secretary General Hafizuddin Ahmed to the talks, prompting the court to stay the effectiveness of the commis-

sion's invitation letter to Hafiz.

As a result, the EC could not hold any talk with BNP and the matter might not be settled until February 12, when the court will resume hearing the case.

According to the EC announced electoral roadmap, its electoral reform talks with the political parties were supposed to be completed between September and November of last year.

During the first round of talks the EC disclosed its plan for holding a second round for seeking the parties' final opinions on the proposals for electoral reform, which are supposed to be finalised through a gazette notification by the end of this month. But the unresolved BNP issue has been delaying all that.

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 16

months and so on. They can provide only training certificates, not degrees or diplomas.

A university or a board is the competent authority to issue certificates after the completion of regular academic course, curriculum and examination. Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) is such an authority that operates under an act of parliament.

The statement also says a meeting was held on November 19, 2007 under the directive of the chief adviser. The meeting decided to initiate an 'umbrella concept' between health and education ministries and urgently amend present rules. Until then, both the BTEB and the health directorate would continue their courses and a committee consisting the directors

of BTEB and Directorate General of Health Services will supervise all the institutions to maintain standard.

Our Reply: Khondker Shefyatulla, director of Medical Education and Health Manpower Development of health directorate and a member of the inter-ministerial committee that was set up as per the directive of the chief adviser, said Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) is the central accreditation body in the country.

"According to the regulation of BMDC, no medical science related course could be offered without the approval of the health ministry. If anybody or group does so, they might be fined or be imprisoned," he said.

Commenting on the issue of medical technicians and medical technologists, Abdul Zabbar Mallik,

secretary of State Medical Faculty, said the terms medical technician and medical technologist are synonymous and since 1980, those who used to be known as paramedics have been designated as technologists.

The State Medical Faculty under the health ministry is authorised to issue certificates for degrees or diplomas since 1962, he added.

Although it was mentioned in the rejoinder that an inter-ministerial meeting in this regard was held on November 19 of 2007, no such meeting took place on that particular date. Rather, the inter-ministerial committee placed its recommendations the previous day, recommending that all the medical technology educational institutes would have to be affiliated with the State Medical Faculty.

Govt asks for reducing spread

FROM PAGE 16

Association of Bankers Bangladesh (ABB), a platform of managing directors of banks, attended the meeting.

The chief adviser recently sent a letter to the Bangladesh Bank governing suggesting to keep the difference between deposit and loan interest rates of banks within four-five percent.

Despite the stagnant business situation in the country last year, private commercial banks made a handsome profit, which was 41 percent more than the preceding year.

The profit was largely due to the huge difference of interest rates and high charges on different banking services, banking sources said.

The average difference of interest rates in banks is now 6.16 percent. At state-owned banks it is 5.88 percent, at private commercial banks it is 6.17 percent and 8.91 percent at foreign commercial banks.

The government side, finance

ministry and the central bank, in the meeting also raised the point of taking high commissions and charges from clients for opening Letter of Credit and different banking services.

Besides, the Bangladesh Bank has been assigned to prepare a guideline on charges on banking services as the charges for the same services vary at different banks," a source said.

The meeting decided to relax the loan waiver policy and as per the new rules state-owned banks can waive the entire interest, if necessary.

As per the present rule, the state-owned banks take 8.5 percent of the interest as cost of fund.

UNB reports: The finance adviser said, "We have decided to relax the policy framework in this regard." He said it would help clear the balance sheet of the Sonali, Janata and Agrani banks as well as mitigate the woes of the defaulters.

As per the decision, after formulation of guidelines in this regard

respective bank boards would be able to waive interest on loans taken by a closed or a deformed project even without recovering the cost of fund of the loans provided to the project.

The boards will also be able to waive the interest in case the respective banks consider that the cost of fund could not be recovered even after selling out the assets (or collateral) of the project concerned or after taking all possible legal measures.

The bank boards will be able to waive interest when convinced that they will be able to recover not more than 300 percent of the principal plus interest.

In case of accident, disaster or death of borrowers, Aziz said the government has decided to increase the interest waiver amount from Tk 5 lakh to Tk 10 lakh.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Bank yesterday sent letters to all commercial banks asking them to simplify rules regarding financing imports and exports.

NCTB to reprint textbooks

BSS, Dhaka

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has decided to reprint textbooks for class six to ten for the current academic year on an emergency basis to meet the demand.

When attention of the board was drawn to some newspaper reports on scarcity of textbooks, the board in a clarification said that so far 1,93,32,104 copies of textbooks for class six to class ten have been marketed through 155 publishing or printing houses for the year 2008.

"It has been observed from monitoring of the market that there is still more demand for the textbooks," the board said.

The board has asked the students, guardians and all concerned not to be worried. The board also requested the booksellers to sell the books at the fixed price.

83rd birthday of Father Rigon today



Today is the 83rd birthday of Father Marina Rigon, an Italian priest and litterateur, says a press release.

Father Rigon, who migrated to Bangladesh in the fifties, has dedicated his life to helping others through constructive and creative activities.

During the Liberation War in 1971, he arranged treatment and food for the valiant freedom fighters.

Father Rigon has translated a number of publications of Tagore, Nazrul, Jasimuddin into Italian. Currently, he is doing his research on Lalons songs.

He has made a great contribution to developing the St. Paul's High School at Mongla in Bagerhat. He also runs a training centre on sewing for destitute women.

Father Rigon will celebrate his birthday with the students of St. Paul's High School today.

Obituary

BSS, Ctg

Rezina Akhter, superintendent of Preventive Services of Chittagong Customs House and wife of Dr ATM Emdad Hossain, a soil scientist and divisional officer of Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI), passed away due to cancer at a private clinic in the city on Sunday night.

She left behind her husband, one son, one daughter and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

Scientists and employees of BFRI condoled the death of Rezina and prayed for the departed soul. They also conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

33 fishermen

FROM PAGE 1 said. The pirates held several fishermen but kept hostage 25 of them and asked others to leave and return with the ransom within seven days to have their colleagues released.

They threatened "dire consequences" if the money was not paid, police said.

The fishermen went to the Sundarbans on February 1 on five boats. The pirates attacked them while they were sleeping in their boats and looted their cash and other valuables.

Aslam, Rafiqul and Mahsin of Kaikhali and Delbar Hossain of Kulta in Shyamnagar upazila are among the kidnapped. The identity of others could not be known.

On February 2, pirates abducted eight fishermen from Agunjala Pantamari canal and demanded Tk 2 lakh for their release.

They released a number of the kidnapped fishermen, keeping hostage the eight, and told them to bring the ransom to Choramegla canal yesterday (Monday).

While talking to The Daily Star yesterday over phone, Rajman Nagar union parishad (UP) chairman Alamgir Haidar said the fishermen went to the Sundarbans on December 30 on eight boats. The pirates attacked them while they were fishing in Agunjala Pantamari canal.

The kidnapped fishermen are Shafiqul Islam, 35, Affar Gazi, 40, Alam Mollah, 40, Mujibur Rahman, 35, Abdus Sabur, 30, Abdur Rashid, 34, Rafiqul Islam, 36, Delwar Hossain Khan, 50, of Shyamnagar upazila, the chairman said.

Panic gripped the relatives of the eight abducted fishermen as the deadline for paying the ransom expired yesterday.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Shyamnagar Police Station Abdur Razzak confirming the incidents said they are trying to rescue the victims.

Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) of Sathkira Range Rajesh Chakma said he did not know about the incidents. He, however, said after gathering information actions would be taken.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

British Council organises an international seminar on 'Intellectual property rights: Context Bangladesh'. Venue: British Council auditorium. Time: 3:30pm.

Book launching

The launching ceremony of the novel titled Gouriur Junction by Humayun Ahmed will be held. Venue: Sofia Kamal Auditorium, National Museum. Time: 4:00pm.

Seminar

Dhaka Ahsania Mission, WBB Trust and The Union jointly organise a seminar on 'Public health development and enhancement of excise duty towards increase of government revenue'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of the 12-volume compendium on cultural review of Bangladesh will be held. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh will publish the compendium. Venue: Asiatic Society auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Reminiscence meeting

Dhaka Union of Journalists organises a reminiscence meeting on photojournalist Mohammad Alam. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Rotary Dhaka

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30pm.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a roundtable on 'Reforms of political parties for effective democracy' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Prof Muzaffer Ahmad and columnist Syed Abul Maksud. Sushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujon) organised the roundtable.



PHOTO: STAR

Cold wave may abate

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light rain or drizzle may occur at one or two places over Khulna and Barisal divisions and the regions of Faridpur and Dhaka at the end period, Met Office said, predicting that the prevailing cold wave may abate.

Besides, light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country, it said, adding that the night temperature may rise by 1-3 degree Celsius over the country.

Highest temperature 27.3 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 07.2 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:47pm today and rises at 6:38am 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	25.5	11.7	56	39
Chittagong	25.0	12.5	80	51
Rajshahi	24.0	08.2	85	68
Khulna	24.5	10.7	73	68
Barisal	25.4	10.2	68	66
Sylhet	25.0	10.7	72	56
Cox's Bazar	27.3	12.5	55	53