



Children engrossed in painting at an art competition on Bangla Academy premises in the city yesterday. Bangla Academy organised the competition on the occasion of Amar Ekushey.

Take coordinated steps to avoid food crisis

Menon urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon has said if the government fails to take timely and coordinated steps, the country would face a food crisis leading to a famine.

He was speaking at an extended meeting of Jatiya Krishak Samity and Bangladesh Khetmojur Union at Shaheed Asad Auditorium in the city yesterday.

Menon said there is a crisis of fertilisers and seeds in the country and the farmers are merely depending on their fate after sowing the seeds.

He alleged that the government

is not paying proper attention to the supply of fertilisers and seeds.

Prof Abdus Sattar presided over the meeting where a report on rural economy and real condition of the farmers was presented by Aminul Islam Golap, general secretary of Jatiya Krishak Samity.

The report said although the caretaker government could gain the public support due to its anti-corruption drive, it is now losing that support for its failure to control the abnormal price hike of essentials.

It also revealed that there is a lack of coordination in distributing relief among the Sidr-affected people and their immediate reha-

bilitation.

The government's hope to make up the loss in Aman paddy through increased production of IRRI and Boro, would not be fulfilled if the fertiliser crisis sustains, the report added.

It urged the government to provide the farmer with fertilisers, seeds, insecticides, power pumps and to initiate food for work programme for impoverished villagers.

The speakers at the meeting also demanded subsidy in agriculture, poultry and livestock sectors, farm loan at 5 percent interest, cyclone centres in coastal areas, and rationing for the village poor.

Tk 6 lakh electric cables seized

UNB, Dhaka

Detective Branch (DB) of police seized a huge quantity of fake electric cables worth about Tk 6 lakh from two unauthorised factories at Shyampur in the city and arrested four people yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of plainclothes policemen raided the house of Hashmat Ullah at Bartola in East Shyampur at about 2:30am and arrested Aynal Hossain, 28, Mehed Hasan, 25, Shahidul Islam, 25, and Mohammad Sohel alias Sony, 20, from two rooms of the house -- one used to manufacture fake BRB cables and another Eastern cables.

Meanwhile, DB police also arrested nine members of a gang of muggers who used to target people withdrawing money from banks.

Acting on a tip-off, the police arrested gang leader Abdur Rob alias Aangul Kata Roba, 50, Abbas, 42, Rubel, 22, Rafiqul, 37, and Zakir, 32, in front of Pir Yemini Market in the city at about 10:00am.

\$63m IDA credit to boost agri technology system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank approved an International Development Association (IDA) credit worth \$62.60 million to revitalise Bangladesh's agricultural technology system, a WB statement said yesterday.

The money will be spent for agricultural research, agricultural extension, and supply chain, including strengthening of national institutions involved in agricultural research and extension, read the statement.

Agriculture accounts for about 22 percent of Bangladesh's GDP and another 33 percent of GDP is contributed by the rural non-farm economy, which is largely linked to agriculture, the statement added.

"Growth of the agriculture and the rural non-farm sectors is critical to reducing poverty in Bangladesh," said Xian Zhu, WB country director in Bangladesh.

Zhu said, "Improved agricultural research and technology will be critical to achieve this growth and accelerate for the process of diversification into higher value crops and post-harvest processing."

He said over the last three decades, there has been a significant increase in the production of rice to achieve near self-sufficiency in food grains. However, this is threatened by increasing population, declining land base and stagnating yields.

Diversification into higher value crops is slow with poor post-harvest management and limited processing capacity.

The project titled 'National Agricultural Technology Project' has been designed to enhance the effectiveness of the national agricultural technology system.

The project will also support a

decentralised demand-led agricultural extension programme with greater accountability and responsiveness to farmers, with a focus on small and marginal farmers.

"By giving greater voice to the farming communities in deciding the priorities for agricultural research, farmer education priorities, and programme monitoring, the project will contribute towards improving governance as well as the quality and efficiency of the delivery of public services," said Paul S Sidhu, WB senior agriculture specialist and project team leader.

The project will support development of supply chains of selected commodities through financing activities related to strengthening farmer-market linkages.

It will be implemented over a period of 15 years in three phases.

Akheri Chahar Shomba Mar 5

BSS, Dhaka

Holy Akheri Chahar Shomba will be observed in the country on March 5 as the moon of the Arabic month Safar has been sighted.

The National Moon Sighting Committee made the announcement yesterday at a meeting presided over by its Chairman and Law and Religious Affairs Adviser AF Hassan Arif.

JU bird fair Feb 15

BSS, Savar

A daylong bird fair will be held on the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus on February 15.

The fair will be organised by the JU zoology department in cooperation with Step Media Limited and Wild Life Rescue Centre.

The fair includes inter-university bird identification competition, exhibition of birds' photographs, witnessing of birds by children at JU lakes and painting competition for them and speech competition on birds.

The fair is organised every year with a view to creating mass awareness to preserve the birds.



A family lives under the open sky as more than 130 shanties burned down in a fire at a slum at Boiler Avenue near the BRTC Bus Station in Chittagong in the early hours of yesterday. The fire rendered about 200 families homeless.



Young readers mob eminent writer Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal to have their books autographed by the author at Amar Ekushey Book Fair on the Bangla Academy premises in the city yesterday.

Dhaka will play major role in climate change debate

Iftekhar tells European parliamentary team

UNB, Dhaka

Since climate change is a priority issue, Bangladesh will continue to play an active role in the global debate on the subject, said Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury.

He made the remark when a nine-member delegation of European Parliamentary Committee on Climate Change met him at the State Guesthouse Padma on Thursday night.

Iftekhar said countries like Bangladesh, which is also the current chair of the Group of LDCs, are least responsible for

greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, yet they suffer the most from their consequences.

He said developed countries, including those of the European Union, have an obligation to help implement requisite preventive and adaptation projects.

He said Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed co-chaired the UN debate on climate change during the last General Assembly session with Dutch Prime Minister Belkenende.

Bangladesh made an active contribution to the Bali Conference and will continue to play a major role in the debate

during the lead-up to the planned Copenhagen Conference in 2009, he added.

The European Parliamentary Committee delegation led by Romana Jordan Cizeli of Slovenia appreciated the priority that Bangladesh placed on the subject and expressed the confidence that Bangladesh's active engagement would enrich the deliberations.

The adviser also briefed the delegation on the current institutional reforms being implemented by the government to ensure stable and sustainable democracy.

Int'l seminar on welfare of persons with disabilities

BSS, Dhaka

A five-day international seminar on 'One for all -- Disabled Persons' Self Initiatives in Development (PSID)' will begin in the city tomorrow.

Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed will formally inaugurate the seminar at Dhaka Regency Hotel at 6:00pm today. Australian High Commissioner Douglas Foskett will join the function as the special guest.

Bangladesh Protibandhi Kalyan Samity (BPKS) is organising the seminar to highlight PSID, an initiative for the welfare of the physically challenged people. A total of 12,000 persons with disabilities are leading self-reliant life with the implementation of PSID method in the country's 30 districts.

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