

RECEPTION TO CHAMPIONS OF EARTH AWARD WINNER South Asia to face absolute food crisis in days to come Says Dr Atiq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Painting a gloomy picture of environmental degradation across the globe, Dr Atiq Rahman, winner of the Champions of Earth Award 2008, yesterday urged the world leaders to make the planet a fairer and better place to live in by establishing social justice.

Speaking at a reception, he said global warming is causing a rise in sea level resulting frequent natural calamities like floods, cyclone, drought and salinity.

The reception was arranged by University and Industry Alliance of Dhaka University (DU) at the Senate Bhaban on the receipt of the highest UN award by Dr Atiq for his contribution to the field of environment and sustainable development.

Dr Atiq, also the executive director of Bangladesh Centre for

Advanced Studies, said the developing countries of Africa and Asia, particularly South Asia, are going to face 'absolute food shortage' in the days to come.

"This is part of global injustice," he said, adding the developed nations of North America and Europe and the newly industrialised countries like China, South Korea and others have to take the responsibility for natural calamities that are hampering agricultural production.

Lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Dr Atiq said global warming will seriously affect the world. "The developed nations can pay for it, but the poor countries will have to pay the lives of their people," he added.

Dr Atiq said one-third people of the world earn only one dollar a day,

while the other one-third earn only two dollars, which is the price of only a bottle of water in White House.

"This is unfair," he said. Dr Atiq noted that when wealth is overflowing in the stock markets, a huge number of children are left malnourished and millions of others left without medicine.

Citing an example he said if a Nicaraguan mother gives birth to a child in Boston, the baby would consume hundred times more food, fuel and avail other facilities than the same baby if it were born at the same time in Nicaragua.

"So God has done His duty. But it is we the people that have made the world unequal. This inequality is linked to environmental reasons," he added.

Stressing the need for integrating scientific knowledge, policy and people for sustainable devel-

opment, Dr Atiq said the politicians and academics must understand the issues critically and act accordingly.

The universities should be turned into centres of excellence, he said, posing a question, "Why is it not possible for Dhaka University to publish 10 world class publications a year?"

Speaking as chief guest, Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz said, "We are proud of showing honour to Dr Atiq."

"We can include environmental issues in the syllabuses of all the disciplines of the universities," he said after handing over a crest to Dr Atiq.

University and Industry Alliance President Prof GM Chowdhury presided over the programme which was also addressed by DU Alumni Association Secretary General Rakibuddin Ahmed.



Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin calls on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

CJ calls on president

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin called on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

During the meeting, the chief justice apprised the president of regular activities of the judiciary.

Military Secretary to the President Maj Gen Mohd Aminul Karim, Press Secretary Abdul Awal Hawlader and Registrar of Supreme Court Ikhtedar Ahmed were also present.

Verdict in graft case against Abul Hasnat today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court dealing with graft charges will deliver today its verdict in a case filed against Awami League (AL) leader and former chief whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah for concealing information in wealth statement and amassing wealth illegally.

Another verdict in connection with a case filed by Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) against former (AL) lawmaker Dr HBM Iqbal will be delivered tomorrow.

Judge Arifur Rahman of the Special Court-10 fixed the date for delivering verdict in the case against Hasnat on February 28 on completion of the submission by both the prosecution and defence lawyers.

ACC Assistant Director Rahela Khatun filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station on September 6 last year accusing Hasnat of acquiring assets worth Tk 1.6 crore beyond his known sources of income and concealing information about his wealth worth Tk 52 lakh.

On January 16, ACC Assistant Director Shaiful Alam, who is also the IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Hasnat to CMM's Court.

Earlier, a Dhaka court ordered attachment of Hasnat's property and issued an arrest warrant against him as he has been in hiding since the case was filed.

Meanwhile, the Special Court-6 will deliver verdict in two separate cases, filed by ACC against the Janakantha Editor Apikullah Khan Masud on March 6 and 9.

Factory worker commits suicide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A worker committed suicide after he was beaten by the owner of his factory for allegedly stealing machine parts of the factory at Araihajar in the district on Saturday night.

The worker was identified as Ramzan, 30, who worked at Power Loom Factory. Police said factory owner Ohab and his accomplice detained three workers on suspicion of stealing some machine parts of the factory and beat them up on Saturday noon.

Ramzan took his life by taking poison out of grief on Saturday night. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Winter Exercise of BAF begins

BAF Winter Exercise 'Wintex-08' started at all BAF Bases on Friday, says an ISPR press release.

The aim of the exercise is to assess and evaluate the operational capability of BAF.

All types of BAF aircraft, helicopters and Radar Squadrons of different Bases are participating in this exercise along with Army, Navy and Civil Defence.

The 'Wintex-08' is scheduled to conclude tomorrow.

BRAC BANK THEFT Customers concerned about compensation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customers of BRAC Bank Ltd's locker services affected by the recent theft at the bank have expressed concern about the compensation they are to receive in 90 days as committed by the bank.

"The bank has promised to keep us updated on the procedure. But almost two months have gone by and they are yet to inform us anything regarding the compensation we are to get," Rabeth Khan, an affected locker renter, said at a press conference yesterday.

Rabeth Khan along with five other locker holders Fatima Rahim, Engr Shahin Rahman, Dr Moshatq Hossain, Badrul Mazid and Gias Uddin spoke at the press conference held at a city hotel.

The BRAC Bank customers said that to their knowledge half of the 60 affected locker renters have so far submitted claims for loss of over 2.5 thousand tolas of gold ornaments lost in the robbery.

However the bank has been claiming to the media that around a 1,000 tola of gold ornaments have been lost in the robbery, they alleged, citing different newspapers reports.

The locker renters said that these actions by the bank had forced them to become suspicious about the bank's real intention regarding payment of compensation.

Asked how they will substantiate their claims submitted to the bank and police, the locker renters said one could easily understand that their claims are true if their financial and social status and transactions with the bank are checked out.

Abedur Rahman Sikder, head of marketing and corporate affairs of BRAC Bank Ltd, has denied the allegations made by the six locker holders.

He told The Daily Star that as per their commitment, officials of the bank are available at the Dhanmondi branch of the bank every Wednesday to meet the affected customers and answer all queries related to the matter. Any customer with a question has to just approach the bank, he said.

Abedur also said that so far a total of 53 locker holders, out of the 60 affected, had submitted claims for compensation at the bank.

He said, as per the bank's commitment, affected locker holders will all be compensated within 90 days. There are still 37 days left of that period, he said.

Abedur however didn't say how many tolas of ornaments had been claimed as lost by the claimants.

Thieves tunneled into the bank through the roof and made off with gold ornaments and other valuables from 60 safe deposit lockers in the Dhanmondi branch of BRAC

Bank Ltd on January 5.

Police have so far arrested several people in connection with the heist and recovered some of the looted gold ornaments.

Technology fair begins at BAU

A two-day technology fair-cum-training on food security for sustainable household livelihoods (FoSHoL) for field officers of NGOs began at the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) on Saturday, says a press release.

BAU Vice Chancellor Prof Mosharraf Hossain Mian inaugurated the fair at the conference room of the Faculty of Agriculture as the chief guest.

Liaison Scientists of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Dr Md Abdul Hamid Miah and Dr MA Mazid, director general, Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI), were also present at the inaugural ceremony as special guests.

Jointly organised by the Bangladesh Agricultural University, Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), BFRI, and FoSHoL-Coordination project, IRRI, the inaugural function was chaired by Professor Dr Md Shah-E-Alam, Director, BAU Research System (BAURES).

Body to re-fix minimum wages for tea workers

BSS, Dhaka

The government yesterday formed a committee for re-fixing the minimum wages for the tea garden workers.

The committee, headed by labour secretary, will discuss with the representatives of tea garden owners and workers and submit a report within a week.

This was decided at a meeting with the representatives of the Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA) with Adviser for LGRD, Labour and Employment Md Anwarul Iqbal in the chair, an official handout said.

Labour and Employment Secretary Dr Mahfuzul Haque, BTA representatives -- M Oahidul Haque, Kamran T Rahman, Laila Rahman Kabir, M Kamal and CG Dhar were present at the meeting.

The adviser urged the owners of the tea gardens to work for the smooth growth of the sector and welfare of the workers.

He assured that the children of the labourers working at the 156 tea gardens will be given jobs after providing them training at the training centres under the ministry.

The government, responding to the request of the tea garden owners, has allocated 1,000 metric tons of rice for selling to the families of the tea garden workers at Tk 24 per kg.

He assured of initiating more projects for improving the lives of the workers of tea gardens.

Watsan expo begins tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

A two-day exposition on water and sanitation titled 'Watsan Expo 2008' marking the United Nations international year of sanitation 2008 will begin at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre tomorrow.

Water Aid Bangladesh (WAB) will organise the exposition to create awareness about drinking safe water and using of sanitation for helping the government to achieve 100 percent sanitation coverage by 2010, said WAB Acting Country Representative M Azahar Ali at a press conference.

Three seminars on 'Sustainable water supply and sanitation programme', 'Technology in water supply and sanitation' and 'Poverty, equity and gender in Watsan' will be held as the sideline of the exposition, she said.

The exposition will remain open from 10:00am to 6:00pm everyday.



Air Vice Marshal (Retd) AK Khandker speaks at a discussion at the TSC auditorium yesterday. On his right are Dr Mizanur Rahman and Maj Gen (Retd) KM Shafiqullah and on his left is Justice Ghulam Rabbani. (Story on page 16)

Dhaka firm to implement int'l humanitarian law

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said that Bangladesh is committed to implementing International Human Rights Laws and places a priority on the issue.

He made the statement while inaugurating a three-day seminar on International Humanitarian Law and its implementation at the Foreign Ministry.

Representatives of other ministries concerned, armed forces, police, Ansar and diplomats are participating in the seminar jointly organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Iftekhar said, "It is the belief that the concept is relevant to contemporary times that leads Bangladesh to play such a key role in UN peace-keeping."

Iftekhar said civilisation involves curbing of instincts in favour of reason, and this set of laws is designed to advance that ideal.

Foreign Secretary M Touhid Hossain, ICRC Head of Mission in Dhaka Finn Ruda and Director General of the International Organisation Wing of the Foreign Ministry Mosud Mannan also spoke on the occasion.

Hospital ransacked in Chittagong

CU CORRESPONDENT

A gang of muslemen ransacked a private hospital and assaulted the patients and staff of the hospital in the port city yesterday.

Engage Hamas in dialogue to avoid violence: Iftekhar

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday observed that engaging Hamas in a dialogue is necessary to prevent the crisis from spurring out of control, and end the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

The adviser made the remarks when asked to comment on the escalating violence in the occupied Palestinian territories especially between Israel and Hamas.

He said, "The Hamas is in control of Gaza. That is the reality on the ground. There can be no peace without talks. Indeed, I see from reports that a majority in Israel also want that."

Asked if the forthcoming OIC will focus on the issue, he said, "certainly."

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