

## Create fund to scale up training, research, project activities

LGRD adviser tells Cirdap meet

LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser Anwarul Iqbal has called on the member countries of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (Cirdap) to create a common fund to scale up training, research and project activities within the organisation, says a press release.

The call was made yesterday while presenting the country statement of Bangladesh at the ministerial retreat of rural development ministers of 14 countries of the Asia-Pacific region which is going on in New Delhi, the Indian capital.

The meeting is focusing on the issue of information and communication technology (ICT) and

gender equality and empowerment in rural development programmes.

The adviser said the LGRD and cooperatives ministry is taking the lead in establishing institutional network along with other government and non-government institutions for implementing rural development policies.

Various projects are now underway for overall rural development and especially to create employment opportunities for vulnerable rural women and for their skill development programmes to empower them. Moreover, the government has taken necessary steps to strengthen the local gov-

ernment systems in order to make quick response to the needs and priorities of the local people.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in ICT sector and is planned to improve social welfare through integration into rural development activities, including agricultural, rural planning and the fisheries industry, he added.

The adviser further said the government of Bangladesh is looking forward to hold the 17th Governing Council meeting and the 2nd ministerial meeting of Cirdap in Dhaka in 2009.

The ministerial retreat will conclude today by adopting 'New Delhi Declaration'.

## UGC full commission meeting held

The 112th meeting of the Full Commission of University Grants Commission (UGC) was held at the Commission Bhaban in the city yesterday with its Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam in the chair, says a press release.

The meeting approved the minutes of the 111th meeting of the commission. It also reviewed the progress of the implementation of the decision taken in its previous meeting.

The UGC full commission meeting approved the revised budget for the public universities for the fiscal 2007-08 and the original budget for 2008-09. It also okayed the revised budget for the UGC for the fiscal 2007-08 and the original budget for 2008-09.

Members for the UGC finance committee were nominated and the guidelines of the UGC professorship were reviewed in the meeting. The meeting also discussed about the report of a three-member probe committee formed to investigate the irregularities of the UGC.

UGC members Prof Ehsanul Haque, Prof Md Abdul Hakim, Prof AHM Zehadul Karim, Prof Md Tajul Islam and Prof Amena Begum were present at the meeting.

Education Secretary Momtazul Islam, Islamic University Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Faiz Md Sirajul Haque, SUST VC Prof M Aminul Islam, Khulna University VC Prof Md Saifuddin Shah, Prof Abdul Hamid of BSMRAU Agronomy department and Chairman of BSMU Urology department Prof SAM Golam Kibria and UGC Secretary Dr Md Lutfe Alam were also present on the occasion.

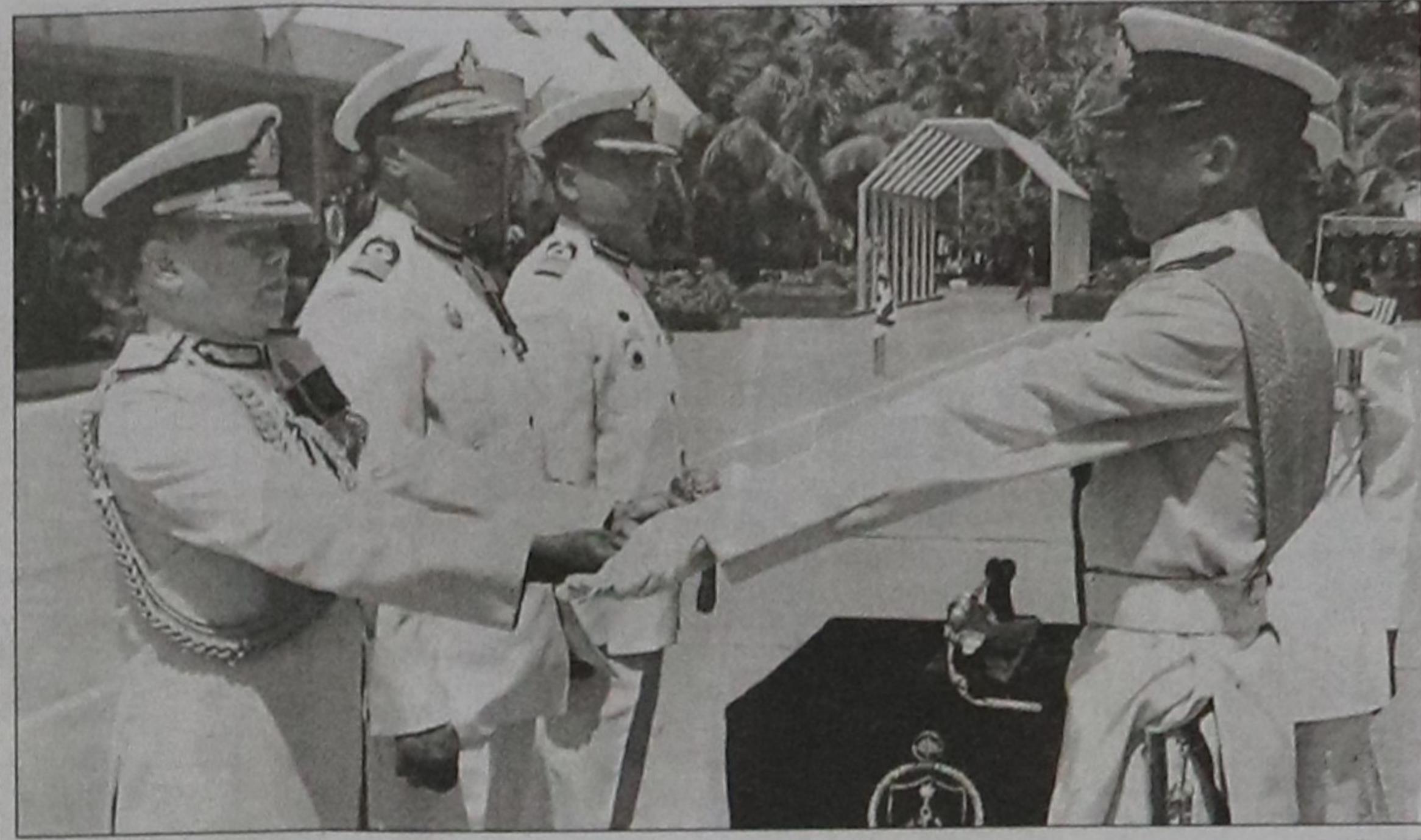


PHOTO: ISPR

Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam hands over 'Sword of Honour' to the best all round Midshipman Kazi Sakur Mahmud in the Summer Graduation President Parade marking the commissioning of Midshipmen 2006 'B' batch of Bangladesh Navy at the Bangladesh Naval Academy Parade ground yesterday.

## 19 midshipmen commissioned in navy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nineteen midshipmen were commissioned in the Bangladesh Navy yesterday at a ceremony on completion of their training at the Bangladesh Naval Academy Parade Ground at Patenga in Chittagong.

Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam attended the Summer Graduation President Parade, which was organised to mark the commissioning of Midshipmen 2006 'Bravo' batch.

The naval chief reviewed the smartly turned-out parade as the chief guest and took salute at the impressive march past.

The naval chief said Bangladesh Navy emerged as an important force over the years by protecting the geographical location of the country, checking piracy and safeguarding resources in the vast sea region.

"I, on this august moment, urge you all to be honest, discharge duties with sincerity and remain vigilant to protect the country's sovereignty," he told the newly commissioned officers.

He also called on them to build a corruption-free society, giving priority to national interest than that of individual one.

Midshipman Kazi Sakur Mahmud was adjudged the best all-round midshipman of the course and awarded the coveted 'Sword of Honour' and also the CNS Gold Medal and Osmani Gold Medal for his outstanding performance in professional and academic subjects respectively.

Currently 16 foreign cadets -- 12 from Palestine and two each from Qatar and the Maldives -- are now being trained at the academy, which came into being in 1976. Some of them also took part in yesterday's parade.

The academy also earned fame outside the country by training cadets from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Nigeria.

Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of Naval Headquarters Commodore Commanding Chittagong M Nasir, Commandant BNA Captain M Mozammel Haque, diplomats, high civil and military officials, parents and guardians of the midshipmen and cadets were present on the occasion.

## Tk 326cr SCC budget announced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Tk 325.85 crore budget of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) for 2008-09 fiscal was announced yesterday.

Announcing the budget at a press conference, acting mayor Azam Khan said there has been no increase in taxes.

The budget envisages a revenue income of Tk 54.65 crore which includes Tk 32 crore as holding tax, Tk 4.5 crore as property transfer tax, Tk 2.5 crore as fees for building construction permission, Tk 4 crore as fees for businesses permission, Tk 3.2 crore as water supply tax and Tk 7 crore as Salami for allotment of SCC market shops.

The SCC will spend Tk 18.91 crore as revenue expenditure.

## Tk 85.50cr Pabna municipality budget announced

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The annual budget of Pabna municipality for 2008-09 fiscal has been announced.

Mayor Kamrul Hassan Mintu announced 85 crore 50 lakh and 7 thousand taka budget at a press conference at his office on Monday.

The budget envisages a revenue income of Tk 6.31 crore and a revenue expenditure of Tk 5.34 crore leaving a surplus of Tk 97 lakh.

Of the total Tk 75.18 crore available in the development sector, Tk 70.46 crore will be spent to develop various infrastructures in the municipality area.

These include maintenance of roads and culverts, dredging of Ichhamati river, establishment of Shishu Park, and other town development projects.



Cultural Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury presents a crest to convocation speaker Prof Sirajul Islam Choudhury at the first convocation ceremony of Eastern University at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

## Sanjukta Sramik Fed demands new labour law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation (BSSF) yesterday called on the government to formulate a new democratic labour law.

They made the demand at a press conference at its office in the city.

In the conference, they placed a three-point demand including fixing the minimum wage of Tk 6700 and implementing it in all private and public industries.

They also demanded ration card for the workers and subsidized fertiliser, seeds, pesticides, electricity and fuel for the farmers.

They said that a memorandum would be submitted to the adviser for Ministry of Labour and Employment on June 30 and to the chief adviser on July 7 to press home their demand.

General Secretary of the federation Mokaddem Hossain read out a written paper. President of the federation Mokhesur Rahman, Vice President Harun Or Rashid Bhuiyan, Amjad Hossain Bhuiyan, Mohammad Zulfikar Azad and Joint General Secretary Anwar Hossain Shikder were present at the press conference.

## Over 200 graft cases against bigwigs challenged

FROM PAGE 1

wealth statement. After long hearing, the HC on November 21 last year declared the ACC notice illegal.

A number of other accused including another former premier Khaleda Zia had later filed similar writs.

The HC verdict made uncertain the fate of over 200 cases filed by ACC on the basis of its notices to graft suspects.

The ACC filed an appeal with the Supreme Court, which on March 13 cancelled the HC verdict after hearing arguments and submissions from counsels of both sides.

The same day, Attorney General Fida M Kamal, who moved for ACC in the apex court, said future of the graft cases was now out of fear.

Hearings of the rules issued by the HC in similar writs are not being held as the certified copy of the Appellate Division judgement has yet to be published.

According to lawyers, a few accused filed petitions with the HC on grounds that the trial courts have not completed the proceedings within the stipulated 60 days since taking the cases into cognisance. That is why the proceedings of the cases should be quashed, they claimed.

Hasina on May 11 filed a writ on the same ground with the HC for quashing the proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant corruption cases against her.

But the HC rejected her petition saying 60 days' period for completing the trial proceedings is not mandatory.

Sources say in most of the cases, which were filed after 9/11 scenario, the HC has stayed proceedings and also issued rules upon ACC to explain the filing of the cases against accused.

As per rules 10 of ACC 2004, the investigation report will have to be submitted to the court within 60 days after filing a case.

The rule says if any investigation officer cannot submit the report, he or she will have to explain it to ACC. If the IO cannot satisfy ACC, the anti-graft watchdog can take departmental action against them.

Detained Awami League leader Obaidul Kader filed three writs with the HC challenging three bribery cases filed by ACC. The HC stayed the proceedings of the cases. The SC recently vacated the HC orders and cleared the way for trial.

The NBR filed a case accusing the former state minister of evading over Tk 3.8 crore in income tax

from 1999 to 2007.

Upon a writ filed by former state minister for power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku on December 5 last year, the HC declared null and void the tax evasion case against him.

The SC on May 20 revoked the HC judgment that declared illegal the tax evasion case filed by NBR

against Tuku.

Endorsing an appeal filed by NBR, the Appellate Division delivered the verdict clearing the way for continuing trial proceedings of the case.

At least 20 tax evasion cases have been pending with the HC now, sources add.

## Diesel subsidy

FROM PAGE 1

northern districts, the largest irrigation-based region.

When contacted last week Agriculture Adviser CS Karim said the government would take legal action against those involved in the irregularities.

"We have brought 67 lakh farmers under the subsidy programme. Some incidents of irregularity may have occurred but the situation is not yet alarming. However, we will definitely take legal action against the persons involved," he told The Daily Star.

The government decided on the Tk 250 crore direct subsidies to marginal farmers to help them recover the part of the cost of diesel used for irrigation. Farmers who have less than 2.5 acres of land are eligible to receive a subsidy of Tk 545 for one acre of cultivated land.

The programme began at the Dighi Union Parishad in Manikganj on April 14 and is still going on in some districts.

But, since the inception of the programme there have been allegations that real poor farmers are being deprived of the subsidy with some getting less than they deserve while a few with more than 2.5 acres of land are getting the money with the connivance of local UP members and agriculture officers involved in the distribution process.

Two days after reports were published on irregularities in Bogra, local government officials went to the area and paid the farmers their share of subsidy themselves.

Maznu, however, still remains scot-free.

"The deputy assistant agriculture officer came and paid me Tk 724 three days later," Bablu Mia told The Daily Star.

Locals believe that Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) A Bakar Siddique was transferred recently for his involvement in the irregularity.

Farmer Nagen Chandra Sen of Senpara village of Parbatipur upazila in Dinajpur told The Daily Star on Tuesday that his name was on the list of subsidy recipients but he did not get the money.

Local UP Member Nazmul Haq in connivance with Deputy Assistant Agriculture Officer Hafizur Rahman also gobbled up the subsidy of Baks area adjacent to Mirapara village, a joint forces team found in enquiry.

The two were also involved in

giving subsidies to three persons although they do not have any cultivable land. They gave subsidy amounts to two farmers who have more than 2.5 acres of land and two others got less than they deserved.

The joint forces arrested both Nazmul and Hafizur and five others including a female UP member.

Meantime, in their memorandum submitted to the agriculture adviser, a few farmers from Kadambari union of Rajoir upazila in Madaripur said during distribution in their area on May 6-9 they were given Tk 700-800 although they deserved Tk 1,150 each.

The farmers also submitted a list and video interviews of the victims.

A local farmer said many of them were given Tk 50-500 less than what they were supposed to get. He cited the example of Pradip Halder who received Tk 1,030 although he deserved Tk 1,095.

"But these farmers had to countersign the amount of money mentioned in the distribution muster roll against their names to validate it," Joydeb Gain, a local UP member, told The Daily Star.

Having been informed of the matter, the Rajoir UNO went to the area with joint forces members, but this scared the complainants and they left the area, he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, however, Madaripur Deputy Commissioner Shashi Kumar Singh said the allegations are "groundless".

In Boropathalla village of Santhia upazila, Pabna, each of the eligible farmers were deprived of up to Tk 70 on May 17, said a local farmer.

He said he met Upazila Agriculture Officer Lokman Hossain and informed him about the irregularity. But the agriculture officer did not take the complaint seriously.

Talking to The Daily Star, Lokman denied the allegation.

Reports of similar irregularities also came from Tanore, Godagari and Bagmara upazilas in Rajshahi.

Agriculture Secretary Abdul Aziz admitted that there have been such irregularities in some areas. "But we had constant monitoring and we took prompt action where there were irregularities," he said.

An official of the agriculture ministry said, "The government must take steps to stop recurrence of such irregularities before starting next year's distribution."

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