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Gen Moeen for growing food on uncultivated land

UNB, Bagerhat

Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday said the country will be self-sufficient in food in the future if crops are grown on uncultivated land.

"Even an inch of land can't be left uncultivated. We will have to grow new crops so we can feed ourselves," he said while addressing a meeting at Sraifatala School ground in Rampal upazila after inaugurating Ashar Alo Dairy Farm and Biogas Energy Project.

He urged all to cultivate fish and mushroom under cooperative system, as the army will reach technology to them.

"We'll have to help one another. Send your children to school as education is the key to development," said the army chief.

He said a total of Tk 27.80 crore has so far been received for Army's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Media should report on candidate profile

Shujan discussion told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The media should provide information about contestants running in local government elections so the people can choose the best candidates, Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan) President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said yesterday.

Prof Muzaffer made the remarks at a views exchange meeting with journalists, organised by Shujan in cooperation with The Hunger Project-Bangladesh at the National Press Club.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, the Shujan secretary, during the meeting alleged that the Election Commission (EC) has not been in compliance with the law of providing information about the candidates.

"The local government elections that are going to be held shortly are very important. But, it is observed that candidates with criminal records, nominated by political parties, are going to contest the polls," Prof Muzaffer said.

Massive corruption was detected in the previously elected local government institutions, he said adding that this negative image of the local government bodies has to be eradicated by electing honest and competent candidates and journalists can play a positive role in this regard.

Despite a nationwide campaign of endorsing honest and competent people in politics, the effort might be jeopardised if the same old faces win the local elections, he went on to say that the local government elections are very significant in establishing a strong base for democracy.

"We don't want democracy only for a day. So, we need leaders who truly represent the people and are committed to the welfare of the people," said Prof Muzaffer, also a noted economist.

Voters will be more informed to pick the best candidates once the journalists through their investigative reports reveal information

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Ex-AL lawmaker Mohiuddin gets 10yrs for graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Mohammad Mohiuddin was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) and one year's simple imprisonment on two counts in a corruption case yesterday.

Judge M Ashraf Hossain of Special Court-5 at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex also fined him Tk 10 lakh, defaulting on which will earn him one year more in jail.

The Anti-Corruption Commission's Deputy Assistant Director Mir Afzal Hossain filed the case with Mohammadpur Police Station on January 2 this year, stating that Mohiuddin, also president of Munshiganj district unit Awami League, made a fortune of Tk 3.73 crore illegally and concealed information about his wealth worth Tk 1.25 crore from the commission.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Traders auction goods from a truck in front of Ahsan Manzil in Old Dhaka yesterday. The shops and wholesale markets around the magnificent palace discourage people to visit the historic site.

Technical glitches Best Air flight back to ZIA after take-off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An aircraft of Best Air, a private airline of Bangladesh, had to return to Zia International Airport (ZIA) half an hour after taking off as the pilot of the plane smelt something burning in the cockpit.

The Boeing-737 left ZIA at 11:00am for Bangkok with 118 people on board.

"The pilot of the plane communicated with the air traffic control at ZIA as he smelt something burning and sought permission to return to ZIA," Group Captain M Naim Hossain, member (Operation and Planning) of Civil Aviation

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Pond digging leads to rare statue

ERSHAD KAMOL

While re-digging his pond recently, Mongal Member at Sultanpur of Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila found a 10th century statue of Lord Vishnu five metres below the ground.

The night after the discovery, the so-called Magnet Party (smuggling group) of the locality offered Mongal Tk 10 lakh for the statue. He refused the offer. He feared about the safety of the artefact and contacted the local police station to handover custody of the statue.

Meanwhile, local journalist and cultural activists contacted Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (ASB) and urged them to help preserve the statue properly. Editor of Smatart Barta, a local daily of Brahmanbaria, Manjurul Alam said, "We thought it is our responsibility to protect our heritage from the clutches of smugglers."

Chairman of ASB Prof Shirajul Islam along with archaeological experts rushed there to have a look at the statue. The experts claimed the five feet high and 2.6 feet wide statue of Lord Vishnu, weighing 262

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



The statue of Lord Vishnu found in Brahmanbaria.

Relief scam case Proceedings against ex-MP Lobi stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for four months proceedings of a relief scam case against former BNP lawmaker and ex-president of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Ali Asghar Lobi.

After hearing a petition filed by Lobi, the HC bench comprising Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad also issued a rule upon the government to explain within four weeks why the proceedings of the case against the petitioner should not be quashed.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

High food prices to up malnutrition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Price hike of food items will have an adverse impact on public health raising the number of the country's malnourished people above three crore.

"In terms of nutrition, it (price spiral of food items) will have a bad impact on people's health, especially those in the low-income bracket," Food and Family Welfare Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali said at a press conference on World Population Day 2008 at the health ministry conference room.

The World Population Day 2008 will be observed today with the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Edible oil prices still higher than fixed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even though the importers and wholesalers on Wednesday fixed the wholesale price of edible oil, traders refused to sell at the fixed prices saying they will incur loss.

The price of soya bean oil was fixed at Tk 112 and palm oil at Tk 100 per litre during a meeting of government officials with importers and wholesalers in Chittagong.

At the wholesale markets of the capital yesterday, soya bean oil was selling at Tk 118 per litre while palm oil at Tk 104.

Wholesalers said they reduced the prices by Tk 0.50 per litre of edible oil.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

31 rebels killed in Lanka fighting

AP, Colombo

Fierce trench warfare and a series of ambushes in northern Sri Lanka killed 31 rebels and three soldiers, the military said yesterday.

The battles part of an escalation in the fighting between the Tamil Tiger rebels and government troops in recent months erupted in the Vavuniya, Mannar and Welioya areas throughout the day Wednesday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

US warns Iran over threat to Israel

Defiant Tehran fires more missiles

AP, AFP, Tbilisi

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Iran yesterday that the United States will not back down in the face of Iranian threats against Israel.

Iranian officials have strongly suggested the country's missile test on Wednesday was itself a warning to Israel not to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. Israel has left that option open.

"We are sending a message to Iran that we will defend American interests and the interests of our allies," Rice said at the close of a three-day Eastern European trip.

Rice noted US efforts to increase its own security presence in the Persian Gulf and the defence capabilities of US allies there.

"We take very very strongly our obligations to help our allies defend themselves and no one should be confused about that," she said.

Rice tied the latest Iranian missile test and rhetoric to US plans for a future missile shield, which would theoretically protect Eastern Europe from missiles launched from Iran.

The system would place radar interceptors in the Czech Republic, a former Soviet satellite, and missiles in Poland. That has drawn protests from Russia, who says that's uncomfortably close.

Such a missile defence system "will make it more difficult for Iran to threaten and ... say terrible things, because their missiles won't work," Rice said.

Meanwhile, Iran test-fired more weapons yesterday as it continued war games in defiance of global concern over its launch of a broadside of missiles in the midst of efforts to end the nuclear crisis.

State television said the weapons fired in the Gulf by the naval section of the elite Revolutionary Guards included shore-to-sea, surface-to-surface and sea-to-air missiles.

It said the war games also included the firing of the Hoot (Whale) torpedo that Iran unveiled in April 2006 which it described then as a super-fast weapon capable of hitting enemy submarines.

Iran on Wednesday test-fired its Shahab-3 longer range missile, whose range includes Israel and US

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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