

NATURAL CALAMITIES, PRICE HIKE

Poverty level increased to 48pc in 2007: Survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poverty situation in the country has deteriorated due to natural calamities and price hike of essentials while improvement in primary education is remarkable to reach millennium development goal (MDG).

This was informed at a roundtable on 'Advancement of MDG, its evaluation and analysis' organised by Campaign for Good Governance at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

According to BBS (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) the income poverty was decreased to 48.9 percent in 2000, which was the base year of MDG from 58.8 percent in 1991-92.

According to this observation, the poverty level was reduced more in urban areas than in rural areas.

The poverty level increased to 48 percent in 2007 due to natural calamities and price hike.

During a period from 1991 to 2005, the number of poverty-stricken people increased to 44 lakh from 5.16 lakh, said another survey of BBS.

However, Bangladesh has

achieved remarkable success in primary education which is now 87 percent and by 2015 it is expected to reach 100 percent.

At present, the ratio of boys and girls students enrollment is 55:45. Around 40 lakh children in rural areas and 30 lakh children at urban slum areas are beyond the education accessibility.

To achieve hundred percent success, extra 1.7 billion dollar will be needed but the government does not have proper planning in this order, said Campaign Project Coordinator Lawrence Besra while presenting the analysis paper.

Campaign Executive Director Ahmed Swapan Mahmud chaired and moderated the roundtable.

He raised a question whether the MDG is the target of our development or it is an imposed prescription of the international monetary organisations.

"According to their prescription we have cancelled our five-year development plan and have prepared the poverty reduction strategy paper according to their prescription, but poverty has increased to 48 percent from 40 percent in the last five years," he

added.

Former state minister Abdul Mannan laid emphasis on land reform for poverty eradication.

"Land should be given to farmers who have ploughs and the water bodies should be distributed among the fishermen who have fishing net for poverty eradication," he said.

He also urged the government to provide subsidy to agriculture for the sake of the national interest rejecting the advice of the donors and other international organisations.

Speaking as chief guest Justice Golam Rabbani called for implementing articles 59 and 60 of the constitution to help eradicate hunger and poverty.

Politburo member of the Workers' Party Haider Akbar Khan Rano urged both Awami League and BNP to cancel all coal agreements signed during their regimes for the sake of national interest.

Former army chief and lawmaker Mahabubur Rahman, former state minister AKM Jahangir Hossain and Chief Executive Officer Pradip Kumar Roy were present.

Mohiuddin returns home today after treatment in Bangkok

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury is scheduled to return home today from Bangkok where he underwent treatment for ten days.

He will arrive at Shah Amanat Airport in Chittagong by a Thai Airways flight at around 1:30pm, the mayor's relatives said.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury, also the president of Chittagong city Awami League, cut short his stay in Bangkok as he intends to submit nomination paper to contest the December 18 parliamentary elections from more than one constituencies, party sources said.

Dr Md Selim, the mayor's son-in-law and CCC chief health officer, said the mayor underwent treatment for kidney problems, diabetes, and heart diseases.

He might have to go to Bangkok again for treatment, he added.

Mayor Mohiuddin will join an extended meeting of the city unit of AL at a community centre at 3:00pm today, sources said, adding that the AL leaders are now preparing the list of nomination seekers from different constituencies in Chittagong.

The meeting is likely to finalise the list, which will be sent to the Awami League Central Working Committee, they said.

BNCC capsule camp ends at JU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seven-day capsule camp of Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) ended on the Jahangirnagar University campus yesterday, says a press release.

Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Dr Mohammad Moniruzzaman as the 'chief guest' inspected a parade of the corps, took salutes and distributed certificates among the participants.

The VC said training plays an important role in developing skills of the students as well as any member of the society.

A total of 120 cadets from 16 education institutions took part in the camp which began on November 3.

Members of civil service, Rab, fire service department and traffic police department trained the cadets.

4-party demand a matter of govt to resolve

Says EC Sakhawat

UNB, Gazipur

Reaffirming that the polling will be held on December 18, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Sakhawat Hossain yesterday said the demand of four-party alliance is a matter of the government to resolve.

Talking to prospective candidates of the five seats in the district and local leaders of political parties he stressed on strict adherence to the election rules and the code of conduct.

Sakhawat cautioned that anyone indulging in 'showdown' during submission of nomination papers would be disqualified. Nomination of candidates of any party having no registration with the EC will not be accepted.

Reach undistorted teachings of Islam to people: Saudi envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Bangladesh Dr Abdullah bin Naser Al-Busairi yesterday urged the Bangladeshi scholars obtained degrees from different Saudi universities to work together to reach the undistorted teachings of Islam to the people.

"Saudi Arabia wants to project the true picture of Islam. So, we need to work together," he said while addressing a meeting of members of the Saudi Universities' Alumni Association at his residence in the city.

About 500 students from Bangladesh have so far obtained degrees from different universities in Saudi Arabia. Twenty-one PhD holders and some other graduates were present at the function.

Most of these graduates are now engaged in teaching in different educational institutions, including



Emeritus Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury inaugurates a cultural convention by releasing balloons at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. Sammilita Sangskritik Jote organised the event.

PHOTO: STAR

'Uphold cultural spirit to eliminate communal forces'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Prof Kabir Chowdhury at a cultural convention yesterday said cultural spirit should be upheld to eliminate the communal forces from the country.

"Cultural spirit was a great inspiration for us during the liberation war. So, to purge the communal forces from the country, the cultural activists should carry on with their movement for a secular Bangladesh where rights will be equal for all," he added.

Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of the convention, Prof Chowdhury also criticised the government for removing Baul statues from the roundabout near the Zia International Airport under the constant pressure of religious bigots.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote organised the programme at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city.

The cultural activists demanded cancellation of the rule of taking permission for holding any cultural programme from the police or the deputy commissioner of a concerned district.

Their demands include allocation of annual budget of at least Tk 10 lakh to every Shilpakala Academy and arrest of Fazlul Haque Amin on sedition charge for threatening to demolish all the sculptures that carries the spirit of the war.

General Secretary of the Jote Golam Kuddus said though the political parties can hold rallies on the streets, cultural activists have to seek permission from the administration.

"We do not accept such regulations," he said, adding that communal anti-liberation forces are hatching a conspiracy against the country to make it a Pakistan-like communal country which was not the spirit of the liberation war.

Emeritus Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury said, "The promise of the liberation war was a secular democratic country where every citizen will get the equal right irrespective of age, sex, stripes and colour and religion, but we could not achieve as the anti-liberation fundamentalist forces carried out a conspiracy against the country and the state itself sponsored them."

"Fundamentalism across the world is provoked by the capitalist forces for their own interests and Bangladesh falls victim to that, he said, adding that Bush declares crusade whereas Islamists declare Jihad to distract people from their own need of economic freedom."

Presided over by Jote President Nasiruddin Yusuf Bacchu, the function was also addressed by Chief Coordinator of Sector Commanders Forum Lt Gen (ret) Harun-ur Rashid, former president of Duta Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and noted artist Rafiqun Nabi.

Edible oil prices go up in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The prices of different types of non-branded edible oils shot up again here in the last three days.

Local traders blamed the stock shortages in the refining mills for the recent price hike.

Wholesale prices of all sorts of non-branded edible oils went up by Tk 200 to Tk 600 per maund at Khatunganj.

Price of super palm oil reached at Tk 3000 per maund, while it was sold at Tk 2400 to Tk 2500 on Wednesday. Soya bean price climbed up at Tk 3800 from Tk 3600, while palm oil went up at Tk 2400 against Tk 2200 on the same day.

Meanwhile, the prices were also increased at the department stores and other retail outlets.

Super palm was selling at Tk 80 to Tk 85 per kilogram yesterday at the retail outlets of different kitchen markets in Reajuddin Bazar and Karnaphuli Market. The price of the commodity was at Tk 68 per kg on Thursday.

Retailers at Karnaphuli Market were selling palm oil at Tk 68 to Tk 72 against Tk 60 two days ago. Retail price of non-branded soya bean also climbed up to Tk 103 to Tk 105.

Jahangir Alam, a retail trader of Karnaphuli Market, said the wholesalers were not giving their required quantity of oil.

A wholesale trader at Khatunganj said the stock crises of edible oils at the refining mills that started last week still prevail, while they were not getting oil from the mills against the delivery orders.

Gen Nasruddin leaves Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff of Sudan Armed Forces General Muhammad Abdul Qadir Nasruddin left Dhaka yesterday after a six-day visit to Bangladesh.

On behalf of the Army Chief, Quarter Master General Lt Gen M Jahangir Alam Chowdhury saw him off at Zia International Airport.

During his visit, General Nasruddin laid wreath at Shikha Anirban (Eternal Flame) in Dhaka Cantonment, said an ISPR press release.

He paid courtesy call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban, while the chiefs of three services, PSO of AFD at their respective offices.

Besides, he visited Bangladesh Ordnance Factory (BOF), Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT), National Defence College (NDC), Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST), Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCAC), Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA), Chittagong Naval Area, BAF Base Zahurul Haque and Rangamat.

General Nasruddin, accompanied by a six-member military delegation, arrived here on a six-day visit on November 3.

WATERLOGGING Call for long-term, short-term plans for S-W zone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meeting yesterday said long-term and short-term plans should be undertaken with the participation of the local people to address the problem of waterlogging in the southwestern zone of the country.

They also blamed the Water Development Board (WDB) as it could not take any effective measure to meet the problem.

They were speaking at a view exchange meeting on 'Local People's View in Eradicating Waterlogging in the Southwestern Zone' organised by Nagorik Shanghati (NS) at the National Press Club in the city.

Environmental and hydrologist Dr Ainun Nishat said a long-term plan is needed to solve the waterlogging problem in the southwestern region of the country as it can't be solved overnight. "But short-term measures could be taken with the participation of the local people for some temporary relief."

Engineer Enamul Haque said Farakka dam was one of the main reasons for the waterlogging while unplanned projects of the WDB aggravated the situation.

He spoke of three ways to solve the problem that include removal of abandoned sluice gates, demolition of narrow culverts and sand dams on the canals to ensure water flow, bringing sweet water from the upstream to the waterlogged areas and cultivation of sweet-water fish after digging ponds in the area.

Engineer Sarder Amin presented the keynote paper at the meeting.

NS President Dr ASM Atiqur Rahman, former lawmaker, Syed Didar Bakht and people of the area also spoke.

Tk 3 lakh property gutted in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Property worth around Tk 3 lakh were gutted in a fire at Pahartali in Chittagong on Friday.

Sources said the fire broke out at a garage near City Gate at Pahartali at around 2:40pm. The fire originated from an electric short circuit.

Eight fire fighting units rushed to the spot and managed to extinguish the blaze after one-hour effort.

Two garages and an oil shop were gutted in the fire. The loss in the fire was estimated at Tk 3 lakh, fire service sources said.

\$109m IDA credit for cyclone-hit areas

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank on Thursday approved 109 million US dollar credit to Bangladesh in support of government's efforts to repair infrastructure and restore the livelihoods for thousands of families affected by last year's cyclone Sidr.

The credit from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessional arm, has 40 years to maturity with a 10-year grace period; it carries a service charge of 0.75 percent, said a press release yesterday.

The credit, through the Emergency 2007 Cyclone Recovery and Restoration Project, will finance reconstruction and improvement of some 300 multipurpose shelters and rehabilitation of 100 km of coastal embankments using cyclone-resistant building techniques.

It will also support activities in the agriculture sector that will help

farmers prepare for the next growing season and strengthen their ability to cope with future disasters.

The project will also strengthen the government's medium- and long-term disaster risk mitigation and reduction capacity, including support to the Disaster Management Bureau, the release said.

It will also finance preparation of future projects for riverbank improvement, coastal embankment strengthening programmes, disaster shelters, and up-gradation of rural road network.

This project builds synergies with the livelihood operation under the Bank's Social Investment Program Project as well as other ongoing agriculture support programs funded by the Bank, United Nations and other bi-lateral donors.

With this project, the Bank's support to Bangladesh's cyclone response totals US\$259 million.



The candidates of 27th BCS examinations, who came out successful as per 1st phase result of the exams, continue hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 2)

PHOTO: STAR

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