

# Total enrolment of children in primary edn by 2011

Says education minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid at a discussion yesterday said half of the country's population are illiterate after six decades of the language movement and four decades of independence.

"It is lamentable that half of the population are still illiterate even after 57 years the country fought a glorious language movement," he

## 10 TRUCKS ARMS CASE Hearing today

CU CORRESPONDENT

Investigation Officer (IO) of the much-talked-about '10 truck-loaded Arms Case' in the port city yesterday sought a four-day remand each of the two prime accused.

Following the prayer, Judge of Chittagong Metropolitan Judicial Magistrate Osman Gani fixed today for the remand hearing.

IO Mohammad Moniruzzaman, also an ASP of CID, made the prayer for remand against accused Hafizur Rahman and Din Mohammad in the smuggling case.

Earlier, the five-day remand granted against the accused in the arms case ended on Monday.

Two cases were filed with the Karnaphuli Police Station after the arms and ammunition were seized during offloading from two boats at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd Jetty on the other bank of the river Karnaphuli on April 2, 2004.

Sources said out of the 43 accused in both the cases, only Hafiz and Din were behind the bars, while 33 were on bail and eight were absconding.

added. Speaking as the chief guest, Nahid said the government aims at enrolling all the children in the primary education by 2011 and bring the present dropout rate of 50 percent down to zero before completion of class five.

He said this at the discussion on 'International Mother Language Day 2009' organised by Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco and Language Lovers of the World (Bangladesh chapter) in collaboration with the Unesco Dhaka office at NAEM auditorium in the city.

The minister further said that the government resumed the construction of International Mother Language Institute a month ago and it is expected to be functional before next February 21.

Noted litterateur Selina Hossain, president of Language Lovers of the World (Bangladesh chapter), said

existence and evolution of Bangla as a language would be impossible without its adequate and appropriate practice.

"It is just regrettable that we have failed to pay due homage to Bangla as a mother tongue," she said, adding: "A nation that fails to respect its mother language accordingly turns rootless and refugee."

She strongly condemned the distorted use of Bangla in English accent in several FM radio stations and television channels and elsewhere, saying that this kind of attitude can turn Bangla into an extinct language.

She emphasised the importance of preserving around 50 indigenous languages in the country alongside Bangla.

BNCU Secretary Dr Md Mahmudul Hasan said 2500 languages out of 6000 in the world would be extinct in the next 50 years.

Unesco declared Shaheed

Day of February 21 as International Mother Language Day in 1999 in recognition to the supreme sacrifices of the valiant sons of the soil. Since then, the day has been observing across the world every year.

Unesco Dhaka office In-charge Kiichi Oyasu and NAEM Director General Prof Baitun Nahar also spoke at the programme with Additional Secretary to Education Ministry Md Mojmammel Haq Khan in the chair.

## Danish princess visits UCEP school

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Danish Princess Alexandra zu Sayn-Wittgenstein visited the Underprivileged Children Educational Programme (UCEP) school at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

UCEP has been providing technical education for working and underprivileged children to turn them into skilled workforce.

The princess visited several classrooms and talked with students and teachers.

Moni Akter, a student, told her that she aspires to become an engineer in the future. The 14-year-old girl, who works as a sewing helper, has been studying electronics at the school.

Brig Gen (ret) Aftab Uddin Ahmad made a Power Point presentation about the UCEP activities.

He said UCEP has been working for the welfare of underprivileged working children in urban areas since 1972.

The main objective of UCEP is to improve the socio-economic status of the urban poor and support industrial growth by generating skilled manpower.

About the achievement of UCEP, Aftab Uddin said over 1.5 lakh students had been enrolled in the schools and 32,164 of them completed all technical training courses so far.

Over 30,000 students have got suitable jobs and 115 of them went abroad for jobs.

Danish Ambassador Einar H Jensen and Danish counselor Jacob Dal Winter accompanied Princess Alexandra zu Sayn during her visit.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina takes salute from Bangladesh Rifles members during a parade at its headquarters in the city yesterday on the occasion of the BDR Week-2009. (Story on Page 16)

## INT'L CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE ENDS Call to consider migration risk in making strategy

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday called upon the international community to design climate change adaptation strategy considering the possibility of huge migration from the areas of Bangladesh, vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change.

"Twenty percent of the country's total landmass is apprehended to be drowned under the sea water," he told the concluding session of the weeklong 3rd International Conference on Climate Change at Hotel Sheraton.

"Migration is a very important consideration for the international community," Muhith said.

Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies

(BCAS), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and The RING (Regional and International Networking Group), jointly organised the conference titled "Community Based Adaptation (CBA) to Climate Change".

Planning Minister AK Khandaker also addressed the session, moderated by BCAS Executive Director Dr Atiq Rahman.

Around 200 delegates, including 150 from 50 countries, representing the United Nations, donor organisations, international universities, international research centres, NGOs and media took part in the deliberations on the critical issue.

As part of the conference, the delegates divided into six groups visited six flood and drought-prone zones of Bangladesh to pick

case studies of the natural calamities. The finance minister said while formulating the climate change adaptation strategy the international community must consider that the industrial revolution by the rich nations has created the environmental crisis.

Turning to domestic preparations, he said the country has developed a strategy to face the challenges of the climate change impact. The strategy, now under review, includes creation of two funds to be in place very soon.

"There is an expert group which will be continuously working on environment," he said, adding that the expert group would work alongside the international community, as Bangladesh is quite active in the international field.



Danish Princess Alexandra Zu Sayn Wittgenstein and Danish Ambassador Einar H Jensen talk to children at Underprivileged Children's Educational Programme (UCEP) school at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

## SURVEY ON CHILD BEGGARS

# 'Children drugged to sleep'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sometimes at the traffic signals, some women are seen begging with sleeping children in their laps. But they do not wake to the blaring horns of passing cars and buses or even to rain or scorching heat.

Now it is known that these children are drugged to make them sleep for long, which is detrimental to their physical and mental growth, said speakers at a press conference yesterday.

Wahida Banu, chairperson of the Forum and convener of Projonmo Bachao, presented the keynote paper at the press conference organised by Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum and Projonmo Bachao at the National Press Club.

The results of a survey on child beggars were presented at the programme. The survey was conducted at six points of the city in October last year.

These points are Farmgate and its adjacent areas, High Court and its adjacent areas, Bijoy Sarani and its adjacent areas, Mouchak-Malibagh

and its adjacent areas, Gulshan and its adjacent areas and Nilkhet and its adjacent areas.

A total of 751 children, including 462 boys and 289 girls, were interviewed during the survey.

"Through the interviews, we tried to know what is the best way to help them," said Altaf Hossain Selim, programme coordinator, Aparajeyo Bangladesh.

Fifty percent of the children came from Barisal, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Bhola, Comilla and Jamalpur and the other are from other parts of the country.

Most of them put up in slums, footpaths, launch terminal, rail stations, bus stations or verandas of dwelling places at night. Fifty percent of the children stay with their parents and the others beg alone.

Local hoodlums often take away their money.

Asked what they would do if begging is banned, 35 percent of children prefer to stay at shelter home, 33 percent at drop-in centres, 13 percent at

their own home, 6 percent prefer to do their own business and 2 percent want to study with the government assistance.

Asked what they can do to help child beggars if begging is banned for them, 32 percent adult beggars said they would send their children to school, 27 percent would stop children begging, 19 percent would employ their children in small enterprises, 17 percent would send their children to food-for-education programme, 15 percent would assist the government in this job, 9 percent would do nothing and 3 percent would send their children to vocational training centres.

Md Kofluddin, director of the Forum; Mahbulul Haque, secretary general, Habitat Council Bangladesh; Kazi Enayet Hossain, executive member of the Forum; Shamim F Karim, Department of Psychology, Dhaka University; and Maolana Abul Kalam Azad, chairperson, Mosque Council Dhaka, spoke at the seminar.

## Saudi assistance to continue Envoy tells food minister

UNB, Dhaka

Saudi Ambassador in Dhaka Dr Abdullah bin Naser Al-Busairi, yesterday said, his country would continue their assistance in different development programmes of Bangladesh.

The Saudi envoy made the assurance when he made a courtesy call on Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr M Abdur Razzak at his secretariat office.

During the meeting, Dr Razzak hoped that the friendly relations between the two brotherly countries would be further strength-

ened and the assistance of Saudi government in different development programmes would continue.

The minister thanked the Saudi government for providing 100 million US dollar in relief assistance for the people of Bangladesh after Cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh's coastal areas.

In response, the envoy said Saudi Arabia, as a brotherly Muslim country, had always been with Bangladesh and will also remain in the future too in any crisis and natural disaster.

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## Political parties won't waste time on minor problems

Hope German MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties in Bangladesh will not waste their energy fighting each other on minor problems, rather they will work together for development of the country, leader of the German parliamentary delegation Sebastian Edathy expressed this optimism yesterday.

"The country's social mobility will be upward if the political parties overcome their differences and work together considering each other potential partners, not enemies," Edathy told a news briefing at Zia International Airport before leaving Dhaka capping a five-day visit to Bangladesh.

He also said Bangladesh can be a role model where Islam and democracy go together. "Bangladesh is a country where majority of the people are of Muslim faith. It can be one of the countries where we can say Islam and democracy go together very well, and we need this as a signal for the global situation that we have."

Edathy, who is chairman of the German-South Asian Parliamentary Friendship Group, led a five-member delegation of lawmakers from both ruling and opposition parties.

Replying to a question, he said he will not comment on local politics, but expressed the hope that the political parties will soon concentrate on tackling the real problems. "I think this country has much more bigger problems than the smaller ones to debate."

Edathy said Germany might extend cooperation in Bangladesh's energy sector, particularly in renewable energy, and in exploring coal resources.

During their five-day stay, the delegation members met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition Khaelida Zia, Speaker Abdul Hamid and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni.

Meanwhile, an all-party parliamentary delegation from Bangladesh is likely to visit Germany in May or June on invitation from the German parliamentary team.

Responding to queries, the German parliamentarian said the issue of terrorism came up at his meetings with the prime minister and the opposition leader, and both agreed that terrorism is a challenge for the democratic system.

If requested, the German government can support training of Bangladeshi law enforcers by German professional trainers, and exchange knowledge about combating terrorism the way it does with the governments of India and Pakistan, Edathysaid.

Asked about human rights situation in Bangladesh, he said ensuring human rights is a sign of the quality of democracy, and hoped the new government would ensure it. He also suggested providing the human rights commission with all facilities for its proper functioning.

German Ambassador to Bangladesh Frank Meyke and other senior officials of the embassy were present at the press briefing.

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