

# Govt firm to ensure equal rights of children

## Minister tells Shishu Utsab

BSS, Chittagong

Industries Minister Dilip Barua yesterday said the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is pledge-bound to ensure equal rights and adequate facilities for children from all strata in the country.

The minister said this while speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural function of a two-day 'Shishu Utsab' (children's festival) on the DC Hill Park premises in the city.

Shishu Utsab, a leading organisation for children, in collaboration with

Basudha Builders, a real estate developer, organised the festival with its Chairman Dr Gazi Saleh Uddin, who is also the dean of Social Science Faculty of Chittagong University, in the chair.

Noted rhymester Lutfar Rahman Riton and Senior Programme Manager of Channel-i Amrul Islam spoke at the function as the special guests. Journalists Syed Omar Farque and Abu Taher Mohammed also spoke.

Dilip said many children across the country are deprived of their basic rights, including right to schooling,

due to abject poverty.

"It is our collective responsibility to build them as worthy citizens by providing them with adequate facilities," the minister said, calling on all to project the real and glorious history of our independence to the future generation.

"We could get dynamic leadership from them in future to turn Bangladesh into a 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamt by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman if we can ensure a conducive atmosphere for their grooming," he added.

Deputy Commissioner of

Chittagong Mohammad Ashraf Shamim attended the second session of the festival as the chief guest and distributed prizes among meritorious students.

Organisers said around 2,000 students from different schools of the port city as well as district took part in the private primary scholarship examinations under the banner of the organisation.

Of them, 600 students received prizes on the first day of the programme, while another 600 students will get prize on the second day today.



Parbatya Chattagram Nari Network and Jabarang Kalyan Samity jointly take out a cycle procession in Khagrachhari yesterday to mark the International Women's Day with a call for nominating at least one woman representative from Chittagong Hill Tracts for the reserved seats in parliament.



Jatiya Matsyajibi Samity forms a human chain at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to those involved in the mutiny at the BDR headquarters.

## Housewife killed in clash

UNB, Laxmipur

A clash between two groups of relatives over a piece of disputed land claimed the life of a young housewife at Uttarpur village in Ramganj upazila in Laxmipur yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Saleha Begum, 30, wife of Yusuf of the village.

Local people said there had a long-standing dispute between Yusuf and his relative Abul Kashem over the ownership of their homestead.

In the fateful morning, family members of both groups locked into an altercation over the land issue.

At one stage, they attacked each other, killing Saleha on the spot.

Police picked up four people - Abul Kashem, Hares Mia, Parul Begum and Taslima Begum - from the scene suspecting their involvement in the killing.

## Boy dies as tree falls on him

BSS, Barisal

A minor boy was killed when a tree fell on him at Chakhar village under Banaripara upazila in Barisal yesterday.

The dead was identified as Sakib, 3, son of Abdul Jalil of Chakhar village.

Family sources said, the accident took place when a date tree, which was being uprooted by the labourers, fell on Sakib as he was playing nearby.

## Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the second death anniversary of Capt (retd) Alhaj Abdul Alim Bhuiyan.

says a press release. On the occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at his village home at Muradnagar upazila in Comilla.

## BFWE cancels programme

The reception ceremony organised by Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs (BFWE) for women ministers and lawmakers, scheduled for today, has been cancelled.

# Starting physical exercise after 50 beneficial: Study

AFP, Stockholm

Taking up regular physical exercise after the age of 50 is as beneficial for men as quitting smoking, a Swedish study published yesterday on the website of the British Medical Journal (BMJ) showed.

Men who began exercising after the age of 50 had the same life expectancy after 10 years as men who had always exercised, the researchers

from Uppsala University said.

The study surveyed 2,205 men at age 50 in 1970 and divided into four groups (sedentary or low, medium or high physical activity levels). They were followed up at ages 60, 70, 77 and 82.

It showed that starting to exercise after the age of 50 was as beneficial as giving up smoking, but it had to be a regular regimen for five to 10 years for the positive effects to be observed.

"Increased physical activity in middle age is eventually followed by a reduction in mortality to the same level as seen among men with constantly high physical activity," the study said.

"This reduction is comparable with that associated with smoking cessation," it added.

The study noted that around half of middle aged men in Western countries do not exercise regularly.

## Bulgarian air most polluted in Europe

AFP, Sofia

The air in Bulgaria is the most polluted in the whole of the European Union, the ministry of environment and water found in a new report published yesterday.

With dust levels persistently around 55 microgrammes per cubic metre -- compared with an average of 30mg in the rest of Europe and the maximum norm of 40 mg -- Bulgarian air ranks as the most polluted in the EU, the report said.

It blamed the high level of pollution on the large number of old vehicles in Bulgaria without catalytic converters and the lack of restrictions imposed on second-hand cars imported from western Europe.



## Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in next 24 hours until 6:00pm today.

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind may occur at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the region of Comilla, Met office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:04pm today and rises at 6:14am tomorrow.

Highest temperature 35.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 16.9 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.2	23.8	82	33
Chittagong	29.8	22.8	79	85
Rajshahi	34.0	16.9	62	35
Khulna	34.2	22.7	81	55
Barisal	34.2	23.6	83	76
Sylhet	31.5	20.8	91	48
Cox's Bazar	31.6	23.0	72	79



Comrade Khalequzzaman speaks at the annual get-together of the Dhaka University unit of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front on the university campus yesterday.

# IMF calls for new stimulus measures to fight slump

AFP, Washington

The International Monetary Fund yesterday called on governments to consider taking new stimulus measures through 2010 as the current global economic downturn continues.

"Given the anticipated weakness in the global economy over the next two years, consideration should be given to providing fiscal stimulus that goes beyond the measures already announced," the IMF said in a report.

"Given the likelihood that the economic weakness will continue into 2010, there should be less concern that the expenditures will only be put into place once the economy has begun to recover," the 185-nation institution said.

The IMF suggested that governments' first consider-

ation should be on the state of their economy and their growth prospects.

"Fiscal authorities have acted globally, but so far the stimulus packages outside the United States have largely been front-loaded by concentrating spending in 2009, with much less to come in 2010," the IMF said in the report.

"In these regions, if there is enough fiscal space to do so without endangering the sustainability of government debt, consideration should probably be given to additional fiscal stimulus packages," it said.

The IMF which has urged stimulus measures in recent months as the crisis deepens, recalled that not all countries have the same scope for taking such measures.

"Countries with lower debt, and especially countries that are paying a low interest rate on

their debt, have relatively more room to expand their fiscal policy," Carlo Cottarelli, the director of IMF fiscal affairs department, said at a news conference.

The report was published as part of preparations for the April 2 summit of the Group of 20 developed and developing countries in London.

"The summit is a follow-up to the emergency G20 summit in November in Washington aimed at battling the accelerating global financial crisis and deepening economic downturn."

The IMF in January published economic forecasts revised sharply lower that showed the global economy would grow at a mere 0.5 percent annual pace this year and 3.0 percent in 2010.

The hard-hit advanced economies were forecast to

contract 1.7 percent this year before a recovery to a 3.0 percent growth rate.

But IMF managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn warned Tuesday that the numbers would be revised lower again in April.

According to the report by the Washington-based institution, "It is essential in our view that public sector authorities play their appropriate role in preventing a collapse of confidence in the private sector that might lead to a vicious downward spiral."

The IMF added that it was "particularly important for fiscal policy to take on an increased share of the burden during the period in which the financial sector is recovering and is not yet able or willing to extend credit to households and businesses to the extent that it normally does."



Leaders of Udichi Shilpi Gosthi place a wreath at a memorial in front of Teacher-Student Centre on the Dhaka University campus yesterday to pay tribute to those killed in a bomb blast at a cultural function of the Shilpi Gosthi in 1999.

# 'Cellphones may spread superbugs in hospitals'

AFP, Paris

Cell phones belonging to hospital staff were found to be tainted with bacteria -- including the drug-resistant MRSA superbug -- and may be a source of hospital-acquired infections, according to study released yesterday.

Researchers from the Ondokuz Mayıs University in Turkey led by Fatma Ulger tested the phones and dominant hands of 200 doctors and nurses working in hospital operating rooms and intensive care units.

Ninety-five percent of the mobile phones were contaminated with at least one type of bacteria, with the potential to cause illness ranging from minor skin irritations to deadly disease.

Nearly 35 percent carried two types of bacteria, and more than 11 percent carried three or more different species of bugs, the study found.

Most worrying, one in eight of the handsets showed methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), a virulent strain that has emerged as a major health threat in hospitals around the world.

Only 10 percent of staff regularly cleaned their phones, even if most followed hygiene guidelines for hand washing, the study noted.

"These mobile phones could act as a reservoir of infection which may facilitate patient-to-patient transmission of bacteria in a hospital setting," the authors warned.

Several strains of drug-resistant bacteria are generally harmless to healthy people but can become lethal to hospital patients in weakened conditions. The bacteria slip into open wounds and through catheters or ventilator tubes, typically causing pneumonia or bloodstream infections.

The researchers noted that

more studies were needed to confirm their findings, which were based on a relatively small sampling.

But they called for common sense measures to help reduce the risk of contamination, especially frequent cleaning of phones with alcohol-based disinfectants or the use of antimicrobial materials.

Banning phone use in hospital settings is probably not practical, they concluded, because the devices are often used for work in emergencies.

The study was published in BioMed Central's Annals of Clinical Microbiology and Antimicrobials.

In the United States, where national statistics are available, MRSA is the cause of more than 60 percent of all hospital infections. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MRSA in 2005 infected 94,000 people and killed 19,000 in the United States.

## MUMBAI MAYHEM Interpol chief holds talks with Pak official

AFP, Islamabad

The head of global police agency Interpol met Pakistan's interior ministry chief on Friday as part of an investigation into the Mumbai attacks, which India has blamed on Pakistani extremists.

Ronald Noble held talks with Rehman Malik, who has been leading Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts, about the Mumbai investigation, the interior ministry said in a statement.

"The information which the government of Pakistan shared with the government of India through diplomatic channels was shared with the secretary general of Interpol," it said. Nobel "appreciated Pakistan's sincere efforts to investigate this case and the work done by investigators," the statement said.

New Delhi blamed the attacks, which killed 165 people last November, on the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the siege soured a five-year peace process between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan.

Indian police have charged the man accused of being the lone surviving gunman with murder and "waging war against India".

Pakistan's Mohammed Ajmal Amir Iman -- also known as Kasab -- was the only alleged member of the 10-man Islamist commando-style unit captured alive during the November 26-29 siege.

Both LeT and Pakistan have denied any involvement in the attacks but the government in Islamabad admitted last month for the first time that the strikes were partly planned on its soil.