



Children release balloons to inaugurate the 4th Children Theatre Festival 2009 and Children Information Fair at Rabindra Sarobar in the city yesterday to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children Theatre Festival begins in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 4th consecutive Children Theatre Festival 2009 and Children Information Fair began in the city yesterday to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As many as 1,000 children attended the inaugural function of the three-day festival organised by Ichchey Media Group and Child Protection Movement, a children's platform, in association with Save the Children Sweden-Denmark (SCSD) at Rabindra Sarobar.

The theme of the festival this year is 'Stop violence against children' and 'History and culture of Bangladesh', while its slogan is 'Desh ke jani, desh ke gori, shishu nirjaton bondho kori' (We know our country, we work for it and we work against violence against children).

A total of seven plays were staged by the children from different organisations having various socio-economic backgrounds on the first day of the event.

The festival was inaugurated by SCSD Country representative Niels Benzen Pedersen, Save the Children UK Country Director Suman Sen Gupta, SCSD Deputy Country Representative Obaidur Rahman, Programme Manager Else Ostergaard, ADP Manager of World Vision Theoteneous Parimal Rozario and ADP Manager of Brac Rashida Rahman along with children representatives of different organisations.

Later, lawmaker barrister Fazle Nur Tapas had a lively dialogue with the children.

On the issues of visiting museums and exhibitions of street children which are still restricted in the country, he promised to draw attention of the concerned authorities in this connection.

CHITTAGONG WASA

Fate of 'Karnaphuli' project hangs in balance

UNB, Dhaka

The fate of Chittagong Wasa's Tk 962.9 crore 'Karnaphuli Water Supply Project' hangs in the balance due to complication over acquisition of 31 acres of land at Pomara in Rangunia upazila in Chittagong.

Chittagong Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWASA) undertook the

gigantic project with assistance from development partner Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), presently known as JICA, in 2006 amid severe water crisis in the port city of some 40 lakh people.

Of the total project cost, JBIC is supposed to provide Tk 6935.74 million while the government Tk 2693.26 million, as the project aims to

produce 13.60 crore litres of water a day.

"But our development partner, JBIC, appears to shy away from the important project, as we cannot settle the dispute over land acquisition for the plant in Rangunia," said a senior CWASA official wishing anonymity.

Asked to explain the problem over the land acquisition, he said the problem has arisen as the landowners, numbering only 5 to 6, declined to sell their lands on the plea that those are highly fertile for growing crops thrice a year. The owners also unofficially said the compensation for the lands should be much higher than that of the government prevailing rate.

The Ecneec approved the project on May 10, 2006 and it is scheduled to be completed by June 2010.

CWASA installations now produce 20 crore litres of water a day against the demand for over 50 crore litres, the official said adding that the coverage ratio would reach around 60 percent on completion of this project.

This project, he said, is very important as the government in its National Water Management Plan targets to achieve access to safe drinking water for everybody by 2010.

Current issues like salinity in the Halda River and presence of arsenic in shallow wells in most parts of Chittagong City has given more importance to the proposed Karnaphuli Water Supply Project, the CWASA official said.

He said enhancement of water supply capacity in Chittagong City is the government's priority, as water supply now is a mere one-third of potential demand and service coverage rate limited at 40 percent in the city.

Make foreign investment policy time befitting: Inu

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haq Inu yesterday said the government should re-evaluate the foreign investment policy so that country's interest is not hampered.

He said it should be clear how the foreign investors would run their business in Bangladesh, how much benefit they (foreign investors) could get as well as the country through making the foreign investment policy time befitting.

"We, at the same time, should make the policy modern so that foreign investors can feel interest to invest here," said Inu, also one of the allies of the Awami League (AL) led grand-alliance government.

He made the remarks while expressing solidarity with a group of garment workers who staged a token hunger strike at city's Mukhtangon, demanding reopening of Basic Apparel Factory and their arrears salaries.

The Basic Apparel Factory remained closed since February 2 where over 18,000 employees work.

Inu said the government

should keep eyes on garments factories so that the workers are not forced to come out to the streets to press home their demands.

He suggested a monitoring cell comprising of the representatives of government, workers and owners to keep the garments sector away from any conspiracy.

"The government should immediately take necessary steps to monitor the garment factories whether required facilities are being provided there," Inu said.

The JSD president said the government has already planned to bring garments workers under rationing to provide them rice, edible oil and essential commodities at a lower cost.

Earlier, the agitating workers of Basic Apparel urged the government to take measures to reopen the factory and allow them to go back to work.

General Secretary of Jatiya Samik League Roy Romesh Chandra, Coordinator of Samik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) Dr Wazedul Islam Khan, Bangladesh Jatiya Samik Jote President Shirin Akhter, workers leader Salahuddin Swapan and Sirajul Islam Rony also spoke.

'Bangladesh success in sanitation a model for other countries'

BSS, Istanbul

The achievement of Bangladesh in improving the sanitation coverage was appreciated at the 5th World Water Forum in Turkey yesterday as a number of donors, including Switzerland, referred the success to be followed by other parts in the world.

"Bangladesh can be projected as a successful example in a low income setting for the rest of the developing world," Thomas Zeller, focal point for water of Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), said at the editors' panel meeting in Istanbul.

He said the success in sanitation has been made possible in Bangladesh because mainly of its government's strong commitment which was backed by the sincere civil society and the media voices as well as donors' support.

"The magic was simple," Thomas said, adding that only a 10-dollar toilet has changed the whole scenario of the country where thousands die from diarrhoea and other water-borne disease every year.

Deputy Secretary of Local Government Division Shams Uddin Ahmed said the sanitation coverage has rose to 88 percent this year from merely as 33 percent in early this decade.

He also expressed hope that things would be improved further through more motivation and government support to ensure sanitation for all by 2010.

Chief of Unicef's Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme Clarissa

Brocklehurst at a Media21 panel discussion lauded the progress of Bangladesh in sanitation, but said 18 million of its population still practise open defecation.

She said now the challenge of Bangladesh is to bring the huge population to toilet, adding that the world has to understand the economic impact of sanitation in national and international economy.

Clarissa said economic progresses in Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia is highly backed by the development of sanitation and hygiene.

She said the national governments as well as the donors

should invest more money in attaining the millennium development goals (MDGs), a target that need more than \$10 billion to be invested each year.

The Unicef official said toilet and housing culture in South Asia has been to be a major barrier as people spend most of their budgets for building houses, but spend the least for good toilets. This culture needs to be changed.

On question on sustainability of Bangladesh's low-cost sanitary latrines, the SDC official said things must be changed with the changes of the economic and social status of Bangladesh.

He said it was very important at the beginning to bring people to toilets built within their ability and in future this infrastructure might be replaced by improved ones. It is really encouraging that the poor people have responded very positively in Bangladesh and changing their long practice to sanitary latrines both at rural and urban areas.

Thomas also said cheap solutions are being proved to be practical as the first step to bring people from bush to toilet. The second step, he said, will be the improved version of toilets in next 10 to 20 years.



Badiuzzaman, general manager and head of operations (Auto Division) of Rangs Limited, launches a car of the latest Mitsubishi Lancer Ex GT brand at the 4th Lucas Dhaka Motor Show at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

New GP tariff effective from tomorrow

METRO DESK

The fresh reduced tariff rates of Grameenphone (GP) to 49 paisa per minute during daytime will come into effect tomorrow.

The daytime tariff is offered from 12:00pm to 4:00pm. All GP subscribers can now enjoy this lowest tariff to call any GP subscriber.

The daytime tariff was initially offered as a promotion through February and March this year and now it has been converted into a permanent offer.

The tariff from a GP connection to any operator has also been reduced to Tk 1 per minute between 12:00am and 8:00am.

The special night-time offer for GP subscribers has also been extended by an hour from 12:00am-7:00am to 12:00am-8:00am.

The tariff for the night-time offer and on GP F&F (Friends and Family) numbers has also been set at 49 paisa per minute. F&F rates are applicable 24 hours a day.

With this adjustment in tariff rates, GP has consolidated its portfolio, ensuring an easier and balanced tariff structure and better service quality for its subscribers. It should be noted that tariff rates in Bangladesh are already one of the lowest in the world.

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Eminent litterateur Hasnat Abdul Hye inaugurates the Independence Day Book Fair and Chittagong Festival 2009 by releasing balloons in the port city's DC Hill area yesterday.

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