

One in every 4 households suffers from food insecurity

Reveals study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One in every four households is in food insecurity in the country that leads to two million children aged between six months and five years suffering from acute malnutrition, revealed a study yesterday.

The study found that out of those malnourished children, half a million are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, a highly vulnerable condition.

The survey, conducted by World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) and Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN) from November 2008 to January 2009, also revealed that real household income dropped by 12 percent between 2005

and 2008.

At the end of 2008, food expenditure represented 62 percent of the total household expenditure, 10 percentage points higher than the national average of 2005.

A total 58 percent of the households claimed that they had insufficient food in the last twelve months and to cope with higher food prices they were in debts and reduced health expenditure by 22 percent.

A total of 10,378 households were surveyed in six divisions and 4,175 children under five years were assessed for their health and nutrition status.

Barisal and Rajshahi divisions presented the highest acute malnutrition (16.1 percent) rates exceeding the WHO emergency threshold of 15 percent. Chronic malnutrition (stunting) was found highest in Sylhet division.

Rural areas presented higher rates of all three types of malnutrition -- wasting, stunting and underweight -- comparing to those of the urban areas.

To share the study findings, Unicef and WFP jointly organised a seminar at a city hotel where Unicef Representative Carel de Rooy termed the situation of child malnutrition in the country a 'silent emergency'.

"Not only malnutrition a direct cause of death among children, but it is also a significant underlying cause of child mortality," he said, adding that it affects the development of a child, increase the risk of women dying during pregnancy or childbirth and contributes to neonatal mortality.

While talking to newsmen, Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque, however, said as the prices of food grains have reduced by this

time, food security would be enhanced in the country within a year.

A special research would be conducted to find out why the nutrition status is so pitiable in some regions and why the awareness messages are not creating impacts on those areas, he said, adding that concurrently, the governmental monitoring system would be strengthened.

DGHS Director General Prof Shah Monir Hossain, IPHN Director Prof Fatima Parveen Chowdhury, Chief of Health and Nutrition of Unicef Birthe Locatelli-Rossi also spoke.

MJF hails govt for RTI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday hailed the government for passage of a bill on right to information.

"We think the government's sincerity towards establishing good governance and an accountable state has been reflected through enacting the Right to Information (RTI) Act," says a statement signed by MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam.

MJF also thanked the immediate past caretaker government for taking the initiative to formulate the law.

Government officials, teachers, journalists and civil society members put their valuable opinions at different stages during the preparation of the draft law, said the statement.

"We have got the law because of sincere efforts of all and positive attitude of the government," the statement said, adding that proper implementation is necessary for achieving the goal of the law.

The law will not only bring positive changes in the governing system but will also reduce corruption and resist misuse of assets," the statement added.

MJF hoped that the government would also soon form an independent and powerful Information Commission.



Speaker Md Abdul Hamid Advocate administers the oath to 36 women lawmakers from ruling Awami League for the reserved seats in the 9th parliament at the Sangsad Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Dy speaker fears militant attack on JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali yesterday said there is apprehension of militant attack on Sangsad Bhaban.

The deputy speaker, also chief of the high-powered committee on security, made the comment after a meeting of the committee at Sangsad Bhaban.

The committee chief, however, said he did not have any specific information regarding the militant attack.

He said he fears attacks as militants are launching attacks in different countries. He added the committee decided to initiate different measures to beef up security at the parliament complexes.

The deputy speaker said the parliament secretariat has already asked the UNDP to provide an under vehicle scanning system.

The meeting attended by members of the committee and senior officials of different law enforcement agencies reviewed the security arrangements for the parliament building.

It termed the filling station at the western side of the parliament building a security threat.

The committee will scrutinise how the land was allocated to the filling station. It constituted a six-member sub-committee led by Additional Secretary (IPA) Pranab Chakrabarti to examine how all the keys of offices inside the parliament building are kept.

New OCs in 22 DMP stations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 28 inspectors under Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and other departments in the city were transferred and given new postings yesterday.

The DMP authorities posted new officer-in-charge (OC) in its 22 police stations.

Mohammad Shahidul Haq was made the OC of Adabar Police Station, Kamrul Alam Mollah of Gulshan, Kamal Uddin of New Market, Shibul Noman of Ramna, Nazmul Islam of Uttar Khan, Salamuddin Khan of Kotwali, Nazim Uddin of Mirpur, Abdul Malek of Pallabi, Kazi Wazed Ali of Badda, Mahbubur Rahman of Tejgaon, Majibar

Rahman of Paltan, Mainul Abchhar of Demra, Zamir Uddin Ahmed of Dakhkhin Khan, Shahjahan Kabir of Mohamadpur, SM Badiuzzaman of Khilkhet, Zakir Hossain Mollah of Shah Ali, Delwar Ahmad of Kafrul, Syed Selim Sazzad of Motijheel, Nazrul Islam of Kamrangirchar, Mohammad Shah Alam of Dhanmondi, Lutfur Rahman of Darus Salam and Ziaur Rahman of Cantonment Police Station.

Six other inspectors who were also transferred to various places are Anisul Haq, AKM Mosharrar Hossain, Shamsuddin Saleh Ahmad Chowdhury, Farid Ahmed and Riaz Hossain.

45 women MPs-elect sworn in

UNB, Dhaka

The newly elected members of parliament (MPs) from the reserved women seats were sworn in at the oath-room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

Speaker M Abdul Hamid administered the oath to the 45 female lawmakers from Awami League (AL), BNP and Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad), a parliament press release said.

Of the 45 women lawmakers, 36 are from the ruling AL, four from the JP and five from the main opposition BNP.

AL women lawmakers are Prof Khadija Khatun Shefali, Apu Ukil, Montaz Begum, Asma Jerin Jhumi, Ashrafun Nesa Mosharraf, Ahmed Naznin Sultana, Athir Rakhaen, Advocate Tarana Halim, Chemon Ara Begum, Jahanaara Begum, Zinnatun Nesa Talukdar, Jobeda Khatun, Nazma Akhter, Nur Afroze Ali, Nurjahan Begum, Parvin Talukdar, Farida Rahman, Faridunnahar Laili, Begum Tahura Ali, Begum Saleha Mosharrar, Montaj Begum, Mahfuza Mondul, Mrs Amina Ahmed, Mosammad Shefali Montaj, Mosammad Farida Akhter, Roushan Jahan Sathi, Ruby Rahman, Showkat Ara Begum, Shahida Tareq Deepri, Shahin Monoara Haq, Shirin-Sharmin Chowdhury, Sadhona Hawlader, Shafiga Khatun, Sultana Bulbul, Sayeda Jubunessa Haq and Hamida Banu Shova.

The BNP lawmakers are Nilufar Chowdhury Moni, Mosammad Shammil Akhter, Rasheda Begum Hira, Rehana Akhter Banu and Sayeda Ashifa Ashrafi Papiya.

The four JP lawmakers are Nasrin Jahan Ratna, Nur-e-Hasna Lily Chowdhury, Mahjabin Morshed and Salma Islam.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE 'Controversy meaningless'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Controversy over the declaration of independence is meaningless, as people did not engage in the war of independence by the call of a single man, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

In the long history of independence, the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in uniting the nation is not questionable, they observed at the discussion at the National Press Club in the city.

Amra Korbo Joy Samajik Unnayan Sangstha organised the discussion and accorded a reception to freedom fighters celebrating the Independence Day.

"The war of independence was not organised only in 1971, the war began long ago. The role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was also beyond question as he played the role of reaching mass people by organising meetings and he was also arrested," said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad.

"Controversy over the announcer of independence stands for nothing but hinders the journey to achieve the goals the nation could reach unitedly," he added.

AL lawmaker Habibur Rahman Molla and Chairman of the Sangstha Abul Kalam Azad were also present.

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Two students drown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two madrasa students drowned in a pond in Turag area on the outskirts of the city yesterday.

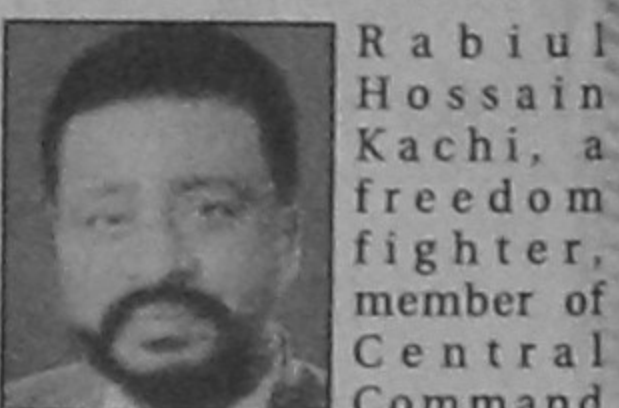
The deceased were identified as Ashraful Islam, 10, son of Alam Mia of Nalbhog village and Abu Syed, 9, son of Shaful Islam of Pararek village in the area. They were students of Madinatul Ulum Forkania Hafizia Madrasa in the area.

Police said the students came down to pond to pick a football. They were playing football at a field adjacent to the pond.

However, divers of fire brigade recovered the bodies at around 2:00pm.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Rabul Hossain Kachi, a freedom fighter, member of Central Command Council of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad and vice president of Noakhali district Awami League, passed away at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) in the city yesterday at the age of 60, says a press release.

Kachi, also former chairman of Noakhali Pourasava, was laid to rest with state honour at his village home, Kalitara in Noakhali.

State Minister for Liberation Affairs AB Tajul Islam, former army chief Lt Gen (Retd) Harun Ar Rashid, Major Gen (Retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, freedom fighters and leaders visited the residence of the deceased at Indira Road in the city yesterday to pay their last respect to Kachi.

They expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

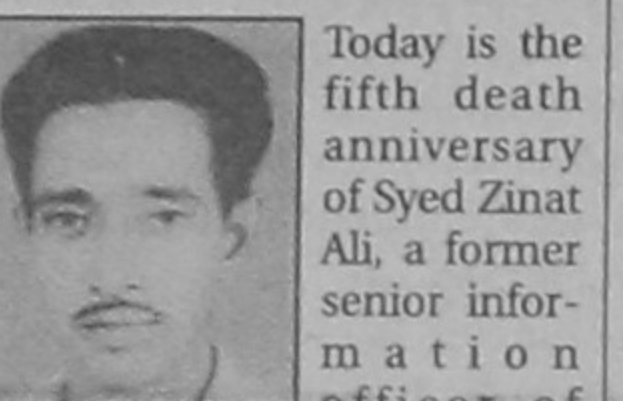
Today is the 38th death anniversary of Shaheed Lt Col NAM Jahangir, says a press release.

The Pakistani occupation forces killed him on this day during the War of Liberation in 1971 while he was the commanding officer of the then '40 Field Ambulance' stationed in Comilla Cantonment.

On the occasion, doa mahfils will be held at Jame Mosque of Combined Military Hospital (CMH) at Comilla Cantonment and at his village home Thana Mosque at Pangsha upazila in Rajbari after Juma prayers on April 3.

Syed Zinat Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the fifth death anniversary of Syed Zinat Ali, a former senior information officer of Press Information Department, says a press release.

On the accession, a Quarkhwan and milad mahfil will be held at his residence at Ambagan in Moghbazar in the city.

'Try war criminals to root out militancy'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Speakers at a rally here yesterday demanded immediate trial of war criminals of 1971 and steps to root out militancy from the country.

They also demanded punishment to former Jamaat lawmaker Maulana Abdul Khaleque for his alleged war crimes during the War of Independence.

They said the then rajakar commander Maulana Abdul Khaleque should be tried for killing a good number of innocent people of Gava and other villages under Sadar upazila during the Liberation War in 1971.

Sathkira district unit of Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee organised the rally at Gava College ground in Sadar upazila with freedom fighter Abul Khair in the chair. Justice Golam Rabbani, Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee chief Shahriar Kabir, district Awami League (AL) General Secretary

Nazrul Islam, Principal Asheke-Elahi, freedom fighters Enamul Haque Biswas and Sharifullah Kaisar Suman addressed the rally.

Justice Golam Rabbani said as the nation is united for trial of the war criminals, the government will have to implement the people's demand for trial of war criminals without wasting time.

He called for quick implementation of the government decision to try war criminals under International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973.

Shahriar Kabir said war criminals should be tried for killing innocent people during the Liberation War in 1971 and demanded immediate trial of war criminals as it is the demand of the people.

Other speakers demanded punishment to Maulana Abdul Khaleque as they claimed that the then rajakar commander was directly involved in the killing of many people at different villages under Sathkira Sadar upazila.

COURTESY BORDER CONFERENCE

BDR DG leaves for Delhi today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Director General (DG) of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Maj General Mainul Islam will leave for New Delhi today to attend a 'courtesy border conference' with his Indian counterpart ML Kumawat.

Mainul, who took the helm of the paramilitary border force after the February 25-26 carnage inside Palkhona, was promoted to the rank of major general from brig general yesterday.

Earlier, the six-day DG-level conference between the border guards of Bangladesh and India, which was scheduled to start in New Delhi on March 27, has been cut short by three days due to the last month's massacre.

Home ministry sources said the conference would no longer be a formal one to resolve outstanding issues and border-related crises as both sides agreed to go ahead with the talks, making it a courtesy conference.

There will also be no agenda for the conference where the BDR DG will lead a six-member delegation.

The BDR chief will express his gratitude to Indian BSF for its cooperation in maintaining a peaceful border during the mutiny at the BDR headquarters.

Mainul is scheduled to return to Dhaka on April 1. Talking to The Daily Star, the DG said they would visit India to be introduced with the counterparts, adding: "It will be courtesy visit and we will shorten our visit from six days to three days."

Wajed Mia returns home

UNB, Dhaka

Dr Wajed Mia, eminent scientist and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's husband, returned home last night after undergoing successful treatment in Singapore.

Dr Wajed, who was suffering from kidney and cardiac complications, left for Singapore last week and underwent treatment at Singapore's General and Heart Centre (SingHeart Hospital).



A woman fills her bottles with water percolating through the joint of a water pipeline in the CRB area in the port city yesterday as the city dwellers are suffering from acute water shortage accompanied by frequent power outage.

Another college reopens in Rajshahi today

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi New Government Degree College reopens today after 15 days of unscheduled closure.

The college authorities in an emergency meeting took the decision on Saturday.

Earlier, four dormitories of the college reopened on Friday.

On Saturday, Rajshahi City College (RCC) reopened after 13 days of closure and its hostels reopened on the day before.

Classes and examinations at RCC were held yesterday.

Sources said, Rajshahi Medical College is also expected to reopen within a week.

On March 14, eight top educational institutions in the city, including Rajshahi New Degree College, City College and Rajshahi Medical College were closed sine die following violent clashes on the day before at Rajshahi University.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Khulna and Barisal divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:14pm today and rises at 5:52am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 17.7 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

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	33.8	22.6	79	71
Chittagong	30.5	23.0	69	74
Rajshahi	34.0	20.6	87	65
Khulna	34.5	23.8	83	69
Barisal	32.8	22.7	79	66
Sylhet	29.5	19.4	94	-
Cox's Bazar	32.6	22.0	69	66

DHAKA TODAY

View exchange meet

Onneyshan organises a view exchange meeting on steps for empowerment of the poor women. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Roundtable

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front organises a roundtable on the liberation war, state of education system and expected education policy. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Film screening

Dhaka University Film Society will screen films under its World Film Manifestation Programme. Venue: Goethe Institute auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar

Samprith Manch organises a seminar on human rights of the minority community people. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.