



Autistic children perform at a cultural function at the Public Library auditorium in the city yesterday. Autism Welfare Foundation organised the event to mark the Autism Awareness Day.

Constructions on croplands a threat to food security

Says Matia Chowdhury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Setting up new structures on agricultural lands has been posing the biggest threat to the food security, as the amount of cropland is declining fast due to the construction of new industries and houses, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said yesterday.

"I am against allowing construction of any new buildings on croplands. If we allow it, we will not get any land for agriculture few years later," she said at the inaugural session of a farmers' training on Agriculture Information and Communication Centre (AICC) at the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) auditorium in the city.

The Agriculture Information Services (AIS) with support from the UNDP and FAO has set up information centres in ten villages on pilot basis so that the farmers can get information on agriculture through Internet. A Bangla website on agriculture was also launched yesterday.

Matia Chowdhury said she would not allow any new building in the name of setting up such centres. Rather, the Union Parishad buildings can be used for this purpose, she added.

The tragedy is that all want to set up new buildings and procure vehicles whenever any new projects are launched, she said, adding that residential quarters were built for sub-assistant directors of DAE at upazilas few years ago, but those are not being used.

DAE officials sometimes use inconsistent

statistics, which is totally unexpected, said the minister.

"Don't give false information to the farmers. Increase your knowledge base and train farmers how to apply that knowledge," Matia Chowdhury said and hoped that the farmers would bring a revolutionary change to agriculture by using information technology.

The minister also hoped that Bangladesh will be a food surplus country very soon and the goal of building a digital Bangladesh will be achieved even before 2021.

New agro-processing industries should be set up across the country for value addition to agricultural products and to check migration from villages to the cities, she said.

State Minister for Science and ICT Yeafesh Osman underscored the need to educate rural people and farmers about information technology to help build a digital Bangladesh.

UNDP Country Director Stefan Priesner said the use of information technology in service delivery system is an effective way of ensuring good governance and better service delivery.

Introducing information technology effectively can increase food production and reduce poverty, he said.

Cabinet Secretary Abdul Aziz, AIS Director Nazrul Islam and DAE Director General Mohammad Sayeed Ali also spoke at the programme chaired by agriculture secretary COK Mushtaq Ahmed.

Keraniganj fire: Two succumb to injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two victims of the South Keraniganj fire incident succumbed to their burn injuries after fighting for life for over 24 hours at hospitals in the city yesterday.

The deceased were identi-

fied as Lutfa Begum and her mother-in-law Mabilia. Lutfa died at Rashmono Hospital at Maghbazar while Mabilia at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Eight other injured were shifted to the City Hospital at Lalmatia in Mohammadpur

from DMCH for better treatment while another was undergoing treatment at Rashmono Hospital, hospital sources said.

Eleven people, including 10 of a family, sustained burn injuries as the fire originating from a gas oven broke out in

Motahar's house at Telghat at South Keraniganj early Wednesday.

Lutfa, 52, one of the victims and wife of house owner Motahar Sikdar, 65, said when she struck a gas lighter to light the gas stove at the kitchen around 5:45am, the room

instantly caught fire with a bang, leaving all the 11 residents injured.

Locals rushed the injured to DMCH from where Lutfa and her husband Motahar were shifted to the Rashmono Hospital where Lutfa died.



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