

MOVE TO REDUCE DROP-OUT RATE AT PRIMARY LEVEL

# Projects to strengthen school feeding programme

WASIM BIN HABIB

The government has taken different projects to strengthen the school feeding (SF) programme across the country in a bid to enhance primary school attendance and reducing drop-out rate.

As part of its SF programme, the government has already started providing around 83,000 students of about 650 government, non-government and NGO-run primary schools in the city with nutritious biscuits under an emergency SF programme from April 15, sources in the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) said.

Under the programme funded by World Food Programme (WFP), poor and underprivileged children living in Demra, Motijheel, Lalbagh, Mirpur, Gulshan are getting a packet of nutritious biscuits during the school hours, they added.

"Not only in the villages, but the conditions of the poor people and slum dwellers in the city areas are also vulnerable and to meet their need for nutrition and enhancing their attendance the government has taken the programme," Bablu Kumar Saha, director of DPE (planning and development) and project director of SF Programme told The Daily Star yesterday.

He further said the biscuit contains vitamins, minerals

and kilocalorie and it will meet the need for nutrition if the children have the biscuits regularly.

A major portion of students attending primary schools belongs to poor or low-income groups and many schoolchildren suffer from malnutrition.

According to government statistics, 91 percent of the country's children are enrolled in the primary schools, but 48 percent of them dropout before completing primary education.

The government is prioritising the SF programme and the main target of the programme is to ensure enrolment of all children in the schools by 2011, Bablu said, adding that the government is planning to expand the school feeding programme.

In addition, the government has taken a Tk 800 crore project to expand the SF programme in 80 upazilas, particularly in dropout and poverty-prone areas, said DPE sources.

The planning commission has already approved it, they said adding the government plans to provide eggs, bread or banana on alternative days side-by-side nutritious biscuits.

"It will help the local economy and encourage the local people to rear chickens or produce banana to supply those to the schools," said a source.

The government is also planning to launch another SF project with the cooperation of European Commission (EC), sources added.

The project titled 'European Commission Assisted

School Feeding Programme' will run in 10 upazilas of six divisions from June-July, which will cover around 2 lakh children.

According to the DPE sources, currently the government with the help of WFP is running its regular SF programme in 17 upazilas of three districts -- Kurigram, Gaibandha and Kishoreganj where six lakh students are the beneficiaries.

Besides, SF programme is also being carried out in the Sidr-affected areas in the southern region of the country, covering 4 lakh children.

SF programme is also being carried out in three hilly districts, sources said.

## 19 'Razakars' sued in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Nineteen Razakars of Batiaghata upazila of Khulna district were sued in two separate petition cases filed with the court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Begum Rozina Akhter on Wednesday.

The court has ordered the officers-in-charge of the police station concerned to submit a report after proper investigation into the allegations for recording the cases.

Former commander of Batiaghata upazila unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad Captain Sheikh Afzal Hossain filed a petition case as complainant naming 13 collaborators of Pakistani occupation forces as accused of murdering freedom fighter Haridas Majumdar during the liberation war in 1971.

The complainant in his petition said the accused gunned down Haridas after spraying 101 bullets on him at Halia village on October 10.

The victim was the son of Gopal Chandra Majumdar of Bigha village under Fakirhat upazila of Bagerhat district.

"I also sustained bullet injuries during the fight between freedom fighters and armed Razakars at that time," the complainant added in his petition.

The 13 accused are Nazrul Joarder, Abdul Jabbar Sheikh, Hemayet Hossain, Ohid Joarder, Atiar Rahman, Musa Fakir, Modasser Molla, Nur Ali Biswas, Ashraf Ali Sheikh, Mozaher Ali Sheikh, Nazrul Sheikh, Amjad Howlader and Saeed Sheikh.

All of them are still alive. The other petition case was filed by Moslem Sheikh as complainant naming six Razakars as accused.

Moslem in his petition stated that the accused gunned down his friend Khair Sheikh at Phulbari Rajakar camp on the night of August 19 in 1971.

Later, they sliced off his body and threw them into the river.

The six accused are Makbul Mallick, Motasin Sheikh, Musa Behara, Shahadat Biswas, Khokon Howlader and Enam Fakir.

With the two cases, the total number of cases filed with the court in last one month against Razakars of Batiaghata upazila now stands at six.



PHOTO: STAR

BDR and Nasaka held a flag meeting at Dekhuboniya in Myanmar yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

## Water management to be more critical in future

Says Dutch envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water management may be more critical in Bangladesh in the coming days due to impacts of climate change, Dutch Ambassador to Bangladesh Bea ten Tusscher said yesterday.

Therefore, a long-term water management policy should be adopted for Bangladesh, she said during a meeting with Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque, seeking his cooperation to work on water management development here.

At the meeting at the ministry, they discussed the present government's manifesto, challenges and the importance of food security, says a press release.

Stating that Netherlands has been working to improve the water management systems of Bangladesh, the ambassador stressed enhancing efficiency of the Water Development Board.

The minister said water management in the country is very important for agricultural production. Sluice gates, dams and canals play crucial

role in that end, he said, adding that mismanagement in the sector cause losses of food production putting the government in trouble in meeting food demand.

## Air chief begins 5-day visit to New Delhi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman arrived in New Delhi yesterday on a five-day visit at the invitation of Indian Air Chief Marshal Fali Homi Major.

During his stay in India, Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman will hold official talks with his Indian counterpart on enhancing cooperation between the two air forces.

He will also call on Defence Minister AK Antony.

He would also discuss issues of mutual concern and interest with Indian Navy Chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta and Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor, an IAF spokesperson said.

## Two get death, 10 jailed for murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced two people to death and 10 others to 32 years' rigorous imprisonment for killing a man in the city's Banshree area in October 2004.

The convicts with death penalty are Shah Alam alias 'Jiner Badsha' and Bhagina Mamun while Zakir Hossain Sentu, Md Zakir Hossain, Sarwar Hossain, Masud Hossain Thandu, Siddiqi Rahman, Sultan Jamadar, Alim Khan, Lokman Hossain, Firos Sheikh and Faruque Mridha were sentenced to 32 years' RI.

Of the convicts, Lokman, Firos and Faruque were tried in absentia.

Judge Mohammad Masdar Hossain of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 handed down the verdict on the convicts at a packed courtroom.

The court also acquitted Mamun, Parvin Akhter, Zakir Hossain Howlader, Abdur Rob Member, Panna Mollah and Masud Bari.

A group of miscreants led by Jiner Badsha kidnapped the victim, Nurul Islam Babu, from his village home at Jhalakathi and brought him to Dhaka on October 4, 2004 following a feud over a piece of land.

Later, the hooligans killed him and dumped the body in the city's Mirpur area.

## Nor'wester lashes 25 villages in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A nor'wester with thunderbolts lashed some 25 villages of Atpara, Durgapur, Kalmakanda, Barhatta and Netrakona Sadar upazilas here on Wednesday night, damaging around 700 mud-built houses, hundreds of trees and over 1000 hectares of ripe Boro paddy.

The hardest hit villages include Mahishpur, Charia, Mangalsidda and Mobarakpur of Atpara; Hatkhala, Panchanonpur and Panchkahonia of Netrakona Sadar; Durgapur poura area, Burunga, Thakurbarikanda, Mojbannagar, Bakoljura, Gaokandia, Kakaigora, Mayanagar and Kalikapur of Durgapur and Hatgobindapur of Kalmakanda.

Around 40 people were injured during the 20-minute storm. Seriously injured Rahisuddin, Konokchapa and Abdul Alim of Atpara and Nurul Islam and Laila Begum of Durgapur were sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in a critical condition, while the other injured were admitted into local health complexes.

## Bulb company manager robbed of Tk 2.5 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of three muggers stabbed a marketing manager of a bulb company in front of Bangabhaban in the city yesterday and snatched away Tk 2.5 lakh from him.

The injured was identified as Shahriar Reza, 30, marketing manager of Crown Bulb Company, at Gandaria in the city.

Police and hospital sources said three muggers intercepted Shahriar in the area around 12:00 noon while he was returning to his office at Gandaria after drawing Tk 2.5 lakh from a branch of 'Dhaka Bank' at Arambagh in a motorcycle. The muggers stabbed him as he tried to resist them.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from where he was shifted to a private clinic.



PHOTO: BNP

BNP secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain speaks at a press conference at the party office at Gulshan in the city yesterday.

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