

Agri reforms vital to make country self-reliant

Land minister tells symposium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira underscored the need for working together with a view to bringing reforms in agriculture sector to establish Bangladesh as a middle-income and self-reliant country by 2013.

"Agro-based industrialisation will contribute significantly to eradicating poverty from the country in future. We will have to bring overall reforms in the agriculture sector to have sustainable development. Aimed at reaching the goal, we all should work together to establish Bangladesh a middle-income and self-reliant country."

The minister said this as the chief guest at the inaugural session of a three-day 'Agriculture Symposium' organised by Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (CSRL) at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

He said the government is pledge-bound to provide all kinds of facilities to farmers, as they play the pioneering role in making the rural economy vibrant, which is the prereq-

uisite to eradicate poverty.

Hira stressed the need for creating employment opportunities for the rural people out of agriculture sector, as an ever-increasing number of farmers are putting tremendous efforts in the sector.

The government will introduce computerised digital system soon for preserving land survey records to recognise landowners, the minister added.

He talked about different projects undertaken by the government for developing the life standards of the rural people, facilitating farmers, rehabilitation of the homeless people and fishermen.

He blamed the last BNP-Jamaat government for stopping all the welfare projects taken by the previous Awami League (AL) government.

Bangladesh Economic Association President Dr Quazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmad underlined the importance of improving health and education of farmers as well as the financial development for the betterment of

the agriculture sector.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasnul Haque Inu also laid emphasis on promoting social economy for changing the fate of farmers and development of the sector.

Workers Menon of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon urged the government to implement the law to ensure minimum wage for the farmers.

Presenting a keynote paper, Monowar Mustafa, secretary of Development Synergy Institute, made a set of recommendations for the development of the agriculture sector.

The recommendations include providing quality fertiliser, restarting a number of irrigation projects of Water Development Board and introduction of easy loan system for farmers.

CSRL Coordinator Dr Ahsan Uddin Ahmed presided over the function, which was moderated by CSRL Member Secretary Ziaul Haque Mukta.



PHOTO: STAR

Schoolchildren render a song at a cultural programme at Teacher-Student Centre on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. Sammilita Sangskritik Jote and Sector Commanders' Forum organised the event.

511 juvenile crime suspects identified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 500 juveniles are engaged in crimes or have links with criminals' gangs in the capital, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque said yesterday.

"We have made a list of 511 juvenile crime suspects from all the eight crime zones of DMP. The joint commissioner (crime) and deputy commissioners, additional deputy commissioners and officer-in-

charge concerned will verify the list," he said at a press briefing after the monthly crime conference at Rajarbagh Telecom auditorium.

The juveniles who have already committed crimes and accused in criminal cases will face legal action, he said.

The police would help the parents prevent their children from mixing with criminals and bring back their children to the right path, he added.

The DMP commissioner

said 15 people were killed by criminals and 31 firearms and other weapons were seized in February.

Besides, 44 vehicles were stolen and 35 stolen vehicles were recovered last month.

The police arrested a total of 5,007 people in February. Of them, 47 are listed criminals, 27 accused in murder cases and 740 are drug peddlers, The DMP commissioner said.

High officials and officers-in-charge of DMP attended the conference.

India ready to review new visa rules

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India yesterday said it was ready to review the new guidelines for granting tourist and conference visas if there were genuine grievances.

Indian Home Secretary Gopal K Pillai said the government has received a number of representations requesting it to reconsider the revised guidelines.

"Government makes rules, government makes regulations which may not be correct. But in a democracy, there is a system. We correct ourselves if a mistake is made," he said at a seminar on 'Thought policing or fighting terror; Home ministry's curbs on foreign scholars'.

Under the present guidelines, a tourist cannot return to India within 60 days of his exit from the country.

Later, Pillai told reporters that "we have received a number of representations (on conference visa) and we are examining them. This is under consider-

ation".

According to the revised guidelines for conference visas, prior security clearance from the home ministry is required in respect of participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq and Sudan, foreigners of Pakistani origin and stateless persons.

Besides, the home ministry's clearance is also required if the participation involves visit to restricted or protected areas in India or to areas affected by terrorism, militancy and extremism like Jammu and Kashmir and northeastern states, and if the conference involves politically sensitive subjects.

Referring to restrictions imposed on issuing tourist visa, the home secretary said the government was open to amend any rules if there was any "mistake".

Pillai wondered how many of the six million genuine tourists, who visit India every year, would like to come back to India within 60 days?

BCL men held over SMC clash freed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police freed six BCL activists of Sir Salimullah Medical College unit, who were held after factional clash at the college premise in the capital yesterday morning.

The BCL men were Obaidul Islam, Md Zayed, Palash Pal, Ataul Karim Arbi, Mizanur Rahman and Atiqur Rahman.

"The college authority took them after giving an undertaking in the evening," Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Salahuddin Khan told The Daily Star.

Following a dispute over forming a working committee of the college unit, a group of supporters of Zayed, the present BCL president, and Arbi, former secretary of BCL college unit, locked into a clash at the medical college premises on Monday night.

"Zayed formed a committee without prior approval of the central committee of Chhatra League whereas we wanted to form the committee after taking approval from the central committee," Arbi said.

As a sequel to the conflict, both the groups locked into clash again yesterday morning.

On information, police rushed to the spot and held six activists of both groups.

Arbi and 12 others were injured during the clash.

All the classes were suspended following the incidents.

Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre opens in city tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

The Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), New Delhi, will be formally inaugurated in Dhaka on Thursday.

ICCR President Karan Singh will inaugurate the centre at a function with Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad as the chief guest, said an Indian High Commission press release.

Bangladesh and India share common heritage and commonalities in art, culture, literature and language.

The Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre in Dhaka aims to promote bilateral exchanges in these fields, the release added.

The Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre is housed in two premises at Dhanmondi and Gulshan. The centre has a multi-purpose hall with exhibition gallery, a dance studio, music rooms and a yoga hall. It has a library-cum-resource centre with over 21,000 books.

For over the last three decades, ICCR has provided special scholarships for 100 students from Bangladesh every year to pursue graduate and post graduate studies in various fields at premier institutions in India.

Over these years, thousands of deserving students from Bangladesh have benefited by education in the fields of music, dance, art, philosophy, engineering and business administration.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni cuts a cake at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the city on Monday celebrating the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Mehboob Chowdhury, CEO of Citycell, other high officials and women customers pose for photo at a programme celebrating the International Women's Day. Citycell organised the event at Spectra Convention Centre in the city on Monday.

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Six killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

Six people were killed in Dinajpur, Pabna and Rajshahi in the last two days.

Our correspondent in Dinajpur reports: Three people, including a six-year-old boy, were killed in a road accident at Ghoraghat in the district on Monday night.

The victims were identified as Babu Ahmed 20, Mehdi Hasan, 19, and Tanvir Ahmed Babu, 6.

The accident took place when a speeding truck hit a motorcycle on Hatpara-Durgapur highway at about 8:30pm.

They were returning home from 'Swapnopuri', a theme park at Nawabganj in the district.

Our correspondent in Pabna adds: Two women were killed in separate road accidents

at Ishwardi and Pabna Sadar in the last two days.

Ferdousi Ara, 28, died on the spot when a speeding human hauler knocked her down on Pabna-Sujanagar highway at about 12:00noon yesterday while she was crossing the road.

In another accident, Farida Khatun, 32, was killed on Monday afternoon when a speeding trolley hit the rickshaw he and her son were travelling in at Ishwardi's in Raju Cinema Hall area.

Her injured son Emon, 5, was rushed to Ishwardi Health Complex.

Our staff correspondent in Rajshahi adds: A teenager was killed in a road accident at Shalbagan in the city yesterday.

Nabi Hossain, 18, died on the spot when a Nowata-bound human hauler hit him while he was crossing the road.

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