

BB step against cultivation of tobacco hailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance hailed the recent decision of Bangladesh Bank (BB) on issuing an order for private and public banks not to provide any financial assistance for cultivation and production of tobacco.

In a statement yesterday, it said such a decision of BB would play a significant role in the development of public health, environment and, above all, in the country's economy.

The alliance hoped that the positive decision of the central bank would be obeyed by other banks.

Studies found that cultivation of tobacco is becoming a threat to food security, environment and public health and to some extent, it is responsible for poverty and malnutrition in the low-income group.

Again, cropland loses its fertility and becomes useless after 10 years for tobacco cultivation. Tobacco processing causes different diseases among the workers and attendance in schools becomes poor during tobacco cultivation, as the children of the workers also get involved.

The statement said the social movement against tobacco would be encouraged by the timely decision of BB.

Call to include trafficking issues in primary school curriculum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Development activists working in education sector yesterday stressed the need for including trafficking issues in the primary school curriculum to stop the increasing child trafficking in the country.

They also recommended that trafficking issues be included in the curriculum which will also make teachers, guardians as well as other stakeholders aware of the issues.

They said this at a view exchange meeting titled 'Inclusion of trafficking issues in the primary school curriculum' organised by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) at a city hotel where representatives from different NGOs were present.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin said if the trafficking issue is included in the primary school curriculum, it might make children aware of the issue from their early age, but it might also create panic among them.



Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin speaks at a view exchange meeting at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday.

"But we should think of the academic burden on children, who are always overloaded at the schools, and such overload might cause to increase the dropout rate."

Child trafficking is not only a problem in the country, it is also a problem in neighbouring India, Nepal and Pakistan, said the minister, adding that united effort is a must to stop the menace.

Abu Alam Md Shahid Khan, secretary in-charge of the primary and mass education ministry, said a strong network exists within the country, which is doing brisk business on human trafficking.

"So, we all should work together to stop any kind of human trafficking, not only give burden to the child books, that already overburdened with so many issues,"

said the secretary in charge.

Former adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury, also executive director of Campe, said the trafficking issue could be included in the primary school curriculum by making it a child-friendly topic.

Despite the school curriculum, the trafficking issues should also be addressed through mass media, including stage dramas, theatres, folk songs, community radios as well as all mainstream media, she added.

Rasheda suggested a massive awareness programme through some other ways, saying: "We hear the cassette of Delwar Hossain Sayedee in the long-route buses, so why not the message about trafficking or other awareness issues."

Rabab Fatima, regional representative of IOM, Zakia K Hassan, national programme officer and team leader of Prevention and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking in Bangladesh, and Dr Monjur Ahmed, senior adviser to Education and Research Institute of Brac, also spoke at the meeting.

2 touchstone statues worth Tk 1cr seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) of Rajshahi camp in separate drives at Lalpur in Natore and Ishwardi in Pabna yesterday recovered two valuable statues worth about Tk 1 core.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab raided Mohorkoya village of Lalpur and caught Alhaj Nayeab Ali with a touchstone statue.

On his confessional statement, the elite force raided the office of Human Rights Implementation Organisation, Ishwardi unit and arrested its president Shahidul Hassan allies Bobi Sardar, who is also the editor of Uttar Janata, a local newspaper, with another statue.

Natore Jamaat leader held

A CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday arrested the publicity secretary of Natore district unit Jamaat on charges of being involved in a bid to foil the government's move to try crimes against humanity.

The arrestee was identified as Mir Nurul Islam, also a teacher of Bangla department of Natore City College.

DB police arrested Nurul from his village in Hazratpur area in the morning.



Special Envoy to the Maldives President Mohamed Ibrahim Didi calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her residence in the city yesterday.

HAMID MEETS UNGA PRESIDENT

Bangladesh lauded for democracy

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh's present position is highly praiseworthy on the way of strengthening its democracy, said President of UN General Assembly Dr Ali Abdus Salam Traky on Monday.

The UNGA President made the comment when Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate called on him at UN Headquarters in New York, an official handout said yesterday.

The Speaker apprised the activities of

Jatiya Sangsad to Dr Ali and said the Jatiya Sangsad is working relentlessly to give democracy to an institutional shape

Dr Ali congratulated Speaker Hamid for constructing a parliamentary group comprising all parties for implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

He also praised the role of Bangladesh in different activities of UN.

Hamid handed over a copy of regulation on Non-Proliferation Treaty of Jatiya Sangsad to Dr Ali.

Chairperson of climate and environment affairs committee of all party parliamentary group Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Environment and Forest ministry Abdul Momin Talukder MP, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour and Employment Ministry Md Israfil Alam, and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UN Dr AK Abdul Momen were present on the occasion.

Stalking won't be tolerated

Says education minister

UNB, Dhaka

Sounding a strong warning against stalking, Education Minister Nurul Islam Naid said a committee will be formed at every mahalla to identify the spoiled and notorious boys for exemplary punishment.

Stalking will not be tolerated. The culprits will be given exemplary punishment so that others do not dare to do it, he added.

The minister said this at a meeting of cross section of people to ascertain views how deal with the rising incidents of stalking which have worried the parents of school- and college-going girls and

female inmates of halls and hostels.

Besides, schools, colleges and universities will be directed to take action against the stalkers, he said while presiding over the meeting.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury viewed that rising incidents of stalking is a manifestation of overall moral degradation in the society. Political leadership seems to be indifferent about the menace.

Media should play a vital role in curbing it, said Dhaka University Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique.

Principal Kanij Mahmuda Akter of Siddheswari University College suggested closure of fax/phone shops

around schools and colleges from where spoiled boys usually contact female students.

Rawshan Ara Begum of Education Directorate suggested stalking cases should be made non-bailable.

Fahima Khatun, chairman of Dhaka Education Board, regretted that plainclothes police deployed against stalking should be activated.

AIG of Police Abdullah Al Mamun pointed to the weaknesses of law to deal with the culprits. Most of the accused taking advantage of loopholes in the law secured release from the court.

Gulf states urged to end sponsorship system to save migrant workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gulf countries must end their sponsorship system that leaves migrant workers exposed to potential abuse, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said yesterday, reports Arab News from Jeddah.

"Reports concerning this region consistently cite ongoing practices of unlawful confiscation of passports, withholding of wages and exploitation by some recruitment agencies and employers," Navanethem Pillay told a small gathering at King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST) in Thuwal.

The call of the UN rights chief is significant for around 4 million Bangladeshis working in the Gulf countries. They send majority of the \$10 billion remittance annually home, but their plights both in the process of immigration to those countries and during their stays are quite common.

"Some are held in prolonged detention after they escape abusive employers and may be unable to obtain access to judicial recourse and effective remedies for their plight," Pillay singled out the systems in many of the countries, which require workers to have local sponsors, known as kafala.

Some Gulf countries such as Bahrain

are scrapping the kafala system, while others such as Kuwait are overhauling labour laws or introducing a minimum wage to improve conditions for millions of foreign workers.

"I wholeheartedly support those efforts and call on other states to replace the kafala system with updated labour laws that can better balance rights and duties," she said.

She called the situation of migrant domestic workers of particular concern, because their isolation in private homes makes them even more vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual violence.

CASE AGAINST GAYESWAR Next hearing on May 18

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned till May 18 the hearing of a case filed against BNP Standing Committee Member Gayeswar Chandra Roy for amassing wealth illegally and concealing wealth information from the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Judge Mozammel Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-3 passed the order after Gayeswar's lawyers submitted a petition seeking adjournment of the hearing.

In the petition, lawyers said their client would file an appeal with the higher court against the order for framing charge against him. So, they prayed for adjournment of the hearing.

The ACC filed the case with Ramna Police Station on January 5 last year on charges of amassing Tk 2.61 crore and concealing information of his wealth worth Tk 25.95 lakh in his wealth statement.

The court issued an arrest warrant against the BNP leader on August 3 last year following a report submitted by the investigation officer of the case.

The report said Gayeswar owned properties worth Tk 1.28 crore while it is Tk 1.02 crore in his wealth statement. He also extorted Tk 67 lakh from the managing director of M/s Reza Constructions Ltd.

Gayeswar was sent to jail on October 12 last year after he surrendered before the court and sought bail in the case.

Later he was released on bail from the High Court.

Anchor Pre-School 2+ launched

METRO DESK

New Zealand Dairy Products Bangladesh Ltd launched its new specialty milk product Anchor Pre-School 2+ at a city hotel yesterday.

Marketing Manager GM Kamrul Hassan said, "Milk is actually a complex nutritional product, rich in protein and many vitamins and minerals to support growth development, Anchor Pre-School 2+ is specially formulated for the children of age 2+." "At the Anchor Institute we are expert in understanding the complexity of milk and isolating components that can be used for specific health benefits. A research report published in the British Medical Journal in November 2006 states that the vitamins and minerals in this formulation have been proven to greatly reduce and combat diseases and infections that commonly affect babies."

Anchor Pre-School 2+ is specially developed for children between the ages 2-4 by expert nutritionists at the Anchor Institute; it contains Nutri-care, a special bundle of nutrients comprised of vitamins A, C and minerals iron, Zinc and Selenium for developing strong immune system.

Other than Bangladesh Anchor Pre-School is trustworthy brand in Sri Lanka and other Asian regions, where this brand is leading the category market.

Managing Director of the company SA Mallick also spoke on the occasion.



New Zealand Dairy Products Bangladesh Ltd launches its new specialty milk product Anchor Pre-School 2+ at a city hotel yesterday.

Concern over clash between workers, cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organisation, yesterday expressed grave concern over the clash between garments workers and police over different issues at Kanchpur in Narayanganj on Monday.

In a statement, ASK acting executive director Noor Khan urged all the parties involved with the garments sector to show tolerance and resolve all the problems through negotiation.

The government and the owners should take necessary steps to ensure just wage of the garments workers to end unrest in this sector.

However, the workers should avoid causing violence to establish their rights.

DEFAMATION CASE Ershad asked to submit statement by May 25

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad to submit written statement by May 25 in a Tk 60 crore defamation case filed against him for torturing his estranged wife Bidisha Siddique between 2005 and 2007.

Judge Imrul Kayesh of the First Joint District Judge's Court passed the order after Ershad's lawyers filed a petition seeking time to submit written statement against the suit.

Bidisha filed the case on March 18 mentioning that Ershad tortured her at home and police tortured her in custody in connection with false cases filed by Ershad between 2005 and 2007.

In her pleading, Bidisha said she was arrested on June 4 in 2005 from her Baridhara residence after Ershad charged her with stealing a cellphone set and embezzlement of around Tk 7.5 lakh.

At the instruction of Ershad, the police tortured her in the name of interrogation in their custody, she added.

Ershad also expelled her from the party and filed several other criminal cases against her. But the High Court had granted her bails in all cases and later she was released on bail.



Young learners of Dhanmondi Tutorial render a song celebrating the Bangla New Year 1417 at a cultural function on the school campus at Dhanmondi in the city recently.

One killed in clash over piece of land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed and four others were injured in a clash between neighbours at Atatur in Keraniganj yesterday over a piece of land.

The dead was identified as Aji Karati, 50, a trader of iron sheets, while the injured were Purba Rani Karati, 45, wife of Aji Karati, his brothers Sumon Karati, 38, and Madhu, 35, and his mother-in-law Ummadin Rani, 58.

Talking to reporters at Mitford Hospital, Madhu said a group of around 50 miscreants led by his neighbour Salauddin swooped on them at their residence over previous rivalry centring a piece of land.

"The cadres ransacked our house at around 10:30am and beat us mercilessly that left my brother (Aji) severely injured. He was rushed to the Mitford Hospital but the on duty doctors declared him dead at around 11:30am," Madhu claimed.

Talking to The Daily Star, Officer-in-Charge of Keraniganj Model Police Station said a case was filed and five of the attackers have been arrested.

'Introduce rural rationing system'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Samajtantrik Khet Mazur and Krishak Front yesterday demanded introduction of a rural rationing system and food security to the farmers be ensured.

The demands came from a human chain in front of the National Press Club where they placed their seven-point demand, said a press release.

Front President Suvrangshu Chakrabarti and General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoz and other leaders spoke at the human chain.