

WFTO CONFERENCE BEGINS

'Strengthen fair trade for marginal producers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day biannual conference of World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) of Asia region kicked off yesterday with a call to strengthen fair trade to create opportunities for small and marginal producers and artisans.

Fair trade is an alternative trading approach that seeks greater equity in international trade to help empower marginal producers.

Participants said fair trade, as a movement, is expanding both at home and abroad. But more needs to be done to help small producers, artisans and workers so they get greater share of the growing global trade, they added.

From 2004 to 2009, fair trade has seen four-fold growth in sales taking the number from 832 million euros to 3,400, said Durreen Shahnaz, founder and chairperson of Impact Investment Exchange, a social stock exchange in Asia.

"This is an average yearly growth of

over 30 percent for five years running. In other words, the world is waking up to your [fair trade organisations and social enterprises] efforts and embracing the practices wholeheartedly," added Durreen in her keynote speech.

She, however, demanded that social enterprises (SEs) get easier access to capital to expand their business.

ECOTA Fair Trade Forum (EFTF) organised the meet at Brac-CDM at Ashulia, on the outskirts of Dhaka. More than 120 local and foreign delegates including from European countries, USA, Japan, China, and India attended the programme.

Dhaka University (DU) Vice-chancellor Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique, World Fair Trade Forum (WFTF) Chair Paul Myers and WFTF Asia Representative Claribel David addressed the opening session.

Prof Arefin stressed the importance of fair trade for economic empowerment of the marginal communities.

Paul Myers called upon fair trade

promoters for awareness building campaigns among consumers to create wider markets for the producers of poor artisan communities.

Organisers said global trade is expanding and export of developing countries is increasing with large inequalities still looming.

For every \$1 generated through exports in the international trading system, low-income countries account for only three cents, according to a publication of ECOTA Fair Trade Forum that works with the artisan communities at home and abroad.

Presently, EFTF members work with over 1,15,000 artisans. Of them 80 percent are women, it claims.

Abdul Awal, chairperson of EFTF in Bangladesh, said governments should provide support to create congenial environment for small producers and social enterprises.

The conference is scheduled to conclude on September 26.



Tathya Odhikar Andolan forms a human chain at Shahbagh intersection in the city yesterday ahead of the International Right to Information Day to be observed on September 28.

2 criminals wounded in gunfight with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two criminals were wounded in a gunfight with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in the city's Mohammadpur area early yesterday.

They are Mohammad Arshad alias Ashraf, 21, and Mohammad Babul Akter Shamim, 22.

A patrol team of Rab-2 challenged a group of youths on suspicion at Basila. The gang, at one stage, opened fire on the Rab men forcing them to retaliate, said Rab sources.

After the gunfight, Rab arrested two muggers with bullet injuries in their legs from the spot and recovered two firearms, two machetes and five mobile sets from them. Their accomplices, however, managed to flee, said the sources.

The injured were admitted to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR).

Contractors ransack 3 establishments, injure 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Armed contractors of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) vandalised three private establishments, including two diagnostic centres, belonging to rival contractors in Laxmipur and Dharampur areas of the city on Thursday, leaving 10 injured.

The attack was made following a dispute over distribution of Tk 1 crore negotiation money of the Tk 5 crore bridge construction work of Naogaon RHD among 95 contractors, police said.

Police said around 20 armed men led by Rajpara BNP's Organising Secretary Shafikul Islam, also a RHD contractor, swooped on Harunur Rashid's office, Don Enterprise, at Dharampur at around 9:00pm.

Equipped with machetes, hockey sticks and rods, they beat up Harun and his brother Nazrul Islam mercilessly.

An hour later, they attacked Badiuzzaman's Care Diagnostic Centre and Abdur Rahim's Boishakhi Medical Centre at Laxmipur and damaged computer, furniture and other goods.

Eight people, including patients, were injured at the pathologies. Some 95 RHD contractors negotiated two bridge-construction works worth around Tk 5 crore with two contractors, Nure Alam Siddik Shilpi of Rajshahi and Dewan Sekar Ahmed Shishan of Naogaon several months back.

The condition of the negotiation was the duo, after getting work orders, would distribute Tk 1 crore among the 95 contractors who purchased bid documents for the works.

Most other contractors become angry during distribution of the money on Thursday night when the contractors wanted to distribute Tk 50 lakh, half of the promised money.

Teenage girl allegedly commits suicide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the body of a teenage girl from her Pallabi residence in the city yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Tania Akter, 16, daughter of Abbas Uddin of Kotali Para in Gopalganj.

Police said she committed suicide but could not confirm the cause.

Sub-Inspector (SI) of Pallabi Police Station Mehedi Hasan told The Daily Star that they recovered the body from the sixth floor of the six-storey building.

Residents of the house said she hung herself with a scarf from the grill of a window, he added.

Massive awareness on RTI Act stressed

DU CORRESPONDENT

Information Commissioner Sadeka Halim yesterday said massive mass-awareness should be raised in the society for the successful implementation of Right to Information Act.

She said the information commission and government are working to aware designated officials to provide information for proper implementation of right to information act. The commissioner was inaugurating a week-long campaign as a part of celebrating International Right to Information Day on September 28.

Tathya Adhikar Andolan, a movement for right to information, and Nagorik Uddyog jointly arranged the week-long campaign in the capital, says a press release.

In order to create demand for the information, non-governmental organisations, citizens' groups and media should come forward and launch campaign to raise massive awareness among people, Sadeka added.

Chief Executive of Nagorik Uddyog Jakir Hossain said they have chalked out various programmes across the country to celebrate the upcoming day with due festivity to raise consciousness among people about their right to information.

After the inaugurating session, the theatre team of Tathya Adhikar Andolan staged a street drama on right of people to the information followed by a colourful procession.

The procession marched several streets on Dhaka University campus and ended at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city.

Country to make CNG-driven auto-rickshaw

BSS, Dhaka

The government has embarked upon a plan to manufacture three-wheeler CNG-driven auto rickshaws at home aimed at replacing the city's non-motorized rickshaws.

The Ministry of Industries took a nine-year project involving initial Taka 26.84 million to manufacture the passenger vehicle by using local expertise and spare parts.

Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Centre and Bangladesh steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC), both autonomous bodies under the ministry of Industries, are the implementing agencies of the project.

"The country's first ever effort to manufacture the easy-going transport vehicle using local spare parts aimed at easing traffic congestion..." Dr Ihsanul Karim, acting director of BITAC, told the news agency yesterday.

Approximately 2,000 3W CNG-driven rickshaws could be produced every year depending on availability of local light and medium industries, said Dr Karim.

BITAC director said large-scale manufacture of the three-wheeler (3W) CNG-run rickshaws will be done with massive use of small and medium workshops located in the city's Dholaiakhal, a hub of the country's potential light engineering workshops.

Dr Karim also said that an initial estimation of Tk 2.50 lakh might be charged for each 3W CNG-run auto rickshaw equipped with locally-produced sustainable light and medium industries.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 13th death anniversary of Nurun Nahar Samad, wife of the first foreign minister of the country Abdus Samad Azad.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be organised at Kalabagan Lakeview Jame Mosque by Abdus Samad Azad Foundation.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Nurun Nahar passed away at a city hospital in 1997. She was founder member of Bangladesh Mohila Samity and Bangladesh Mothers' Association. She also inspired her husband in politics.



Locals punish two muggers by keeping them in chest-deep water along with their legs chained together, inset, in the city's Hatirjheel Lake yesterday. They were caught red handed while fleeing after committing the crime behind Sonargaon Hotel.

Obituary

METRO DESK

Abad Hussain Khan, son of late Yaswar Hussain Khan of UP, India, passed away on Thursday, said a press release.

Khan is the son-in-law of Murtaza Reza Chowdhury of Rajshahi House, Boro Moghbazar, Dhaka and married to Farhadi Khan.

He left behind two daughters to mourn his death.

Qulkwani and doa mahfil will be held at Gulshan Jame Mosque in Gulshan-1 after Asr prayers today.

All friends, relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the mahfil.

WEATHER TODAY Change in temperature unlikely UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind, is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

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

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:52pm and rises tomorrow at 5:48am.

Country's highest temperature 35.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 24.0 degrees at Sylhet.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 5 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in Percentage (Morning, Evening)

'Attribute Altaf Mahmud as martyred freedom fighter'

BSS, Dhaka

As the trial of war criminals started it came as a big relief for Shawan Mahmud, the only child of martyred famous lyricist and musician Altaf Mahmud.

The relief came on her like thousand other orphaned freedom fighters' children who were bearing painful deprivation and agony seeing war criminals going unpunished for over last three decades.

"From (my) student life at various forums, I demanded the trial of the heinous war criminals. Now it has started ... you know when the trial began it gave me a relief," Shawan with flicker of light in the eyes told the news agency.

Sahwan Mahmud wants her father to be attributed as martyred freedom fighter not as Shaheed intellectual as he was killed while waging war against the occupation Pakistan army and their collaborators during the War of Liberation in 1971.

"My father died in fighting as freedom fighter as member of crack platoon even though he was a musician. He might be killed

any day on this month in 1971 with utmost brutality by the occupation force aided by Razakars and Al Badars," she said.

Altaf Mahmud joined the crack platoon, the most heroic guerrilla group of freedom fighters, who were conducting operation inside Dhaka with a desire to participate in the war directly apart from his regular job of writing lyrics and tuning songs.

"I knew my father is no more... but I would like to know what was date when my father was killed at least," she said and hoped that the date of fateful day of killing of her father and what happened to her father will be come out during the ongoing investigation of the war crimes tribunal.

During the War of Liberation, Altaf Mahmud turned his residence into a base camp of the members of crack platoon, where they took rest and hide their arms and ammunition.

"It was at 5.30 in the morning of August 30, 1971, when our house was raided and my father was taken away by the Pak army right in front of our eyes. No one of the house did know that my father and freedom fighters had hidden arms in the ground near our house," Shawan said.

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