

Ctg business forums start fair price shops

BSS, Chittagong

The Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industries (CCCI) and Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce & Industries (CMCCI) started selling essential commodities at fair prices for people of low-income group in Chittagong city yesterday.

Former CCCI president MA Latif, MP, formally inaugurated the fair price sale programme of CCCI in front of the Chamber House in the morning.

Latif, in his inaugural speech, lauded the initiative taken by CCCI and urged the businessmen of the country to come forward in keeping the prices of daily commodities within the purchasing capacity of the masses.

As part of the programme, the CCCI will sell the commodities at subsidised prices till the 25th of Ramadan (August 14).

The CCCI is initially selling fine rice at Tk 20, boiled rice at Tk 18 and sugar at Tk 45 per kilogramme in the outlet and it will slowly add more products to the outlet. Two more outlets will be inaugurated soon.

CCCI Secretary Osman Goni conducted the function, presided over by CCCI President Murshed Murad Ibrahim.

CMCCI Director MA Malek, also the editor of Daily Azadi, inaugurated the fair price programme undertaken by CMCCI on its office premises.

As part of the programme, the CMCCI is selling fine rice at Tk 20 and sugar at Tk 45 per kilogramme and two-litre bottles of soybean oil at Tk 260.



Left, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina shares a moment with young girls at an Iftar party for orphans, autistic children and physically challenged freedom fighters arranged at her official residence Gono Bhavan in the capital yesterday on the first day of Ramadan. Right, BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia shares another Iftar party with orphans and religious leaders at Ladies Club in the city's Eskaton the same day.

PHOTO: PMO, BNP



RU students deprived of hall libraries

AM JAHD

Residential students of Rajshahi University (RU) are being deprived of library facilities in the halls due to unscheduled closure of the libraries and lack of books and space in the reading rooms.

According to the residential students, the libraries and reading rooms of 10 out of 16 halls remain closed most of the time while the remaining six open without any fixed schedule.

Requesting anonymity, an official of Shaheed Suhrawardy Hall said, "Students show little interest in coming to the hall's library due to the low number of books available."

Only 81 books were bought for the library since its inception in 1995, he said.

The students are falling behind in their studies as they do not get the library and reading room facilities, stated many residents of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Hall.

A resident of Sher-e-Bangla Hall, Soumitro Roy, said he always found their hall's library and reading room closed in the three years since he started residing in the hall.

A resident of Madar Baksh Hall, Lutfar Rahman, said, "The reading room in my hall has around five to six chairs for some 1,000 students. So I hardly get a chance to study there."

Venting anger over the insufficient facilities, another resident of the hall, Rintu Biswas, alleged that the hall authorities are reluctant to pay any heed though each student pays Tk 30 for this facility while getting the hall seats.

During a visit, this correspondent found libraries and reading rooms of eleven boys' dormitories, except Shaheed Habibur Rahman Hall, and five female dormitories locked.

Many students of the female halls said the libraries had no fixed opening and closing hours.

Book numbers at the halls are insufficient and the available ones are very old and damaged, they added.

A resident of Munnojan Hall, Fouzia Mousumi, said, "The number of books in the hall library is so limited that I never found any book of my interest and the space in the reading room is so cramped that only ten students can sit there at a time."

Officials of the halls said the hall libraries remained shut due to shortage of sufficient budget and manpower and adequate space in the reading rooms.

Deputy Registrar Hamidur Rahman of Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall said they only get Tk 1,500 as annual development allocation for the hall library and this amount is insufficient.

Ayub Ali, section officer of Ziaur Rahman Hall, said they purchased 400 books in the last 10 years since the hall's library was established.

Suhrawardy Hall Provost Prof Akhter Faruque said they do not get the necessary funds to enrich and operate the libraries and reading rooms.

"Now-a-days students are not interested in coming to the library as most of them depend on photocopies for academic purposes," he headed.

Over the allocation for the hall libraries, RU Central Library Administrator Prof Dr Bidhan Chandra Das said, "We can not do anything more in this regard."

Admitting the reality, RU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Muhammad Nurullah said, "We will take necessary steps to ensure quality education for the students."

RU Vice Chancellor Prof Abdus Sobhan was not available for comment.

Spinning mill fire hurts 20 workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least 20 workers were injured while trying to douse a fire that broke out at a spinning mill in Kashimpur union under Gazipur sadar upazila yesterday.

Valuables worth around Tk 20 crore were damaged in the fire that originated from a short circuit at the mill of The Delta Spinning Mills Ltd around 4:30am, said its Chairman AKM Faruque Ahmed.

Fire fighting units from Gazipur, Savar EPZ and Kaliakoir doused the fire after four hours of frantic efforts.

The mill workers were injured while trying to extinguish the fire that damaged cotton, thread and machineries.

Bangladesh to bridge Asia-Pacific, South Asia

Says US diplomat

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador David Adelman in Singapore has highlighted the importance of the US-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue which was launched in May 2012 as part of US focus on South Asia.

Bangladesh represents one of the largest development assistance commitments that the Obama Administration has made, leading to a fall in poverty, and in maternal and infant mortality, he told a programme in Singapore on Friday, reports Press Trust of India (PTI).

Adelman said Bangladesh would geographically serve as a land bridge for trade between the Asia-Pacific region and South Asia, especially given the reforms underway in Burma.

About US and India relations, he said both countries had been targets of "violent extremists... India and US will have to continue to engage Pakistan to make South Asia peaceful and prosperous."

"The United States also believes that India has a critical role to play in confronting global

challenges such as terrorism, climate change, human rights and nuclear proliferation.

"Both India and the United States have been targeted by violent extremists," Adelman said in a lecture at the Institute of South Asian Studies, a think tank of the National University of Singapore.

He continued, "We welcome initial steps that India and Pakistan have taken to normalise trade relations, which are crucial to Pakistani efforts to improve its economy and counter extremism within its borders."

Adelman pointed out that the American and Pakistani troops had a common enemy in al-Qaeda, and a shared objective in supporting Afghanistan's security.

He also said the areas of mutual benefit and cooperation between the US, South Asia and Southeast Asia had manifested themselves most clearly in greater economic integration, fewer barriers to international trade and investment and strengthened bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Boy missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Ismail Hossain Emon, an eight-year-old boy and a nursery student of Baridhara

Model High School in Gulshan-2, went missing from his residence at 59/Ka, Kalachandpur in Gulshan of the capital on July 12.

The boy is of about three feet height and has a round face.

He is of swarthy complexion. Emon was wearing black half pants and a half sleeve T-shirt when he went out of the house without his parents' concern around 2:30pm.

His family members searched their relatives' and friends' houses but nobody could confirm his whereabouts. His father Md Abdur Rob has lodged a general diary with Gulshan Police Station in this connection.

His parents requested to inform at 01916189859 or the police station if anybody finds him.

Housewife 'commits suicide' in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife allegedly committed suicide at her rented house in Hazaribagh of the capital yesterday.

The victim was Shirin Akhter, 22, wife of Bellal, a tea stall owner.

Police recovered the body in the morning after it was brought down.

Police said Shirin had quarrelled with her husband over money Friday night. At one stage, her husband left the house and remained busy at the stall whole night. Shirin's sister-in-law and the sister-in-law's husband, who were present on the night, found her hanging with a scarf from a ventilator of a room in the morning.



PHOTO: STAR

Though setting up shops on footpaths is illegal, traders selling Iftar items make it a practice during the month of Ramadan throughout the capital, including this one on Topkhana Road yesterday.

New law drafted to regulate NGOs

BELAL HOSSAIN BIPLOB

NGO Affairs Bureau recently drafted a new law stating that its director general could penalise foreign funded non-government organisations (NGO) if it occurs to him or her that they are engaged in activities which are illegal or harmful for the country.

The proposed "The Foreign Donations (voluntary activities) Regulation Ordinance 2011" focuses on monitoring NGO activities and ensuring transparency and accountability, said the bureau Director (project 1) SM Ashrafuzzaman.

The punitive measures, as per the draft's Act-24, include cancellation of the NGO's registration, a bar on its activities for a period, imposition of a fine equaling to or three times the foreign donation the NGO received and punitive measures against those responsible as per the country's laws.

However, the NGO could appeal against the DG's decision to the secretary of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The hearing of the appeal must be done in the next 30 days and the consequent judgement would be considered final.

The draft also states that NGOs wishing to operate in the three hill tracts districts must get a "Non-Objection Certificate" from Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs before applying for the bureau's clearance, said the DG, Md Nurun Nabi Talukder.

The bureau had posted the proposed law on its website on January 24 and asked the development organisations to place their recommendations.

Nurun said they had finished taking the recommendations and the finalised draft would be placed on the website within a short time.

"The PMO is dealing with the draft and it will be placed before the cabinet and the national parliament after a discussion with the law minister," he added.

The bureau monitors NGO activities under a 2001 circular made by the PMO based on "The Foreign Donation (Voluntary

Activities) Regulation Ordinance 1978" and "The Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Ordinance 1982". Presently, foreign funded NGOs operate under the circular.

Nurun said the draft merges these three and introduces some new provisions to ensure accountability and transparency in the NGO sector.

"New provisions include taking action against those who misuse foreign funds," he said.

He claimed that the government had no motive to control NGOs through this new law but rather aimed at bringing clarity in NGO operations and stop malpractice.

The NGO community welcomed the new law and carried out discussions on it. They had some confusions and objections and requested their leaders to draw the government's attention in solving those.

In February, the NGOs gave their set of recommendations to the government.

Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh (ADAB) objected to a provision which allows suspension of an NGO's activities upon suspicion and without verification.

It also objected to the provisions giving unilateral power to the DG over the cancellation of registrations and restricting an NGO official's personal freedom by barring him from getting involved with political organisations.

"The government is actually trying to control the NGOs in the name of providing assistance through the law," said ADAB Vice Chairperson Rafiqul Alam.

"Our board observed that the government is formulating the law based on past findings about some NGOs being involved in militancy and other malpractices," he said.

NGO Federation of Bangladesh Chairperson Tajul Islam welcomed the law but stated that the government must ensure freedom to NGOs in carrying out their activities for the welfare of the country's people.

"We have gone through the law and recommended some provisions. Now, we expect the bureau to consider our recommendations," he said.

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