



Customers browse fresh produce at National Vegetable Fair organised by Ministry of Agriculture. The three-day fair began yesterday at the capital's Khamarbari.

Escalating repression, rape may force a public movement

Pankaj Bhattacharya says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Oikya Nap President Pankaj Bhattacharya yesterday said people in the country will wage a tough movement soon if the government fails to stop incidents of repression and rape.

"People are still silent over irregularities during the 11th parliamentary election but the way repression is escalating, none will remain silent anymore," Pankaj said at a press conference on "Condemnation and protest against rapes in different parts of the country".

Research and Development Collective (RDC) organised the conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

Pankaj said the prime minister can set a good example by declaring that no activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League and Awami League will be involved in rapes and those found guilty will face exemplary punishment.

He alleged that the National Human Rights Commission has played a biased role by denying correlation between the Subarnachar [Noakhali] rape incident and the December 30 polls, even though the victim herself had stated that she was raped by ruling party men due to her refusal to cast vote for "boat".

He urged the government to form a "National Taskforce" to ensure justice for rape victims.

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XULHAZ-TONOY MURDER
ABT man confesses to involvement

COURT CORRESPONDENT

An active member of banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team yesterday confessed at a Dhaka court that he, along with four others, took part in the murders of USAID staffer and LGBT activist Xulhaz Mannan, and his friend in 2016.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mainul Islam recorded the confessional statement of Asadullah for over three hours at his chamber after investigating officer of the case Md Manirul Islam, an inspector of Counter Terrorism & Transnational Crime Unit of DMP, produced him for recording the statement.

"I was one of the two ABT men who stabbed and obstructed the security guard of Xulhaz's home in Kalabagan, to let three

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UPGRADING ELENGA-RANGPUR HIGHWAY Government signs Tk 675cr deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday signed a contract with a China-Bangladesh joint venture company for upgrading a portion of 190-kilometre Elenga to Rangpur highway to four lanes to improve road communication between the capital and 16 northern districts.

Under the contract, Chinese firm Hego and local company Mir Akter Hossain Ltd will upgrade 19.8km highway road from west side of Bangabandhu Bridge to Hatikamrul Mor in Sirajganj in the next three years.

Aside from upgrading the portion of the highway, the contractor will maintain it for six years, at a total cost of Tk 675 crore.

Chief Engineer of Roads and Highways Department Ebne Alam Hasan and Leu Xyao Meyo, authorised representative of the joint venture company, signed the contract on behalf of their respective sides at a city hotel.

The project will jointly be financed by the government and Asian Development Bank (ADB), they said. Quazi Shahriar Hossain, director of SASEC Road Connectivity Project-II, said four deals including yesterday's one has already been signed and four others will be signed within March, before

the work starts.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Road Transport and Highway Division's Secretary Nazrul Islam, ADB country director Manmohan Parkash were present at the signing ceremony.

As per the deal, the contractor will build seven bridges, 17 culverts, one flyover, five underpasses, 12 bus-bays, one pedestrian overpass and six intersections.

Officials said Elenga-Hatikamrul-Rangpur is an important part of the South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) corridor, Asian Highway, Bimstec Corridor and Saarc Highway.

The existing two-lane highway is inadequate for carrying passengers and goods between Dhaka and the northern districts, they said.

In order to enhance sub-regional connectivity, increase passenger and cargo carrying-capacity and road safety, the government has taken the project to upgrade the two-lane highway to four lanes, with separate lanes for slow-moving vehicles at the cost of Tk 12,000 crore.

The government is upgrading Joydevpur-Chandra-Tangail-Elenga highway to four lanes under SASEC Road Connectivity Project.

Internal conflict will split BNP: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government has no intention to "split BNP" as the party will suffer the fate due to internal feud.

"BNP is now in a fragile condition... It has enemies within itself. Leaders of the party have already started talking in contradictory tones," he said.

The AL leader further said, "If BNP splits, it'll happen only because of the party's internal conflict. We don't need to divide the party."

He came up with the remarks while talking to reporters after signing the construction deal for a four-lane highway stretching from Tangail's Elenga to Rangpur.

The road transport and bridges minister said that the government wants BNP lawmakers to join the parliament as they want a strong opposition.

He said they surely do not consider BNP to be a "weak party" though it has become chaotic due to its "wrong" politics and activities.

Quader was also sceptical about the continuation of Dr Kamal Hossain-led Jatiya Oikyafront and was of the opinion that BNP's unity with the partners of the alliance will not last long.

He said the upcoming upazila election will be a competitive one, even if BNP does not join the local body polls.

We've always risen like a phoenix: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the government is conspiring to split their party.

"Plots are being hatched to weaken BNP and split it. They [govt] tried to do so in the past, but failed," he said while speaking at a milad mahfil at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

Fakhrul further said, "We would like to unequivocally say they won't be able to divide BNP as it has risen like a phoenix repeatedly whenever it faced devastation in the past."

BNP arranged the programme marking the fourth death anniversary of party chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko.

Fakhrul urged his party colleagues to reach out to people and mobilise support in favour of their party and its politics to further strengthen BNP.

He also called upon the democratic and patriotic forces to unite and resist

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Chief of Army Staff General Aziz Ahmed with four female officers, who have been promoted to the ranks of lieutenant colonel, at the army headquarters yesterday. The officers are Major Sanjida Hossain, artillery; Major Syeda Nazia Royhan, artillery; Major Farhana Afrin, artillery, and Major Sarah Amir, engineers.

PHOTO: ISPR

Govt accelerating anti-corruption drive in edu sector: Dipu Moni

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Developed countries should fulfill their commitment to spend 0.7 percent of their gross national income (GNI) as "Overseas Development Assistance" (ODA); otherwise, behaving as "world leaders" doesn't suit them, Education Minister Dipu Moni said yesterday.

She was speaking as the chief guest at a discussion on "Role of education in ensuring peace and development" at International Mother Language Institute auditorium in Dhaka.

Education ministry and Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco jointly organised the event marking International

Day of Education 2019.

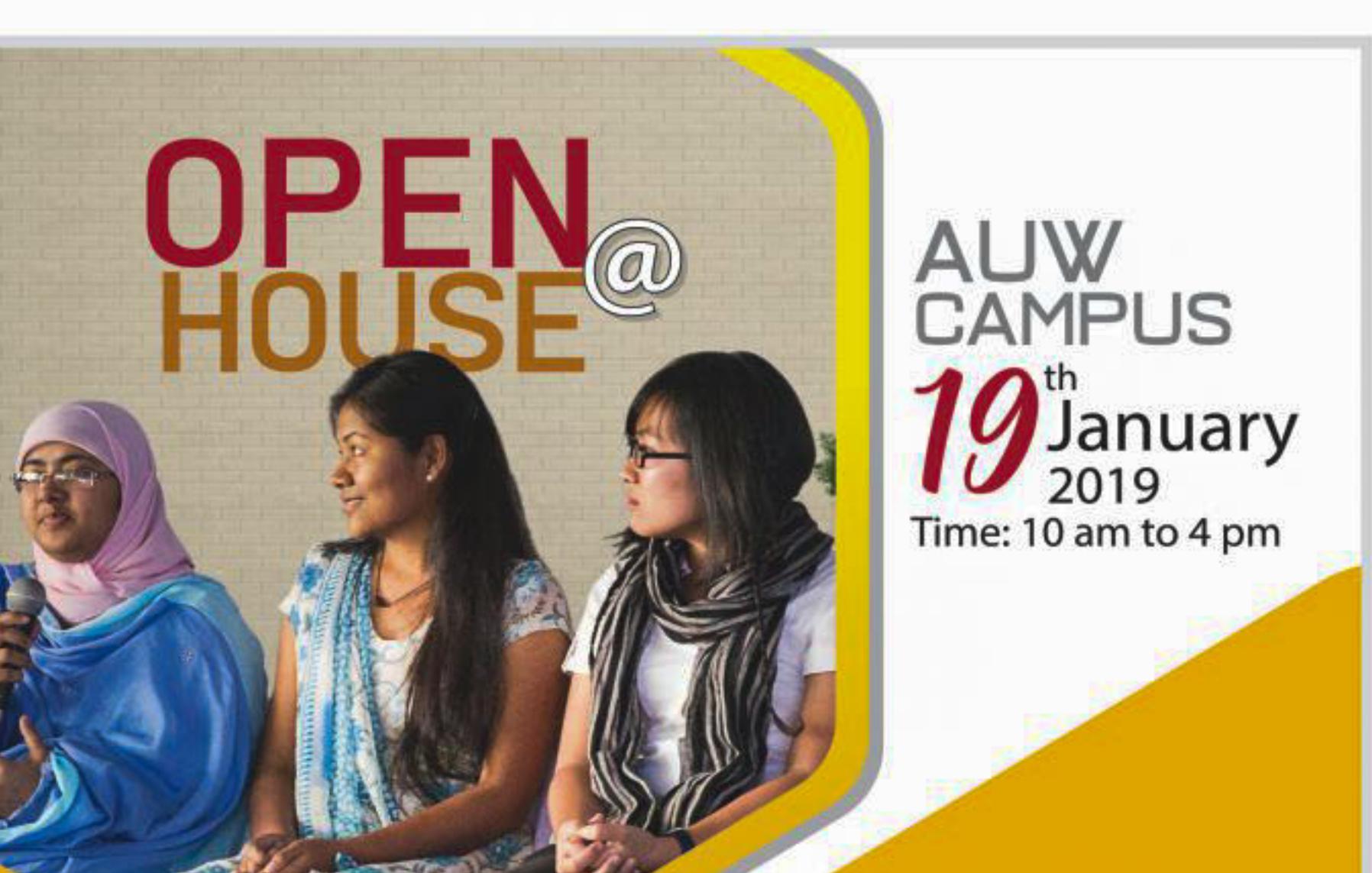
"Most of the [developed] countries don't fulfill their ODA commitment. Without fulfilling their responsibility, they cannot remain world leaders... All [countries] have to perform their duties for the betterment of the world," said Dipu Moni.

In her speech, Dipu Moni highlighted the Awami League (AL) led-government's plans for developing the education sector.

"Though only 2 percent of GDP is allocated for education on paper, in effect it is more as all ministries also spend on skills development in their relevant sectors," she said.

She mentioned awareness, tolerance, sense of humanity and human rights, and

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EC plans voter registration for expats, says CEC

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Election Commission plans to introduce a voter registration system for Bangladeshi expatriates, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda said in New Delhi, India yesterday.

The CEC said the commission will set up offices in several countries, namely Singapore, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, UK, USA, Italy, Australia and Canada. These are the countries where most Bangladeshi expatriates live.

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