

Conduct research to diversify exports

PM urges scientists, researchers

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged scientists and researchers to work for the welfare of mankind, as evolution of research and science is inevitable for the country's development.



"We want that you [scientists and researchers] will conduct your researches for people's welfare as fellowships are being given from the public fund," she said.

She also urged researchers to conduct studies to diversify Bangladesh's export basket alongside modernising and mechanising the agriculture sector, reports UNB.

"Research is essential if we want to increase our export items. I hope you all will pay special attention so that our export continues (to thrive) with diversified products," she said.

The premier made the remarks while distributing Bangabandhu Fellowship, National Science and Technology

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Crowds gather at Central Shaheed Minar to pay respects to HT Imam, who passed away early yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Abdul Hamid expressed deep shock and sorrow at the revered political advisor's passing. HT Imam was mourned by a host of well-wishers, including Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, Law Minister Anisul Huq and other ministers and high-level officials of the government.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NORTHERN PVT MEDICAL COLLEGE RANGPUR

Suspended, yet charging Tk 10 lakh for admission

Students demonstrate for 26 days, demand transfer to other institutions in Rangpur

KONGKON KARMAKAR, Dinajpur

Despite the government's suspension on Northern Private Medical College's educational activities in Rangpur five years ago, the medical college authorities have continued student enrollment, taking a huge amount of money from them.

In a meeting on June 12, 2016, then Health Minister Md Nasim had instructed the suspension of three institutions including Northern Private Medical College in Rangpur. He said the medical college was not following proper admission protocol, and there was a lack of facilities, crisis of skilled manpower, and shortage of patients and required beds.

The college also did not operate on its own land.

Minister Nasim had also said that the students of the suspended institutions will be transferred to other local institutions with adequate facilities.

Five years have passed since, and the students of Northern Private Medical College are in big trouble with their academics as lessons have almost come to a halt due to lack of teachers and other facilities.

There are 250 students enrolled in different years at the medical college;

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Draft Hindu property succession law prepared

National-level coalition emphasises equal inheritance rights for men and women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A draft Hindu succession law has been prepared with emphasis on equal rights of both men and women inheritors to their ancestral properties.

The draft "Hindu Succession Act-2020" has been prepared by the national level coalition "Hindu Ain Pronoyoney Nagorik Udyog", said a press release from Manusher Jonno Foundation, which is the secretariat of the coalition.

Different aspects of the law was discussed during a webinar yesterday, the press release said.

The draft copy of the law will be submitted to the law minister, said Rina Roy, director of MJF.

In the draft law, alongside sons and daughters, the rights of inheritors belonging to the "third gender" has also been included.

According to classical Hindu law, all daughters of a man are not equally eligible to inherit.

Unmarried daughters and married daughters with sons can inherit, while childless widowed daughters or daughters with no sons or with no possibility of having sons are excluded. However, property achieved by Hindu women can be inherited by their male successors, said the MJF release.

Due to inequality in inheriting properties, many Hindu women have to face discrimination and torture, even though the country's constitution guarantees equal rights of all citizens, it said.

Aspects of the draft law was discussed at meetings attended by Hindu lawyers, other professionals and representatives of Hindu religious organisations in different divisional cities, according to the press release.

Yesterday, High Court bench judge Justice Krishna Devnath, lawmaker from reserved seat Aroma Dutta, and Hindu community leaders Kajal Devnath and Milon Kanthi Datta, among others, addressed the webinar chaired by MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam.

First metro train leaves Japan for Dhaka

Expected to reach in April

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first set of metro train left Port of Kobe in Japan yesterday and expected to reach Dhaka via Mongla port next month.

"The train left the port at 18:00 Japan Standard Time [3pm Bangladesh time]," MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL) -- the implementing agency of the project -- told The Daily Star.

The first train was supposed to leave the port on February 20, but could not -- due to inclement weather, MAN Siddique told reporters on February 28.

"We hope the train would reach Dhaka within April 23. However, it would depend on weather," he said yesterday.

The train would reach a depot in Dhaka's Diabari area via Mongla port. It will have six coaches with the highest capacity of 2,308 in total, according to DMTCL sources.

Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 or MRT-6, country's first ever metro rail, is being built from the capital's Uttara third phase to Motijheel at the cost of Tk 22,000 crore.

DMTCL, in August 2017, signed a contract with Kawasaki-Mitsubishi Consortium for manufacturing 24 sets of trains for the metro rail. Five sets of train were manufactured within December last year. The second train is likely to reach the depot on June 16, and the third on August 13.

The original implementation period of the project was 2012-2024. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina later directed that metro services from Uttara to Agargaon be made operational by 2019, and from Agargaon to Motijheel by 2020.

Failing to meet the deadline, authorities in May 2019 said the project would be launched on December 16, 2021, as the country celebrates golden jubilee of its independence.

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CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS AT BEGUM ROKEYA UNIV

VC claims innocence, edu ministry snubs it

STAR REPORT

Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah yesterday denied all findings of University Grants Commission's (UGC) recent report on his reported irregularities, saying it is biased and fabricated, and Education Minister Dipu Moni patronised and insisted on it.

Hours after, the education ministry denounced Prof Nazmul's statement, terming it fabricated, baseless and motivated.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity, Prof Nazmul said, "I state without any hesitation that Education Minister Dipu Moni, for her personal animosity towards me, forced UGC to prepare the fabricated and biased report."

Prof Nazmul also claimed that he was a victim of local politics of Chandpur district.

"UGC member Muhammad Alamgir, who led the investigation team, is from Chandpur and served the minister's agenda by making me a scapegoat of corruption done by the previous VC," he said.

UGC had launched an investigation on 45 allegations against Prof Nazmul.

Recently, a probe body found irregularities surrounding construction of two 10-storey buildings and a mausoleum at the university. It recommended taking measures against those involved, including the VC.

In the press statement, the education minister said they have received the investigation report, on which a high-level meeting will be held soon at the ministry.

UGC TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER
UGC will investigate more allegations against the vice chancellor.

Higher-ups of UGC in Dhaka have already formed a body, although identities of all its members and convener could not be known. However, Md Jamal Uddin, senior assistant secretary of UGC's administration department, is the body's member secretary.

It is likely to visit the campus on March 14.

According to campus sources, seven BRUR teachers filed complaints with the education ministry in 2019, bringing various allegations against the vice chancellor, including irregularities, anomalies and corruption.

The seven are Gazi Majharul Anwar of physics department; HM Tariqul Islam, associate professor of chemistry department; Khairul Kabir, associate professor of finance and banking department; Mosiur Rahman and Komollesh Chandra Roy, associate professors of mathematics department; Sabbir Ahmed, assistant professor of public administration department; and Belal Uddin, assistant professor of economics department.

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Food security deteriorated in Bangladesh: FAO

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has placed Bangladesh in a list of countries that require external assistance for food to brave "severe localised food insecurity". The list includes 45 countries, including nine Asian countries.

Economic constraints due to effects of Covid-19, monsoon floods and high prices of staple foods have worsened food security and resulted in increased need of import or humanitarian aid, FAO says.

The information was revealed in the quarterly global report of crop prospects and food situation, published yesterday by FAO's Markets and Trade Division of under Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture.

The report is said to be based on information available as of February 2021.

Despite the government's expansion of social safety net programmes, the report quoted official estimates indicating 30 percent of Bangladesh's total population was poor as of June 2020, compared to 21 percent in June 2019.

While poverty levels increased due to income loss and a decline in remittance caused by the pandemic, the country witnessed recurrent floods throughout 2020, causing damages to the agricultural sector and households, and aggravating food insecurity conditions.

Crop damages and increased demands led to soaring prices of rice, and prices in January 2021 reached its highest. It is more than 35 percent higher on a yearly basis since October 2017, constraining access to food.

Yet, the country has been hosting about 8,60,000

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2 die in Dhaka road accidents

UP member killed in Jashore road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed in separate road accidents in Dhaka's Jatrabari and Khilkhet areas early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Prasenjit Kumar (25), a toll collector at Postogola Bridge, and Ashique Abdullah Helal (42), a staffer at a private security company.

Prasenjit was hanging from the window of a Dhaka-bound covered-van from Mawa to collect toll at Postogola Bridge around 3am.

An altercation took place between him and the driver and the driver sped up to Jatrabari with Prasenjit still hanging from the window, said Sub-inspector Avijit Podder of Jatrabari Police Station, quoting the deceased's colleagues.

At one stage, Prasenjit got hit by a roadside concrete block. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical

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WOMENS' EMPOWERMENT

ActionAid awards 4 grassroots leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four grassroots leaders have been recognised with "Nasreen Smriti Padak" yesterday for their outstanding contributions to women empowerment and society.

The award is a signature initiative of ActionAid Bangladesh in memory of Nasreen Parvin Huq, former country director of the organisation.

The awardees are Susmita Sultana Swarnali, a student of Chattogram, MS Hasna Begum, an agro-based entrepreneur from Gaibandha, and MS Rani Begum, a farmer from Gaibandha and Sohanur Rahman, a social worker of Jhalakathi.

They were awarded for their contributions towards women leadership in the local government system, entrepreneurship in agriculture, leadership in Covid-19 response and setting an example against sexual harassment and abuse, respectively.

ActionAid Bangladesh announced the awards at a webinar yesterday, titled "Celebrating Women Leadership", to celebrate achievements of women leaders from different generations all over Bangladesh, ahead of International Women's Day.

Grassroots and national-level women leaders also shared their untold stories of struggle, survival and bravery at the webinar.

Prof Firdous Azim, chairperson of Brac University's English and humanities department and member of Naripokkho, joined the webinar and said women's rights will be ensured only when social equality is established.

Academic Rasheda K Chowdhury, former adviser to the caretaker government, said women's rights have always

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Renowned consumer brand Lux was relaunched by its parent company, Unilever Bangladesh Limited (UBL), at the capital's Radisson Blu Water Garden hotel yesterday through a gala event. UBL Chairman and Managing Director Kedar Lele unveiled their latest products with modern branding in the presence of Lux Superstars and brand ambassadors of different generations including Zakia Bari Mamo, Moushumi, Kusum Sikder, Shamim Ara Neepa, Afsana Mimi and Bidya Sinha Saha Mim.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Is the future of social media audio only?

ZARIF FAIAZ

Social media, as we know it, might be headed for a big change. In the world of texts, photos and videos, an old trick is making a silent, but stomping comeback – audio chat rooms.

The trend started off with a buzzing audio only social networking platform called Clubhouse where anyone can host their own shows while others join in to start a conversation or simply just listen in. The platform has been getting a lot of attention lately in Silicon Valley and has had millions of downloads despite being currently only on iOS and invite-only.

What makes Clubhouse a popular choice with users worldwide is the flexibility to just step in and out of a live call with random strangers, celebrities, icons and stars as well as the ability to garner exposure by creating and hosting their own live shows.

It's a world of exclusivity and flexibility that don't require scrolling, interacting and paying attention to visual cues and offers a heightened degree of exposure to an exclusive audience.

The idea of Clubhouse has gotten so popular that it has prompted social media giants like Facebook and Twitter to step in and launch their own competing products. Facebook

is said to be working on one while Twitter has already launched its own, called Spaces.

Twitter announced on Wednesday that it is opening up Spaces to users. Spaces will allow users to join in talk in 'spaces' and soon, start their own 'spaces' as well.

The move by Facebook and Twitter to copy and release their own version of a competitor's product is hardly new. If records have shown anything, it's that products that generate hype enough to be adopted by giants usually catch on and stay on to live. In the past, Facebook has adopted Snapchat's features to create its own 'stories' feature that has, over the years, become immensely popular.

All these hype about the audio only social media has not only generated buzz, but also attracted security and privacy concerns from regulators. Clubhouse has been accused of breaching privacy and of allowing unmonitored, unfiltered content to pass through in the form of live audio broadcast. The company has said that it is reviewing the allegations and concerns and will soon address them in a future update.

Despite concerns, the buzz is all too loud to ignore and as Facebook and Twitter boards the hype train, it will be interesting to see what the future holds for social media.

Illustration: Zarif Faiaz