



As winter beckons, rural Bangladesh has already adorned itself in its age-old traditions -- starting the fog immersed mornings with the sweet nectar of date trees. The collectors of the date sap go through a tedious process of setting up pitchers late in the night, and wait till dawn to receive the fruit of their efforts. This photo was taken recently from Baraikandi of Barishal Sadar area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

2.5m children still out of school

Speakers stress on revamping sector to ensure education for all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even after the government and private sectors' continuous efforts to bring children to schools and improve education quality, about 2.5 million school-aged children remain out of educational institutions.

Meanwhile, the current dropout rate is still 17.9 percent for primary education, and it is much higher for secondary education, as fewer than half the students go through the five years.

Additionally, the student-teacher ratio remains very high, at 46 to 1, and about 77.4 percent of schools have double shifts.

Dr Mostafizur Rahaman, programme manager at Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), shared the data while presenting his keynote at a webinar yesterday.

The webinar titled "Achievement, challenges and way forward in Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee", was jointly organised by CSO Alliance, CAMPE and Dhaka Ahsania Mission.

According to Dr Mostafizur, only 26 percent of teachers have received leadership training, while there is a lack of trained teachers who are proficient in braille.

He recommended preparing a comprehensive plan to achieve national education targets, and a monitoring system involving the government, NGOs and teachers.

At the same time, authorities concerned need to focus on inclusive education materials and designing special programmes for disadvantaged groups,

ISSUES

- » Dropout rate still 17.9pc for primary education
- » Student-teacher ratio 46 to 1
- » Only 26pc teachers received leadership training
- » Teachers unwilling to allow children with disabilities integrate into schools

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Comprehensive plan to achieve nat'l edu targets
- » Monitoring system involving govt, NGOs, teachers
- » Inclusive edu materials, special programmes for disadvantaged groups
- » Conducive environment for students with disabilities

especially for indigenous children, he said. Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury joined the webinar as chief guest and discussed different positive initiatives for students who are from underprivileged communities.

She mentioned the arrangement of "Sheikh Russel Digital Labs" at educational institutions, mid-day meal programmes for students studying in government primary schools, separate wash blocks for girls, and disbursing stipends through mobile financial services.

She also urged to create a conducive environment for students with disabilities, including introducing braille and establishing separate wash blocks for them.

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JU's resident snake rescuers



MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

PHOTO: COURTESY

When one becomes aware of the presence of snakes, colour drains from their face out of fear, while only the courageous few prepare for defense with sticks -- aiming for the kill.

However, a stark contrast can be noticed on Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus, where a group of youths are working towards the conservation of snakes. Along with other endangered wildlife, they are devoted to rescuing snakes and releasing them in favourable environments.

In 2016, they founded the voluntary organisation Deep Ecology and Snake Rescue Foundation (DESRF).

Md Mahfuzur Rahman, founder president of DESRF, and his team

members recently shared their experiences with The Daily Star. They told the tale of one of their recent rescue drives to elaborate their process of work.

Mahfuz got a call from a stranger, who requested his assistance in saving a snake from the campus area.

The team rushed to the spot, which was adjacent to the university's playground and main entrance, with very little preparation. The snake was a highly venomous lesser black krait snake (*Bungarus lividus*), a species of the venomous elapid snake found in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

When Mahfuz's team reached the spot, however, the snake swiftly took shelter in a road-divider.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

GRAFT CASE AGAINST HEFAJAT LEADERS Little progress in 7 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven months have passed without significant progress in the inquiry into the graft allegation against Hefajat-e-Islam leaders.

"The inquiry is at the preliminary stage," Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) secretary Dr Md Anwar Hossain Howlader told reporters yesterday at ACC's Segunbagicha headquarters in the capital.

Anwar said they already have the bank details of Hefajat's former joint secretary general Mamunul Haque, along with those of several other members of the organisation, from Bangladesh Bank.

ACC is currently analysing the income tax files of Mamunul, his elder brother Mahfuzul Haque and other Hefajat leaders -- Ataullah Amini, Jalal Uddin Ahmed and Mohammad Mohsin Bhuiyan.

Money-laundering allegations surfaced against the organisation's leaders after the violence that ensued across the country in March this year, ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh.

Detective Branch and ACC launched inquiries, following which ACC sent letters to different government agencies, asking for reports on properties of 19 madrasas.

Anwar said they already have information on these madrasas' income and grants from 2016-17 and 2020-21.

"However, we're yet to get any significant information." Asked about the allegations of getting illegal aid from abroad against Hefajat, Anwar said they could not disclose anything regarding that at the moment as the inquiry is ongoing. In reply to another query, he said Hefajat leaders could be summoned for questioning if necessary.

Earlier, ACC chairman Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah said, "We've decided to inquire into their [Hefajat leaders] wealth as we learnt that the money has various sources."

They did not target any particular individual in the process, he added.

DB traced transactions of over Tk 6 crore in the two bank accounts of Mamunul Haque, joint secretary-general of the now-defunct Hefajat committee. Mamunul is currently behind bars in several cases of vandalism and rape.

Case against MJF, Banchte Shekha EDs dismissed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Narayanganj court has dismissed a case against Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam and Banchte Shekha Executive Director Angela Gomes, as the complainant did not appear before the court, and there is no ground for proceeding with the case.

One Akash Ghosh filed the case with Narayanganj chief judicial magistrate's court on September 21 under the Bangladesh Penal Code, accusing the two of wantonly causing provocation with intent to cause riot and criminal intimidation.

On Tuesday, Senior Judicial Magistrate Shamsad Begum delivered the dismissal order, saying that it appears from the documents that the case's complainant is not interested to run the case, and there is no ground for proceeding with it.

"The probe report has been accepted. The petition case has been dismissed under section of 203 of the Code of Criminal Procedure," the magistrate said in the order.

MORE NEWS

Mushtari Shafi laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Shaheed Jaya Mushtari Shafi was laid to rest with state honour at Chaitanya Goli Graveyard in Chattogram yesterday.

Earlier, a namaz-e-janaza was held at Jamiatul Falah Mosque Ground in the city post zohr prayers.

In the morning, people from all walks of life paid their last respects to Mushtari at Chattogram Central Shaheed Minar.

Mushtari was an artist of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra during the Liberation War of 1971 and organiser of the movement for the trial of the war criminals of 1971 in the early 90s. She was also involved with social and cultural activism.

Husband on fresh remand over death of DU student

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Iftekhar Abedin on a two-day fresh remand in the third phase in a case filed over the death of his wife Elma Chowdhury Meghla.

Elma, a student of Dhaka University, was allegedly tortured to death at her in-laws' residence in Dhaka's Banani on December 14.

Metropolitan Magistrate Arafatul Rakib passed the order.

Switzerland to invest Tk 1,100cr

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Switzerland will invest Tk 1,100 crore (Swiss Franc 119 million) in Bangladesh to support the country's successful LDC graduation and promote a just and resilient society.

The Swiss Embassy in Dhaka made the announcement as it launched a new cooperation programme 2022-2025, which is aligned with the Agenda 2030 and Bangladesh's development priorities, including the Eight Five-Year Plan. The event was launched at a city hotel yesterday.

Law not enough, awareness also vital

Says minister on ending violence against women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said torture and violence against women cannot be stopped only by exercising laws.

"We have to build awareness in this regard. Also, the government and NGOs will have to work together for that," he said.

He made the remarks while speaking as chief guest at a meeting organised by Dhaka North City Corporation at Bicharpati Shahabuddin Park premises in Dhaka's Gulshan.

The minister said government is working to prevent violence against women. After the meeting, the minister told reporters that the formulation of a law for appointing Supreme Court judges is under process.

DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam presided over the meeting where Jatiya Sangsad member Nahid Ijhar Khan also spoke.

Nowhere else to go

150 residents of Ctg's tilted houses in misery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Around 150 people are in shock and despair, after the buildings and tin-roofed houses they live in tilted at Chattogram city's Majirghat area on Monday night. They have no idea about what will happen to their homes, and have now taken shelter at their neighbours' houses.

Meanwhile, many are still residing in the damaged structures as they have nowhere else to go.

Three buildings, five tin-roofed houses and a Hindu temple tilted while CDA was dredging Gulzar canal.

This correspondent talked to many of the houses' residents, mainly from the Hindu community, who shared their woes.

"If Chattogram Development Authority [CDA] excavated the canal in a planned manner, our buildings, houses and temple would not have tilted," said Aroti Das.

"We constructed the building after taking a loan from the bank. We have become

helpless now," said Krishna Das.

"Around 150 people of 25 families became homeless all of a sudden, just for CDA's short-sightedness," said Babul Das.

"Our temple was destroyed. We have moved the idols to a residential house. How long will we stay in others' houses? We want our temple back," said a priest of the damaged temple, seeking anonymity.

"The tilted buildings are gradually becoming riskier. Local administration didn't take any steps to protect us," said another resident.

On Tuesday, Kazi Hasan Bin Shams, chief engineer of CDA, said, "Owners of the buildings have illegally occupied the land. We will take stern action against them."

Asked about rehabilitating the residents, Mohammad Mominur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Chattogram, said the area is under the jurisdiction of city corporation.

Despite repeated attempts, CCC mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury could not be contacted for comments.



While many of the residents are now staying at their neighbours', some could not leave behind their broken homes, resorting to passing nights under the damaged structures. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



To raise awareness against plastic pollution, Chattogram-based organisation Boi Bondhu, in cooperation with the city corporation, introduced a unique campaign. Under this one-month long initiative titled "Give plastic, take seeds", the organisation is collecting scrap plastic materials from people and giving them plant seeds in return. The photo was taken from the port city's Jamalkhan area yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN