

WB to lend \$550m



Frederick Temple

AFP, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) yesterday it would lend roughly 550 million dollars to Bangladesh as a first installment of development funds under a three-year plan.

The amount, to be finalised at a meeting of the Bank's board of directors in Washington on June 19, is expected to nearly double the 300 million dollars provided last year, said Frederick Temple, the WB country director for Bangladesh.

"The first chunk of the World Bank financial support will be given without any judgement [on performance]," Temple told

reporters.

But he said the second installment of the loan, aimed to help the South Asian nation achieve economic growth and fight poverty, would be made after a performance assessment.

Temple, who is to return to Washington later this year at the end of his three-year tenure in Bangladesh, praised various initiatives in economic and other fields made in the first 15 months of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government.

He said donors "want to see evidence of commitment to change and initiate steps to change before we come with financing."

"We don't say everything is perfect. We go on saying there is very promising initiation of stabilisation (and) structural reforms," he said, adding that there was still a "big agenda on the table."

Temple's comments came a week after a Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) donors meeting praised Dhaka for achieving reforms but cautioned that it needed to do more on human rights, governance and crime.

Bangladesh wants two billion dollars from the BDF, which groups the World Bank, the IMF, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and donor countries including Australia, France, Japan, Britain and the United States.

PDB to tap wind power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An agreement was signed yesterday between the Power Development Board (PDB) and the Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) to generate wind-powered electricity in coastal area.

It will help generate 10-megawatt power in coastal areas, said a PDB press release.

As per the agreement, the IIFC will provide technical and PDB financial support to run a feasibility study in the coastal belt.

M Sirajuddin, secretary of the PDB, and Golam Mostafa, company secretary of the IIFC, signed the agreement.

GDP to gyrate up

Agriculture, manufacturing, transport to see big jump

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The GDP growth this fiscal has been projected at 5.33 per cent, 0.91 percentage point higher than last fiscal's, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

In arriving at the tentative growth rate, it has been expected that agriculture, which accounts for 16.82 per cent of GDP, would see a big jump to 3.59 per cent from last fiscal's negative growth of 0.62 per cent.

It has been estimated that this year's cereal production will be high at 268.94 lakh tonnes, which was 259.06 lakh tonnes last fiscal.

Aman rice production has been shown quite high at 111.15 lakh tonnes, although private field reports

say aman yield had been quite dismal. The field reports have been corroborated by high paddy price and a huge cereal import of 2.4 million tonnes.

The second largest contributing sector -- manufacturing which contributes 15.94 per cent to GDP -- would also see 1.14 percentage point more growth from last fiscal's and would stand at 6.62 per cent.

Transport, storage and communication, which accounts for 10.76 per cent of GDP, will see 7.33 per cent growth against last fiscal's 6.56 per cent.

The BBS has also adjusted the share of different sectors to GDP. Agriculture's share has gone down from last fiscal's 17.46 to 16.82 per

cent this fiscal, manufacturing's has increased from last fiscal's 15.86 to 15.94 per cent, transport's has gone up from 9.69 to 10.76 per cent, and community, social and personal service's share has gone up from 8.99 to 9.20 per cent.

Real estate's contribution has decreased from 9.11 to 8.82 per cent.

Last fiscal, the GDP growth rate was provisionally put at 4.8 per cent and then it was revised down to 4.42 per cent.

In his last budget speech, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman had said this fiscal's GDP would grow by about six per cent. However, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had forecast a 5.2 per cent growth.



PHOTO: STAR

Police rummage around in a flat of Eastern Flower in Siddheshwari after a robbery yesterday. An iron safe is left bare of gold and money at the SA Paribahan office at Kakrail after a burglary.

Robbers, burglars rule the city

Three flats looted, four offices burgled, Tk 55 lakh taken away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cash and valuables said to be worth over Tk 55 lakh were looted in separate incidents of robbery and theft in Siddheshwari and Kakrail yesterday morning.

ables reportedly worth Tk 8.54 lakh from three flats of Eastern Flower at 46, Siddheshwari.

At Kakrail, burglars took away cash and valuables worth Tk 46.65 lakh from three offices in the early morning.

Robbers looted cash and valu- Victims of Eastern Flower rob-

bery said eight men carrying firearms entered the apartment in a car at 5:10am after overpowering the guards. They tied up the guards-- Shamsul Arefin, Asaduzzaman and Rahat-ul-Islam--and huddled them together on the landing of the ground

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Comilla Head Post Office robbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

The Comilla Head Post Office was looted Monday night by a gang of about 10 robbers who cleaned out its treasury room of cash and valuables worth over Tk 22 lakh, police said yesterday.

The robbers entered the post office by breaking the grill of its toilet window and tied up the two night guards. They then entered the strongroom, broke the vault open and stole Tk 22.54 lakh worth of cash and valuables before fleeing the spot.

Police arrested the two night-guards -- Ibrahim, 45, and Nazrul Islam, 35, -- for their suspected involvement in the robbery.

Police recovered 12 broken locks, two machetes, a torch, a set of night-guard uniform, a screwdriver, four blades and two key rings.

Assistant Postmaster Mamunur Rashid filed a case with Kotwali thana.

OIC FMs' meet opens in Tehran today

BSS, Tehran

The four-day 30th OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference begins today at the Islamic Republic of Iran's Broadcasting (IRIB) conference centre here in the backdrop of recent events in Iraq.

Except Iraq, all the 57 member countries of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) have been invited to attend the conference. Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will lead the Bangladesh delegation.

Conference chairman and Iranian Foreign Minister Syed Kamal Kharazi will chair the confer

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US embassy's clarification

The US embassy has contradicted a report of The Daily Star published yesterday and said the United States is not requiring Bangladeshi nationals to have machine-readable passports in order to be admitted to the United States after October 2004.

"According to these reports, a US State Department official furnished this information at a briefing in Los Angeles. In fact, the State

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DCC finally ready for aerial spray

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is now ready for aerial spraying of larvicide to combat mosquitoes.

The DCC has bought 380 gallons of larvicide, Envil, and the chopper has also been equipped, sources said. About Tk 1.26 crore has been expended for the medicine, machinery and taxation, sources added.

Though the pilots are now being trained for the operation, the larvicide will probably be sprayed in the next Culex mosquito season, DCC officials said at a press conference yesterday.

"We're now fully equipped with aircraft and trained pilot to combat the mosquito menace. But we are yet to decide when to start the spraying," said AZM Shafiqul Islam, chief executive officer of the DCC.

"At the moment we are concentrating on controlling Aedes mosquitoes. And we don't need aerial spraying for it," said Dr. Ashraf

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BAC probes BSS project on human rights

STAR REPORT

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) is investigating alleged corruption and irregularities in the Tk 75.02 lakh Improvement and Promotion of Human Rights Issues project at the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

The Danish International Development Agency (Danida) funded the project to promote human rights issues and create public awareness through news reports. It gave the fund as part of its support to human rights and good governance programme in Bangladesh.

BAC sources said they are now conducting a 'comprehensive investigation' as per instructions from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to immediately identify persons involved in misappropriating the Danida fund.

Earlier, during preliminary inquiries into allegations received from various quarters, the BAC detected embezzlement of fund allocated under various heads. These include manpower, training workshop, seminar, travel cost, investigative reports, general reporting and equipment.

In April last year, the BAC sent a

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Rain soothes sultry capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The capital was under the feel of a mild heat wave until evening rain came as a relief yesterday.

The summer heat coupled with humidity has spread countrywide since Monday, lifting the mercury curve up.

Temperature in the capital edged up to 36.2 degrees Celsius yesterday from 36 on Monday, according to a weathercast.

Yesterday's highest temperature was recorded at 40.2 degrees Celsius in Rajshahi, and Ishwardi recorded 40 degrees Celsius, said the Met office. Temperature hit a two-day high in Jessore at 40.3 degrees Celsius on Monday.

"The heat wave may continue a few days more," said

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