

Offer easy loans to create entrepreneurs

Agri minister urges banks

UNB, Dhaka

Agriculture Minister Dr Md Abdur Razzaque yesterday urged banks to come forward with easy loans to help create entrepreneurs in both agriculture and non-agriculture sectors.

The minister came up with the call at the inaugural programme of the 958th branch of Agrani Bank in Dhanbari upazila of Tangail from his official residence.

He said the importance of agriculture in the country's economy is immense. The overall development of the country and sustainable poverty alleviation will be possible through the development of agriculture.

"And to do this, we need to create entrepreneurs in both agriculture and non-agriculture sectors and cooperate with them in the development of rural economy," said the minister.

He said there are many opportunities to create small entrepreneurs at the local level in agricultural processing, manufacturing and repairing of retail agricultural machinery in the country. For this, banks need to come forward with the attitude of creating entrepreneurs in these sectors, he added.



A seller shows off the fish-in-demand, currently attracting large crowds to the bazaar. This market at Mirpur's Pirebagh was crowded yesterday, with people looking to buy hilsa at cheaper prices. A fish weighing about 1.5kg was being sold for around Tk 700-800.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

FAKE COVID-19 CERTIFICATES BY JKG

Charges pressed against Sabrina, seven others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detectives yesterday pressed charges against eight people, including JKG Health Care Chairman Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury, in a case filed over issuing fake Covid-19 certificates.

The other accused are: Sabrina's husband JKG Chief Executive Officer Ariful Chowdhury, Executive Officer Shafiqul Islam, graphic designer Humayun Kabir Himu and four other employees - Himu's wife Tanzina Patwary, Jebunnesa Rima, Sayeed Chowdhury and Biplob Das.

The IO dropped the name of Mamunur Rashid as his involvement with the incident was not proved.

Of the accused, Shafiqul, Humayun and Tanzina gave confessional statements before magistrates on different dates narrating their involvement in issuing fake Covid-19 certificates.

Md Liakot Ali, an inspector of the Detective Branch (DB) of police and also the case's investigation officer, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

In the charge sheet, the IO said the charges brought against them of issuing fake Covid-19 certificates were primarily proven and they should be brought under trial for their alleged involvement with the incident.

On June 23, Kamal Hossain, who was given a fake Covid-19 certificate from JKG Health Care, filed the case against Humayun, his wife Tanzina and several unknown people with Tejgaon Police Station in this regard.

Police arrested the couple the same day and they confessed to their involvement in issuing fake Covid-19 certificates.

Following their confessional statements, police arrested seven others including Dr Sabrina and her husband on different dates.

Another accused Shafiqul Islam gave a confessional statement before a Dhaka magistrate.

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT

Rokeya univ teacher granted bail by HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted bail to Sirajum Munira, a suspended teacher from Begum Rokeya University Rangpur (BRUR), in a case under the Digital Security Act.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan granted the ad-interim bail after virtually hearing a petition.

Petitioner's lawyer Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua told The Daily Star that there is no legal bar for her client to get released from Rangpur jail, following the HC order.

Law enforcers arrested Sirajum Munira, a teacher of BRUR's Bangla department, on June 14 in a case filed under the Digital Security Act on charges of posting derogatory updates on her Facebook profile, defaming the recently-deceased veteran Awami League leader and lawmaker Mohammad Nasim.

Members of Tazhat police station of Rangpur Metropolitan Police reportedly arrested Sirajum Munira from her residence in Rangpur city at midnight on that same day.

KILLING OF EX-ARMY MAJOR SINHA

Three youths caught up in accusations

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Just before heading to Cox's Bazar a month ago, Shipra Debnath, a student of Stamford University in Dhaka, told her brother Suvojit Debnath: "I will direct a documentary."

However, this aspiring young filmmaker's dreams were shattered on July 31 after Teknaf police shot dead an ex-army major Sinha Mohammad Reshed Khan, who was producer of their travel documentary.

All three crew members -- Shipra, Shahedul Islam Sifat and Tahsin Rifat Nur -- students of Stamford University's Film and Media Studies department -- are aspiring filmmakers, said their family members, teachers and friends.

Shipra and Sifat, third-year students, are in jail now. Police handed over Rifat, a final-year student, to his guardians' custody.

The three students and Sinha were staying at Nilima Resort in Himchhari area of Marine Drive Road to film the documentary.

Ramu Police arrested Shipra from the resort in a narcotics case on early August 1, claiming they recovered bottles of liquor

from her room.

Her terrified family said the allegations against Shipra are untrue and fabricated.

Shipra's brother Suvojit believes her sister is a victim of police action. "They tried to create a plot in which they can cover up their misdeeds and select the most-known technique, involving drugs," Suvojit said.

The brother added that he was able to talk to Shipra after police picked her up from the resort on that night. Till then, she had no idea what was happening as police did not inform them.

Later, police released Rifat, but arrested Shipra in a narcotics case.

Suvojit said his parents are now sick and living at their village home.

Another arrestee Sifat was arrested in two cases -- one on murder charges of his co-worker Sinha and the other for narcotics.

His uncle Masum Billah termed the cases fictional.

"Police wrote in the FIR that ex-major Sinha was killed by their guns and bullets. But they charged Sifat under section 302. It is self-contradictory," Masum said.

Masum told this correspondent that he was able to talk to Sifat after the incident.

"Sifat informed me over phone that they were carrying camera, tripod, hard disk, laptop, ... Police are providing no information about the seized items."

"However, police in the case statement mentioned that they recovered 250 grammes of cannabis and 50 yaba pills. The digits of the recovered items itself show that it is fictional," he claimed.

Masum, who is now in Cox's Bazar, alleged that police are not helping them with any information.

Hailing from Barguna, Sifat had been living at Masum's place in Dhaka.

Advocate ZI Khan Panna, chairman of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), which is offering legal assistance to the accused students, told The Daily Star, "The families are not even being able to protest publicly for their release because the state is involved here."

The rights organisation in a statement yesterday called on authorities to not harass the young students.

'It's a clear violation of int'l standards of freedom of expression'

Article 19 on India's J&K policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UK-based human rights organisation Article 19 has expressed deep concern over what it termed "the ongoing blanket of communication restriction, harassment and intimidation of journalists" and "the shrinking press freedom" in Jammu and Kashmir.

"It is a clear violation of international freedom of expression standards in the country," said the organisation's South Asia Regional Director Faruq Faisal in a statement yesterday, marking one year since India abrogated the Article 370 and 35A of its constitution that provided some autonomy to the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

A year has gone by with activists, journalists, and local and international organisations pleading to the Indian government to restore some normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir, but it has fallen to deaf ears, the rights body said.

Article 19 said the Indian government has used the pandemic to impose further lockdowns in the region. It is tightening the grip over the region to curb any sort of

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Lighter vessel capsizes at Bay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A lighter vessel carrying 950 tonnes of raw sugar capsized at Bay of Bengal near Bhasanchar yesterday morning.

One of its 12 crew members, identified as Gias Uddin, remained missing while others were rescued by members of other vessels.

Sources at Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) said rescue vessels of Bangladesh Navy were in search of the missing crew member.

The vessel -- MV AL Noor-1 -- after loading the imported raw sugar from a mother vessel at the outer anchorage of Chattogram port was heading for Narsingdi, said BIWTA Deputy Director Mohammad Salim.

It started sinking around six nautical miles from Bhasanchar around 9:30am when water entered its engine room after a crack developed at the bottom from strong water currents. Staff of lighter vessels MV Akij Logistics-27 and MV Success-33 rushed to the ship and managed to rescue 11 crewmen.

Tajul Islam, master of MV Akij Logistics-27, told The Daily Star that they rushed there upon hearing a radio message from the sinking vessel. They were able to rescue the crewmen after three hours of effort in the rough water, he added.

CHILD LABOUR CONVENTION MJF lauds ILO on universal ratification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday congratulated International Labour Organisation (ILO) for achieving universal ratification on the child labour convention, thus giving all children legal protection against the worst forms of child labour.

In a statement, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "We are delighted to learn that with the formal deposition of ratification instrument by Kingdom of Togo on August 4, ILO achieved universal endorsement of child labour convention adopted by all 187 member states. As a front-runner in Bangladesh in making meaningful changes in the lives of children by withdrawing them from all forms of child labour, MJF joins the global celebration of this historic feat of ILO."

"MJF and a number of child rights organisations assisted the Bangladesh government to formulate National Child Labour Elimination Policy in 2010. With the universal ratification now in place, we all must create an atmosphere where child labour is unacceptable. Parents, society, NGOs and the government are duty-bound to work for bringing an end to child labour," she added.

The MJF executive director also regretted that the country has lost an entire generation to modern slavery. "We must not allow losing another generation, therefore, this universal ratification should usher in the time for universal accountability," she added.

Referring to the declaration of International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour by the UN, MJF urged the government for prioritising children in all policies to achieve relevant SDG targets.

MJF also emphasised the need for effective coordination between the government and different non-government organisations, and also among different ministries working on children's issues, to eliminate child labour in the country.



Riding a crane-lifted work box, a Dhaka North City Corporation staff uses a hacksaw to sever a glut of wires hung from electric pillars around the Dhanmondi area. City authorities have launched a drive to cut off illegal connections by service providers operating in the area. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



A city corporation worker sprays insecticide around Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in the capital to keep Aedes mosquitoes in check. Both DNCC and DSCC have taken measures to tackle dengue, as the vector-borne disease exhausted the country's healthcare system last year.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Two killed by road crash in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Two people were killed and five persons injured in a road accident on Thakurgaon-Dhaka highway at Jagannathpur in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila on Tuesday night.

The deceased were identified as Masiran Nesa (105), wife of late Abdur Rashid of Dalua village under Birganj upazila in Dinajpur; and Rahman (25), son of Mohammad Hanif of Chakhaldi village, Thakurgaon, said police.

The accident occurred at around 9:30pm when a Dhaka-bound bus collided head-on with a battery-run auto-rickshaw, Thakurgaon Police Station Officer-in-Charge Tanvirul Islam told The Daily Star.

All the victims were in the auto-rickshaw, said the OC, adding that Masiran died on the spot.

On information, police and fire fighters rushed to the spot and took the injured -- identified as Nasima Khatun (40), Amena Khatun (80), Anwara Begum (60), Sajeeb (30) and Gopal (25) from Chakhaldi village -- to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital.

Police seized the bus but its driver and his helper managed to flee the scene.

Highway police filed a case with Maidandighi Highway Police Station in this connection, OC said.

Tk 2,000Cr MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

Petition filed to show 3 AL leaders arrested

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday submitted a petition to show three Awami League leaders of Faridpur town unit arrested in a Tk 2,000 crore money laundering case.

The accused are -- Nazmul Islam Khandakar (61), president of AL Faridpur town unit, Billal Hossain (54), former treasurer of Faridpur Sramik League, and Arifur Rahman (40), general secretary of town unit Jubo League.

They were arrested from different places in the town last week. Uttam Kumar Biswas, assistant superintendent of police of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and also the case's investigation officer, submitted the petition to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mamunur Rashid fixed August 19 to hear the petition in presence of the accused.

The same court fixed August 12 to hear another petition submitted on July 30 to show arrested three others accused -- Mahfuzur Rahman Mamun, Faridpur town AL joint general secretary, Md Moniruzzaman, Faridpur Poursava extended ward 25 AL general secretary, and Sumon Saha, an AL activist -- in the same case.

All six accused were arrested on the basis of confessional statements of two brothers, who were arrested earlier.

On July 24, Sajjad Hossain alias Barkat, former AL general secretary of the unit, and his brother Intiaz Hasan alias Rubel, former president of Faridpur Press Club, gave confessional statements before a magistrate narrating their involvement in laundering money.

SM Miraj Al Mahmud, a CID inspector, lodged the case against the two brothers under the money laundering act with Kafur Police Station on June 26.