

ADB forecasts 5.4pc growth rate in '97

Bangladesh is set to register real GDP growth of 5.4 per cent in 1997 and six in 1998 as against 4.4 and 4.7 per cent achieved in 1995 and 1996 respectively, a country projection report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) made available in Dhaka yesterday said, reports BSS.

The report, Asian Development Outlook 1997 and 1998, said if the steps, taken up under the reform programmes of the present government after its assumption of office in June 1996, are carried out properly

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Shantibahinim kidnap eight, demand ransom

BANDARBAN, Apr 23: Eight tribal farmers were kidnapped late Monday night reportedly by tribal insurgents from two villages in Roangchhari thana under the Bandarban district, reports BSS.

According to police and security force sources, a number of Shantibahini gunmen raided Longlaipara and Bumpara villages at mid-night and took six Khlong tribal farmers from Longlaipara and two from Bumpara to an unknown place.

The kidnappers demanded ransom for the release of the hostages, the sources said.

Four of the hostages were freed today by the kidnappers to convey their demand for ransom, the sources added.

PM goes to Tungipara today

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, Apr 23: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will arrive here tomorrow.

She will address a meeting of officials and the local elite at the circuit house on law and order in the district.

Later the Prime Minister will visit the Dogloss Memorial School Centre to see the progress of a literacy programme which was inaugurated by her on March 16.

The Prime Minister will have an overnight stay at her ancestral home at Tungipara and offer Feteha at the Mazar of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman next morning. She will also inaugurate a loan distribution programme at Tungipara and leave for Dhaka the same day.

Khaleda to address public meet at Gafargaon Apr 29

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia will address a public meeting at Gafargaon in Mymensingh on April 29 at 3 pm, said a press release.

Central leaders of the party will also address the meeting.

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Ganges Barrage feasibility study project ready for cabinet approval

By Mizan Ali

A Tk 60-crore project proposal for conducting feasibility study and preparing design of the proposed Ganges Barrage will be placed before the cabinet soon, according to highly placed official sources.

The feasibility study and designing of the barrage is likely to take two and a half years. The project proposal was prepared by the Water Development Board (WDB), the sources said.

The project will be designed in such a way that the government can initiate the project with its own resources. However, option for seeking foreign assistance will remain open, the sources said.

About the ability of Bangladeshi engineers and experts to take up such a big project, the officials said that the 615 meter Teesta Barrage was designed and constructed by the Bangladeshi engineers.

Talking to The Daily Star, M H Siddiky, Director General of the Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO) said that the Ganges Barrage was a top

priority project of the government.

"The barrage has been planned with the aim of checking environmental and ecological destruction and restoring the conditions for growth of normal habitat in the southern region of the country," Siddiky said.

The objective now is different from what it was in the 60s, Siddiky added.

"In the 60s, construction of the Ganges Barrage was proposed with an emphasis on irrigation and agricultural development, but the situation has changed now. The river Gora, which is the only fresh water carrying artery in the region has now died down and the southern belt is worst hit by salinity. Priority now is to resuscitate Gora and save the southern belt from salinity specially during the dry period," he said.

The WARPO DG said that the possible site of the barrage is likely to be at Pangsha, 60 km downstream of Hardinge Bridge. This has been based on

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Bank reforms body suggests Loan defaulters, their family members can't be directors

By Inam Ahmed

The Bank Reforms Committee has recommended that no loan defaulter or his family members should be allowed to become directors of any private bank.

The Committee, formed soon after the new government took charge last year with the task of outlining far-reaching reforms to make the banking sector transparent and competitive and to serving customers more efficiently, has submitted its report to the Finance Ministry last week.

Headed by Kazi Fazlur Rahman, an advisor to the caretaker government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, the committee has drawn up a guideline, for the first time, that the board should not consist of more than one member from the same family.

Further, members of the same family should not hold

ties of sponsors, bankers say.

The committee has also proposed that the paid-up capital of new banks should be Tk 40 crore instead of the current provision of Tk 20 crore. Of this Tk 40 crore, at least half the amount will have to be paid by the sponsors. They should not be allowed to borrow money from another bank and invest in new banks.

The sponsors must have cleared their income tax and corporate taxes of their firms to be eligible for directorship.

To stop the current trend of controlling the board of banks through placing family members in it, it has recommended that the board should not consist of more than one member from the same family.

Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, in his opening remarks, emphasised the importance of good governance, efficient management

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Restore parts of '72 BB Order, demand 14 financial instts

By Staff Correspondent

A Chhatra League (BCL) leader of Tangail was gunned down at Rajabazar in the city late Tuesday night.

Police said that Shamim Talukder, 27, suffered at least 10 bullet wounds in his body when an unidentified gang fired on him in a lane at East Rajabazar at about 11:45 pm. He died on the spot.

Shamim hailed from Akur Takur Para in Tangail. He was joint secretary of pro-Awami League BCL, Tangail district unit. He came to Dhaka a few days back and was residing at his uncle's house at Khilgaon in the city, police said.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately. Police, however, suspected that the incident might be linked with conflict between two MPs from Tangail.

Shamim went out of his uncle's Khilgaon residence when a young man called him at about 5 pm. Later, Tejgaon police recovered his blood stained body from an East Rajabazar lane and sent it to the Dhaka Medico.

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18-week Peruvian hostage drama ends

All captives freed, all guerillas killed



Smoke billows from the residence of the Japanese ambassador in Lima Tuesday as Peruvian special forces storm the residence to rescue 72 hostages held by Amaru rebels for 18 weeks.

— AFP/UNB photo

LIMA, Apr 23: Peruvian troops stormed the Japanese ambassador's residence here yesterday in a surprise operation that freed 71 of the captives held by Marxist rebels since December, but left 17 dead including all the hostage-takers, reports AFP.

The risky raid was launched without warning and came amid negotiations to end the 18-week crisis peacefully. Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto stressed in a hastily-arranged press conference in Tokyo that the Japanese government had not been informed of the move. He, however, thanked the Peruvian President.

From the start, Tokyo had insisted force should not be used to end the crisis, launched when the rebels stormed the ambassador's residence on December 17.

One of the freed hostages Bolivian ambassador Jorge Guimilco, said the captors were playing a football match in the reception hall of the residence when the troops launched the assault.

Officials said 140 crack troops entered the residence compound through an underground tunnel, first highlighted when rebels cited its construction as the reason for an abrupt

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Shilu Abed

passes away

By Staff Correspondent

Shilu Abed, Director of Aarong, passed away at a city clinic yesterday afternoon. She was 55.

Wife of Fazle Hasan Abed, Executive Director of BRAC, Shilu Abed suffered a severe heart attack a few months back and recovered fully.

She then went to her office yesterday for the first time. On return, she complained of breathing problem. She was rushed to a city clinic where doctors pronounced her dead.

Asked about this, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan

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BNP yet to finalise its agitation programme

By Nazmul Ashraf

BNP's planned countrywide agitation is unlikely to be launched prior to its scheduled programmes in the Chittagong Division, peasants' grand rally at Narsingdi and a reception to the ICC Trophy winning Bangladesh cricket team in the

BNP's reception to cricketers on Sunday

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday formed a 45-member committee to accord a grand reception to the national cricket team on April 27 (Sunday) for lifting the ICC Trophy and securing a berth in '99 World Cup, reports UNB.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia will be the chief guest at the reception to be held at 4 pm at her official residence at 29 Minto Road.

Former State Minister for

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Hide traders' claim refuted

Banks provided Tk 219 cr despite overdue loans

Four nationalised commercial banks and a private one

gave Tk 147 crore to hide traders as fresh loan for procuring hides during this Eid-ul-Azha, the peak season for hide collection, reports UNB.

Of this, Tk 27.5 crore was disbursed by the Sonali Bank, Tk 99 crore by Janata Bank, Tk 331 crore by Agrani Bank, Tk 198 crore by Rupali Bank and Tk 153 crore from National Bank.

The secretary said the banks disbursed Tk 279 crore last year (1996) among the hide traders, of which Tk 162 crore was realised. The excuses shown by the defaulters in this regard are not acceptable," he said.

In 1995, the amount of disbursed loan was Tk 283 crore, according to Bangladesh Bank sources.

Usually, the banks should not provide loan to those who do not repay outstanding loans, but, Amir-ul-Mulk said, loan was provided this year for the sake to leather industry which collects its 40 per cent hide.

He said the banks provided the fresh amount in spite of the fact that Tk 1,200 crore lying outstanding with the hide traders. "Of this, Tk 553 crore has already become overdue," he added.

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Law & order reviewed

Rape, abduction mark sharp rise in March

By Staff Correspondent

The number of rape, abduction and criminal cases recorded with police in the country marked an increase last month over that of February, according to reports presented at the regular monthly meeting of senior police officials at the police headquarters here yesterday.

The meeting, presided over by Inspector General of Police (IGP) M Azizul Haq reviewed the overall law and order in the country. The IGP gave some "important instructions" for curbing criminal activities.

Criminal cases of dacoity, robbery, murder and riot, in March was 907, 12 more than that of February. Of those, cases of dacoity were 80, robbery-140, murder-279 and riot-408. However, the number of riot cases dropped by 35, the press release

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Breakup of the earlier-provided loans is: Tk 147 crore from the Sonali Bank, Tk 331 crore Janata Bank, Tk 371 crore Agrani Bank, Tk 198 crore Rupali Bank and Tk 153 crore from National Bank.

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Reshma, 25, wife of Masud Rana, a rickshaw mechanic, reportedly went to buy medicine for her child on Monday night, but did not return to their shanty near the Road No 3, Dhamrai. Her body was later recovered hanging at the staircase of Azimpur Staff Colony Tuesday morning.

Correction

Zainul Hoque Sikder, Director of National Bank Limited (NBL) in a statement yesterday said he had adjusted his loan amount before getting the notice of the Bangladesh Bank by depositing ten per cent of the outstanding loan on March 25 and April 1. Accordingly, a rescheduled proposal for gradual adjustment of the loan was sent to the Bangladesh Bank and it was approved by the BB on April 9 and 15.