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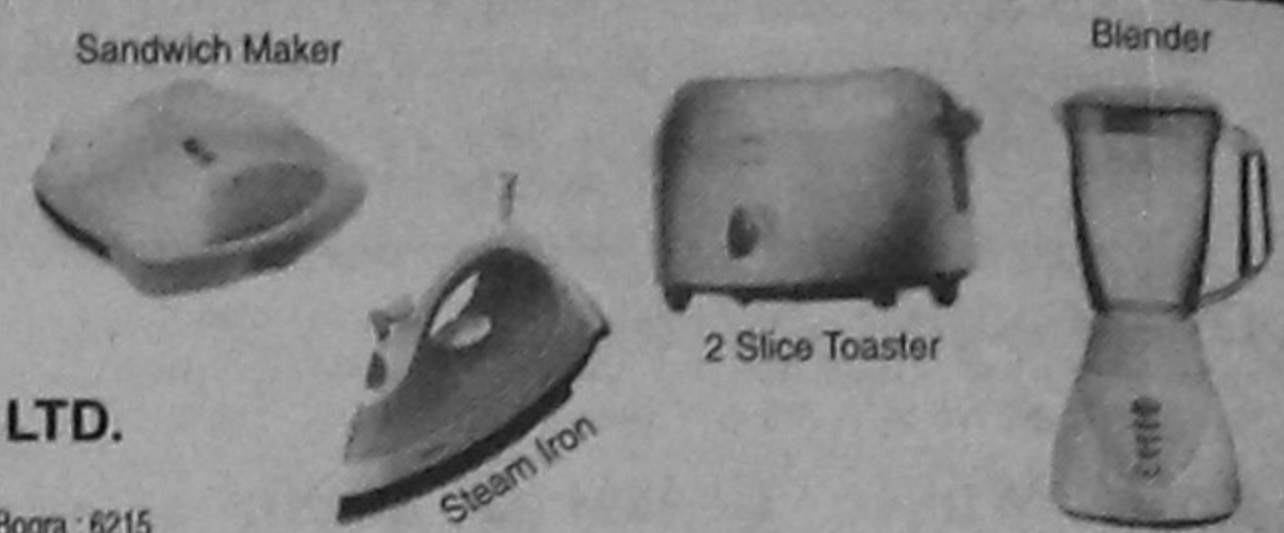
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Increased public sector investment in agriculture demanded

By Staff Correspondent

The country's leading agricultural economists said yesterday there should be more public sector investment in agriculture, which they termed as the engine of economic growth.

Focusing on the 2000-2001 budgetary allocation to agriculture, they lauded the "pro-production" spirit of the proposed budget but expressed dismay over non-allocation of enough funds for crop sector and agricultural research purposes.

They were speaking at the discussion on "The New Budget and Agriculture Sector" at BARC Auditorium in the city. Bangladesh Agricultural Economists' Association (BAEA) organised it.

Agricultural economists pointed out that while non-productive sectors such as defence saw a 6.9 per cent increase in revenue expenditure, agriculture only had a rise of 3.1 per cent despite being the most productive one.

Presenting a keynote on the topic, Dr Jahangir Alam, direc-

tor general of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute, held that the crop sector is getting less and less amount of budgetary allocations for last 10 years despite the fact that crop sector alone contributes 72 per cent of total agricultural value addition.

Dr Alam was critical about pre-budget "meet-the-sectors" programme of the finance minister. He pondered how many farmers, agriculturists and agricultural economists the minister had met before laying out his fiscal plan.

The keynote speaker as well as the other participants were, however, highly appreciative of the government's measures to support the farm sector such as continuation of explicit subsidy in fertilizer and implicit subsidy in irrigation.

Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil later said he will have talks with the finance minister soon and try to take up the issues. "I think there are still scopes for him (Finance Minister) to accommodate few of your

suggestions, if not all, in the proposed budget, which the parliament hasn't passed yet."

Addressing the discussion as the chief guest, Jalil particularly appreciated the agricultural economists' concern about resource allocation to agricultural research.

BAEA president Dr M A Sattar Mondal said "people of the country would be the ultimate loser if a situation is created where the private sector does not come forward and the public sector also refrains from investing in the face of fiscal deficit and bank borrowing."

Dr Mondal, also a member of Planning Commission, said Bangladesh's aggregate measures of support (AMS) to agriculture barely accounted for 3.5 per cent of total farm gate value of agricultural produces in the country whereas it could stretch the support volume up to 10 per cent under the WTO regulations.

Dr Mohammad Hossain Mondal reminded the policy planners that Agriculture

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One arrested for allegedly inciting wife to commit suicide

By Staff Correspondent

A retired army officer was arrested on charge of torturing his wife that led her to commit suicide.

But police filed a case against him for 'inciting' his wife to commit suicide.

Sutrapur police in the city arrested Maj (ret'd) Ehsanul Bari, 50, when he went to the police station to file a case saying that his wife Beauty Alias Rawan, 28, had committed suicide.

Police suspected Bari and detained him. Bari is a resident of Gopibagh.

Beauty was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at about 2:30 am yesterday, where doctor declared her dead.

There were black scars in her neck and scratch marks in her left cheek, police and hospital sources said quoting the inquest report.

Police said Beauty was the second wife of Bari and he used to lock her in the house whenever he went out.

Police quoted Bari's neighbours as saying that they often heard her crying. She might have committed suicide to escape the torture, police said.

A board may be formed to conduct her autopsy at the DMCH today, hospital sources said.

Chaktai Canal re-excavation project opens

CHITTAGONG, June 18: Mayor of Chittagong A B M Mohtuddin Chowdhury inaugurated five-kilometer long Chaktai Canal re-excavation project at a simple ceremony at Bahaddarhat here today, reports BSS.

The canal is being re-excavated by the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) under test relief programme.

Chaktai Canal originating from the Karnaphuli river at Chaktai runs through the city's Khatunong, Asadganj, East-West Bakolia, Chawkbazar, Kapasola, Katalganj, Muradpur, Chandgaon and Bahaddarhat areas.

Mayor has sought cooperation of the people for re-excavation of Chaktai Canal to get rid of water logging in the busiest trading areas of the city.

He, however, said that the CCC would take necessary action for removing unauthorized structures on both sides of the canal.

Charampatra scripts handed over to PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received yesterday the scripts of Charampatra, the most popular and inspiring radio programme that encouraged countrymen and the freedom fighters during the Liberation War, reports UNB.

M R Akhtar Mukul, writer and presenter of the ultimatum on the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, and his two granddaughters handed over the scripts along with book "Ami Bijoy Dekhechi" (I Have Seen the Victory) and printed book of "Charampatra" to the Prime Minister in the afternoon at the National Museum auditorium.

Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Bangladesh National Museum authorities organised the script handover programme with Prof Mustafizur Rahman, president of the caretaker board of the Museum, in the chair.

The prime minister said the greatest contribution of Charampatra was that it exposed the ugly faces of the Pakistani juntas in a very easy and simple language to the people.

"I think if the Charampatra had been aired in formal language, it would not have touched the hearts of the people."

"We used to wait to listen to the Charampatra and all the programmes, including songs, that were very inspiring as igniting fire in the blood," said Hasina.

"Now, we are preserving the history. Generation after generation there will now be the real history. The interest to know the history is now increasing among children and youths," the Prime Minister said.

FRHRC Chairman Som Prasad Pandey led the inspection and will prepare a report on its effect on Nepalese villagers.

"India has grossly ignored Nepalese sovereign rights by constructing the high embankment which has caused severe damages from floods and threatened the lives of over 15,000 villagers," he said.

FRHRC members issued a strong statement demanding that Nepal immediately negotiates with the Indian government to find a solution to the problem.

"This problem should be solved at an early date with the cooperation of India," Koirala said.

He said it was sad that India had not paid any attention to the problem in spite of the efforts by the Nepalese government to draw attention to it.

PARC to submit recommendations by month end

By Special Correspondent

The Public Administration Reforms Commission (PARC) on Saturday discussed inter-cadre rivalry in the administration and activities of welfare associations, virtually functioning as trade unions and pressure groups hampering smooth functioning of the government, PARC sources said.

The meeting chaired by PARC Chairman ATM Shamsul Huq reviewed its (PARC) recommendations to be submitted to the Prime Minister by the end of this month, the sources added.

Attended by PARC members and high officials including the Cabinet Secretary and the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the meeting discussed the issue of appointment at deputy secretary level through open competition.

Creation of a Senior Management Pool (SMP) to include deputy secretary to Secretary level officials also came up for discussion.

The meeting also took up the issue of welfare associations in government departments often functioning like trade unions, defying rules and regulations

for government servants.

The issue of inter-cadre rivalry particularly that with the administrative cadres had remained unresolved for long. In recent times, it has become an issue of agitation by 26 cadres, making it virtually an agitation against administrative cadres by the rest in the government service.

The 26 cadres who include doctors, engineers and agriculturists have been pressing for what they say scope of promotions to deputy secretary level and above through open competition.

ATM Shamsul Huq told The Daily Star after the meeting that setting up of SMP came up for discussion to provide scope to everyone for promotion.

"The SMP would help modernise the administration to make it befitting to the needs of the 21st century as we are looking ahead leaving aside the immediate administrative problems which are matters to be resolved by the Establishment Ministry and parliamentary standing committee on establishment."

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MR Akhtar Mukul handing over the scripts and the book of Charampatra to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for preservation at the National Museum at a function yesterday.

— PID photo

Dam close to Nepal's border 'India grossly violated international law'

KATHMANDU, June 18: India has grossly violated international law by constructing a dam on the Rapti river close to Nepal's border without the government's consent, the Parliamentary Foreign Relations and Human Rights Committee (FRHRC) said today, reports AFP.

A team representing the FRHRC Saturday carried out an on-the-spot inspection of the construction, state radio said quoting team members.

The dam has caused water to overflow the river's banks inundating over 35 villages and the homes of over 15,000 people, ruling Nepali Congress General Secretary Shushil Koirala told journalists.

The tall embankment was constructed while Nepal was facing a political instability in the last couple of years, India should have sought the Nepalese government's formal approval for the construction of such embankment as per international norms and law, Koirala said.

According to international

law such an embankment cannot be constructed within eight kilometres of a country's border. The dam is located about 200 metres from the Nepalese border.

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Next hearing in Shazneen Rape Case on July 9

By Court Correspondent

The Special Court for Women and Children Repression Prevention, Dhaka yesterday fixed July 9 for next hearing in the Shazneen Tasmim Rape Case.

Judge M Shah Alam Miah yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the case as he was busy with some other cases.

Both the prosecution lawyers and the defence lawyers were ready for hearing of the case yesterday with appearance of the complainant of the case.

As per directive of the Supreme Court on May 28, the Special Court framed charges against the principal accused Shaid under Section 6(1) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 1995 and five others under Section 6(1) and 14 of the Act.

Charges were framed against the six accused on April 13, 1999. But the lawyers for the two accused — Minu and Parveen — filed a Criminal Appeal with the High Court Division of the Supreme Court to set aside the order passed by the Special Court.

After hearing both the sides the High Court stayed the operation of the case on July 6 last year.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court vacated the stay order upon a petition filed by the prosecution lawyers on February 17, 2000.

At the same time the court stayed the proceedings of the Shazneen Murder Case pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka till disposal of the rape case.

Shazneen, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered of their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Shahidul Islam Shahid, a domestic help of the house, is the principal accused in the case while contractor Hasan is the alleged mastermind.

Shahid, Hasan, Badal, carpenter Shaniram, guard Humayun Kabir and maid — Minu and Parveen — were arrested soon after the incident. Among them, Humayun Kabir died of cardiac arrest last year.

All the accused were present at the court during the proceedings.

Public prosecutor M A Bari, Advocate Mahbub Ahmed and Advocate Shaidul Islam Mukul appeared on behalf of the complainant while Advocate Saikat Ferdous and M A Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam for the accused.

Jordan's king dismisses government

AMMAN, June 18: Jordan's King Abdullah today dismissed conservative Prime Minister Abdul-Raouf al-Rawabdeh and replaced him with a liberal leaning politician with strong business credentials, officials said, reports Reuters.

The monarch asked Ali Abu al-Ragheb, a prominent member of parliament and former minister, to take over from Rawabdeh in the first government change since he succeeded his father, King Hussein, early last year.

Ragheb and his new cabinet, which will include three deputy premiers, are expected to take the oath of office in front of the monarch at the royal palace within the next 24 hours, officials said.

Rawabdeh's 15-month old cabinet has been accused by liberal and conservative politicians alike of nepotism in appointments to senior jobs in the coveted civil service and of graft and abuse of public funds.



The walkway near the Paltan Crossing in the city has been besieged by hawkers, and the pedestrians and the authorities do not seem to mind. Or do they? — Star photo

Budget ridiculous: Saifur

Further rise in inflation rate predicted

Former finance minister M Saifur Rahman said yesterday his successor would have been sacked for authoring such a "ridiculous" budget for fiscal 2000-2001 had there been a responsible government in the country, reports UNB.

"Finance Ministers of any other countries of a finance director of a big corporate house must be sacked if they showed same revenue projection in two consecutive years," he told a discussion meeting at the Jatiya Press Club in a scathing criticism of Kibria.

Saifur said the finance minister projected around Tk 24,000 crore in revenue in 1999-2000 as well as 2000-2001.

"How does he claim himself to be a finance minister when he projected same revenue in two consecutive fiscals," asked Saifur.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria placed a revenue budget of Tk 24,151 crore in 1999-2000 and Tk 24,198 crore in 2000-2001. The revised revenue budget of Tk 21,345 crore was estimated for the fiscal 1999-2000.

Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (CAB) organised the post-budget meeting with CAB president Dr Jafarullah Chowdhury in the chair.

Associate Professor of Finance and Banking Department of Dhaka University M Mujahidul Islam presented the keynote.

Former finance minister Fasih Uddin Mahtab, DU economics department chairman Prof Abu Ahmed, Prof Syed Rashidul Hasan of marketing department, executive editor of the Daily Janakantha Borhan Ahmed and chief editor

of the Financial Express Reaz Uddin Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.

"The budget is a ridiculous document and full of dreams... it's not even a budget. The minister does not know what a budget is," the BNP lawmaker, Saifur Rahman, said.

He observed the budget document is the highest system of accountability. "The ambition should be encountered by reality."

He said revenue projection above 12 per cent over previous year's collection is a highly ambitious one considering GDP

growth rate at around 5 per cent, inflation around 5 per cent and the rest 2 per cent for management efficiency.

Saifur blasted the borrowing from banks to use the money for project financing. Now 21 per cent of the total revenue budget required for debt servicing which was 10 per cent during BNP government he said.

He favoured an independent central bank for strong fiscal and monetary management, but with a chief who will not allow a finance minister to go for deficit financing.

He cautioned that the inflation rate would rise further unless the fiscal management is put on the right track within next six months.

The former finance minister said the expansion of tax holiday would not help increase investment in the country because of law-and-order situation.

He also criticised reduction of import duties on bulk milk powder.

Expressing his concern about public borrowings, Prof Abu Ahmed apprehended that the borrowing would lead the government to devalue the taka again within a month or two.

Results of 14 students were withheld and two students were expelled cheating at the examination.

Mahmuda Akhter Shirin, roll number 961681 of ATI, Sher-e-Banglanagar, Dhaka topped the combined merit list securing 5037 marks. Moriam Begum, roll number 962038 and Arifur Rahman, roll number 962121 of ATMDI, Savar obtained second and third positions respectively.

Results of Agriculture Diploma Examinations, 2000 held in January under Bangladesh Technical Education Board, Dhaka were announced yesterday, reports BSS.

The pass percentage is 75.03. A total of 3039 examinees out of 4050 came out successful. Among the successful candidates, 1832 got first divisions and 1207 second divisions.

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Fresh argument in Humayun Zahir Murder Case begins

By Court Correspondent

Fresh argument in the Humayun Zahir Murder Case began at the 8th Additional District an a Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

The Judge Mir Awal Hossain fixed July 2 for next hearing of argument in the case.

Humayun Zahir, a leading businessman and then Chairman of the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) was shot dead on the premises of his Dhamondi residence by a group of assailants on April 8, 1993.

Father-in-law of Zahir filed a case with Dhamondi police station accusing seven people the same day.

The investigation officer submitted a chargesheet accusing seven people, including Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu after a detailed investigation.

Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu and Abdul Matin were granted bail by the High Court. They appeared before the trial court yesterday.

The rest two Tanmoay and Kaiser, now in the custody, were produced before the court yesterday.

Public prosecutor Quamrul Islam appeared for the state while advocate Mahbub Ahmed for the accused.

Tania Rape Case adjourned till July 31

By Court Correspondent

The Special Court for Women and Children Repression Prevention, Dhaka yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the Tania Rape Case following a time prayer by the prosecution lawyers till July 31.

The Judge M Shah Alam Miah adjourned the proceedings of the case as the prosecution witness did not appear before the court yesterday.

Tania, a eight-year-old girl was raped on the premises of the police control room adjacent to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court, Dhaka on March 10, 1998.

The accused — Obaidul Haque Mora, now in the custody, was produced before the court yesterday.

A bail petition on behalf of the accused was moved, but the court did not give any decision regarding the petition.

Dacoity at CEPZ: Another arrested

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 18: Another person was arrested yesterday in connection with dacoity at a Korean factory at CEPZ.

Acting on a tip-off, DB police arrested Babul Sharif alias Babul, 23, from Agrabad area under Double Mooring thana in the city.

Babul told police that he got Tk. 30 thousand as a share of the dacoity and deposited Tk 24 thousand to the account of his brother with a local branch of Agrani Bank.

A group of dacoits numbering about 12 looted Tk 16 lakh from Lims (BD) Limited — a Korean factory located at CEPZ — on June 7.

With the arrest of Babul, police have so far arrested six people, including a woman in connection with the dacoity.

Container port

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again on June 20 to chalk out the next course of action.

The government started negotiations with SSA to work out new terms and conditions for a draft agreement for the 500 million dollar US-funded project.

The government move angered the 22 trade union bodies who formed an alliance to resist the project.