

## Amendment to Farm Labourers Wages Policy approved

The Cabinet yesterday approved amendment to the Farm Labourers Wages Scale Fixation, Appointment and Regulation Policy 1990 for streamlining jobs of agricultural workers, reports UNB.

"As a result, the daily wages of skilled and unskilled agricultural farm workers would increase and job facilities and rules and regulations would be consolidated," the cabinet said.

Approval to the policy was given in a meeting of the Cabinet at the PM's office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The Cabinet also recommended list of holidays for year 2001 and endorsed omissions from and commissions to provisions of the Land Port Authority Act 2000.

It further approved a proposal for the government to endorse and abide by the ILO Convention 182(1999) and the ILO Recommendation 190(1999).

The meeting also discussed implementation of the Public Law 190(1999).

## Sami dismisses report on ULFA leader

Foreign Secretary C M Shafi Sami yesterday dismissed the report of Indian wire services and the broadcast by BBC that a guerrilla leader of Assam was injured in group clash in Bangladesh and undergoing treatment in Dhaka, reports UNB.

"We have no such information," said Sami when a correspondent drew his attention to the BBC report during a routine briefing in the Foreign Office.

Indian news agencies PTI and UNI, quoting a senior army officer in Agartala, said Paresh Barua, the military chief of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), was wounded and his deputy Raj Barua was killed in a factional clash in Khagrachhari on Saturday.

Picking up the report, BBC also said the wounded leader was taken to Dhaka for treatment.

A senior official in Khagrachhari over telephone said the report was "absolutely false and baseless." He said nothing of the sort had happened anywhere in the Hill Tracts.

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# Economists question WB role in setting policy agenda

Star Report

A debate sparked off yesterday between senior World Bank officials and leading economists of the country who questioned the Bank's role in making Bangladesh's policy agenda.

They were speaking at a meeting on Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative, Bangladesh (SAPRI) at the office of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in the city.

The visiting World Bank Vice-President, Jozef Mritzen, and its Country Director Frederick T Temple were among others who spoke at the meeting, moderated by CPD Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan.

The economists said that World Bank was merely engaged in writing reports and doing nothing for development of important sectors like power and other physical infrastructures.

They questioned the participatory nature of WB's Country Assessment Study (CAS). They said that a US company having no idea about Bangladesh got the contract for conducting the participatory process of the CAS while the facilitating local company did not have any knowledge about economics.

In response, the WB officials said that it could not bring about much change in the power sector because of a system loss as high as 40 per cent.

To this, the economists said that the Dhaka Electric Supply Author-

ity (DESA) was created according to WB prescription.

"You are blaming us for following your prescription," said Nasrin Khandaker, a teachers of economics at Dhaka University.

Temple said that WB was working to help the government bring about reforms in the judiciary, governance and other fields.

But the economists questioned its activities in the country.

The economists also said that participants in consultation meetings on CAS fail to deliver effectively as they are not given the findings in advance.

Prof Rehman Sobhan said the WB backs out if the government refuses to comply with earlier decisions. A process should be evolved to carry on with on-going projects by making necessary changes, he said.

Jozef Mritzen said, "The attitude should not be to agree and continue just to have the money."

He said sometimes it becomes difficult for a country to agree to certain things as those are "extremely dangerous...politically".

He said growth in Ecuador and Mali was less as structural adjustment was done badly there.

Considering the structural adjustments, Bangladesh should have

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## JS body for Division-1 in jail for all political prisoners

By Nazmul Ashraf

Once again, the politicians have differed to differ on an issue involving their own interests.

It happened at a time when they are sharply divided on almost every issue concerning national politics. Lawmakers belonging to the conflicting political camps yesterday unanimously agreed on the simplification of a jail code to benefit the political prisoners.

On previous occasions, lawmakers in both the benches had similar understanding on raising their salaries and allowances and importing duty-free cars.

At a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Home Ministry, legislators of the ruling Awami League, and opposition BNP and Jatiya Party resolved that the political prisoners would get Division-1, the superior status, the moment they enter the jail.

The standing committee also listed a section of bureaucrats who will be entitled to the same privilege. The meeting also redefined the criteria of the under trial prisoners deserving the Division-1 status.

Under the existing code, the trial court on

approval by the District Magistrate determines the status of the under trial prisoners. The process often takes time for the prisoners to get the status they deserve.

Division-1 is the status enjoyed by prisoners who by social status, education and lifestyle are accustomed to a superior mode of living. Division-2 is applicable to those whose status and mode of living are not superior to those of the ordinary people.

As decided by the standing committee, all former ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers and others of equal rank and status, sitting and former MPs, chairmen of Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Pourashava (municipality), presidents and general secretaries of central and district committees of political parties, and the first class government officials (both serving and retired) would fall in the bracket of Division-1 prisoners on admission to the jail.

However, the meeting did not define clearly as to how the political prisoners under the above criteria will be determined.

In line with the committee decision, a bill seeking

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## DU temporarily expels Hemayet, 3 others

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University authorities yesterday temporarily expelled four students and served show-cause notices on five others for their alleged involvement in Thursday's untoward incident in Kataban and Nilkhet areas adjacent to the campus.

The four are Syed M Hemayet Hossain, a student of M.Com final year in Accounting and general secretary of BCL Ziaur Rahman Hall unit, M Daud Hossain Raza of MSS final year in Political Science, Akhteruzzaman Jewel, a Masters student in Geography and Environment department and library secretary of DU unit of BCL and Akhteruzzaman Panir of second year in Economics.

Panir and Jewel were also declared 'undesirable persons' on the campus. Panir was also expelled for one year in the past for his involvement in violence at

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Optimum use of idle space, indeed... as pedestrians prefer the old habit of zigzagging through busy roads, traders at the Baitul Mukarram Market make most of the empty spaces on the footbridge. Lined up backup power generators and containers of fuel and lubricants have turned the footbridge into a storehouse of sort. -Star photo

## Set up third court during vacation for speedy trial

Ruling party urges Chief Justice

By Staff Correspondent

Ministers and senior leaders of ruling Awami League yesterday appealed to the Chief Justice to constitute a new Bench of the High Court immediately to review the split verdict on the death reference of five of the accused in the Bangabandhu murder case.

Addressing a party rally at city's Paltan Maidan, they appealed for constitution of the Bench during the ongoing vacation of the court.

They also demanded expeditious completion of the trial process for execution of the convicts in the case.

In a split verdict on Thursday, one judge of a Division Bench of High Court upheld the trial court's verdict that gave death sentence to all the 15 accused in the case while the other judge acquitting five of them.

As per provision, the Chief Justice will now send

the verdict regarding the five to a new Bench for review.

AL organized the rally yesterday as part of a weeklong programme to press its demand for early execution of the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Prime Minister and AL President Sheikh Hasina was scheduled to chair the rally. It was presided over by Foreign Minister and AL Presidium member Abdus Samad Azad.

The poorly attended rally was also addressed by Presidium members LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Home Minister and AL Organizing Secretary Mohammad Nasim, Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Industries Mini-

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## State attorneys studying death ref cases

By Special Correspondent

State attorneys are working on the death reference of five accused in Bangabandhu murder case acquitted by one of the two judges in a Division Bench of the High Court on Thursday.

Both the judges upheld death sentence of the 10 other accused.

The attorneys are studying similar split verdicts to determine what should happen in such a case, sources close to them said yesterday.

They have already applied for certified copies of the judgement given by the HC Bench comprising Justice Ruhul Amin and Justice Khairul Huq.

Justice Ruhul Amin acquitted five of the 15 former army men sentenced to death by a trial court on November 8, 1998 for

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The ruling party rally at the Paltan Maidan yesterday fizzled out into a virtual non-starter when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina didn't turn up. Although the meeting featured some senior leaders, it simply failed to pull the crowd. -Star photo

## 196 dev projects for men, only 50 for women!

By Staff Correspondent

One hundred and ninety-six development projects aimed at 'welfare of men' have been undertaken in the country in fiscal 2000-2001 while the number of such projects for women is only 50, a seminar in the city was told yesterday.

Of the Tk17,500 crore development budget for this fiscal year, Tk 545.48 crore is for 'directly women-related projects' and Tk 4605.20 crore for 'men-related projects', said a study report presented at the seminar on 'Allocation for Women in National Budget'.

Organised by Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha (BNPS), the seminar discussed impact of national budgets on women's development, contribution of women in government's revenue earning and deprivation of women from their due shares.

Dr Pratima Pal Majumder presented the key-note paper on 'National Budget and Empowerment of Women.' Executive Director of BNPS Rokeya Kabir

presided over the seminar and Mahbub Kabir of the organisation gave the address of welcome.

"The objective of our study was mainly to assess the impact of various taxes on socio-economic condition of women as well as the impact of national budget on women's empowerment," Dr Pratima said in her paper.

Analysing the national budgets of three fiscal years including the current year, "we found that dependence on foreign aid, high defence costs, budget deficit and lack of wisdom to involve women in mainstream development current," are some the major causes of inadequate allocation for women, she noted.

In fiscal 1998-99, 28.94 per cent of the development budget was allocated for projects for the welfare of both men and women. Of this, only 2.59 per cent was for women and the rest was mainly for

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## Hitler confesses killing of Rab, discloses names of 9 others

By Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 18: Regional leader of Purba Banglar Communist Party Rafiqul Islam Hitler, arrested in connection with Awami League leader A S M Rab killing, today confessed his involvement with the gruesome killing, reports UNB.

He also disclosed names of nine others who were directly involved in the murder.

In his confessional statement to the CMM, Hitler said four people, including president of the local apex trade body and his two brothers, and a former Mayor of Khulna City Corporation, were the conspirators and financiers of the killing.

Quoting Hitler court sources said contract for the killing was Tk 15 lakh, of which the first

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## BTTB plans bill collection thru' ATMs

By Mustak Hossain

Telephone subscribers will soon get rid of the monthly hazard of queuing up to pay telephone bills as the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) plans to introduce plastic cards for payment through automatic teller machines (ATMs).

The system, the first of its kind for paying utility bills in the country, would bring comfort to the subscribers, "a highly placed source at the Board told The Daily Star.

Electronic Transactions Network (ETN), an American joint venture in the country, has submitted a proposal to the BTTB in this regard, he said.

The company would initially install 20 ATM machines at strategic locations like shopping centres at different parts of the city.

"Through the ATMs, people would be able to pay their bills anytime they want with the plastic card," the BTTB official said.

Seven private commercial banks -- National Bank Limited (NBL), National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited (NCCBL), Dhaka Bank, Prime Bank, Credit Agricole Indosuez, Islami Bank, Arab Bangladesh Bank -- will be primarily networked under the scheme.

"More banks will join in once the unified ATM network is introduced," he said.

Customers of these banks would also be able to use the ATMs for 24-hour cash access and deposit operations.

The network would also help the banks avoid expenditure on instal

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**Aarong Low Fat Milk 1% fat only**

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Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 19	5.15 pm
Dec 20	6-36 am

#### Prayer Timings

December 19

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-09	5-18
Zuhr	12-45	1-20
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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#### Sheri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Dec	Sheri	Iftar
22	19	5-10	5-19
23	20	5-10	5-19
24	21	5-11	5-20

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