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Transcom Electronics Limited

WB okays
\$150m loan
for edn
programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) yesterday approved a \$150 million credit for the second phase of Primary Education Development Programme.

The loan is being given under a new, collaborative approach through which development partners of Bangladesh aim to harmonise their assistance under a single national programme rather than implement separate projects, Hena Mukherjee, lead education specialist of a WB team, explained in a statement.

Development partners are contributing about \$640 million for the \$1.8 billion national programme, which is envisaged to help increase enrolment, reduce drop out rates and enhance the number of

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ATTACK ON DR KAMAL
2 held, civil
society body
demands
Altaf's quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Oikya Prochesta, a civil society platform, has given a seven-day ultimatum to Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury to resign for his false statement in parliament after the Monday's attack on the motorcade of Gano Forum President Dr. Kamal Hossain.

From a rally at Muktangan yesterday, the Prochesta leaders also warned of tougher agitation if the home minister does not resign.

The rally was a part of its country-wide programmes to condemn the attack on the internationally reputed jurist's journey to Rangamati for a public meeting.

The rally also asked Altaf to apologise publicly for 'lying' in parliament.

A procession followed the rally, which was addressed by Gano Forum (GF) General Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, GF

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Crackdown on AL activists ordered

1,000 targeted in anti-picket preparation for Saturday's hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken a hard line against hartal and yesterday ordered the police to arrest some 1,000 Awami League (AL) activists in the city.

Opposition leaders and workers will be confined indoors during the AL's countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on Saturday.

Police have already swung into action, raiding houses of opposition workers listed by different law-

enforcement agencies.

A home ministry meeting yesterday asked the police to mount a manhunt for the leaders and workers on the night before the shutdown so that no-one can take out process or picket in the capital.

The policemen who will not go hard on the opposition activists will be punished and transferred, sources quoted the meeting as saying.

The home ministry at an unscheduled meeting, chaired by

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar, asked the police to mount the deputy commissioners (DCs) and additional DCs of the districts and assistant commissioners (ACs) of the police to keep the streets free of pickets and procession during hartal hours, meeting sources said.

The government also directed the police to immediately press charges against around 600 opposition activists arrested on more than one count during the previous

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Judicial Service Commission gets its chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Appellate Division Judge MM Ruhul Amin was yesterday appointed chairman to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), the body to recruit judges for lower courts.

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday also made Public Service Commission (PSC) Member Latifur Rahman, a member of the seven-

member JSC.

The other members of the JSC are the law, establishment and finance secretaries, registrar of the Supreme Court and Dhaka district and session judge.

Questions have been raised about the JSC structure, as some point at the fact that the representatives from the judiciary have been heavily outnumbered.

The government set up the JSC four years into the court order. Formation of the JSC is one of the 12

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ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES IN PROSHIKA

Donors want audit by int'l firm

EU finds evidence inconclusive, says fund freeze unwarranted

STAR REPORT

The European Union (EU) and other donors yesterday rejected a government audit report that showed irregularities in Proshika, and suggested appointing an international auditor to reinvestigate the allegation against the non-government organisation (NGO).

The government on the other hand dismissed the idea and told the donors it is determined to take some legal actions against Proshika, but will nonetheless let it continue its work by allowing funds to flow again.

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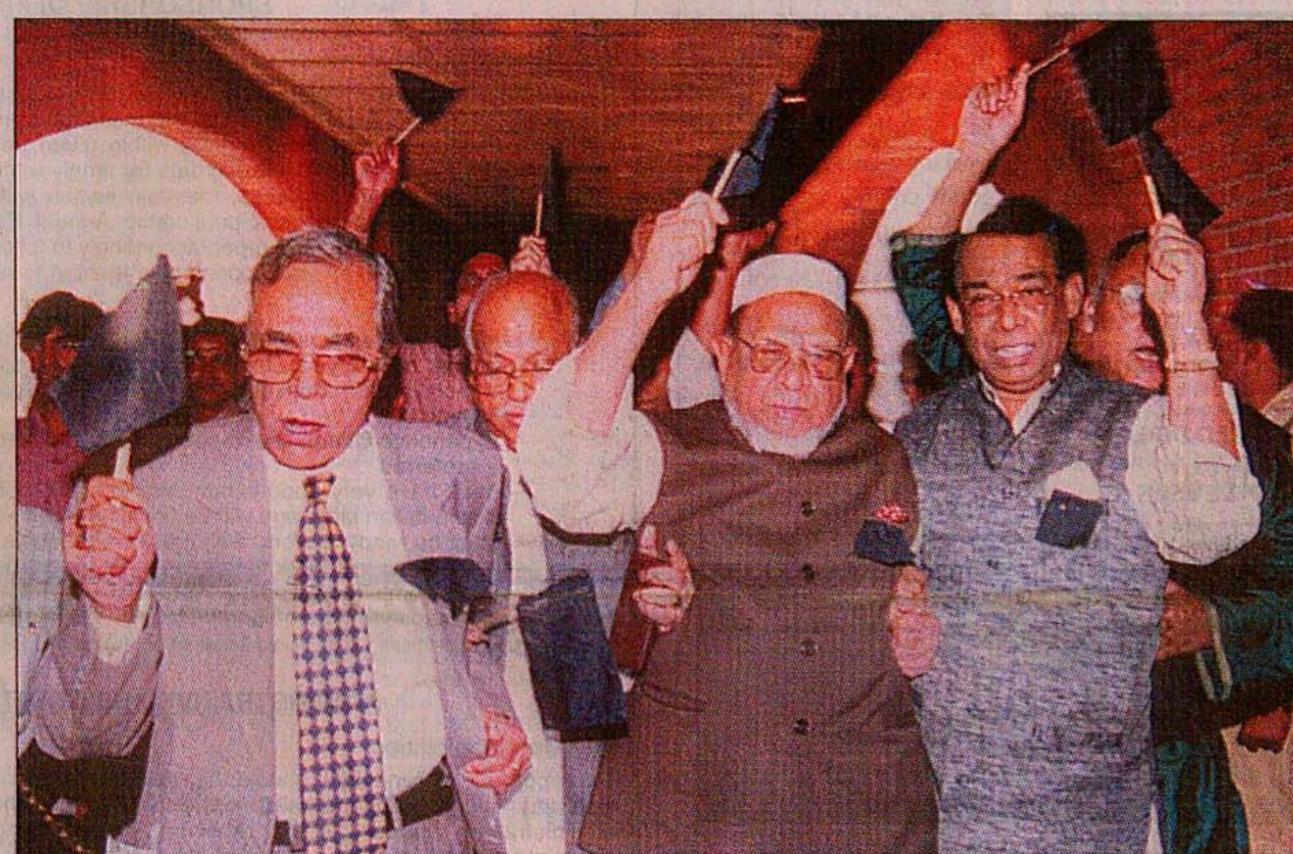
"We shall take legal actions on the basis of the audit report. At the same time, the funds of Proshika have remained stuck for too long. We shall take steps so that it can resume its activities," Finance Minister Saifur Rahman told journalists on the Planning Commission premises after emerging from a heated dis-

cussion with donors.

Among the donors, the EU was most vocal in its criticism of government actions against Proshika and said it did not find evidences supporting the allegations against the NGO. It criticised the government for blocking Proshika's fund on "a weak premise", saying the move basically deprived lakhs of beneficiaries at the grassroots level.

The meeting convened by

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Lawmakers from the main opposition Awami League stage a black-flag procession in the Jatiya Sangsad before handing over a memorandum to Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar yesterday, protesting 'persecution of the opposition'.

Farmers in double jeopardy

Fertiliser price hike, power disruption make boro rice cultivation difficult

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

A diesel crisis coupled with the price hike of fertilisers and power supply disruption is hitting hard the irrigation-based cultivation of boro paddy in the northern region at the beginning of the season.

There are around 4.5 lakh irrigation pumps in the region and 85

percent of them are dependent on diesel.

The demand for diesel for boro cultivation remains high from mid-February to mid-March.

The fuel oil is selling at between Tk 21 and Tk 28 in different areas of greater Rajshahi and Rangpur.

Daily supply of diesel to different oil depots in the northern region

went down to 9.35 lakh litres between February 15 and February 23 from about 35 lakh litres a day. Some 8.78 lakh litres were supplied yesterday.

Sources at the petroleum suppliers' coordinator office in Bogra blamed the supply shortage on the 'failure' of the ministerial oil

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Construction work still in quagmire Rod prices keep soaring; market manipulation blamed

TAWFIQUE ALI

Construction works continue to remain suspended as the rod prices kept soaring even after the government waived 14.5 percent duty on rod raw material imports.

Retail traders and leading developers allege mild steel (MS) rod manufacturers and wholesalers are manipulating the market in a situation where the international rod prices themselves have skyrocketed. Because of the market manipulation, the tax waiver failed to lower

the rod prices.

They believe if there was no market manipulation, the prices would still have gone up in accordance with the international prices, but they would have been much lower than the current ones.

Rod manufacturers on the other hand deny any price manipulation and pass the blame on the international price hike.

In the last week of January, in the face of demands by Bangladesh Association of Construction

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Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation
Scholarship for meritorious and needy students



Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation has decided to award 250 (Two Hundred Fifty) scholarships every year to meritorious and deserving students studying at HSC, Bachelor and Masters levels in any discipline. Meanwhile, under this program, 150 scholarships have already been awarded to HSC and Masters level students. Now another 100 scholarships will be awarded to students studying at Bachelor level (students who have passed HSC examination in 2003) for which applications were invited from deserving applicants with a minimum CGPA of 4.70 (Science Group) and 4.60 (other than Science Group) through advertisements published in The Daily Ittefaq and The Daily Star on February 9 & 10, 2004.

To give priority for the students of the countryside area it has been decided that students studying in the institutions which are located outside six city corporations area i.e. Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet may also apply fulfilling the following minimum requirement:

Academic level	Minimum CGPA Science Group	Minimum CGPA other than Science Group
HSC	4.60	4.50

Application should reach the following address on or before April 10, 2004:

Administrator

Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation
Sena Kalyan Bhaban (5th Floor)
195, Motijheel C/A
Dhaka-1000

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No more wild guesses

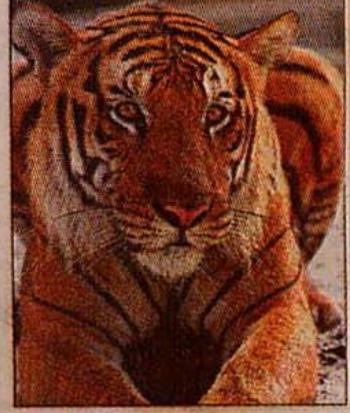
Cross-border tiger census begins today

PINAKI ROY

For the last 35 years, wildlife officials at the Department of Forest have hazarded wild guesses about the number of Royal Bengal Tigers in the Sundarbans.

The official estimate over this long period of time has been suspiciously consistent -- "more than 300" or more specifically "362", but there has never been any concrete steps to thoroughly approximate the tiger population through a proper scientific census.

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Bablu freed himself on his own
Brother claims
UNB, Bandarban

The brother of hotelier Hassan Mahmud Bablu, who was abducted from Bandarban, yesterday claimed his younger brother freed himself from his captors by his own effort.

Bablu's brother Hasan Mansur Milan, in a fax message to the news agency, admitted their family contacted the abductors on several occasions through different sources to broker Bablu's freedom on ransom. However, the message mentioned nothing about any payment to the kidnappers.

On Wednesday, different dailies reported Tk 15 lakh has been paid to the kidnappers to buy Bablu's freedom.

Meanwhile, police said abductors fled their den leaving behind

