

\$1,368m ADB loan proposed for Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

The country programming mission (CPM) of Asian Development Bank (ADB) has proposed a \$1,368 million lending programme (2004-06) for Bangladesh.

The lending programme, consisting of 17 projects, will be placed before the ADB management for final approval, according to an ADB announcement in Dhaka yesterday.

Of the proposed loan amount, \$ 618 million is expected to come from Asian Development Fund (ADF) and \$ 750 million from the ordinary capital resources (OCR) with the annual average lending of about \$ 456 million.

The proposed 2004-06 technical assistance (TA) programme includes a total of 28 projects for which ADB expects to provide \$ 14.7 million.

The programme accommodates several thematic priorities, including promotion of the private sector, good governance, gender and development, and regional cooperation.

The programme will be reflected

in the country strategy and programme update (CSPU) for Bangladesh, which will be considered by ADB's Board of Directorate in August this year. "Board endorsement is required before the CSPU can become operational," said an ADB release.

The bank concluded its CPM for 2004 with a wrap-up meeting at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) this week. ERD Secretary Mirza Tasadduq Hossain Beg presided over the final meeting.

The CPM concentrated on ADB's assistance to fewer sectors based on greater selectivity, strong commitments of the government to reforms and result-based programming, focusing on improving portfolio management.

It had also concentration on ADB's comparative strength and its long involvement in the sector as well as complementary with other development partners.

The CPM was conducted from February 25 to March 17 by the ADB country team.

IGP and DMP commissioner get one-year fresh terms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has extended the terms of both Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shahudul Haque and Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ashraf Huda for one more year.

Highly placed sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Ministry of Home confirmed that both the two top police bosses have been given one-year extension of service on completion of their previous one-year contract.

The fresh contracts were approved yesterday, PMO sources said.

There has been widespread speculation for the last few days whether Shahudul and Huda would get further extension or some fresh appointments would replace them. A case against Shahudul at the High Court also led to speculation over his replacement.

Sources at the home ministry claimed the government has retained the officials because of their high skills and professionalism.

Same killer out

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the brutal murder of the businessman and his son," Awlad Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sutrapur Police Station told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We have had vital information from Guddu (arrested for suspected links to the killing of Shamsul and Russell)," the OC said, "the killings of Shamsul and his son had similarities with that of watch trader Rejaul Karim Selim in many ways," the OC added.

Police retrieved Selim's head and limbs scattered over Srinagar, Louhajang and Munshiganj sadar thanas. Shamsul and Russell's bodies in more than 250 pieces were found in Gazipur and Dhanmondi. All the three were called out before being killed and all of them hailed from Munshiganj. Besides, the arrestees are believed to have links to both the incidents.

A mob allegedly lynched Buddha, 35, an accused in at least seven cases, on Sir Salimullah Medical College (Mitford) Hospital premises in Old Dhaka Tuesday night after he allegedly gunned down a BNP activist, Hannan, 25, at the same place minutes before.

"Things will get more clear once the killers of Buddha and Hannan are arrested," the OC added. The OC said Shamsul and Russell were probably killed and the bodies shredded either in Dhanmondi or in Gazipur.

He said Guddu, now on a five-day remand, confessed to having links with Kajal earlier but not now. Guddu also refused his involvement with the killing of businessman and his son.

"We are also trying to find out why the killers adopted such cruel method to kill them," the OC said, adding that there may be three possible reasons -- the killers wanted to conceal their identity or they were on drugs or they wanted to terrorise people in the locality.

OC of Kotwali Police Station ABM Sultan Ahmed however suggested yesterday to journalists that Awami League men might have killed BNP activist Hannan as he had filed a case with them on March 22 after the opposition activists allegedly ransacked the BNP office in Nalgola.

Srinagar police, meanwhile, are interrogating Abdus Samad, a close associate of Kajal, and Tapash, Palash and Habib to gather more information about the killing of businessman and his son. They are also accused in watch trader Rejaul Karim Selim murder case.

Security

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are keeping a constant watch on markets, businesses hearts and houses of businesspeople.

The move came after fabric trader Shamsul Haq and his son Russell Sheikh were shredded into over 250 pieces after their abduction on Friday in the latest of about two dozen traders' killings in recent months.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar said security was tightened in Old Dhaka and all-out measures were taken to ensure safety of businesspeople.

The government has attached top priority to improvement in law and order, he said, adding criminals would be dealt with an iron hand.

The administration would leave no stone unturned in its hunt for the killers of Shamsul and Russell, he asserted.

High officials largely blamed internal conflict among businesspeople for the fatal attack on businesses and said police were poring over probable links between businesspeople and criminals.

Home ministry officials said Babar held a series of meetings with top officials of the Armed Forces Division Police, the inspector general of police, chief of the newly floated Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and key ministry and intelligence officials yesterday. They discussed launch of the elite Rapid Action Battalion force, law and order and ways to cut crimes.

Chudadanga BNP leader gunned down

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Unidentified assailants gunned down a local leader of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in Zibannagar upazila of Chudadanga on Tuesday night.

Police and witnesses said Abdul Haq, 55, president of BNP Baka Union unit, came under attack while he was sitting at the party office at Hashada Bazaar.

Police quoted local BNP activists as saying a gang of six entered the office at about 8:30pm, shot Haq point blank and left the spot.

He was rushed to Zibannagar Health Complex where doctors declared him dead.

District BNP leaders condemned the killing of Abdul Haq and demanded immediate arrest of the killers. Police yesterday picked up three people for interrogation.

BSS adds: Outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Janajuddho faction), in a message sent to a local newspaper office yesterday, claimed responsibility for the killing.

Final survey team

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Guandong in Bangladesh to Buchidong in Myanmar remains to be completed to link the capitals of the two neighbours.

The group of experts will follow up the works done by a three-member survey team, led by Roads and Highways Division Additional Chief Engineer Abid Uddin, during its visit there, communications ministry sources said.

The first team visited the area earmarked for the Guandong-Buchidong road and examined its topographical features and suitability for road construction.

The team also had talks with the Myanmar authorities who offered to give full co-operation in the construction works, the sources said.

The Dhaka-Yangon highway will also help establish direct road link between Dhaka and Bangkok. As Myanmar is well connected by roads with its neighbours like Thailand and China, the 'look east' foreign policy of Dhaka will gain a fillip after Bangladesh establishes direct road links with the East Asian countries.

The communications ministry officials said the construction work would be a very difficult one, as a

US on change of power in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States does not favour any party in the political process of Bangladesh and believes Bangladeshis have the right to select their leaders within the political framework of the constitution, according to a State Department briefing.

A spokesman for the US State Department made the remarks in Washington on Tuesday in response to a query about his views on electoral process in Bangladesh and the March 28 comments of US Ambassador Harry K Thomas in Dhaka on Bangladesh's politics.

Thomas said the US government likes to see stability in Bangladesh with the ruling BNP running its full term to 2006 unless parliament brings it down.

His comments came after the main opposition Awami League set April 30 as the deadline for fall of the government.

The briefing text supplied by the US embassy here says: "The United States supports the right of the people of Bangladesh to select their leaders within the political framework of their constitution. We do not favour any particular party in the political process."

"We do not support extra-constitutional efforts, including disruptive actions and violence designed to remove a democratically-elected government."

The spokesman agreed with Thomas that the political opposition should only use constitutional means to advance its agenda.

Businessman

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Chittagong correspondent say quitting sources.

Rahim's family hinted that Momin might have murdered him for Tk 3 lakh he borrowed from Rahim, also former senior vice-president of local Awami League, six months ago.

Momin called the fish trader out of his Ichhanagar Bazaar house at around 7:30pm asking him victim to collect the money, they alleged.

Earlier, the poultry trader returned Rahim only Tk 40,000 and promised to pay back the rest by March 26, sources said.

"Momin gave my uncle two cheques amounting to Tk 2.5 lakh on the deadline, but asked him to take the entire amount in cash from him Tuesday night instead of depositing the cheques in bank," the victim's nephew, Mohammad Hafiz, told reporters at the CMCH yesterday noon.

Receiving the phone call, Rahim, father of four sons and three daughters, went out alone on his motorbike, but did not return, he added.

His son Abdullah Al Mamun lodged a case with Kamaphuli Police Station the same night making Momin the prime suspect.

Essentials' prices

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12-14, papaya Tk 10, aubergines Tk 12-15, green chilli Tk 20-22 and barbati at Tk 20-24.

"The prices of green vegetables are likely to increase if it does not rain by this week," said Anwar Hossain, a vegetable trader in the Palashi kitchen market.

"As the vegetable market in the capital city entirely depends on the supply from across the country, the vegetable gardens in the rural areas being hit by the want of rain would affect the supply badly leading to a price hike in the city markets," Anwar added.

In city's Karwan Bazar wholesale market per kilo onion was selling at Tk 15-16, Indian onion at Tk 13-14, per kilo local grown garlic was selling at Tk 36-38, Indian garlic at Tk 26-28, per kilo masur was selling at Tk 40, green chili at Tk 14-16, tomato at Tk 8-10 and potato at Tk 8-9.

"As some parts of the country have been rainless for the last five months, a price hike of vegetable is imminent," said Abu Mia, a vegetable trader in Karwan Bazar.

Tk 28,000cr

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was asked to submit its probe report in 15 days so that Pac can discuss the report at its next meeting scheduled for April 21.

Quoting audit reports, Pac said the civil surgeon's offices in Sherpur, Jessore, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Tangail, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Sunamganj, Chapainawabganj, Bagerhat, Barisal and Bhola bought medical equipment during financial years 1995-96 and 1997-1998 at much higher prices.

It said the civil surgeons bought leucoplasts at Tk 845 against the market price of Tk 105, slides at Tk 850 against Tk 90, gloves at Tk 145 against Tk 10, disposable syringes at up to Tk 14 against Tk 3 and tissue paper at Tk 790 against Tk 40.

"Clearly, this is robbery of the state's money. The money should be recovered and the guilty punished," Rashid said.

The committee chairman also hinted that the 'corrupt' civil surgeons and officials might be summoned to the committee meeting.

We don't shelter terrorists

Foreign minister on alleged Ulfa bases in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan has said Bangladesh will cooperate with all countries including India in fighting terrorism.

"None within our territory are carrying out any terrorist activities against any other country and none will ever be allowed to do so," Khan told newsmen at his office in the city yesterday.

The foreign minister's statement followed Indian Foreign Secretary Shashank's recent comment about separatist Ulfa (United Liberation Front of Assam) leaders who, India claims, are operating from Bangladesh.

Shashank, who recently visited Bangladesh, told an Indian daily he feels Dhaka will soon cooperate with New Delhi on the Ulfa issue.

Referring to Shashank's visit, Khan told reporters that no particular issue was discussed with the Indian side, rather there was discussion about terrorism in general. "Bangladesh's stance on the issue is clear -- we don't shelter terrorists," Khan said, adding: "None of the two countries will allow their territories to be used by any terrorist group."

He said Indian side was apprised of Dhaka's concern about various anti-Bangladesh propaganda and activities being carried out by organisations like Swadhin Bangabhumii. "We don't want such things to happen," he said, adding that Indian authorities have been provided with the address and fax number used by the anti-Bangladesh organisation.

On the extradition of jailed Ulfa leader Anup Chetia, Khan said the government cannot intervene in the matter as the case has already gone to court.

About the possibility of signing an extradition treaty with India, he said the matter was not discussed at all and that any such initiative is beyond his knowledge.

Regarding India's controversial river-linking project that the ruling BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) has pledged to implement on re-election, the foreign minister said no country could withdraw water from international rivers without consulting upper and lower riparian countries as it could have serious ecological and economic consequences for the entire region.

Edn commission

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It recommends hiking up the teacher-student ratio to 1:30 at primary level and 1:40 at secondary level by the next eight years.

According to a report of the Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) containing the latest educational data, the teacher-student ratio in Bangladesh is the poorest among 22 South and East Asian nations. There is just one teacher for every 57 school-goers in Bangladesh.

The commission puts emphasis on instituting an effective mechanism to ensure enrolment of children in school at the age of five. It also advises to formulate and adopt a language policy and stresses the need for upgraded and proper teaching in English.

The report asks to decentralise the education administration, while retaining the existing educational structure, to reduce hassle of the grassroots people.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday Prof Moniruzzaman said his team came up with the recommendations from a holistic approach, at the same time keeping in mind what could be implemented immediately.

He said, with a view to encourage international standard research, centres of excellence could be established at different universities.

The 340-page report contains separate lists of recommendations for development of primary and mass education, secondary, higher secondary and higher education and suggests setting up a permanent education commission to implement those. A permanent commission is also required, it says, to identify and assess problems and find out their remedies through continuous research and brainstorming and put those to work.

The report underscores the need

for using modern technologies including internet, computer, television and radio with a view to build an educated and science- and technology-savvy nation.

It prescribes a suitable salary structure for teachers so that they feel encouraged to teach. The code of conduct and rules for promotion of teachers also should be respectable, it adds.

It asks to strengthen teachers' training, rearrangement of curricula and making registration obligatory for all primary schools irrespective of formal, non-formal, kindergarten and NGO-run ones.

The commission thinks a new system of examination should be introduced that does not just declare a pass and a fail but really evaluates the quality of learning achieved by the students. It, however, keeps public examinations off limit to this system.

Encouraging higher educational facilities in private sector, despite their high costs, the commission suggests establishing an accreditation council to maintain the standard of education.

It advises the government to refrain from establishing single-discipline public universities, e.g. on agriculture, engineering and medicine, as the concept is against universal education and the basic norms of university level education.

It asks the authorities concerned to ensure impartial enrolment at university level and taking appropriate measures for eliminating session jams.

It also recommends for establishing at least a hundred primary schools a year for the next 10 years after conducting a school mapping that will identify the localities deprived of or in need of more schooling facilities, like remote areas and areas of indigenous peoples.

Open dialogue

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was then chiefly criticised for its failure to curb law and order slide.

"Now I've to phone home at least three times a day to know whether my children and the family members are well."

Annisul also hailed the previous AL government for keeping the prices of essentials stable.

Referring to a recent BGMEA view that a democratically elected government should complete its term, he said the association was always above politics and supported a democratic change of government.

Responding to the businessmen's demands, Hasina, also AL president, said the government is not sincere about dialogue which is evident in its forcing the opposition out of parliament.

"How can we sit with the party which wants to eliminate the Awami League through atrocities? How can we sit with those who've killed at least 12,000 workers of my party since the last general elections?" she asked.

Hasina said her party was compelled to enforce hartal, as the ruling coalition's repression and misdeeds hit new highs.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), Metropolitan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (MCCI), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh Shop Owners Association (BSOA), Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab), Dhaka City Shop Owners Association (DCSOA), Bangladesh Courier Services Association (BCSA) and Bangladesh Agricultural Machinery Merchants Association (Bamma) also took part in the discussion.

MCCI President Kutub Uddin Ahmad said the hope for expanding trade and business would evaporate if the government and opposition had no common agenda to face the challenges of international trade.

Criticising hartals, Kutub Uddin, also a former BGMEA president, said, "When the Awami League was in power, we, the BGMEA leaders, issued a statement criticising hartal. That time, the then commerce minister and now the general secretary of Awami League, Abdul Jalil, appreci-

ated the move, saying the language of the statement should have been more terse."

Rehab President Towfiq M Seraj requested the AL to join parliament saying the business community felt confident if the opposition was in the House. "If needed, walk out from the House four times a day, but please join it."

Quazi Moniruzzaman, former president of the BGMEA, urged the ruling and the opposition parties to work together to face the looming challenges in the garment sector when the quota system goes.

Requesting the AL leadership to come back to its previous no-hartal stance, he called upon the BNP-led alliance government to commit that it too would never enforce hartal when in opposition.

FBCCI Director Mohammad Helal Uddin said, "Compared to the present situation, I've to say that we, the business people, were in a far better situation under the previous government of Awami League, though then we used to think otherwise."

BSOA President Amir Hossain Khan said each and every businessperson was getting phone calls from the gangsters for tolls. "The criminals know everything about us; how much money I've in bank and what property I'm going to buy." He said it seemed that every businessperson was accountable to the extortionists.

Hasina tried to defend her party's change of stand from an anti-hartal one while in power to a pro-hartal one now, saying she made the announcement seeking a similar commitment by the then opposition.

She claimed people are frustrated with the present rulers and want a change through midterm polls.

Senior AL leaders, including Abdul Jalil, were present at the programme.

Among the other business leaders present in the discussion were former advisor to caretaker government Rokia A Rahman, BKMEA president Fazlul Haq, former BKMEA president Manjurul Haq, Masud Kader, FBCCI directors Aktaruzzaman Manju and Harunur Rashid, DCSOA General Secretary (GS) Delwar Hossain, BCSEA GS Abu Naser and Bamma GS AKM Masud Jahangir.

Altaf

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ers, producers and businessmen could be protected, the interest of consumers will be protected as well.

The business leaders told the minister they were selling soybean oil at a loss-making rate. They said they would adjust the prices of oils, depending on a US forecast that was to be available by noon yesterday.

Emerging from the meeting, Altaf told journalists that prices of rice in the last one month came down 6.45 percent.

When journalists asked whether this improvement is a result of his assuming the commerce portfolio, Altaf said: "we are making an all-out effort."

Ruling BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Pintu and Adviser to the commerce ministry Barkatullah Bhulu were present at the meeting.

Pintu urged the minister to reopen the defunct Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) as a market intervening arm of the government.

Countdown

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party on April 12 amid fears of 'violent confrontation'.

Some of Bangladesh's development partners and business leaders spoke out for term-completion by the elected government, but the AL is unbent on its stand.

The AL and some left parties will observe 'Basic Democratic Rights Protection Day' today in the run-up to a set of intensified agitation at the end of the month against the government what they say has failed to rein in crimes, corruption and price hike of essentials.

The AL has called daylong nationwide hartals for April 7 and 8 and plans to announce longer shutdowns ahead of its deadline.

The main opposition is also trying to consolidate its relations with left parties after enforcing a simultaneous hartal on March 6 along with the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers Party, JSD-Inu, Samyabadi Dal and GanoAzadi League.

The BNP and its front organisations will stage rallies and processions in every ward of Dhaka in an effort to add a zest to the party.

Khaleda, also the chairperson of BNP, will address a public rally on April 10 in Dhanmondi-Mohammadpur constituency after similar meetings in Jatrabari, Bashabo, Lalbagh, Badda and Mirpur for drumming up support.

Top BNP policymakers admitted that the month-long programmes were taken in view of the AL deadline.

JS complex

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Bangladesh, The Architectural Society of China, Hong Kong Institute of Architects, Ikatan Arsitek Indonesia, Indian Institute of Architects, Japan Institute of Architects, Korean Institute of Registered Architects, Architects Association Macau, Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia, Institute of Architects Pakistan, Singapore Institute of Architects, Association of Siamese Architects Under Royal Patronage, Society of Nepalese Architects, United Architects of the Philippines, Sri Lanka Institute of Architects and Vietnam Association of Architects.

India in sight

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haul as the hosts, needing 268 to avoid an innings defeat, were 207 for nine on the fourth day.

Yousuf Youhana was batting on a fighting 107, his 11th Test century, with last man Shabbir Ahmed on nought. Kumble finished the day with figures of six for 71.

India have not won any of their previous 20 Tests in Pakistan, losing five and drawing 15.

Left-arm paceman Irfan Pathan had done the damage earlier on Wednesday, with a career-best four for 100 in only his third Test, to end Pakistan's first innings on 407 to ensure India could enforce the follow-on.

The tourists had amassed 675 for five in their first innings, Virender Sehwag slamming a record 309 while Sachin Tendulkar added an unbeaten 194.