

Donors plan to expand dev works in CHT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Donors have planned to expand their development activities in the hill tracts with nine more upazilas of Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachhari hill districts coming under a Tk 300 crore programme.

This was disclosed during a visit of a nine-member delegation comprising representatives from European Commission (EC) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The delegation at a meeting here yesterday discussed the progress of development works and reviewed law and order situation in the hill tracts, according to meeting sources.

Bandarban Hill District Council Chairperson Mamaching and Bomang Circle Chief Aung Soy Pru Chowdhury, among others, attended the meeting held at the conference room of the district council.

The delegation led by Norwegian Ambassador in Dhaka Aud Lise Northim will visit Thanchi upazila today and have discussion with local upazila chairman, mouza headmen, karbaris and professionals.

Burn patients suffer as doctors duck duties

Experts pull political strings to remain absent at DMCH, do charity works elsewhere

NAIMUL HAQ And SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Most of the senior doctors at the recently launched Burn & Plastic Surgery Unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) allegedly do not attend critically burnt patients as they remain busy with their private charity work elsewhere and exert political influence to remain absent.

Allegations are that due to the absence of senior doctors after office hours since 2:30pm patients arriving with deadly burn do not receive proper treatment under expert guidance. When many patients arrive at the same time, the situation worsens because lack of

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PHOTO: STAR

A matron runs the show at the recently launched Burn & Plastic Surgery Unit at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital yesterday, as most of the senior doctors allegedly are too busy with their affairs elsewhere to tend the patients.

Baby food prices spike in a week

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The prices of baby food and milks have marked a steep rise over the last one week in different city markets making the purchase difficult for the consumers.

The price of milk has risen by Tk 10 to Tk 23 for a tin weighing 350-gram to 450-gram.

"I earn Tk 2,000 a month and four 400-gram tin of Lactogen-1 [a milk brand] for six-year-old boy already cost me half of my salary. Further price increase would mean a huge burden for me," said Habib, owner of a small makeshift cloth shop on footpath.

A 450-gram-tin of Baby Care, which now sells at Tk 270, sold Tk 255 on Tuesday and Tk 250 two months back in the retail markets.

A 450-gram tin of Humana, another brand of baby food, was selling at Tk 275 yesterday while price of the same product was Tk 250 a week ago in a market at Mirpur Section 10.

The price of 450-gram tin of Biomil rose from Tk 250 to Tk 265, Enfamil from Tk 260 to Tk 275 while a 350-gram tin of Sweet Baby from Tk 255 to Tk 265.

A 400-gram Lactogen sold at Tk 225 yesterday in the city markets. It

was Tk 210 a week ago.

Price of 350-gram carton of Nido, baby food manufactured by Nestlé Bangladesh Limited, was Tk 150 in the retail market. Nestlé officials, however, said they did not yet increase the price which was fixed at Tk 140.

Besides, prices of cereals of different brands have increased by Tk 10 for a 350-gram carton.

The price of one-kilogram Diploma condensed milk rose to Tk 145 from Tk 122. One-kg tin of Dano sold at Tk 288 yesterday while two months ago, it was Tk 260, a shopkeeper at Kawran Bazar market said.

Commerce Secretary Siddiqui Rahman Choudhury told The Daily Star that they are monitoring the hike in prices of milk and other baby foods. "The supply of those products is adequate, and there is no special reason for the price hike," he added.

He, however, said, "The prices might have increased possibly due to rise in the transportation cost or fordollar price."

He said they will soon hold a meeting with the concerned businessmen to discuss the issue.

The commerce secretary said prices of potato, onion, spices remain relatively lower compared

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Rokan seeks court guideline on contempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, counsel representing a newspaper faced with contempt charges for running reports on a judge's alleged result scam, yesterday asked the High Court to give a guideline defining contempt of court.

Rokan moving for the Bhorer Kagoj, one of the two national Bangla dailies held in contempt, argued that article 108 of the constitution as well as the Contempt of Court Act do not offer any definition of contempt of court.

During the hearing at the HC division bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice AFM Abdur Rahman, Rokan sought from the court instructions as to what actions to be considered contempt of court and what not.

The Bhorer Kagoj, along with the Prothom Alo, another national Bangla daily, on October 30 last year published reports that said Additional Judge Faisal Mahmud Faizee's LLB certificate had allegedly been doctored.

The judge's father Mohammad Faiz filed the contempt petition on November 8 against Publisher of the Bhorer Kagoj Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Editor Abed Khan and

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POVERTY REDUCTION

Govt done well, despite donors' lack of support

Saifur tells int'l seminar on food policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said donors have not come up with the financial support they committed while endorsing the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to halve poverty by 2015.

Yet, he said, the government has fared well in advancing towards the MDG as per the development indicators concerned in health, education and other sectors, he told an international seminar in the city.

Over a hundred representatives of the government, donor agencies, non-governmental organisations and research institutions from home and abroad converged at the daylong seminar on 'Food Policy in Bangladesh: Issues and Perspectives' held at the city's Sonargaon Hotel.

The finance minister said, "Food security is not only about food availability, rather it's a question of income too. By ensuring macroeconomic stability, peoples' income can be increased thereby, enhancing their purchasing capacity."

Saifur also tried to rationalise the current high rice-price in the market, saying if the growers get better

price, it would act as an incentive to produce more foodgrains.

The seminar jointly organised by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Bangladesh Rice Foundation (BRF) and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) discussed strategies to reduce hunger and poverty in Bangladesh.

The finance minister apart, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar and Food and Disaster Management Minister Kamal Ibne Yusuf also spoke at the seminar split into three working sessions -- 'Food Security: Emerging Issues and Challenges,' 'Bangladesh's Agricultural Strategy: New Perspective' and 'Disaster Management: Safety Nets and Nutrition Interventions.'

Joachim von Braun, director general (DG) of the Washington-based food policy think-tank IFPRI, BIDS DG Q Shahabuddin and IFPRI Senior Research Fellow Akhter Ahmed presented the keynotes at the sessions chaired by BRF Chairman M Syeduzzaman, IFPRI Trustee Board Member Mandivamba Rukuni and Brac Executive Director Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury.

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Former adviser to caretaker government Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, former agriculture secretary AMM Shawkat Ali, Dr Marc Cohen, Dr Raisuddin Ahmed and Dr Shenggen Fan of OFPRI, Naser Farid of the food ministry and Sajjad Zohir of BIDS took part in the discussions, among others.

In his address as the chief guest at the first session, Saifur took credit in being able to enhance support for agriculture and promised to provide more to the vibrant sector for the sake of ensuring food security of 140 million people. He, however, was a bit critical about what he dubbed as lacklustre efforts in research and development (R&D) work in agriculture.

But other discussants were very vocal against what they said was a decreasing public sector investment in agriculture, with Wahiduddin Mahmud pointing at the fact that less than half a percent of the agricultural GDP is spent in agriculture R&D in Bangladesh. Prof Mahmud put special thrust on democratic governance, increased purchasing capability of people and putting a dent into the high incidence of child

Train robbers loot Tk 1 lakh, hurt 7

Cop suspended

UNB, Brahmanbaria

Robbers looted Tk 1 lakh and injured seven passengers in a daring hold-up on a Dhaka-bound Upakul Express train Saturday night.

"As the Dhaka-bound inter-city train halted at Mondobhag rail-station to give passage for another train, bandits boarded it and swooped on the passengers," police said.

The gang looted valuables worth over Tk 1 lakh from the passengers, leaving seven of them including an army person injured.

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Two ansars closed on rape charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Two ansars from Bhitabolla police camp in Bagherpara upazila were closed on charge of raping a class nine girl in Jamdia village yesterday.

Bagherpara Police also arrested Abdul Gani of the same village for assisting the Ansar men -- Kausar Ali and Jahurul Islam.

Additional Superintendent of Police Farook Ahmed visited the place of occurrence and talked to the girl on Saturday night soon after the incident.

BUSINESS FATS CHOKE CITY ARTERY



PHOTO: STAR

Plumbing shop owners on the city's North South Road typically throttle the traffic by stacking and loading or unloading their wares on the footpath as well as half of the road -- the only one linking the downtown with the second Buriganga bridge.

Mugger lynched in N'ganj

BSS, Narayanganj

A mugger was lynched by an angry mob at Pagla while attempting to flee with Taka 8,000 he snatched from a businessman on Dhaka-Narayanganj road under Fatullah police station last night.

Police said the hijacker was identified as Dilip, 25, son of Shambhu Rajbangshi of Jelepura under Fatullah.

Sources said a group of four hijackers attacked businessman Rabindra Mohan, 40, and snatched Taka 8,000 from him. Local people caught Dilip and lynched him. Dilip's accomplices however managed to escape.

A case was filed with Fatullah police.

Israel plans to attack Iran's nuke plants

Reports Sunday Times

REUTERS, London

Israel has drawn up plans for a combined air and ground attack on Iranian nuclear installations if diplomacy fails to halt Tehran's atomic programme, London's Sunday Times said.

The newspaper said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his inner cabinet had given "initial authorisation" for a unilateral attack on Iran at a private meeting last month.

US officials have indicated they would not stand in Israel's way if international diplomatic efforts to halt Iran's nuclear projects fail, the paper said.

"If all efforts to persuade Iran to drop its plans to produce nuclear weapons should fail, the US administration will authorise Israel to attack," the paper quoted an Israeli security source as saying.

Tehran, which has a stated goal of destroying the Jewish state, says its nuclear activities are aimed only at electricity generation but

Washington and the European Union suspect Iran could use its programme to make atomic bombs.

Iran has frozen nuclear enrichment while it tries to reach a negotiated settlement on its nuclear program with Britain, France and Germany.

Washington on Friday joined the drive to put pressure on Iran by offering it a start to World Trade Organisation membership talks and access to civil aircraft and spare parts if it abandons its most sensitive nuclear activities.

The Sunday Times said Israeli tactics included raids by elite commando units and air strikes by F-15 jets using bunker busting bombs to penetrate underground facilities.

It said Israeli forces had been simulating attacks on a mock-up of Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment plant in the last few months.

Israel, which says Iran is very close to being able to make a nuclear bomb, played down the report.

Asked if there was a possibility

that Israel could attack Iranian nuclear installations, Vice Premier Shimon Peres said: "I don't think so."

Israel is believed to be the only country in the region with nuclear weapons, though it has not confirmed or denied their existence.

Israeli warplanes bombed Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in a daring raid in 1981 to prevent it from making atomic bombs.

Tehran says it is prepared to confront any threats and that it would protect its nuclear sites.

"We will defend our nuclear sites with all our strength and we are ready to ward off any possible aggression," Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani told the semi-official INSA students news agency on Saturday.

Vice President Dick Cheney said in January that there was concern Israel might attack Iran if it "became convinced the Iranians had significant nuclear capability."

GALIB'S REMAND Son files petition in HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Son of Dr Mohammad Asadullah Al Galib, amir of Ahle Hadith Andolon, Bangladesh yesterday filed a petition in the High Court (HC) challenging the validity of the remand and detention of his father.

After hearing, a division bench comprising Justice AK Badrul Huq and Justice Fazlur Rahman fixed March 16 for passing order on the petition.

In the petition, Dr Galib's son Ahmed Abdullah Sakib also sought permission for the family members to meet Galib in the jail without security persons.

Dr Galib, a teacher of Rajshahi University, arrested February 23 on charge of leading militant fundamentalists in the country, is now being quizzed by the Joint Interrogation Cell in Dhaka.

Advocate ABM Nurul Islam moved for the petitioner before the court.

Deputy Attorney General Golam Kibria opposed the prayer.

Border talks at Agartala today

BSF erects barbed wire fences on 200km border area

AGENCIES, Dhaka/ Kushtia

A high-level conference between Bangladesh Rifles and Indian Border Security Force begins today at Agartala in the wake of frequent clashes between the two forces at the frontier, according to an official announcement.

The four-day meeting would deal with a number of contentious issues including construction of barbed-wire fences as well as different establishments -- roads and bridges and pump houses -- on the Indian side within 150 yards of the no man's land.

"Firing on and killing of innocent and unarmed Bangladeshi people by the BSF and Indian citizens" is also expected to dominate the talks.

The other issues on the agenda are BSF camps on the border, security, obstruction of development works on the Bangladesh side by the BSF, and smuggling of arms and drugs.

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Talks on forming Iraq govt collapse

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Talks between Kurdish leaders and a Shia bloc to form the next Iraqi government have collapsed three days before Iraq's first fully elected parliament meets as two US contractors and a soldier were killed in a bomb blasts and 12 corpses were found south of Baghdad.

Kurdish parties debated joining a coalition government with Iraq's election-winning Shia alliance yesterday. The meeting between Kurdish and Shia representatives that had been expected to seal agreement on the new government a month and a half after historic January 30 polls was postponed while Kurdish leaders continued to discuss the terms, officials from both sides said.

Leaders of the Kurdish alliance's two factions -- the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) -- were still debating the draft deal concluded with the Shia United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) last week, a KDP source said.

UIA official Adnan Ali confirmed the delay and added that KDP

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