

BPC fund crisis holds back dev in tourism sector

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) fails to implement most of its plans and projects to enhance the tourism sector due to fund crisis. Officials of BPC, the national tourism organisation, said they do not receive any designated fund apart from the little amount of Annual Development Plan (ADP) as loan or grant. "BPC has its own earning, which is also very insufficient," said a high official. Starting with Tk 2.30 crore as the first fund for "Crash Programme 1972-75", the corporation received Tk 16.95 crore as the highest amount of money for its fourth "five-year plan 1990-95". However, it received only Tk one crore in 2003-2004 fiscal year and no fund in 2004-2005. The government granted BPC Tk 48.83 crore

from 1973 since now to promote the sector. "We need at least Tk 100 crore if we want to materialise our future plans and projects," said the official. He said BPC has specific plans to enrich tourism sector of the country by 2020. The plan includes proper excavation, preservation and conservation of archaeological sites, including Paharpur Mahasthangarh, Mainamati, Bagerhat Shat Gambuz Mosque and other Buddhist monastery. It also includes enhancement of Eco-tourism in Sundarbans, Teknaf peninsula, Chittagong Hill Tracks as well as Tanguar and Hakaluki Haor. "We have a major plan to develop Kuakata Beach, especially a portion of it called Gangamati, as an exclusive tourist

area," the official said, "Cox's Bazar and offshore islands like Sonadia and St Martin's need a face lift to attract tourists." He also suggested that all the projects need major infrastructure development, including accommodation and foods of international standard. BPC officials said Bangladesh has not been promoted as a tourist destination even after 33 years of its independence. They said a five-year market promotion programme in some countries with potentials is necessary. "Even for that purpose, we need at least Tk 10 crore," said an official of Planning, Training and Statistic division of BPC. "I think Bangladesh has great potentiality as a tourist destination once proper logistic and infrastructure support is provided," said

Simon Kabir, an expatriate visiting Dhaka now. The high official commented tourism sector never got much importance to the government's development projects. "We understand that other sectors like education and agriculture are more important for the betterment of the country but tourism can bring a lot of foreign exchange to the country," he said. He said BPC submitted around Tk 100 crore in total to government treasury as income tax, value added tax (VAT), share of profit and other taxes since 1973. "BPC gave Tk 13.04 to the treasury in the last five years," he claimed. BPC could certainly help the country become self reliant by boosting the tourism industry, he observed.

Manju rules out merger with JP (Ershad)

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju has categorically said his party will not merge with Ershad-led Jatiya Party. "Many people told me to rejoin Ershad, but I believe they would not tell me to do so anymore," he said while addressing his party activists at Zia International Airport (ZIA) on Sunday night on his return from a 12-day visit to China. Manju said the JP had set a new trend in the country's politics, and it will stick to it in future despite many challenges. He said those, who don't love the country and make conspiracy in politics, cannot rule the country. Party presidium member Begum Taslima Hossain and Privatisation Board Chairman Inam Ahmed Chowdhury accompanied the JP chief during the tour. JP General Secretary Sheikh Shahidul Islam, presidium member Abdur Rahim and other top party leaders were present at the airport.

AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK AL decries govt move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka city Awami League yesterday decried the government move to divert the course of the investigation into the August 21 grenade attack after ten months of the incident for ulterior political gains. In a joint statement, AL city unit President Mohammad Hanif and General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya termed the attempt a farce and said it was designed with an ill-motive to stage a political drama. Quizzing a top terror in a bid to relate his divulgence to the grenade attack and arresting the AL leaders, including Mokhllesur Rahman, Sadek Khan, Habibur Rahman Mizan, is nothing but an evil scheme to implicate the AL men in the last year's grenade attack that killed 24 people, they said. While the government has failed to make any headway in the investigation into the grisly attack or arrest any real culprit, it is resorting to a ploy to stage a farce in the name of probe, the leaders added. They also demanded immediate release of AL leader Mokhllesur Rahman, a former ward commissioner.

NUS programmes on elimination of child labour

Nari Unnayan Shakti, a national women development organisation, launched a massive campaign across the country on Sunday to mark the World Day Against Child Labour 2005, says a press release. As part of the programme, seven parallel campaigns were conducted in Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal, Cox's Bazar and Kustia. Rallies, cultural programmes, discussions and charity meals were the main features of the event. Over a thousand working children, including trafficked girls, took part in the programmes. The inaugural session was presided over by NUS Executive Director Afroza Parvin at Banasree-Dhaka training centre. The workshop was supported by ILO Dhaka. A meeting was also held at Kuril, Badda, with child commercial sex workers. They called for more effective support from the government as well as NGOs for the betterment of this deprived section. The NUS also held a rally at Kuril with 250 child labours.



Outgoing Pakistani High Commissioner to Bangladesh Manzar Shafiq paid a farewell call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday.

G77 FMs call for solidarity

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The foreign ministers of G77 countries and China met at Sheraton Doha Hotel in Qatar yesterday. Foreign Minister of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani inaugurated the meeting in the morning. The Qatari foreign minister, in his speech, called for greater solidarity among the developing nations and effective mechanism for South-South cooperation, saying the economies of the South played a significant role in international trade. Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan led the Bangladesh delegation to the meeting, according to foreign ministry sources. Morshed said the development challenges of the South lie in two broad areas-aid and trade. "For decades we have spoken of a conducive international economic environment. This meant quality aid in adequate quantity, a rule-based, fair and just world trade regime and transfer of technology," he said. Welcoming the May 24 announcement by the European Union (EU) to double their ODA by 2010 and to reach 0.7 percent by 2015, Morshed paid special tribute to the five countries, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Denmark, which have achieved 0.7 percent target.

He hoped that the rest of the OECD Development Assistance Committee members would redouble their efforts to meet their three and a half decade old commitment. Morshed stressed the need for urgent steps to develop the quality, transparency and accountability of ODA as recommended in March 2005 Paris meeting. He urged the G77 ministers to make a strong appeal to the developing world to meet the commitment to earmark 0.15 percent to 0.20 percent of GNP as ODA for the LDCs. "An ambitious Doha outcome with the elimination of export subsidies, significant cuts in domestic support and in tariffs could add a hundred billion dollar annually to the global economy by 2015", the minister observed. Criticising globalisation, the Bangladeshi foreign minister made four recommendations at the meeting. These are allowing duty-free access of all products exported from LDCs to developed and more advanced developing countries, opening up their markets to temporary and less skilled service providers from the LDCs, reducing non tariff barriers to the import of LDC products and transfer of technology. The foreign minister called for greater South-South cooperation in terms of increased implementation of the general system of trade

preference, investment, exchange of best practices, technology and know-how. The meeting of the foreign ministers finalised the two outcome documents for the South Summit-Doha Declaration and Doha plan of Action.

Bangla-Saudi jt commission meets today

BSS, Riyadh

The eighth meeting of Bangladesh-Saudi Arabia Joint Commission begins here today, following a two-day preparatory meeting held on June 12 and 13. The commission was formed in 1979 for improving economic and technical cooperation between the two countries. Economic Relations Division Secretary Ismail Zabihiullah will lead the eight-member Bangladesh delegation, while the Kingdom's Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for Foreign Trade Abdullah Bin Abdur Rahman Al Hamudi will lead the Saudi side. The meeting will focus on reduction of trade imbalance, boosting exports from Bangladesh, removal of double taxation, Saudi investment in EPZs, recruitment of more Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia and enhancing facilities for them, problems relating to visa, performance of Omrah Hajj and some other issues. Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) will also sign a memorandum of understanding with Saudi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Zillur returns home after treatment

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Awami League presidium member Zillur Rahman, MP, returned home yesterday after treatment in London. He has been suffering from various complications and took treatment there for long, and now he is fully cured. Zillur sought blessings and expressed his gratitude to all for praying for his recovery, says a party press release.

Outgoing army chief calls on president, PM

UNB, Dhaka

Outgoing Army Chief Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury called on President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday. President Iajuddin at Bangabhaban praised the Gen Hasan Mashhud for discharging his duties with honesty and sincerity and wished him good health and long life. The Army Chief thanked the President for his all out cooperation during his tenure. Gen Hasan Mashhud also paid a farewell call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday. The Army Chief expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister, who is also the Defence Minister, for her support during his tenure. Gen Hasan Mashhud, who goes on retirement on June 15, also mentioned the Prime Minister's personal initiative in ensuring welfare of the Army. Khaleda thanked the outgoing Army chief for his sincere efforts in his long career as a soldier as well as ambassador of the country.

SALMA SOBHAN FELLOWSHIP 32 trainees receive certificates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-two women yesterday received certificates at the end of the second module of a training programme under 'Salma Sobhan Fellowship in Journalism for Women'. Renowned economist Prof Rehman Sobhan, Brac Executive Director Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury and journalist Abdul Kayum distributed the certificates at the Brac Training and Resource Centre in Savar. The eight-day training programme began on June 4. There will be a widespread impact when the women journalists become actively involved in the profession and write about the service sectors, especially education and health, said Prof Sobhan. "You have to be bold enough wherever you go and work," he told the trainee journalists. The 32 women, selected from 32 districts in the country, have earlier completed the first module of training and six months of attachment period with the daily Prothom Alo. The Brac in cooperation with the Pratchi Trust introduced the training programme in December last year. The participants will remain attached to the daily for the next one year and contribute reporting. "The Salma Sobhan Fellowship Programme is an illustration of Brac and Pratchi Trust's commitment towards empowerment of women and alleviation of poverty," said a press release. The two organisations aim at developing 200 women journalists from across the country in the next three years through partnerships with the media or any other competent organisations, it added.

Rickshawpullers, owners threaten tougher movement

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Rickshaw owners and pullers of the city yesterday threatened tougher movement if the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) launches operation to drive out rickshaw from the city roads. Rickshaw-Van Malik Sramik Sangram Parishad will announce action programme at a rally at Muktangan tomorrow. The Parishad leaders said this at a press conference at the Jatiya Sramik League office. Convener of the organisation Ali Akbar, joint convener Fazlur Rahman, member secretary Insur Ali, Shah Alam Chowdhury, Haji Abdul Mannan, Ali Ahmed, Azahar Ali and Rustam Zaman were present. They said there are three lakh rickshaws officially in the city although the number is more than six lakh. Of them, only 87,000 are licensed. The government is being deprived of huge revenue because of a large number of unlicensed rickshaws, they said. Insur Ali said the DCC, in the face of their movement, signed an agreement with the rickshaw owners association for giving more 43000 licenses on November 6, 2001. But it is yet to be materialised. He demanded that the DCC provide the licenses soon. If the DCC try to remove rickshaw defying the court order and violating the agreement, the rickshaw-pullers and owners will go for a tougher movement against the move.

Independent local govt a must for good governance

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Budgetary allocation to local government institutions would benefit the people if the amount is spent without being influenced by executive powers, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday. They said members of parliament and bureaucracy must stop influencing the activities of local government, especially the union parishads (UP) to help establish good governance at grassroots level.

The roundtable titled 'National budget and local government' was organised by Autonomous Union Parishad Advocacy Group at the National Press Club in the city. While presenting a keynote paper, Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, country director of Hunger Project Bangladesh, said there is no initiative in the proposed budget for FY 2005-2006 to make the local government stronger. "Budgetary allocation to union parishads has dropped compared to previous years as the allocation to Gram Sarkar has increased which is a ominous sign for union parishads," he added. He said without making the local government stronger, establishment of good governance would remain a far cry. Dr Quazi Kholiquzzaman, president of Bangladesh Economic Association, said the representatives of local government are forced to act according to the wishes of the central government. "If the local government is not free from the influence of executives, then mere increase of budgetary allocation would not bring any change at local level," he said. He also regretted that local government representatives who are elected from opposition parties, face discrimination while getting allocation. Hafizuddin Khan, former advisor of the caretaker government, said the successive governments over-



Prof Mozaffer Ahmed speaks at a roundtable titled 'National budget and local government' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

looked the necessity of strong local government. "It is true that the budgetary allocation to Gram Sarkar was increased from political point of view, but a movement has to be launched across the country for stronger local government," he said. Mujibul Haque, former cabinet secretary, laid emphasis on strong local government with the objective of establishing a strong participatory democracy. "It is an abuse of the constitution that the MPs dictate the activities of local government," he added. Awami League lawmaker Faruk Khan said the local government, especially the union parishad, has to be more transparent in their activities for increasing their credi-

Proposed budget a document of inefficiency: B Chy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday termed the proposed budget for FY2005-2006 'a document of inefficiency' of the government which does not hold any vision. Speaking at a press conference at BDB office at Baridhara, he said, "The budget is full of bluffs, inconsistencies and high ambitions. It has been formulated keeping an eye on the next general election." Prof Chowdhury said the government with its corrupt and inefficient administration will not be able to achieve the target of TK 64,000 crore. He criticised the finance minister for continuing the provision of whitening the black money and not placing any proposal to curb corruption.



BDB President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury speaks at a press conference at Baridhara in the city yesterday.

He said the pre-condition of good governance is political commitment, but there is no political commitment in the proposed budget. The BDB chief demanded the withdrawal of the proposed tax on mobile SIM (Subscribers Identity Module) card, but thanked the government for increasing tax on tobacco. He said there is no mention of training for the government servants which is a must to upgrade the efficiency of the administration. Prof Chowdhury regretted that the finance minister, in his budget speech, could recollect the contribution of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria. Prof M A Mannan, advisor finance of BDB, said the provision of whitening black money will benefit the ruling party men in the general election as they will go for toll to those black money holders for running the election. BDB Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury MP, Cultural Secretary Shahidul Islam Khokon, Publicity Secretary Shah Ahmed Badol, City Jubo Dhara Convenor Sheikh Shahiduzzaman and Executive Member Advocate Shahara Bugum were present at the conference.

Death anniversary

Today is the 13th death anniversary of litterateur Kayes Ahmed, says a press release. He died on this day in 1992 at his Gandaria residence in the city.

Q M Zaman



On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his ancestral home, "Shaheb Bari," Hajiganj after Asr prayers. Foods will also be distributed among the destitute.

Chowdhury Mohiuddin



Today is the sixth death anniversary of Chowdhury Mohiuddin Ahmed (T ara Mia), ex-police officer, says a press release. On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Dattapara Jam-e-Masjid in Madaripur after Asr prayers today. Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

WEATHER TODAY

Temperature may fall

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely at a few places over Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may fall slightly during the period over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 38.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 24.0 degree Celsius at Sylhet, Bogra and Rangpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:47pm today and rises at 5:11am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.2	29.5	77	80
Chittagong	34.5	28.2	76	84
Rajshahi	37.2	26.2	69	68
Khulna	36.5	28.5	78	83
Barisal	36.0	28.6	79	78
Sylhet	34.4	24.0	90	65