

UNDP to fund Tk 300 cr for CHT dev

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will invest Tk 300 crore in the next four years for the development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Under a joint programme on 'Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts', the government and the UNDP in cooperation with the donor partners will implement the project.

The project is part of a long-term steps towards mainstreaming international development assistance and to build confidence among the people and institutions in the CHT to promote long term peace, said a UNDP press release.

The UNDP signed its largest ever project with the Economic Relations Division (ERD) yesterday.

Funds for this purpose have been made available to UNDP primarily by the European Commission as well as by Australia, Japan, Norway and the USAID.

The operational strategy of the project aims to reduce poverty, specially among the very poor, and consolidate harmony and stability.

"UNDP will strengthen the capacity of the people and institutions in CHT and the common goal of this project is to build confidence and to turn the peace initiative into development realities that will reduce poverty and benefits the people," said UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner.

Appointment of Miah as ACC commissioner challenged HC rule on govt

UNB, Dhaka

The validity of appointment of Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah, commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), was challenged in the High Court yesterday.

Following a writ petition filed in the court in this regard, a division bench issued a rule on the government to explain why the formation of the ACC and the appointment of its commissioner should not be declared illegal.

The rule, returnable in three weeks, came three days after the appointment of ACC Commissioner Maniruzzaman Miah was challenged by a public interest litigation writ petition filed by the same petitioner, Advocate Saidur Rahman Khan.

The government formed the three-member ACC, a corruption watchdog, on November 21, 2004 with former HC Judge Justice Sultan Hossain Khan as its chairman.

The petitioner's counsel MK Rahman submitted that the commission was formed ignoring the prescribed list of eligible persons recommended by a selection committee for the appointment of commissioners.

He said the name of Miah was also not on the prescribed list of eligible persons.

Dhaka's RMG

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expressed his resolve to fight until last minute of the negotiation, a member of the Bangladesh delegation told UNB over telephone.

Economists from Bangladesh attending the 6th session of the conference termed the outcome a failure of negotiation.

Experts Wednesday cautioned that a reduction of tariff lines even to 99 percent would cost Bangladesh the benefit of the concession as the US would put the country's RMG into the remaining one percent. Such an outcome would be a disaster for Bangladesh, but would make the Africans happy, they had said.

"Bangladesh cannot get duty-free access in textile sector," Portman told the briefing, explaining the strength of the country's RMG industry that registered 20 percent export growth (US\$ 2.5 billion) to US market last year.

"Now Bangladesh stands in the global competitiveness and within 5 years it will come to a same platform to discuss with us," he said, adding, "The day is not far when we'll see the country as a developing one. We are proud of it and will help them achieve this."

Replying to a query, he said Bangladesh would not get duty-free access for textiles - neither in terms of safeguard measures, nor in any other way. But Africa could get duty-free access for cotton.

On a development package proposed for the LDCs, Portman said: "It doesn't mean all products of Bangladesh will be entitled to this package. We have a pressure of domestic constituency."

In a sharp reaction, Commerce Minister Altf Hossain Chowdhury said Bangladesh would not step back from its stand. "We came here to get our interest. Until the last minute we'll try."

ISLAMIST MILITANCY

'Country faces second big crisis after liberation war'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday identified poverty, divergent educational system and misinterpretation of Islam as the major factors behind the rise of militancy.

They said there is no concept of militants and suicide bombers in Islam.

The discussion on 'National security: Role of the politicians' was organised by Bangladesh Policy Forum at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Former advisor to the caretaker government Major General (Retd) Moinul Hossain Chowdhury said the country's security is threatened due to increasing gap between the rich and the poor.

If the disparity is not reduced suicide bombings will not be stopped, he said, adding that the politicians have a responsibility to cut disparity.

Moinul Hossain said the situa-

tion has become unstable because politicians are doing politics for power and not for the welfare of people.

The people also can check militancy by changing the government through voting in national election, he added.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former state minister for foreign affairs, said the country is now facing second big crisis after the liberation war in 1971.

He said the nation has to be united and act together to find out the roots of militancy and ways to check the menace.

Identifying the age-old education system as the source of militancy, he called for introducing modern educational system at the school level.

Editor of the Naya Diganta Alamgir Mohiuddin said there is no suicide bomber in the country, rather some persons are hiring those poor people for bomb blasts

to fulfil their ill motives.

Shah Abdul Hannan, former secretary, criticised the political parties who blamed Jamaat-e-Islami, its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir and madrasas for militancy during dialogue with the government.

There is no room for militancy in Islam, he said, adding that only a government has the authority to call for jihad.

Abdul Hannan said there is no offence in desiring the "Rule of Allah."

Kazi Azizul Haque, international affairs secretary of Khelafat Andolon, said madrasa teachers and students are not communal, rather secular politicians with English medium background are communal.

City University teacher Sheikh Towfiq and Joint Co-ordinator of Hizb ut-Tahrir Kazi Morshedul Haque also spoke at the discussion.

PM opens military hardware display

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday opened a spectacular display of military hardware by Army, Navy and Air Force in observance of the Victory Day.

Immediately after inauguration of the impressive display at the National Parade Square at Tejgaon by Khaleda by cutting a red ribbon and releasing multi-colour balloons, three BAF aircraft flew past the venue at a low altitude.

Earlier, on her arrival at the display site, she was received by Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Moeen U Ahmed, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral M Hasan Ali Khan and Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Fakhruddin Zaman and PSO to the Armed Forces Division Major General Mustafa Reza Noor.

Khaleda, also in-charge of the ministry of defence, went round different stalls and pavilions set up by the three services.

Blood's family meets Hasina

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Family members of former Consul General in the US Embassy in Dhaka Archer K Blood called on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence in the city yesterday.

During the meeting with Blood's wife Margaret Archer and daughter Shireen, Hasina recalled memories of the War of Liberation and lauded the role of the US diplomat for his bravery.

Rokia assures small women entrepreneurs of cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President of Women in Small Enterprises (WISE) Rokia Afzal Rahman yesterday assured the small women entrepreneurs of cooperation in marketing their products.

She also called on the rural women to make proper use of micro-credit and encouraged them to be engaged in collective entrepreneurship.

Rokia A Rahman, also former advisor to caretaker government, was speaking at the concluding ceremony of a six-day vocational training programme for 20 women at Belabo village in Amdia, Narsingdi. Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) of Bogra organised the training for the members of Shamsunnahar Women's Welfare Organisation (SWWO).

At the programme, she also donated Tk 5,000 to the SWWO on behalf of the WISE to invest primarily in making paper boxes and packets.

Bangladesh Mahila Samity member Sairunnahar also donated Tk 5,000 to the organisation.

Basanti Chakrabarti, trainer of TMSS, member Setara Begum, a representative from Belabo village Sultanuddin Ahmed, SWWO Chief Advisor Prof Dr Rashiduddin Ahmad were also present.

Tk 2 lakh donated to Liberation War Museum

With an aim to upholding the country's history and heritage, Citibank NA Bangladesh in collaboration with the Prothom Alo, embarked on a six-month-long fund raising campaign on July last for book reading programme of the Liberation War Museum, says a press release.

With the launch of the programme, the museum has successfully reached out to almost 146 schools in eight districts encouraging young students to acquire knowledge through book reading.

The museum further aspires to develop the linkage with the educational institutions to provide a selection of books to more than 150 schools in six districts in the coming days.

Under its campaign, the Citibank yesterday made the second contribution to the museum with a fund raised during September to December against each international payment or reimbursement the bank processed on behalf of its correspondent clients.

Editor of the Prothom Alo Matur Rahman handed over a cheque for Tk 200,000 to Dr Sarwar Ali, trustee and member secretary of the Liberation War Museum, in presence of Mamun Rashid, Citigroup country officer, and Mofidul Hoque, trustee member of the museum.

The Liberation War Museum also contributed 100 books to Bathuli Saadi Laily Begum High School of Basail in Tangail district yesterday.

Resist evil forces

Dr Kamal urges professionals

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday urged the lawyers and other professionals to resist the evil forces who are out to kill innocent people and destroy the constitution and judiciary.

"The evil forces are instigating the fundamentalist and extremist militants to carry out destructive activities, and also trying to make divisions among the professionals," he said.

He was addressing the meeting of the lawyers after a human chain organised by Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad (SASP). The Parishad organised the human chain on the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) premises protesting the attacks on the judiciary.

Dr Kamal urged the lawyers to continue to organise various programmes, including human

chain, exchange of views and meetings, to mould public opinion in favour of establishing rule of law, protecting constitution and justice in the society.

Presided over by SASP convener Barrister M Amir-ul Islam, the meeting was also addressed by Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Advocate Mahbub Alam, former SCBA president Advocate Abdul Bast Majumder, SASP Member Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury and SCBA Secretary Advocate M Enayetur Rahim.

They demanded immediate resignation of the government for its failure in running the country and trial and punishment of State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar for his false remark about Yadav, an innocent victim of suicide bomb attack in Netrakona.

Victory Day programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political, socio-cultural and professional bodies have curtailed their programmes taken up to celebrate the Victory Day today.

The programmes included laying of wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar, hoisting of national flag, bringing out of colourful rallies and holding of discussions.

Armed Forces' programme Members of Bangladesh Armed Forces have taken up several programmes to mark the day.

Apart from a 31-gun salute, the day's programmes of the armed forces include special munajat after Juma prayers at all mosques of Army, Navy and Air Force across the country seeking divine blessings for the peace and progress of the country.

BNP programme Leaders and workers of ruling BNP and its student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal will hoist national flag and party flag in the morning.

Led by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, they will also lay wreaths at Savar National Memorial at 6:30am. BNP leaders and workers will also lay wreath on the graveyard of late President Ziaur Rahman at 7:00am.

A cultural programme has been organised at Paltan Maidan at 2:00pm.

A colourful rally will be brought out from Central BNP office at 2:00pm tomorrow.

BNP district and upazila units have also taken separate programmes including discussions and rallies to mark the day.

Awami League programme Leaders and activists of main opposition party Awami League

(AL) and its student front Bangladesh Chhatra League will hoist national flag and party flag atop party offices across the country and lay wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at 6:30am.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and President of AL Sheikh Hasina along with her party leaders and workers will lay wreath at Savar National Memorial at 7:00am.

AL Leaders and workers will also lay wreath at Shikha Chirintan at Suhrawardy Udyan at 8:30am.

Hasina will meet members of some martyred freedom fighter families, injured freedom fighters, and activists of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra at her Dhanmondi office at 10:00am.

A Bijoy rally will be brought out from Paltan Maidan at 2:30pm that will end at Bangabandhu Museum.

A mass song programme has been organised at the same venue at 6:00pm.

AL will organise a discussion at Bangabandhu Museum at 2:30pm tomorrow with Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

A cultural programme will also be held at the same venue at 6:00pm.

Other Organisations Sammilita Sangkritik Jote will bring out a colourful rally from the Central Shaheed Minar at 10:00am today as part of its three-day victory festival titled 'Bijoy Utasab-05'.

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Zaker Party, Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Bangladesh Janasheba Party and many other organisations have also taken up programmes to mark the day.

JHALAKATHI 10 accused in 2 judges' murder acquitted

BDNEWS, Jhalakathi

A Jhalakathi court yesterday acquitted ten people accused for the killing of two judges in the suicide bomb attack by Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) on November 14 in Jhalakathi.

Md Ismail Hossain, first class magistrate of Jhalakathi, acquitted the accused as the police could not press any specific charges against them.

Police arrested them at Krishnakhata area on November 14 and 15. JMB suicide squad member Mamun, who carried out the attack on the judges, was also injured in the blast, used to live in that area.

The police produced them before the court showing them arrested under section 54. Later, the police interrogated the arrestees, putting them on remands three times.

They were granted bails last week on condition of appearing before the court every working day.

The acquitted people are -- Moulana Md Abdul Mannan, general secretary of Jhalakathi Sadar Upazila Jamiyatul Modarasin and superintendent of Kutubnagar Azizia Dakhil Madrasa, Ripon Mallik, Kamal Hossain, Hafizul Islam, Abul Kalam, Shahidul Islam, Majeedul Islam, Shaheed Khan, Sameer and Bachhu.

WTO talks

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The World Bank added its voice to the indignation expressed by least-developed countries over their treatment at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Hong Kong, saying there had been much talk about development but too little action.

"In the three days the meetings have taken so far, the rich countries have transferred more than \$2 billion (1.1 million pounds) to their farmers in various forms of support," World Bank Vice President Danny Leipziger said in a statement.

"In the same period, the 300 million poorest people in Africa have earned less than \$1 billion between them."

Poor nations slammed Washington and Tokyo at the talks for balking at a deal that would allow their goods in free of duties and quotas, saying that after years of prescribing liberalisation for others it was time they "swallowed their own medicine."

One official said US Trade Representative Rob Portman "went ballistic" over the statement, which was issued by Zambian Trade Minister Dipak Patel on behalf of the poorest WTO countries.

The United States also came under fire over the \$4 billion a year in subsidies enjoyed by its cotton farmers, and won little respite when it announced its willingness to offer duty-free access for cotton from impoverished West African states.

"This is a step in the right direction but it is clear more needs to be done. The real problem for African cotton producers is dumping on the world market, resulting from domestic and export subsidies," European Union trade chief Peter Mandelson said in a statement.

Arrest Nizami

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actions against Jamaat Amir and Industries Minister Nizami and Social Welfare Minister Mujahid.

The presidium meeting with the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in the chair also decided not to change the party's stance on the prime minister's proposal for dialogue on militancy and termed the invitation to the talks an act.

Jalil said the meeting noted that Shaikh Abdur Rahman is in government care and therefore he and those Jamaat leaders should immediately be brought to book and Jamaat has to be expelled from the government.

"It is now clear to the countrymen that Jamaat and Shibir men are involved in the militant activities as most of the arrestees bear links to the ruling coalition partner and its student wing," the AL general secretary said.

On the combined opposition's reply to the prime minister's letter, the AL presidium meeting did not take any decision. Jalil said the issue would be resolved at a 14-party meeting later.

The AL-led opposition alliance will soon sit down with different professional and socio-cultural organisations, Jalil added.

He said the recently promulgated ordinance legalising telephone tapping is contrary to the constitution and it will open the floodgates to instances of infringement on individual freedoms.

He said the meeting discussed among others measures preparatory to the divisional grand rally to be held in Rajshahi on December 22. The meeting held at AL's Dhanmondi office also decided to hold grand rallies in Sylhet, Chittagong, Barisal and Dinajpur [Rangpur region] after the January 22 long march towards Dhaka.



Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and members of civil society line up at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday to demand trial of the perpetrators of the gruesome murder of Kibria and fair investigations into all grenade and bomb attacks.

Only 4 pc of children with disability go to school

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are around 16 lakh physically and mentally challenged children in the country and only four percent of them are getting opportunity to go to school, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said although there are many laws to protect the rights of the people with disability, their implementation is hardly seen.

The roundtable titled 'Rights of street and working children with disabilities: Present context' was organised by the Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID) at Bangladesh Institute of International Strategies Studies (BISS) auditorium in the city.

Funded by Save the Children Sweden-Denmark, the roundtable was participated by human rights activists especially people working

with the physically or mentally impaired children.

With a view to make aware people and sensitising the disability issues for undertaking specific interventions, the speakers shared their working experience and stressed different needs to be met for the retarded people especially the children.

Termining the word 'Disable' as odious Prof Zerina Rahman as the core discussant in the meeting said people should change their attitude towards physically or mentally impaired children.

"The government has taken various measures so that the physically and mentally challenged people can enjoy their rights, but these are not implemented properly," she said.

Prof Zerina said local government also can play an important

role in ensuring the rights of the challenged people.

At the same time special consideration should be given for the people with disabilities in public places, she added.

Rabiul Hasan of CSID presented a paper showing the condition of challenged children in the society, hindrances to their education, and lack of entertainment, health and above all employment opportunities.

CSID Founder Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury presided over the roundtable where Chairman of Privatisation Commission Enam Ahmed Chowdhury spoke as chief guest.

Former Chairman of BTRC Syed Marghub Murshed and Programme Manager of Save the Children Sweden-Denmark Kristine Zenthen Jeppesen spoke as special guests.

338 victims of trafficking rescued since June last year

Babar claims significant progress in combating the menace

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar yesterday said the government has made significant progress in combating human trafficking and prosecuting the traffickers.

He also hoped that this progress will elevate Bangladesh to Tier 1 from 2 in the US Department of State 'Trafficking in Persons' (TIP) report.

The TIP report placed Bangladesh on Tier 3 in 2004 due to the government's negligence in combating trafficking and prosecuting the criminals, which encouraged the illicit business in the country. Later, Bangladesh was updated to Tier 2.

During the period from June 15, 2004 to December 1, 2005, the government rescued and rehabilitated 338 victims of trafficking, brought 155 camel jockeys home and intercepted a good number of people at different airports and borders, the state minister said.

Also, three traffickers were sentenced to death and 80 others to life imprisonment, he said at the inaugural session of a workshop of a

project titled 'Counter-trafficking intervention, protection and prosecution for victims of trafficking in persons in Bangladesh' at a city hotel.

The government has formed an inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee to oversee the national efforts to check trafficking while a national anti-trafficking police monitoring unit is there with its presence in all 64 districts, Babar said, adding that 161 boys were rescued from servitude in the fishing industry.

Appreciating Bangladesh for its continuous progress in combating human trafficking, USAID Mission Director Gene V George said the police officials, community members and religious leaders were trained in this regard beside reducing poverty and fostering economic and political empowerment of women.

"Vulnerable women and children become victims through emotional words of the traffickers, which could be checked only through high-profit and low-risk enterprises," George said.

Lauding the establishment of Project Implementation Committee (PIC) at the home min-

istry, he said the number of prosecution went up to 75 last year from 35 in 2003.

Safar Raj Hossain, secretary of the home ministry, said human trafficking is the third largest illicit business after the arms smuggling, which is operated by a strong network of racketeers worldwide, forcing thousands of women and children into bonded labour and prostitution.

Shahidul Haque, regional representative of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said presently 27 million people are thought to be trafficked victims, who are a capital of 200 billion dollars hidden economy worldwide.

The counter-trafficking intervention project, being implemented by the IOM in collaboration with the home ministry, will conduct awareness campaigns in 18 districts, mostly in the northern parts of the country, which have been identified as a trafficking-prone area.

Additional Secretary of home ministry Mohammad Mohsin and chief of IOM's counter-trafficking team Mizanur Rahman also spoke.