



Financiers halt Tk 291cr loan to Jubok Phone

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

Financiers have postponed the disbursement of a Tk 291-crore syndicated loan to Jubok Phone, a sister concern of Jubo Karmasangsthan Society (Jubok) which is allegedly involved in unauthorised banking activities.

The loan agreement between the banks and the company was scheduled to be signed at Radisson Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka yesterday but the signing ceremony was postponed following Bangladesh Bank's show-cause notice on Jubok.

Eleven banks and financial institutions approved the loan to Jubok Phone. These are Dhaka Bank, AB Bank, Al Falah Bank, IDCOL, Uttara Bank, Prime Bank, Eastern Bank, Exim Bank, Janata Bank, National Credit and Commerce Bank, and First Security Bank.

Sources said managing directors of some of the banks have already taken decision against disbursing the loan, saying it is very risky to provide loan to Jubok Phone. Some others said they talk

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Area around mine subsides by 1ft

Untreated chemical waste from Barapukuria causes water-logging in 4 villages, poses serious health hazards

KONGKON KARMAKER and SHARIER KHAN

About 1.2-square kilometre area of four villages around Barapukuria Coal Mine in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur has subsided by up to one foot while untreated chemicals, waste and water from the mine has inundated the area, posing serious health hazards to thousands of people and threatening aquatic life and soil fertility.

Operating without any pollution treatment facility, the mine is pumping out untreated waste and chemicals to the adjacent areas through a sluice gate and a seven-km-long canal. As a result, water bodies in the areas have become polluted and fertility of topsoil of four villages is being affected.

Moreover, locals fear that

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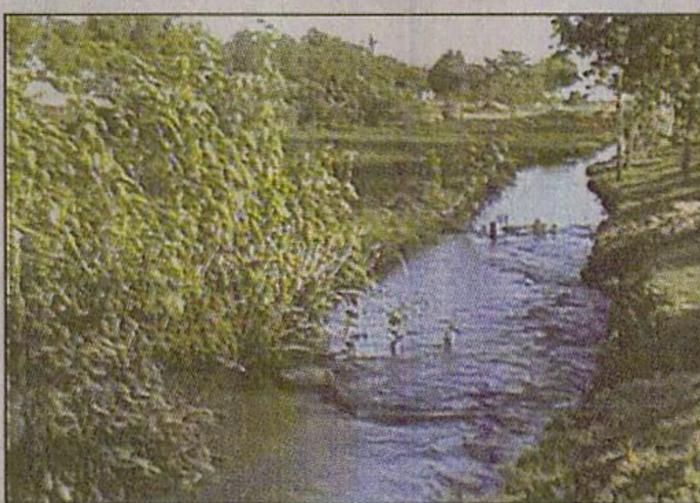


PHOTO: STAR

Untreated waste from Barapukuria coal mine in Dinajpur flows into a canal through this drain contaminating the water and degrading soil.

ILO decries low wages in RMG sector

Says legal minimum salary not increased in 10 years

MD HASAN

Minimum monthly wages in garment sector of Bangladesh has made it impossible for workers to lead a decent life, says a recent survey of International Labour Organization (ILO).

The survey observes most of the trade unions in the garment sector operate from outside the factories and thus suffer a lack of active participation of the workers.

Bangladesh is a country with one of the lowest wage rates in the world, the survey on "RMG Industry, Post-MFA Regime and Decent Work, The Bangladesh Perspective" says.

It says while the low wage rate reflects large supplies of workers relative to demand, what is striking is that the legal minimum wage in

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this sector has not increased during the last 10 years or so.

"It is often argued that minimum wage in the sector has increased in response to the adjustment with the increased standards of living and inflation", it adds.

"However, such a claim is grossly overstated, as full inflation adjustment is never undertaken."

Meanwhile, there are seven grades for the garment industry ranging from grade one to seven. The hierarchy has been designed in descending order, with grade seven being the lowest and statutory legal minimum wage for a grade seven employee being Tk 930 and that for a grade one employee being Tk 4,500.

The labour standards are appallingly low, when compared

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BNP clips Sylhet lawmakers' wings

Dissolves Ilyas-led district body; Saifur apparently comes out victor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fierce rivalry between BNP lawmakers Saifur Rahman and M Ilyas Ali finally compelled the ruling party yesterday to dissolve the convening committee of its Sylhet district unit.

Though the party dissolved the committee led by Ilyas, it also limited the influence of veteran finance minister Saifur in party politics in the district.

Party lawmakers from Sylhet will now coordinate organisational activities in their respective constituencies, and thana BNP leaders in cooperation with central leaders will do the job in the areas that do not have party lawmakers, a BNP press release said yesterday.

"No lawmaker will interfere in party activities in areas other than

his constituency," it added.

A BNP leader told The Daily Star that the party action would go in favour of Saifur but at the same time the senior leader will have no scope to interfere in BNP politics in Sylhet.

Dissolution of the convening committee followed Prime Minister and party chief Khaleda Zia's separate meetings with Saifur, Ilyas and Sylhet city BNP President Ariful Haq Chowdhury yesterday.

Party sources said Saifur was so angry with his junior rival Ilyas that he wanted to avoid yesterday's National Economic Council (NEC) meeting on health grounds. "The prime minister telephoned Saifur Rahman and assured him of taking steps to resolve the crisis," one leader said.

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Bangladesh to get \$2m from donors to fight bird flu

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) and other donors are providing Bangladesh assistance worth \$2 million to help initiate activities to check Avian Influenza (AI).

The assistance will be utilised for creating and raising awareness, communications and training.

The possible AI project, now under preparation, has four components that look at animal health, human health, awareness raising and implementation, a WB handout yesterday said.

Sources said the WB was also reviewing the government's

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Dhaka elected to UN peace commission

UNB, Dhaka

In a resounding recognition of its contribution to UN peacekeeping mission, Bangladesh has been elected to the newly established Peace-Building Commission of the United Nations.

An official announcement in Dhaka on Sunday said the peace commission was set up following a decision reached by world leaders in New York last September.

The 31-member body will fill a gap in the UN system where as yet

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Tk 26,000cr ADP for next fiscal okayed

Education, power, transport get highest priority

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Economic Council yesterday approved a Tk 26,000 crore Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the next fiscal year, increasing its allocation by 23 percent from the current year's revised ADP.

It also approved a revision of the current fiscal's ADP, downsizing it by 12.24 percent.

Although the current fiscal's original ADP of Tk 24,500 crore was

slashed by Tk 3,000 in the revised one, the government still went for a bigger ADP for the next fiscal.

Since foreign aid inflow is likely to decline, local resources will constitute 57 percent of the next fiscal's total ADP.

Despite different expert quarters' suggestions for keeping a lesser number of projects in the next fiscal's ADP, it has a total of 886 projects while the current ADP has 859.

Among the projects in the next ADP, 428 are still unapproved and

have no allocation for them.

Sources said political influence will be used to incorporate these projects later on.

Education, power and transport sectors got the highest priority as far as allocations are concerned in the new ADP.

The prime minister (PM), who presided over the meeting, urged all officials concerned to become more alert to implementing the projects as soon as possible.

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Hunt on for survivors

Indonesia quake toll tops 4,600

AFP, REUTERS, Bantul

Rescue workers dug desperately through rubble yesterday for survivors of Indonesia's earthquake as weeping relatives buried victims and the death toll jumped to 4,611.

Indonesia yesterday appealed for foreign humanitarian aid following the devastating earthquake on Java island, in a bid to "reduce the burden" on national and local authorities.

The foreign ministry said in a statement that it had asked its ambassadors "to mobilise human

itarian assistance to help the victims of the earthquake."

The ministry said the appeal had been launched "in an effort to reduce the burdens of the regional governments and the central government."

Thousands of troops and emergency rescue teams joined volunteers who clawed at debris with their bare hands on the main island of Java, but power blackouts and heavy rain at dusk hampered efforts.

In hard-hit Bantul district south

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PM shocked at quake loss

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed deep shock and sadness at the huge loss of life and property in Friday's devastating earthquake in Java, Indonesia.

In a message to Indonesian President Dr H Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Khaleda conveyed sympathies and condolences to the government and the people of Indonesia over the disaster.

"I am confident, under your dynamic leadership, the government and the people of Indonesia would be able to overcome the

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