

Oriental Bank moratorium extended for 6 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday extended the moratorium on all activities of Oriental Bank for another six months except seven kinds of transactions, including limited level deposit withdrawal.

The finance ministry in a gazette notification said that the decision was taken due to delay in preparing the scheme for restructuring of the bank.

On January 25, the government imposed the first six-month moratorium on the bank's major activities.

For restructuring the problem bank, Bangladesh Bank (BB) had sent a proposal to the finance ministry with two options, but the ministry sent back the proposal asking a number of clarifications.

The BB recently sent the proposal again to the ministry and sources said that it is currently under review.

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Birdem doctors' strike put patients in peril

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Morjina, a 40-year-old diabetic patient who came from Bikrampur to get better treatment at Birdem Hospital in the capital, was forced to leave the hospital as the doctors in the emergency department have not been referring any patient for admission for the last three days due to a debilitating doctors' strike.

The resident physicians and resident surgeons of the out-patient department have also been extending their tacit support to the striking doctors by not referring any patient for admission.

"Morjina received treatment from this hospital ten to twelve days ago and returned home. But as her condition deteriorated we again brought her back to the hospital," said one of her relatives adding that the doctors said no patient was being given admission to the hospital.

"We don't know what to do now.

The emergency doctors said we can admit her to Holly Family Red Crescent Hospital or Dhaka Medical College Hospital," the relative added.

A huge number of patients coming from within the capital or outside seeking treatment at Birdem had to go back as no new patient has been given admission to the hospital following a strike of around 300 in-patient department doctors who were given contractual appointments after 1992, when the practice of giving such appointments began.

The doctors went on the strike on Monday following a notice issued by the authorities on the same day saying no contractual appointment of doctors will be renewed.

Demanding regularisation of their jobs and a unified rule for all employees the in-patient department doctors on contract have been on the strike since then.

Only four patients, who are either staff of the hospital or their relatives,

were admitted yesterday whereas usually more than sixty new patients usually get admissions there every-day.

Even surgeries have been stopped leaving patients in grave situations, while the doctors are abstaining from carrying out their routine duties. Many of the admitted patients who are scheduled to be discharged from the hospital following treatment are also not being able to leave the hospital because they are not getting discharge letters due to the physician's strike. In the meantime fees for their unnecessary stays in the hospital are piling up on their bills.

A special emergency medical squad has been providing services in a limited capacity to the emergency patients and around 30 to 40 registrars yesterday decided to join hands with the special team.

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PHOTO: STAR

Diabetic patient Morjina Khatun is being taken out of the Birdem hospital in the capital yesterday after she was denied admission due to doctors' strike at the country's premier diabetes treatment centre.

Khaleda, Hasina hope for better ties with India

Menon meets them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed their hope that India will take necessary steps to solve different prevailing issues between the two neighbouring countries to further boost up bilateral relationship.

Khaleda and Hasina also expressed their hope to visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Shaivshankar Menon that the friendly ties between India and Bangladesh will be strengthened further through the meeting at the foreign secretary level.

Menon called on the BNP chairperson and the Awami League (AL) president yesterday.

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Council okays national budget for 2007-08

UNB, Dhaka

The council of advisers at a special meeting yesterday approved the national budget for 2007-08 fiscal year with amendments to the duty and tax measures proposed earlier.

Chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, the meeting thoroughly discussed the budgetary measures, according to CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim.

"It's a good budget. But its success depends on proper and timely implementation," the chief adviser was quoted to have told the meeting.

The budget is scheduled to be approved today by the president through an ordinance under section 93 (1) of the constitution.

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5,436 fowls culled in Thakurgaon after bird flu outbreak

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A total of 5,436 fowls have been culled and buried in Thakurgaon municipal area since Tuesday midnight after bird flu broke out in the locality.

Six teams led by the deputy commissioner of Thakurgaon conducted the drive in 300 households of the seven villages, culling chickens, ducks and pigeons.

Thakurgaon Livestock Department officials said bird flu first broke out at Hazipara village and then spread to Kalibari.

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No progress in Bogra arms haul case after 4 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Four years into the recovery of a huge cache of bullets and powerful explosives in Kahalu and Dupchanchia upazilas in the district, no headway has been made to the investigation of the sensational cases.

Police filed four cases with Kahalu and Dupchanchia police stations after the recovery of around 1 lakh bullets and 174 kg RDX explosives from different places of the two upazilas on June 27 night and the following day in 2003.

But proceedings of the cases

regarding the country's second largest ammunition and explosives recovery remained stalled for the last 28 months as the High Court ordered stopping proceedings of the cases following a revision petition filed by one of the accused in the cases, Atiqur Rahman Dulu, on February 29 in 2005.

Three months after the haul, police submitted charge sheet of the cases against local Awami Krishak League activist Akhlaqur Rahman, his wife Anwara Begum Bithi, truck driver Altu Mia, Ashish Kumar Barmon and Bogra Jubo League leader Atiqur Rahman Dulu.

Questions rose whether it was possible for the low profile people to smuggle in such a huge cache of bullets and explosives while the investigators have not yet succeeded in detecting the people behind the scene, the destination of the seized ammunition and the motive behind the act.

Akhlaqur Rahman has been absconding since the filing of the cases.

Kahalu police on June 27 night recovered 62,100 bullets and 115kg

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Redwan on 4-day remand Criminal charges pressed against Pintu

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained former state minister for liberation war affairs and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leader Redwan Ahmed was placed on a four-day remand while police pressed charges against BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu in a criminal case yesterday.

Hearing on charge framing of an arms case against detained former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar will be held on Monday.

REDWAN REMANDED

Uttara police produced Redwan before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Shafique Anwar at about 2.50pm and sought a ten-day remand for interrogation.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Uttara Police Station Bazlur Rashid placed a forwarding report where he said Redwan had amassed a huge amount of money through corruption while he was the state minister.

Moreover, he was trying to stand against the present government after his name was included on the list of top graft suspects. So, he needs to be quizzed to find out the source of his income and whereabouts of his accomplices, said the investigation officer (IO) of the case.

Opposing the prosecution plea, the defence lawyers submitted a petition seeking cancellation of the remand prayer.

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10 JCD men jailed for 3 yrs in tender obstruction case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced ten Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and activists to three years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) and fined them Tk 10,000 each for obstructing buying and dropping of tender schedules for jobs worth around Tk 450 crore.

The case was filed against them with Motijheel Police Station for preventing participants from bidding in a tender at the Construction Maintenance Management Unit (CMMU) of the health ministry on July 30 last year.

The convicts are Intiazur Rahman Prokash, Sahabur Rahman, Humayun Kabir, Mofizur Rahman alias Akash, F Kabir Khan Shilpi, Sajjad Hossain Robin, Shariful Islam Sabuj, Sajedul Islam Rumon, Abu Bakar Siddiq Sathi and Asaduzzaman alias Asad.

Sahabur Rahman, Mofizur Rahman and Sajjad Hossain were tried in absentia.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza of Speedy Trial Court-6 handed down the sentence in presence of eight accused at a packed courtroom. The court acquitted accused AKM Azad alias Swadhin as the charges brought against him were not proved.

The court fined the convicts Tk 10,000 each and if they fail to pay the amount they will have to serve three-month more RI.

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Japan pledges \$291m Soft loans for power, railway, water projects

UNB, Dhaka

Japan has pledged to provide \$291 million (Tk 2,000 crore) in loan assistance with nominal interest for three development projects in Bangladesh.

Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Masayuki Inoue formally apprised Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed of the new loan package when the envoy called on him at his office yesterday.

This will be the first such big amount of loan assistance by a development partner to the present

caretaker government after it assumed power on January 12 this year, said an official.

The projects for which the soft loan will be utilised are New Haripur Power Plant's 360MW Development Project (Part-I) involving \$144 million, Dhaka-Chittagong Railway Development Project with \$104 million and Water Resources Development Project involving \$43 million.

The loan repayment period is 40 years with a grace period of 10 years at 0.01 percent interest rate per

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11 killed in Israeli raids on Gaza

AFP, Gaza City

Eleven Palestinians were killed yesterday as Israel launched twin offensives in the Gaza Strip, triggering the deadliest violence since Hamas fighters overran the territory 12 days ago.

The bloodshed comes amid a renewed push for peace and rising expectations that outgoing British Prime Minister Tony Blair will be named special envoy by the international Quartet pushing to resolve the Middle East conflict.

Israeli tanks and bulldozers

rolled into Gaza City and the southern town of Khan Yunis in incursions launched overnight that swiftly sparked clashes with Palestinian fighters armed with guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

An air strike was called in near the Karni crossing between Gaza and Israel after gunmen were spotted approaching Israeli forces in the area.

The army said the activity was against "terror threats" in Gaza, where Hamas fighters overran

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22 killed in Cambodian plane crash

AFP, Undated

A plane crash earlier this week in southern Cambodia killed all 22 people aboard, including South Korean and Czech tourists, officials said yesterday after rescuers found the wreckage.

"Nobody survived," said Prime Minister Hun Sen, who traveled to this coastal town near the crash site -- located in dense forest on a remote mountain -- to oversee recovery operations.

He blamed bad weather rather than mechanical failure for Monday's accident, which was Cambodia's deadliest air crash in a decade.

"This accident was not caused by a technical problem of the plane," he said, adding though that all planes operating in the country would be inspected.

"If they are too old we will ban them from flying in our country," he said.

The chartered Russian-made

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PHOTO: STAR

These two pythons caught from Hathazari and Rauzan are now kept at Chittagong Zoo. Scorching heat often forces the reptiles to come out of their jungle habitat.

Heat brings pythons down to city

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Locals caught two pythons from Hathazari and Raozan in 24 hours ending yesterday morning.

With the latest capture, a total of five small and large pythons have been caught from different parts of the city and the district in the last seven days.

Unable to withstand sweltering heat, the pythons have been leaving their natural habitat at hilly areas looking for cooler shelter at city localities in Chittagong, experts said.

All the pythons captured were handed over to the Chittagong Zoo authorities.

Experts observed that since the pythons of this region cannot stand scorching heat, they usually move towards the urban areas when the mercury goes up beyond their tolerance level.

Zoologists in Chittagong said that the local pythons are of "Indian Python" (Python molurus) species, and they can bear temperature from 23 degree Celsius to a maximum of 32 degree Celsius.

According to the met office statistics, the average temperature in the port city for the last seven days was 33.31 degree Celsius.

Of the two pythons captured,

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