

Brazil seeks help from Prof Yunus to develop microcredit programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brazilian President Lula da Silva has sought assistance from Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus to develop microcredit programme for the poor in Brazil, particularly for the poorest regions of the country.

He also focused on the poverty alleviation programmes of the Brazilian government when Prof Yunus met him at Alvorada Palace in Brasilia on Thursday, says a press release.

During the meeting, Prof Yunus briefed the president on the Grameen Bank programmes.

Prof Yunus, who visited Brazil from June 11 to 14 at the invitation of the Brazilian Senate, also addressed the plenary session of the Senate where he spoke of the activities of the Grameen Bank.

The speech was telecast live throughout the country on the Senate TV Channel.

Following the address at the Senate, Prof Yunus was received at Alvorada Palace by President



Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus with Brazilian President Lula da Silva during a meeting at Alvorada Palace in Brasilia on Thursday.

Lula. During the two-hour meeting attended by cabinet ministers and senators, they discussed development issues ranging from poverty alleviation, healthcare,

food crisis, ways of increasing agricultural productivity, climate change and the environment and other common issues facing both Bangladesh and Brazil.

Prof Yunus briefed President Lula on healthcare initiatives of Grameen and sought his advice and assistance based on Brazilian experience to bring healthcare to the poor in Bangladesh.

Vice Minister Dr Gerson Pennay briefed Yunus on the healthcare programmes in Brazil.

President Lula also promised to send his health minister to Bangladesh in the near future.

Later, the agricultural minister joined the meeting and discussed how to increase agricultural productivity in developing countries such as Bangladesh.

Prof Yunus told President Lula that he represented the voice of all developing countries of the world on environmental issues and the rights of the poor.

President Lula said Brazil had a lot to learn from the successes in Bangladesh.



(From left) BHW Advisory Group member Dr Halida Hanum Akhter, Health Adviser Dr AMM Shawkat Ali, Brac Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed, WHO Assistant Director General Dr Timothy Evans and Health Secretary AKM Zafar Ullah Khan hold copies of a study report titled 'State of Health in Bangladesh 2007' at its launching ceremony at ICCDR, B auditorium in the city yesterday. James P Grant School of Public Health at Brac University organised the event.

REPORT ON HEALTH WORKFORCE LAUNCHED

Come up with specific plan on health sector: Adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though the issue of public-private partnership is much uttered in the country, the fact is that nobody has come up with a specific plan and clear policy in this regard, said Health Adviser Dr AMM Shawkat Ali yesterday.

At the launching ceremony of a report titled 'Health workforce in Bangladesh: Who constitutes the healthcare system?' the adviser said the issue of human resource development (HRD) should be addressed seriously and the non-state actors can come up with specific plan.

James P Grant School of Public Health at Brac University organised the launching ceremony at Sasakawa auditorium of ICCDR, B in the city.

Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW) conducted the study and prepared the report.

While speaking as chief guest, the health adviser said regulatory reform on health sector is needed very much as the country now doesn't need investment in infrastructure, rather it needs

skilled manpower. The report revealed that the country has a staggering shortage of over 60000 doctors, 2.8 lakh nurses and 4.83 lakh technicians.

It also revealed that there are only five physicians, two nurses and half technologist per 10000 people, while providing training to family welfare volunteers, that has been stopped since 1997, could play an important role in reducing maternal and child mortality.

Termining lack of coordination among different ministries as a constraint, the health secretary said still 48 percent posts of doctors at upazila level is vacant while in district level 25 percent and in tertiary level 10 percent posts of doctors are vacant.

Some 12 percent posts of nurses are vacant across the country as recruitment of the doctors and nurses has been stopped since last few years, he added.

Chaired by Founder and Chairperson of Brac FH Abed, the programme was also

addressed by Assistant Director General of World Health Organisation Dr Timothy Evans, Member of BHW Advisory Group Dr Halida Hanum Akhter, Convener of BHW Working Group Prof Abbas Bhuiyan and Dr Sabina Faiz Rashid.

VANDALISM AT FACTORY 2 RMG workers sent to jail

Two workers arrested for vandalism at a garments factory here were sent to jail when produced before the court yesterday.

Anwar and Tajibul Islam were arrested from Jamgara area yesterday morning following a case filed against 36 unruly workers for ransacking Hollywood Garment Factory and allegedly looting Tk 2 lakh.

Sources said some 3,000 workers resorted to vandalism in the Factory on Tuesday demanding payment of arrears.

Mudslides kill 14 in India

AFP, Guwahati

At least 14 people were killed and 30 injured yesterday in mudslides triggered by heavy monsoon rains in India's northeast, officials said.

Rescue work was being hampered by heavy rain, local official Bidul Payeng told AFP by telephone, adding the death toll could mount further with at least 10 of the injured in critical condition.

"So far we've recovered 14 dead bodies. Most victims died after being hit by landslides on their houses," Payeng said.

The casualties occurred in and around Arunachal Pradesh state capital Itanagar, which was cut off from the rest of the country.

Payeng said there were reports of at least two vehicles falling down a gorge on the city's outskirts.

"We are unable to carry out rescue operations due to heavy rains. We don't know how many people were in the vehicles," he said.

In adjoining Assam state, monsoon-triggered flash floods inundated 120 villages, displacing around 30,000 people.

"There were breaches in three major embankments (of the state's main Brahmaputra river) following heavy rains," district police chief SA Karim said.

The 2,906-kilometre (1,258-mile)-long Brahmaputra is one of Asia's largest rivers, crossing through China's Tibet region and India's northeast before flowing through Bangladesh and emptying into the Bay of Bengal.

Authorities asked the army to be on standby to give help as weather officials warned of more rain.

The monsoon rains, which sweep India from June to September, cause flooding and deaths every year in the densely populated country of more than 1.1 billion people.

Road crashes kill 2, injure 76

STAR REPORT

At least two people were killed and 43 others injured in separate road accidents across the country yesterday and on Friday.

Our RU correspondent reports: A woman was killed and 10 others were injured in a road accident yesterday at Trimohoni area under Mohanpur upazila in Rajshahi.

The victim was identified as Shamsur Nahar, 50, of Mohanpur village.

Police and locals said the accident occurred when a Naogaon-bound speeding bus lost its control and fell into the roadside ditch, leaving the passenger Shamsur Nahar dead on the spot and 10 others injured.

The six seriously injured were admitted into Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), while four others were given first aid at Mohanpur Health Complex.

Mohanpur police, however, recovered the bus from the ditch.

On the other hand, a minor boy was killed and his parents were injured in a road accident in Dhopaghata area under the same upazila on Friday.

The victim was identified as Shishir Ahmed, 7, of Tekatpara village at Puba upazila in Rajshahi.

Police said the accident occurred when a human hauler hit a motorcycle at Dhopaghata. As a result, the minor boy fell on the ground.

Local people rushed the three passengers to RMCH where Shishir succumbed to his injury.

The deceased's seriously injured father Saidur Rahman Master, 40, and mother Khursida Begum, 28, were admitted into the hospital.

Mohanpur police, however, arrested the bus driver Entaj Ali.

An unnatural death case was filed with Mohanpur Police Station.

Our Dinajpur correspondent adds: At least 31 people, including three children, were injured in two separate road accidents here yesterday due to heavy downpour, sources said.

The injured were rushed to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital. Seven of them left the hospital after receiving primary

treatment, while the rest are being treated there.

Of them, 14 people are in critical condition, said the hospital sources.

Seriously injured were identified as Shefali Begum, 22, Lalbanu Begum, 42, Omera Khatun, Kanak Rahman, 8, Royel, 10, Md Mazedur Rahman, 25, Md Rashidul Islam, 35, Md Reza, 12, Md Abdur Rahim, 40, Md Abdur Rahman, 37, Md Harunur Rashid, 32, Md Rafel Rahman, 25, Muhammad Matlub, 30, and Kashmeri according to the DMCH and Phulbari Health Complex sources.

Police sources, quoting locals of Chiribandar upazila, said a Gaibandha-bound crowded bus skidded off at Amtoli village and fell into a roadside ditch at 8:10am, leaving at least 15 people injured.

Another accident occurred at Bezaimor when a Bogra-bound passenger bus turned turtle as the driver lost its control, leaving at least 16 people injured.

Foreign policy discussed with ex-diplomats

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury held a dialogue on foreign policy with retired Bangladesh ambassadors at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Iftakhar initiated the discussion by presenting a keynote paper, which argued for a pro-active foreign policy, an idea that received broad support from others.

Speaking to the media later, the foreign adviser described the discussion as "extremely rich and rewarding".

He said foreign policy must be based on national consensus and the retired ambassadors can help build the consensus by creating public opinion both within and outside political parties.

The retired diplomats praised the foreign adviser for this initiative as this was the first ever consultation of this kind held at the foreign ministry.

Scuffle between supporters of BNP factions

Delwar cancels meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain cancelled a view exchange meeting with leaders of Narayanjan district BNP and its front organisations yesterday following a scuffle between the supporters of 'reformist' faction and 'pro-Khaleeda' faction.

The scuffle ensued after the supporters of both the factions from Narayanjan gathered on the ground floor of NAM flat of Delwar Hossain in Dhaka to attend the meeting scheduled for yesterday.

The 'pro-Khaleeda' faction leaders also assaulted Narayanjan BNP Vice President Badruzzaman Khasru, also a leader of the party's central committee, and his two sons, witnesses said.

When the supporters of 'reformist' faction led by Khasru's younger brother Ataur Rahnah Angur, a former lawmaker of the party, arrived at the NAM flat at around 11:30am, the supporters of other faction led by Abu Yusuf Khan Tipu, general secretary of Narayanjan Jatiyatadhi Sramik Dal, started chanting slogans -- 'agents of the government' and 'reformists'.

Khasru then protested their act, sparking off the scuffle, which continued for about half an hour.

However, the leaders and supporters dispersed when the law enforcers stepped in.

Delwar called the meeting as part of his regular view exchange meeting with the district level leader.

Woman killed by husband in Faridpur

UNB, Faridpur

A woman was killed by her husband at Bhati Laxmipur in the town early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Swapna Malo, 22, wife of fisherman Kanchan Malo, 25.

Police said following an altercation with his wife on Friday night Kanchan hit her with a sharp weapon while she was in sleep, leaving her injured.

Local people took the injured housewife to Faridpur Medical College Hospital where she died.

Local people also caught Kanchan and handed him over to police.

Arms, ammo seized in Satkhira

UNB, Satkhira

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered a number of arms and ammunition at Shriula village under Ashashuni upazila in the district early Thursday.

Sources said on secret information, Rab-6 men recovered three guns, one pistol, four rounds of bullets and five sharp weapons from a pond in front of the house of union parishad member Nazrul Islam at around 4:00am.

Death anniversary

Today is the 5th death anniversary of Anisul Haque, proprietor of now defunct Adbiz, says a press release.

Relatives and admirers are requested to pray for peace and salvation of the departed soul.



Garment workers stop their work inside Yan Apparels Ltd in protest against the beating of a worker by an official in Agrabad area in Chittagong yesterday. The worker was beaten as he asked for salary from the official.

US shuttle heads for landing after successful mission

AFP, Cape Canaveral

The US shuttle Discovery raced back to Earth yesterday after a successful mission to deliver and open Japan's first space laboratory at the International Space Station.

The shuttle, carrying seven astronauts, left orbit and plunged toward the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida ahead of its landing set for 11:55am (1515 GMT).

Nasa gave the shuttle the green light to wrap up its two-week journey after it determined that the loss of a small clip from its rudder posed no risk during landing.

The V-shaped thermal barrier clip, measuring 6.5-by-2.5 centimeters (2.5 inches by one inch), is only needed during the shuttle's ascent, the US space agency said.

"It's not an issue whatsoever," deputy shuttle program manager LeRoy Cain told reporters.

Nasa also determined that Discovery's heat shield was in "very good shape" and the shuttle was "safe for re-entry," Cain said.

The agency has kept a close eye on the shuttle's protective thermal layer since a crack in Columbia's

heat shield caused the orbiter to explode as it re-entered Earth's atmosphere in February 2003, killing its seven astronauts.

Discovery commander Mark Kelly, speaking on Nasa TV from the shuttle, admitted the seven-person crew had initial concerns when they saw an object floating past them but were reassured by news that it was a clip.

"We've seen these things come off before," he said, adding: "It is no worry at all, it has no effect on re-entry and Discovery is in great shape."

After 14 days in space, Discovery undocked from the ISS on Wednesday about 344 kilometers (214 miles) above the South Pacific east of Australia, and began preparing for its return to Earth.

The shuttle's main task was to deliver, open and outfit the 11.2-meter long, 4.4-meter wide main module of the Japanese Kibo laboratory. The mission also included three spacewalks.

In addition, Discovery brought a new crew member to the ISS, Greg Chamitoff, who replaced fellow American astronaut Garrett

Reisman.

Reisman is returning to Earth after a three-month stint at the outpost, and told Nasa TV on Friday that he was primarily looking forward to "being back home, sleeping in my own bed -- and using my own toilet."

The only toilet at the International Space Station began to fail just before Discovery's launch, and spare parts were sent up on the shuttle to repair it.

Reisman said the spacewalk was one of the best things he had done while at the ISS, and also described the incredible views from space, in particular one of the United States at night as a weather front moved across the country.

"The thunderstorms had this electric blue light like a disco or something, and around it was the warm glow of all the city lights. It was absolutely spectacular," he said.

Nasa hopes to complete construction of the space station by 2010, viewing it as a central part of space exploration ambitions because it allows scientists to study the effects of microgravity on humans.

Vishnu statue worth Tk 250cr recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Baria

Brahmanbaria Sadar police yesterday recovered a touchstone statue of Vishnu worth around Tk 250 crore from Sultanpur village under Sadar upazila in the district.

Police sources said a large statue, weighing 261 kilograms, was found under the ground when a landslide occurred in the pond of Mongal Mia, 60, a member of Sultanpur union parishad (UP).

The UP member, however, informed the matter to Sadar police. A team of police led by Second Officer of Brahmanbaria Sadar Police Station Mazbah Uddin rushed to the spot.

They excavated the ground and recovered the statue at 11:15am. The height of the statue, including its touchstone frame, is five feet and three feet in width.

Police said the whole structure of the statue is made of precious stone according to the primary examination by a local goldsmith.

The main statue was encircled with 12 other gods, goddesses and animals in the same frame. There were some flowers and foliages engraved on the frame, police said, adding that the pedestal of the statue as well as whole structure was made of touchstone.

Mezbah Uddin said the statue will be sent to Archeological Department in Dhaka to be preserved.

Implement 7th Wage Board Award: DUJ

UNB, Dhaka

Leaders of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) yesterday called for immediate implementation of the 7th Wage Board Award in all the newspapers and news agencies.

Addressing an emergency DUJ meeting, they said the government has announced the Wage Board after long 12 years alongside raising the rate of government advertisement by 120 percent and ensuring the import of newsprint at zero tariff for the convenience of media owners.

The DUJ leaders said the media house that will not implement the Wage Board will not be able to avail of the facilities recommended by the Wage Board.

Presided over by DUJ President Shah Alamgir, the meeting was addressed by former DUJ president Ataf Mahmud, General Secretary Omar Faruque, Vice-President Abul Kalam, Joint Secretary Shaban Mahmud, Treasurer Mazful Islam, Organising Secretary Noore Jannat Akhter Sima, Publicity Secretary Gazi Zahirul Islam, Social Welfare Secretary Rafique Ahmed and Office Secretary Barun Bhoomik Nayan.

The meeting also took stock of the latest situation in various media houses, including ETV, and announced programmes to press for reinstatement of those who have lost their jobs in the private TV channel ETV.

Search for trapped miners abandoned in China

AFP, Beijing

Rescue workers were yesterday forced to abandon a search for seven miners trapped after an explosion at a Chinese coal mine in which at least 27 died, state media said.

The rescue effort, already hampered by high levels of toxic gas in the mine, was abandoned completely after the workers found unused explosives and detonators in the shaft, the state Xinhua news agency said.

About 100 rescuers had been searching for survivors since the blast at the mine in Shanxi province, one of China's main coal-producing areas, on Friday morning.

They pulled 27 bodies from the mine early yesterday but the fate of the remaining seven was not known.

The blast was caused by explosives used in the extraction of coal, the mining company told local authorities.

Fifteen workers managed to escape by themselves after the explosion at the mine in Xiaoyi city, and nine were pulled out alive by rescuers.

China's coal mines are among the most dangerous in the world, with safety standards often ignored in the quest for profits and the drive to meet sky-rocketing Chinese demand for coal. Police detained two mine bosses and two workers in charge of explosives, Xinhua said, citing a local official.

DHAKA TODAY IUB convocation Strategic plan launching Media campaign Calligraphy exhibition Discussion Media award Roundtable Monsoon festival

WEATHER TODAY Rain likely UNB, Dhaka Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Chittagong division and at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.