

Ecneec okays 11 projects worth Tk 4547 crore

Tk 681cr for improvement of quality of higher education

UNB, Dhaka

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) yesterday approved 11 projects, including the Tk 681-crore one on higher education quality enhancement providing research funds to the public and private universities who reportedly remained high and dry in this important sector.

The total cost of the 11 projects is Tk 4547 crore with Tk 3518 crore foreign aid from IDA, ADB, SDCEC, WB and IDAS.

Presided over by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, yesterday's ECNEC meeting was attended by the advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser, secretaries and high officials of different ministries.

The higher education quality enhancement project funded by the World Bank got the go from the ECNEC with loan negotiations remaining incomplete, officials said.

"The negotiation is still going on," said a Planning Commission high official.

He said the Planning Commission had opposed the

World Bank project proposal, as it did not match the needs of the country.

As per the project document, the government would provide research funds to the 31 public universities if their research proposals maintain a quality while the number of the private universities is almost double.

"The contribution of the universities in the research arena is not significant. Under this project the government will fund the research of the universities," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam told reporters after the ECNEC meeting at the Planning Commission office.

Of the Tk 681-crore allocation, a sum of Tk 598 crore would be funded by the World Bank for the project to run from 2009 to 2013.

For the funds of this project the research proposals would have to pass from the evaluation committee comprising experts from different sectors.

The government in the past week formed a seven-member loan negotiation team, headed by Economic Relations Division's Additional Secretary M Mosharraf

Hossain. Representatives of the ministries of finance, education and law and the University Grants Commission are also on the committee.

Earlier, the commission had opposed the project, as it would not be wise for the government to take loans from the World Bank and give the money in grants to private universities, which collect a huge sum in fees from students.

The commission also said colleges offering higher education under the National University were facing serious problems in maintaining education quality while public universities and such colleges cater the need for higher education for more than 90 per cent of the students pursuing higher studies.

The project will have four components - promoting academic innovations, building institutional capacity, raising connectivity capacity of the higher education sector and project management.

The academic-innovation component, involving Tk 350 crore or \$50 million, is focused on private universities.

Foreign adviser, Afghan deputy minister discuss bilateral matters

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury held a meeting with Afghan Deputy Minister for Woman Affairs Sayeda Mughan Mustafawi at his office yesterday and discussed bilateral matters.

The foreign adviser expressed his appreciation of the fact that Afghanistan is now a full-fledged member of Saarc, which Bangladesh "welcomes most wholeheartedly".

"Gender mainstreaming is a subject in which Bangladesh is eager to share experience with Afghanistan," he said during the meeting.

The foreign adviser also thanked the Afghan government through the deputy minister for the cooperation extended by them in obtaining the release of Bangladeshi Noor Islam, a Brac official, who was abducted by militants in Afghanistan earlier this year.

The meeting was also attended by Ambassador Ahmed Karim Nawabi of Afghanistan.

Admission test of BSMRAU on Jan 3

UNB, Dhaka

Admission test for four-year BS (Agriculture) programme under 2009 session of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agriculture University (BSMRAU) will be held on January 3.

Application form and admission guide can be collected from the office of the Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, during office hours from October 26 to December 24 on payment of Tk 500 at Sonali Bank, BSMRAU branch.



Former chief adviser to a caretaker government Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman speaks at a seminar on 'Jatiya Sangsad and the role of parliamentarians: Expectations of people' at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday. Sitting on his right are Dr Iftexharuzzaman, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid and Prof Muzafer Ahmad. (Story on Page 1)

One to die, 10 get life for killing student

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

The Chittagong Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal yesterday sentenced one person to death and ten others to life imprisonment for killing a college student in 2006.

The condemned convict, Mohammad Ibrahim, and four of the lifers were tried in absentia.

Judge Md Shafiqul Karim handed down the verdict.

The lifers are Shahidul Islam Jony, Rabiul, Iqbal Hossain, Liton Biswas, Mohammad Suman, Foysal, Mim Rashed Khan, Rupam Das, Mizanur Rahman and Ishrak. Of them, Jony, Rabiul, Iqbal and Liton are on the run.

They were also fined Tk 10,000 each.

According to the prosecution, the convicts stabbed Utpal Barua, a college student, to death near the United Nations Park in the port city on March 4 in 2006 when he was going to a coaching centre.

His father Sushil Barua filed a case with Panchlaish Police Station.

Police submitted charge sheet against 11 people on March 11 in 2008 and charges were framed on May 27.

Public Prosecutor Quamrul Islam Sazzad, Adv Sadhanmoy Bhattacharya and Adv Kafil Uddin Chowdhury appeared for the state while Adv Sabhu Prashad Biswas, Adv Manjur Ahmed Ansari and Adv Dewan Nazrul Islam defended the accused.

Five stolen cabs recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered five stolen taxicabs and arrested two people from the city's Mirpur area yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Md Abdul Salam, 26, son of Abdul Sattar, of Mirpur and Md Shahidul Islam, 38, son of late Sirajul Huq, of the same area.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-4 recovered the cabs from Shah Automobiles near Kingshuk CNG Pump at Mirpur and arrested the people at around 1:00am.

Rab officials said the arrestees along with five others would engage hijackers at several points in the city, who were involved in snatching cabs after making the drivers senseless.



Visitors admire artworks at an exhibition at Zainul Gallery at the Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University, yesterday. Chaturanga, a group of women artists - Kamrun Nahar Tandra, Mafruha Begum Beauty, Rawjatul Jannat Champa and Afroza Anjum Rosy, organised the seven-day exhibition.

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