

WB help for 10 more disaster-hit districts

METRO DESK

Notun Jibon, a Social Investment Programme Project (SIPP) that started as a small-scale pilot project in two of the poorest districts of Bangladesh - Jamalpur and Gaibandha, has now been expanded to 10 more districts affected by recent floods and the cyclone Sidr.

The government-led project, co-financed by the World Bank (\$18.3 million), targets the hard core poor who cannot avail themselves of micro-credit facilities, says a World Bank press release.

The project has tested new community-based financing to improve access to local infrastructure and basic services for the hard core poor. Its community driven development approach has helped the poor form their own institutions, and the project provides funds for investment and small-scale lending directly into the hands of the villagers.

The unique approach of this project has unleashed the potential of the rural poor in

Bangladesh. In a span of 6 years, over 200,000 households (almost 2,000,000 people) in the poorest and disaster-prone districts of Bangladesh have benefited from community infrastructure and productive investments (drinking water, access roads and bridges, access to credit, markets, skills and income generation); and another 150,000 households in the cyclone and flood-affected areas have started receiving benefits.

The second phase of Notun Jibon - Empowerment and Livelihood Project - will be initiated in 2010, and will expand to 12 new districts and broaden to deepen the achievements of Phase I.

Allegations against Rickshaw Chor Protirodh Committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Mahanagar Rickshaw and Van Malik Kalyan Parishad, a welfare committee for rickshaw and van owners, has alleged that Dhaka Mahanagar Rickshaw Chor Protirodh Committee, an organisation to resist stealing of rickshaws, has running illegal activities of selling 'protection sticker' to rickshaw owners.

In the name of protecting rickshaws from thieves, the Rickshaw Chor Protirodh Committee has virtually been extorting at least Tk 50 lakh a month, Shahar Ali, chairman of Rickshaw and Van Malik Kalyan Parishad, said in a press release yesterday.

Leaders of the Rickshaw Chor Protirodh Committee have even formed another organisation styled 'Bangladesh Rickshaw Malik League' to smoothly run their illegal activities of collecting money for protection of rickshaws, he added.

Rickshaw Malik League also held a big lft party yesterday and invited influential Awami League leaders in a bid to make the Rickshaw Chor Protirodh Committee activities hassle-free, Shahar Ali said.

11 robbers held with stolen gold

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested 11 robbers, including four women, of a gang and seized 31 tolas of stolen gold ornaments from their possession in the city's Khilgaon area early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Tania Begum, 20, Dhania Begum, 22, Rashu, 23, Delwar, 40, his wife Rushia, 35, Mohammad Roni, 20, Harun-or-Rashid, Rajib Ahmed, Mohammad Yusuf, 41, Arif Hossain and Abdul Haque.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Nobojyoti Khisha of Khilgaon Police Station said they arrested Tania and her sister Dhania in a raid in the Culvert area.

On their confessional statement, they seized the gold from the residence of Delwar, who used to keep the stolen gold, and arrested other members of the gang. Sub-Inspector (SI) Mohammad Aslam Hossain told The Daily Star.

He said their ringleader is Mafia alias Churni, who is now in jail after being arrested in June, but her gang members were active under the leadership of her daughters Tania and Dhania.

Quoting locals, he said the burglars have a garage in the area where there are around 100 rickshaws.

The male members of the gang in guise of rickshaw pullers gather information about people who generally go to their workplace leaving the house under lock and key.

When they leave for their workplaces, other members of the gang enter the residences by cutting window grills or breaking the locks and make away with the booties.

OC Khisha said in primary interrogation the robbers have confessed that around 100 burglars are active in Khilgaon, Sabujbagh, Motijheel and Rampura areas, who commit robbery in the daytime.



Democratic Left Alliance stages a demonstration at Mukhtangan in the city yesterday protesting the approval of oil and gas exploration bids for three offshore blocks to foreign companies.

LEASE OF OFFSHORE BLOCKS Protest continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political parties yesterday protested the approval of oil and gas exploration bids for three offshore blocks to foreign companies and demanded cancellation of the decision.

They also demanded withdrawal of Energy Adviser to the Prime Minister Taufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury.

The organisations staged demonstrations at different places in the city.

Convener of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah and Member Secretary Anu Muhammad in a joint statement demanded fresh invitation of tender be floated and the provision of exporting gas and oil be cancelled.

In the statement they said the agreement with the foreign companies do not preserve the national interest, rather it will serve the interests of the foreign companies.

Communist Party of Bangladesh President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim in a statement demanded the government cancel the approval of the bids and frame a new Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) banning export of oil and gas. Workers Party of Bangladesh

President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimal Biswas also condemned the government's decision to approve the bids.

Bangladesh Chhatra Federation brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus and held a protest rally protesting the approval of the bids.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Gono Sanghati Andolan, Jatiya Mukti Council, Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh, Democratic Revolutionary Party, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal and Democratic Left Alliance also condemned the decision.

1,884 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,884 people on various charges in separate drives across the country in 24 hours as of 6:00am yesterday.

Ten firearms, 11 bombs and 38 bullets were also seized during the countrywide drive, said a release of police headquarters.

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