



NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

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Farmers beam at Boro boom

Credit given to govt steps, good weather

PORIMOL PALMA

The country seems on course to have a bumper harvest of Boro rice this season, say field reports from different districts.

The government's target of Boro production this fiscal year is 1.91 crore tonnes from 48 lakh hectares of land. It was 1.83 crore tonnes from 47 lakh hectares last year.

With harvesting more than halfway through, farmers in many areas are upbeat about the prospect of a bumper output.

Agriculture experts and farmers attributed this success to favourable weather conditions and government steps to ensure availability of farm inputs like fertilisers and seedlings timely and at cheap prices.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, however, appeared cautious about making any comments on the expected output. "I will wait for the harvest to complete," she said talking to The Daily Star recently.

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Farmers take Boro paddy home after harvesting from a field in Char Anandipur of Mymensingh district. Upbeat with the superb harvest this season, they now expect fair price for their produce.

PHOTO: AMINUL ISLAM



Egyptian new interim chief of Qaeda

Says Al-Jazeera

REUTERS, Dubai

Al-Jazeera television said al-Qaeda has appointed a temporary leader and a new head of operations following the killing of Osama bin Laden by US commandos, citing its own correspondent

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Tsunami-wrecked Japan joins Padma financing

87pc of \$670m assistance deal is grant; bridge project gathers pace, tender awaits WB nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Still recovering from a devastating earthquake and tsunami, Japan is giving Bangladesh \$670 million financial assistance for three projects including Padma Multipurpose Bridge.

The assistance is the highest Bangladesh ever got from Japan in the last 40 years.

Eighty seven percent of the assistance is grant and the rest of the amount carries the lowest interest rate among all the loans Bangladesh ever received.

Around \$450 million of the



amount will be spent on Padma Multipurpose Bridge while the remaining fund will finance Khulna Water Supply Project, and small and medium sized enterprises (SME).

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Japanese Ambassador

Tamotsu Shinotsuka, and Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Takao Toda signed the Exchange of Notes and a Loan Agreement in the National Economic Council (NEC) auditorium yesterday. Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, and Secretary of Bridge Division Mosharrarf Hossain Bhuiyan were also present at the signing ceremony.

With the signing of the agreement with Japan, the majority of the financing for Padma Bridge has been

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Connectivity next hurdle

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Although fund concern for \$2.97 billion Padma Multipurpose Bridge is over, the government still needs additional fund for related infrastructure development.

New roads and rail lines have to be built, and the existing roads on both sides of the bridge have to be upgraded to get the full benefit of the bridge that is expected to be completed by 2014.

The communications ministry already took up various projects to that end, which will require several billion dollars and three to four years to be completed. If fund for those projects is not available immediately, many of those will be delayed by years.

Under the related projects, all major roads on both sides of the bridge will be turned into four-lane highways, while the capital will be directly connected with Barisal and Mongla Port by railroads.

"The projects are important for smooth communication. We will somehow manage fund for the projects," said Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain

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Veiled cops catching muggers

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Mirpur police have adopted a unique technique to capture muggers red handed.

Code named "Burqa Team," a four-member police squad -- two wearing burqa (veil) and two in plain-clothes -- conducts the drive especially at night.

Police initiated the move in the wake of rising incidents of mugging and carjacking in the area in recent months.

Such team was first introduced in the

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CHARGING EXTRA FARE

Errant bus operators punished

HASAN JAHIID TUSHER

Two mobile courts yesterday sued 39 city bus services and fined them Tk 72,700 for charging passengers extra fare in the capital.

They seized 11 buses and confiscated route permit of another for charging additional fare and not having valid documents.

The drives follow complaints against bus operators charging additional fare in the city. Following a decision to hike CNG price, the government on May 16 adjusted bus fares increasing them by nearly 30 percent that takes effect today.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority magistrates Mohammad Tofael Islam and SM Rezaul Karim conducted the drives in Agargaon and Badda Natun Bazar from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

However, most areas in the city remain out of reach for shortage of manpower.

The BRTA has sought help from the Dhaka District Administration to provide it with more magistrates to conduct drives in major parts of the capital, said a BRTA official wishing anonymity.

Two more mobile courts may be engaged in the drive today, the official said.

"I have checked 30 buses and found most of them charging extra fares. I filed cases against 14 buses, seized two and confiscated the route permit of another for charging extra fare from passengers and not having valid documents," said Tofael, who led a drive yesterday with the help of Rab-4 and police personnel in Agargaon.

He said bus operators either got new tickets printed or put seals on old ones to charge additional fare.

However, some mini-buses did not charge extra fares, said the magistrate.

The drive will continue in the city, he said.

Magistrate Rezaul Karim said he fined several buses Tk 54,500 and filed cases against 25 bus services and seized nine buses in Badda area for charging extra fares.

They charged passengers Tk 16 instead of Tk 10, Tk 24 in place of Tk 16 and Tk 42 instead of Tk 32 on different routes from Motijheel to Uttara and Tongi via Badda.

Many passengers in the city's Shahbagh and Azimpur bus stands expressed resentment at being charged unduly hiked fares by bus

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PHOTO: STAR

FROM THE TOP... A magistrate checks tickets of passengers in a city bus at Agargaon in the capital yesterday to see who are charged more than they are supposed to pay. The same magistrate, who heads a mobile court, then fines the bus operators for overcharging passengers. Bus operators in Gulistan, however, continue to stamp extra charge on tickets.

GOVT'S RESIGNATION PM trashes Khaleda's demand

BSS, Geneva

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has blasted Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia for demanding resignation of the government.

"The leader of the opposition is asking the government to quit from power after failing to enjoy the huge wealth she amassed illegally," Hasina said at a reception organised by Switzerland Awami League (AL) and expatriate Bangladeshis at Hotel Kempinsky here Tuesday afternoon.

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JS body for reopening 5 land phone operators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday made a final recommendation to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to conditionally return licences to five landline telephone operators considering the interests of their subscribers and employees.

The parliamentary standing committee on post and

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KILLED BY ROBBERS 7 months gone, none charged

Family lives on nerves as gang out on bail

M RAHMAN

Police are yet to press charges in a murder case for killing freedom fighter Captain (retd) Mozammel Haque during a robbery at Gazirchat in Ashulia seven months ago, although some of the accused confessed to their crime.

Victim's family members alleged all the 11 robbers, arrested after the incident, secured bail from a court as police did not submit the required documents related to the case.

The law enforces are mysteriously reluctant to arrest the accused, claimed Mozammel's kin, though they appear in the area frequently and issue threats.

A gang of around 26 robbers stabbed the freedom fighter to death when he along with two of his sons tried

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Freedom fighter Mozammel Haque who was killed by robbers when he went to help his neighbour under attack.

PHOTO: STAR