

723 farmers sued in Bagerhat for loan default

UNB, Bagerhat

Certificate cases have been filed against 723 farmers in Bagerhat for failing to repay agricultural loans to Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB). The BKB authorities filed the cases against farmers of nine upazilas of the district for not repaying loan of Tk 1,92,20,000 given between 1990 and 2013. A total of Tk 194.29 crore is still unpaid by 51,780 farmers of the district. Farmers said they could not repay the loan due to cyclonic storms Sidr and Aila that damaged their fishery and agriculture farms. Sources at the BKB regional office said loan of Tk 66.78 crore has been distributed among 11,197 farmers during the current fiscal year through the bank's 21 branches. Of the amount, Tk 64.65 crore has been realised till February this year. The loan was distributed among the farmers for buying agriculture inputs, livestock and irrigation equipment and running agriculture based industry and socio-economic activities. The loan was to be repaid through instalments within two to four years. Despite repeated reminders, the farmers did not repay the loans. The cases are now pending with Bagerhat court. Loan defaulter Miran Kanti Pal of Fatepur village said he had taken loan of Tk 1.50 lakh in 2006 for agriculture and fish farming. But Sidr and later Aila caused extensive harm to his farms.



Sparse presence of vehicles on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue at Farmgate in the capital yesterday as the BNP-led 18-party alliance held a grand rally at Motijheel Shapla Chattar.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh could be Asia's next tiger Says US envoy

BSS, Dhaka

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan W Mozena yesterday said Bangladesh had a huge potential and it could be the "next tiger" of Asia if certain things could be kept under check. "Bangladesh has moved forward recently and it has a huge potential. But the events like recent Rana Plaza collapse and Tazreen fire have held it back. If it can be made sure that these things would not occur in future, Bangladesh can be Asia's 'next tiger', Royal Bengal Tiger, middle income country and most of all 'Sonar Bangla', " the US ambassador said. He said these while addressing the launching ceremony of USAID's "Justice for all programme". Law Minister Barrister Shafique Ahmed launched the programme as chief guest. Law and Justice Division Secretary ASSM Zahirul Haque, Director of the National Legal Aid Services Organisation Syed Aminul Islam attended the function as guests of honour. Mozena said justice was essential for democracy. Justice was easy to talk but providing it to all is a tough job. But the Bangladesh government was working hard on this and the US was pleased to provide assistance in this regard. Barrister Shafique Ahmed said the government started appointing judges and legal officials for quickly disposing a lot of cases pending in the court.

EMPLOYER SPONSORSHIP TRANSFER Saudi govt assures permission

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Saudi government yesterday assured to take necessary measures to facilitate the transfer of iqama (sponsorship of employer) of the Bangladeshi workforce in the Kingdom and to regularise their jobs. According to officials concerned, the Bangladeshi expatriates would now be allowed to transfer sponsorship to another employer following changes in a law that strictly prohibits change of employer within a certain period. The assurance came as per Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni's request during separate meetings with top-ranking Saudi government officials, including the crown prince and foreign and labour ministers. Talking to Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Salman Bin Abdulaziz in Jeddah, Dipu Moni

appreciated the king's recent announcement to provide three months grace period for those affected by the "Nitaqat program" to rectify and regularise their employment status. The prince highlighted the importance of streamlining the manpower sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dipu Moni and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, in a meeting at the latter's office, agreed to enhance bilateral relations in the areas of investment cooperation, education and agriculture. They also discussed enhancing bilateral trade between the two countries, particularly export of quality pharmaceutical products, readymade garments and ceramics from Bangladesh, says a press release. She also met Saudi Labour Minister Engineer Adel bin Muhammad Fakeih and OIC Secretary-General Iyad bin Amin Madani in Jeddah.

Talks will be held with BNP on polls Says Suranjit

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League Advisory Council member Suranjit Sengupta yesterday invited the opposition BNP to talks on ensuring a credible and peaceful election. Suranjit, at a discussion in the capital's Liberation War Museum, also said talks in a democratic manner would be held but BNP and its Chairperson Khaleda Zia would be responsible if anarchy was created to destabilise the country. Suranjit also said it was a positive sign for the nation that BNP had called off their two shut-down programmes responding to the prime minister's call and for this the premier eagerly invited them for talks. The discussion was organised by Bangabandhu Academy to observe the first death anniversary of AL leader Abdus Samad Azad, and protest against anti-state activities of Hefajat-e Islam.

50-60m people still very poor in country Says Dr Kholiuzzaman

UNB, Dhaka

Eminent economist Dr Qazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmad yesterday said 50-60 million people in the country were still very poor despite anti-poverty efforts by NGOs. He was speaking at the "Second National Convention on State and People's Responsibility to Secure Citizens' Rights on Public Services" in the capital. The convention was organised by Oxfam and five partner NGOs in the Biam auditorium. Addressing the morning session, Social Welfare Minister Enamul Hoque Mostofa Shahid urged all NGOs to coordinate their works to have greater outcome of the development efforts. He said, "NGOs like Oxfam are contributing to the development of the country but for lack of coordination among the NGOs, we as a nation are still lagging behind. Coordination will also prevent duplication of programmes." He said his ministry could coordinate the works.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Garments Sramik Rakkha Andolon forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding compensation for the families of workers killed and injured in disasters at their workplaces.

BENAPOLE PORT Service providers go on strike today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The six associations dealing with the export-import business through the Benapole land port will go on an indefinite strike today to demand that the handling workers, who load and unload goods, stop "extorting" importers in the name of taking tips. The announcement came at a meeting of the organisations where Benapole C&F Agents' Association Vice President Al Hajj Nuruzaman asked the port authorities to take steps to end the extortion. The port users alleged that the labourers charged as high as Tk 2,000-Tk 3,000 "as tips" for every truck while loading and unloading goods. The "extortion" has reached to such an extent that it is scaring away many importers from this port, said Nuruzaman. The port director Tofajjol Hossain said the higher authorities were informed of the strike. During the strike, import-export and loading-unloading of goods and all customs activities will remain suspended. The five other associations are Jessore Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Transport Owners' Association, Benapole Land Port Importers and Exporters' Association, C&F Agent Workers' Union, and Jhikargachha-Navaron-Benapole Truck Owners' Association.

'Drug dealers' beat up four DB men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Four members of the Detective Branch (DB) of police were injured in a beating by a gang of alleged drug traders in Narayanganj city yesterday. DB Inspector (investigation) Shahidur Rahman said a team of DB police led by Sub-inspector (SI) Shafique and Manir raided the house of a drug trader, Moniruzzaman Shaheen alias Banduk Shaheen, in Golachipa area around 7:00pm. Sensing their presence, Shaheen and his accomplices locked the house's collapsible gate, started calling out that robbers had attacked and then beat the four. Another team led by SI Mujibor and Tariqal rescued their colleagues from the spot, he said. The law enforcers, however, could not detain anyone in this connection. Police claimed that Shaheen, detained several times before, looted a rifle from police in 1996 and locals named him Banduk (gun) Shaheen. On Thursday, another DB team was confined in Paikpara area of the city and was rescued by local police.

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**19th Conference of the Islamic World Academy of Sciences-2013**

19th Conference of the Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS)-2013 will be held from 5-9 May, 2013 in Dhaka under the patronization of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Science & Technology, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Academy of Sciences are jointly holding the conference.

IAS formed in 1986 with the OIC approval is a non-political International Science Academy. It has been working relentlessly for socio-economic development and empowerment of the people in the Islamic world through promotion and application of science, technology and innovation. The academy has, so far, arranged 18 international conferences in areas of science, technology and innovation for the benefit of Muslim Ummah. This is the first conference of IAS in Bangladesh.

The conference will be attended by more than 70 distinguished Scientists and Technologists from 23 countries including OIC Secretary General and IAS President with Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni in the chair. Besides, more than 300 researchers and policy makers from Bangladesh are expected to participate in the conference.

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