



COURTESY: BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION, LONDON

Newly-appointed Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem shakes hands with UK Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field during a courtesy call at his office in London on Thursday.

Pvt banks

FROM PAGE 16
Nazrul Islam Mazumder, chairman of the BAB, presided over the meeting, held at the BAB office in the city. Most of the chairmen and managing directors of private banks attended it.

The two organisations have taken the decision as part of instructions given by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal on Thursday.

Kamal asked the BAB leaders to take initiative to halt further rise of defaulted loans in the banking sector.

After getting the working paper, the BAB and ABB will sit together again to finalise the strategies to halt the upward trend of non-performing loans (NPL) in the banking sector.

The final strategic paper will be submitted to the finance minister to take action on the issue.

ABB chief Rahman told the Daily Star yesterday that they had discussed different issues at the meeting to improve the financial health of banks.

As of September last year, NPL accounts for 11.45 percent of the banking sector's total loans, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

In terms of amount, it stood at Tk 99,370 crore -- the largest yet in the country's history.

Taken up

FROM PAGE 16
He also suggested that the government consult other South Asian countries who share rivers with Bangladesh and urged Bangladeshi lawmakers to have a political goodwill to implement the plan.

On September 4 last year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting of the National Economic Council approved the century-long Delta Plan 2100, prepared by the General Economics Division (GED) of the planning ministry.

The government has planned at least 80 projects and decided to spend about \$37 billion by 2031 for the implementation of the scheme.

After the approval came, environmentalists and climate experts alleged that the plan was not taken up on the basis of adequate studies and would not be helpful in the long run.

Speakers at yesterday's programme raised the same issue and the NRCC chief echoed their views.

But the government has been dismissing the objections since the beginning.

Noted climate expert and Brac University's Prof Emeritus Ainun Nishat said many old government projects were included in the delta plan which needed revision.

He also said the government still believed water is necessary "only for human beings". But it has to think about other living beings while initiating the scheme.

Later in the afternoon, the two-day conference ended with the adaptation of a proposal with 38 recommendations mostly focusing on the modification of the delta plan through studies and consultation with experts in this sector.

The proposal also recommended that transparency and accountability were ensured in all aspects of the scheme by the government.

Several researchers, academics, environmentalists and civil society representatives from home and abroad, including from India, Nepal and the US, took part in the programme where about 92 research papers were presented in different sessions.

Bapa President Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, also the founder of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, noted rights activist and green activist Sultana Kamal, and BEN Founder Nazrul Islam, among others, spoke on the concluding day of the conference.

PROTEST AT ARREST

1 killed in N'ganj as police 'shoot at agitators'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

One person was killed and 20 others injured as police allegedly opened fire at a crowd protesting the arrest of two people from a restaurant at Modonpur bus stand area in Narayanganj's Bandar Upazila.

The dead was identified as Ashiqur Rahman, 25, a garment worker and resident of Bandar upazila, eyewitnesses said.

According to locals, around six to seven police officers entered the Dreamland Restaurant near the area and detained Nur Nabi and Rifat, both aged between 22 and 25, around 6:30pm.

Both of them were ruling party activists, they said.

Soon after they were detained,

locals and other party members protested and lay a siege on the restaurant.

They also engaged in a scuffle to take back the two men from police custody, Nusrat Jahan, an eyewitness, told this correspondent.

At one stage, police fired several shots to disperse the crowd, another eyewitness claimed.

Officer-in-Charge of Bandar Police Station Azharul Islam told The Daily Star that police went to the restaurant to arrest Nabi and Rifat, against whom arrest warrants for extortion charges had been issued. He also said police fired blank shots to disperse people.

Superintendent of Police in Narayanganj Harun-or-Rashid said he was not aware of any such casualty and was collecting information on the incident.

Congo ruling coalition wins legislative majority

REUTERS, Kinshasa

Outgoing Democratic Republic of Congo President Joseph Kabila's ruling coalition won a majority in legislative elections, a coalition official said on Saturday, despite opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi's win in the presidential vote the same day.

The result will undercut Tshisekedi's ability to deliver on campaign promises to make a break with the Kabila era and fuel suspicions that his victory, announced on Thursday, came through a backroom deal that will preserve Kabila's influence over important ministries and the security forces.

Kabila is due to step down in the coming days after 18 years in power, marking Congo's first democratic transfer of power in 59 years of independence. But Kabila has signalled that he intends to remain involved in politics and might run for president in 2023 when term limits no longer apply.

Under the constitution, the parliamentary majority enjoys significant powers and the president must appoint his prime minister from its ranks.

The prime minister, in turn, must countersign presidential orders appointing or dismissing military chiefs, judges and heads of state-owned enterprises.

Adam Chalwe, a national secretary for Kabila's PPRD party, the biggest within the FCC coalition, told Reuters that results from the individual races announced by the electoral commission (CENI) early Saturday morning showed FCC candidates taking more than 300 out of 500 seats in the National Assembly.

Reuters was not immediately able to confirm that independently.

Parties in the FCC coalition accounted for about 350 seats in the previous legislature.

The coalition's presidential candidate in the Dec. 30 election, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, finished a distant third with 24 percent of the vote. Pre-election polling had shown the FCC lagging behind opposition parties in legislative races.

On Saturday, the presidential runner-up Martin Fayulu plans to file a formal fraud complaint with Congo's highest court. Fayulu says he won a landslide victory with more than 60 percent of votes and accuses Tshisekedi of striking a deal with Kabila to be declared the winner.

Tshisekedi's camp denies there was any deal and says meetings it held with Kabila's representatives after the election were aimed solely at ensuring a peaceful transfer of power.

But the disputed outcome threatens to reawaken violence in the huge and tumultuous nation where millions have died during civil wars since the 1990s.

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Ottawa police chief Charles Bordeleau said the bus driver was arrested at the scene and taken in for questioning, but he declined to provide further details.

Watson also said that 23 people were injured in the collision, some very seriously, and taken to hospital. The Ottawa Hospital confirmed on Twitter that it had received nine patients in critical condition from the crash.

China's State Council, or cabinet, said on Jan. 9 that it would further reduce taxes for smaller companies. On Friday, Finance Minister Liu Kun said authorities would step up tax and fee cuts to lower corporate burdens.

But Trump has turned his single-

UK minister lauds Hasina for support to Rohingyas

Newly appointed Bangladesh high commissioner to UK meets him in London

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Appreciating Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's humanitarian support to the Rohingyas, UK's Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field underlined the need for the refugees' voluntary, dignified and sustainable return to Myanmar involving UN agencies.

He said this while receiving the newly-appointed Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem at his office in London on Thursday.

Tasneem reassured the UK that Hasina in her new term would continue to uphold the "principles of non-refoulement" and "humanitarianism" and ensure a voluntary, safe and sustainable return of forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals that fled to Bangladesh to escape persecutions in Myanmar.

Field reiterated that the UK would continue to play its leadership role in the UN Security Council and bilaterally with Bangladesh in ensuring prevention of human rights violations and alleged genocide of the Rohingyas.

He commended Bangladesh for its leadership role in UN Peacekeeping and recognised the sacrifice made by fallen peacekeepers from Bangladesh for global peace.

Field said the UK would be more focused on strengthening its trade, and economic and security cooperation with Bangladesh in the days to come.

He lauded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for including younger generation of politicians in her new cabinet.

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