



JUTE MILL WORKERS

Govt to give Tk 200cr to pay arrears

Finance ministry set to release funds before Eid

REJAUl KARIM BYRON and MOUDUId AHMEDd SUJAN

The government is going to allocate Tk 200 crore to pay a portion of the arrears of workers and officials of state-owned jute mills ahead of the Eid, officials said yesterday.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal might give the clearance in a day or two, they added.

The move comes following countrywide demonstrations by workers for around two months to press home their nine-point demand, including payment of their due wages, in some cases for up to 12 weeks.

The finance ministry agreed to give the money to Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) after the Corporation sought Tk 337 crore to clear wages and salaries of employees of 22 state-run jute mills.

Officials said the finance ministry was initially unwilling to provide the fund to the BJMC due to the mills' consistent losses, resulting mainly from outdated technology, inefficiency and corruption.

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Hridi, holding the photo of her father Parvez, cries as she asks at a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club for her father to be returned before Eid. Close to her, a woman holds a banner that says, "Where is Mikel Changma?" Mayer Daak organised the programme with family members of enforced disappearance victims demanding they be returned home safe.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

UN honours twelve fallen Bangladeshi peacekeepers

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations has honoured 12 fallen Bangladeshi peacekeepers who lost their lives on duty in various parts of the world last year.

The UN awarded "Dag Hammarskjöld Medal" to 119 fallen peacekeepers from 27 member states. Among them were the 12 Bangladeshis who made supreme sacrifice for global peace.

The medals were awarded by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and received by the permanent representatives of the respective countries at an event held in New York on Friday. The programme was organised mark-ing the International Day of the UN Peacekeepers.

Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, permanent representative of Bangladesh to the UN, SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Modi appointed PM-elect

President asks him to form govt; Congress rejects Rahul's offer to quit

AGENCIES

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind yesterday appointed BJP leader Narendra Modi Prime Minister-elect and invited him to form the new government.

After the BJP and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) had unanimously elected him as their leader, Modi reached the Rashtrapati Bhawan last night to stake claim to form the next government, reports Times of India.

Earlier, NDA leaders met the President with a list of their MPs as a proof of the dispensation's majority in the 17th Lok Sabha.

Modi later told reporters at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, "I am grateful to the NDA leaders for giving me the responsibility." He said the "massive mandate" given by the people also brings responsibility to fulfil their aspirations.

He also asserted that his government will not sit back and continue with the development work at a faster pace.

"No stone will remain unturned to fulfill the aspirations and dreams of the people," Modi said.

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Bring them back before Eid

Urge families of some victims of enforced disappearance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

She once again stood at the Jatiya Press Club with the wish that her father would come back and embrace her.

With fingers gently wrapped around the photo of her father, nine-year-old Adiba Islam Hridi could hardly speak before tears started rolling down her cheeks.

"It's been so many days since I had seen my father. I want to touch him. I want to celebrate Eid with him. Please give my father back," Hridi said with an emotion-choked voice. Her father Parvez Hossain has been missing since 2013.

Hridi and her mother Farzana Akhter had been attending programmes at the Jatiya Press Club and other places over the last few years demanding safe return

of Parvez.

Parvez, a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader from Bangshal of the capital, was picked up at Shahbagh by members of a law enforcement agency on December 2, 2013, claimed family and friends of Parvez who were present when he was taken.

Farzana was pregnant with Hridi's brother, Araf Hossain, who is now four-and-a-half years old.

Farzana said Hridi had been asking about her father for the last five years.

Hridi was not the only child there. Lamia Akhter Mim, 7, was standing there demanding her father Kawsar Hossain is returned home.

The professional driver has also been missing since 2013.

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Charges not framed even in 4 years

Time petitions delay graft trial of ex-minister Mannan, his wife

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

The charges in two graft cases against former state minister for housing and public works Abdul Mannan Khan and his wife Syeda Hasina Sultana could not be framed even in four years because of repeated time petitions.

Case records show 28 hearings were held for charge framing against Mannan and 33 hearings for Sultana till April 2.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the cases against the couple in 2014 following a seven-month investigation.

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Back at Sophia, Tigers seek to keep winning

SAKEB SUBHAN from Cardiff

The Bangladesh squad's World Cup campaign will get underway today with their first warm-up game against Pakistan at the Swalec Stadium in Cardiff, which will always be Sophia Gardens to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Co as it was so called when they SEE PAGE 13 COL 3



Sacks of paddy are being weighed and piled by farmers at Chhatintoli market in Naogaon's Mahadevpur on Friday morning. Paddy growers in the district are frustrated with falling prices and debts.

PHOTO: PINAKI ROY

Eid won't bring any joy to them

Hard hit by price slump, rice growers in struggle to survive

PINAKI ROY and ANWAR ALI

A little over a week is left before the Eid-ul-Fitr but that can hardly excite the paddy growers in Naogaon as they remain preoccupied with falling prices and debts.

The government initiative to buy rice from farmers has made barely any impact on local markets and the prices have continued to drop over the last one week.

"The government is buying 1.5 lakh tonnes of rice from across the country while the farmers have produced 1.68 lakh tonnes in Mahadebpur upazila alone,"

said a district agriculture officer on condition of anonymity.

"So, you can see how insignificant the quantity is. The initiative does not have any impact on the ground," he said.

The price of fine rice was Tk 720 a maund just one week ago but it came down to Tk 600 to Tk 620 on Friday. Even many farmers had to sell their produce at Tk 500 if the quality of rice was not good.

In different parts of Naogaon, small farmers were found worried about how they would repay their debt to fertiliser and pesticide traders. Mainul Mia from Bilkuri village

came to Chhatontoli paddy market on Friday morning with nine maunds of paddy. But he was very upset as the wholesalers were not offering him more than Tk 600 a maund.

"It cost me more than Tk 900 to SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

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