

AVERTING FOOD CRISIS

PM proposes forming int'l seed bank

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday proposed the formation of an international seed bank to avert food crisis in future.

She made the proposal when Qu Dongyu, director general of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), called on her at her official residence Gono Bhaban, according to PM's press wing.

She also told the DG to form a consolidated fund for taking projects on digitisation and innovation.

Qu Dongyu assured that the existing cooperation will continue with a more robust, innovative, and digital approach. He invited the PM to participate in the World Food Forum, from October 3-7, in Rome.

He was accompanied by Maximo Torero, chief economist at FAO HQ; Jong Jin Kim, ADG at FAO Regional Office, Bangkok; and Robert D Simpson, FAO representative in Dhaka. Agriculture Minister Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, Ambassador-at-large Mohammad Ziauddin, Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus, Agriculture Secretary Md Sayedul Islam, and Ambassador to Rome and Permanent Representative to FAO, Rome Md Shameem Ahsan were also present.



After winter takes away all its leaves, the “buno lotkon” tree comes back in spring, sprouting leaves that are initially reddish, but soon turn green with the passing of time. Perhaps this is nature's way of reminding us that nothing is permanent, neither the times of grief or sorrow, nor the phase of rebirth and joy. This photo was taken at Ramna Park.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

BR turns to ADB for loans, again

Places proposals for five priority infrastructure projects, several more

TUHIN SHUBHA ADHIKARY

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has already topped the lenders' list of Bangladesh Railway (BR). But with several new projects coming up, the state-run transport agency has sought more loan from the bank.

Of these new projects, BR has placed five infrastructure projects as priority ones, which will require around \$8 billion for implementation. It also placed several other projects — both infrastructural and mechanical — for ADB's consideration.

BR officials placed the proposals, as an ADB delegation led by its director general (South Asia department) Kenichi Yokoyama, met Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan at the capital's Rail Bhaban yesterday.

The ADB delegation, however, did not give any clear assurance to BR, rather asking it to speed up its reform programme, reduce operating ratio and increase rail fare, meeting sources said.

Currently, BR spends Tk 287 to earn Tk 100, but the ADB asked the agency to bring this down to Tk 150 per Tk 100.

Despite this, BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder, who accompanied the railways minister, termed the meeting “fruitful”.

Replying to a question, he said the delegation was not empowered to say whether ADB will provide the loan or not, but were tasked with placing the proposal before their board.

WHY RELYING ON ADB?

BR is implementing a 30-year master-plan for 2016 to 2045 divided into six phases. A total of 230 projects, with an estimated cost of Tk 5,53,662 crore, have been proposed in the plan.

PRIORITY PROJECTS	AMOUNT SOUGHT
Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Gazipur's Dhirasram	\$289.82m
Conversion of Laksam-Pahatali metre gauge (MG) double track to dual gauge (DG) double track	\$1,486.82m
Conversion of Chattogram-Dohazari MG track to DG track	\$767.6m
Conversion of Tongi-Bhairab Bazar-Akhaura MG double track into DG double track	\$1,455.34m
Construction of a chord line from Dhaka to Cumilla via Narayanganj	To be decided after feasibility study

Currently, BR is implementing nine projects with ADB loans of about Tk 23, 337.07 crore.

Meanwhile, India, China, Japan and South Korea are financing 10 more BR projects.

However, two other BR projects, which were supposed to be financed by China, are facing uncertainty, after China declined to fund one, and the Chinese contractors selected by their government declined to work with a curtailed budget.

Of the seven projects financed by India, six are loans while the other is a grant. But, all the projects are running behind schedule, with the neighbouring country having no immediate plans to give more loans to railway, BR officials said.

Japan and Korea are financing one project each. Two more projects are now in the pipeline with Korea, while BR sought a loan from Japan for the Joydebpur-Iswardi double line project,

where China declined to finance.

BR earlier sought loans from the World Bank but is yet to get any formal assurance. Some companies from countries such as Russia, UK, China and Turkey had expressed interest to invest in BR, but those proposals are yet to see any visible progress.

Given this, BR is leaning towards ADB, even though the Manila-based bank had earlier imposed some conditions for the loans, including raising rail fare, BR sources said.

At yesterday's meeting, the railways minister termed ADB “a good partner” while seeking the loan, sources said.

THE PROJECTS

Five priority projects BR is seeking loans for are construction of a new Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Gazipur's Dhirasram; conversion of Laksam-Pahartali metre gauge (MG) double track to dual gauge (DG) double track; conversion of Chattogram-Dohazari MG track to DG track;

conversation of Tongi-Bhairab Bazar-Akhaura MG double track into DG double track; and construction of a chord line from Dhaka to Cumilla via Narayanganj.

Except the ICD project, the other projects are related to the development of the Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar corridor, the most important transport corridor of Bangladesh. BR has already completed feasibility study for this under a technical assistance with ADB's loan.

Currently, most parts of the Dhaka-Chattogram corridor is MG double line, while conversation work of Akhaura-Laksam section into dual gauge double track is ongoing with ADB's loan.

As the Kamalapur ICD is unable to cope with the growing demand, authorities want to shift it to Dhirasram. The estimated cost of the project is \$362.28 million, of which BR wants \$289.82 million from ADB.

The estimated cost for the conversion of 123.76-km Laksam-Pahartali MG double track to dual gauge (DG) double track in Chattogram is \$1,841.95 million. BR has sought \$1,486.82 million from ADB.

Conversion of 52-km Chattogram-Dohazari MG track into DG track would require \$1,168.39 million. BR has sought \$767.60 million from ADB.

Estimated cost for conversation of the 95.37-km Tongi-Bhairab Bazar-Akhaura MG double track into DG double track is \$1,720.15 million. BR has sought \$1,455.34 million from ADB.

Construction of the chord line from Dhaka to Cumilla via Narayanganj will reduce the distance from Dhaka to Chattogram by 100 km. BR has taken up

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‘No single agency is enough’

Law minister on preventing human trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said human trafficking and migrant smuggling cannot be prevented by only one organisation or agency.

“Integrated approaches from all concerned are needed to combat the crime,” he said while speaking as chief guest at a meeting.



The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the law ministry jointly organised the meeting at a city hotel for inaugurating a three-day training programme on human trafficking and relevant national and international legal frameworks.

A total of 22 judges of human trafficking prevention tribunals and women and children repression prevention tribunals attended the programme.

Anisul Huq said the government has formulated Human Trafficking Prevention Act, 2012 and rules in 2017, which recognise human trafficking as a heinous crime. It also established human trafficking prevention tribunals in seven divisions across the country.

Besides, the government and its different national and international associate organisations are now planning to introduce the National Action Plan 2018-2022.

“People are also getting positive results out of such initiatives,” said the minister.

Maurizio Cian, head of cooperation of delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh, said the country and European Union are jointly fighting the crime, read a law ministry press release.

DEATH OF COLLEGE STUDENT

PBI gets ninth date to submit probe report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to submit — by March 31 — the probe report in a case filed against Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir and seven others over the rape and murder of a college student in Dhaka's Gulshan.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Begum Yeasmin Ara passed the order after Investigation Officer Md Alauddin, also an inspector of PBI, failed to submit the report yesterday, said court sources.

With the latest one, PBI took nine dates to submit the report.

On February 22 this year, another Dhaka court asked PBI to submit the report by yesterday.

Police recovered the body of the 21-year-old college student in a Gulshan flat on April 26 last year. The victim's elder sister on September 6 filed a case with the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-8 of Dhaka, bringing allegations of rape and murder.

‘Will take tough measures’

Railway minister warns demonstrating gatekeepers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan yesterday said his ministry will resort to tough measures, if the temporary gatekeepers who are demonstrating do not return to their posts.

“We are considering whether action should be taken against them. There must be discipline. Things cannot go on like this,” Sujan told journalists at his office at Rail Bhaban.

The temporary gatekeepers have been demonstrating since February 27, with the demand to make their jobs permanent.

Meanwhile, as the minister was talking to reporters, several hundred gatekeepers took position outside the Rail Bhaban premises to press home their demand to bring their jobs under revenue budget.

A total of 1,889 gatekeepers were appointed in early 2018 under two railway projects that Bangladesh Railway (BR) took up to rehabilitate and improve level crossings.

Since February 27, they have been observing a “fast unto death” in front of Dhaka Divisional Railway Manager's office, beside Kamalapur Rail Station, but yesterday they took position outside the Rail Bhaban, as

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It's been two weeks since temporary gatekeepers started a demonstration to make their jobs permanent, even attempting “fast unto death” for their goal. While the rail minister was speaking to reporters yesterday, hundreds of gatekeepers gathered outside Rail Bhaban to stress on bringing their positions under the revenue budget.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

PRAYER
TIMING
MAR 14



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-05	12-45	4-30	6-12	7-30
Jamaat	5-40	1-15	4-45	6-15	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION