

# Stakeholders urge specialised credit for small farmers



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Small farmers and agro-businesses in Bangladesh are facing significant barriers in terms of accessing loans. This can be solved by creating specialised credit products for them, said speakers at an event yesterday.

These remarks were made at a stakeholder consultation workshop, hosted by USAID's Feed the Future (FtF) Bangladesh Inclusive Access to Finance Activity (IAF), implemented by Palladium International in partnership with SAJJIDA Foundation.

Policymakers, high officials from financial institutions, and other stakeholders came together at the event to validate the preliminary findings of the assessment "Access to Finance Landscape and Inclusive Development in Bangladesh".

Kazi Rafiqul Hassan, Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank, Joseph Lessard, Director, Office of Economic Growth, USAID Bangladesh and Nasir Ahmed, Chief of Party at FtF spoke at the event, among others.

Alexis Polovina, Farzana Yasmeen, and Farhad Hossain from the USAID mission attended the workshop.

## Internet was shut

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communicated through this group to shut down the internet immediately. They were asked to confirm after completion of the order," said Tajul.

Tajul said the interrogation was done in the full presence of lawyers. "There was a glass partition between Palak and the investigation agency, and his lawyers. This is as per the international standard. There is no scope for torture or coercion."

The prosecution was expected to submit a probe report against several government officials, including Maj Gen Ziaul Ahsan, yesterday, but the bench granted them an additional two months.

The bench, led by tribunal chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder and members Justice Md Shofiul Alam Mahmood and Judge Md Mohitul Haq Enam Chowdhury, passed the order.

## A dream trip ends

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friends... but he came back to us as a lifeless body," said Hossain, his voice cracking with grief.

He was first taken to a nearby hospital, and from there he was shifted to Mugda Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Kamrul, the eldest of four siblings, hailed from Noakhali and was living with his family in the Rayerbagh area. He used to run a cloth shop on a footpath in the Maniknagar area.

"He was the family's hope. My son dreamed of creating a better future for all of us. He had been very excited about his upcoming trip as he hardly found the time to go anywhere," Hossain added.

On Wednesday evening, Kamrul packed his bag and left home. His mother observed him having a heated exchange with someone over the phone.

She never imagined it would be the last time she would see him alive, said Hossain.

According to his family, Kamrul was carrying a smartphone and Tk 10,000 with him. The murderer only took away his phone and Tk 3,000. The family would later find Tk 7,000 inside one of his pockets, smeared in blood.

Police suspect it to be a mugging incident but are not ruling out other motives.

"We are trying to arrest those responsible for the murder," said Sub-inspector Atikul Islam of Jatrabari Police Station.



Shankar Halder stacks baskets made of bamboo which he will then sell for Tk 150-500 depending on the size. Normally, fishermen use these baskets to store a variety of small fish that they catch in rural canals and wetlands. The photo was taken from the Harta Bazar in Wazirpur upazila of Barishal yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

# Prawn production declines due to feed costs, fry shortage

PARTHA CHAKRABORTTY, Bagerhat

Bagerhat district is renowned for commercially producing giant freshwater prawns, which is an important export commodity besides being a popular delicacy across the country.

The production volume of giant freshwater prawns has been on the decline in recent time due to shortage of good quality prawn fries and rising cost of feed, making farmers wary.

The local shrimp cultivators' association believes that the country's export volume of prawns could be tripled if these issues are addressed and resolved.

Giant freshwater prawns, locally known as 'golda chingri', have distinctive tiger-striped brown or black shells, can reach lengths of 35-40 centimetres each, and just four or prawns can weigh up to total one kilogramme.

However, these prawns take around a year of care to reach their full size, thereby requiring a lengthy cultivation process. Medium and

large-sized prawns are usually exported, while smaller-sized prawns are sold domestically at Tk 700-800 per kg. Larger prawns currently fetch a market price of Tk 1,800-1,900 per kg.

Many farmers engaged in prawn farming in Kachua upazila of Bagerhat have expressed concerns over the adverse impact of shortage of high-quality fries and soaring cost of feed on the production of this much sought after export item.



"We are struggling to source good quality fries, while the cost of feed has skyrocketed. This is disrupting the production of prawns and hindering export potential," said Gopal Das, a local prawn farmer.

Fakir Mohitul Islam Sumon, president of Bagerhat Shrimp Cultivators' Association, stressed for government support to address the issues.

"If farmers have access to high-quality prawn fry and reasonably priced feed, the production could be increased by three times. Additionally, government-led training programmes for farmers could help improve yields and exports," he said.

The Department of Fisheries, however, suggested the farmers to modernise their farming practices to boost production. "By using subsidised electricity, improving feed quality, and ensuring virus-free fry production, farmers can enhance prawn size and yields considerably. Increasing pond depth and adopting modern farming techniques will also help in this regard. We are encouraging farmers to shift from traditional to modern farming methods to improve productivity and export capacity," said ASM Russel, district fisheries officer in Bagerhat.

## Improve within a month, or face consequences

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years old and trucks over 25 years old must be removed by May next year. Transport association leaders have already agreed to this decision, and advertisements were published in national newspapers yesterday to announce it.

The government will provide assistance to vehicle owners, if needed, to secure bank loans for purchasing new buses, he added.

School authorities will be encouraged to use school buses for transporting students in a bid to reduce traffic jams, with a directive from the education ministry expected soon.

The adviser also revealed that company-based bus operations will be launched on nine routes in the capital on a pilot basis starting February 25 next year.

Meeting sources reported that several participants accused the BRTA of poor service, particularly the long delays in issuing driving licences and the inadequate vehicle fitness tests.

"There are countless allegations against BRTA... I'll take action against each and every employee of BRTA, including its chairman, if they fail to improve service," a participant quoted Fouzul

Kabir as saying.

After the meeting, he told reporters that BRTA had been given one month to improve. If it fails to do so, action will be taken.

BRTA's arrangements for issuing fitness clearance and driving licences were deemed inadequate, and the authority was advised to involve private garages, driving schools, and police in these processes.

In response to questions about whether the government would seek private services, he said that BRTA was failing to meet its responsibilities, causing public suffering and indulging in corruption. He stressed that everything must be done to change the

situation.

When asked about the consequences if BRTA fails to improve, he warned, "Heads will roll."

Air Pollution Measures Underway

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan said efforts were underway to provide some relief from air pollution, adding controlling pollution would not be possible within a day, month, or even year.

She highlighted the brick kilns in the Ashulia area as a major source of air pollution in Dhaka and mentioned that they were considering declaring Ashulia a brick kiln-free zone.



# NU unveils new ICT building

STAR REPORT

The National University (NU) is set to enhance its Information, Communications, and Technology (ICT) services, benefiting both affiliated colleges and students, said a press release.

The announcement came from Vice Chancellor Prof ASM Amanullah at the inauguration of a new ICT building on the NU campus.

Dr Amanullah emphasised the importance of modernising the university to meet global demands and improve access to ICT knowledge.

He also highlighted the need for training faculty and officials abroad to further develop their professional skills.

The VC called for cooperation in making NU a key player in national development.

The ceremony began with a moment of silence to honour the martyrs of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

Special guests included Pro-VC Prof Md Nurul Islam and Treasurer Prof ATM Jafarul Azam. The event was chaired by Shahnewaz, the ICT department's director-in-charge, with deans, staff, and faculty members also in attendance.

# Illegal brick kilns mushroom across Barishal region

SUSHANTA GHOSH

At least 111 illegal brick kilns, of which around one-third are with environmentally hazardous drum chimneys, have mushroomed across Barishal districts amid inadequate monitoring by the authorities concerned.

Of those illegal brick kilns, 27 are operating in Bakerganj, 22 in Babuganj, 20 in Hija, 14 in Muladi, 11 each in Sadar and Mehendiganj and 6 in Ujirpur upazila, according to sources at the Department of Environment.

At present there are also 95 brick kilns that are operating in the district legally.

Only recently, the DoE's Barishal Divisional Office started an operational drive in the district, and so far demolished 12 illegal brick kilns and fined seven others a total Tk 7 lakh.

Faizunnesa Akhter, executive magistrate of DoE in Dhaka, has been leading the drive from November 26.

Lincoln Bayen, divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association in Barishal, said inadequate drives and lax monitoring by the concerned authorities have led to these illegal brick kilns proliferate in number across the district, raising serious concerns regarding their adverse impact on the environment.

Welcoming the recent drive, he said such stringent drives are necessary to curb this menace.

Contacted, Md Jahirul Islam Talukder, deputy director of DoE's Barishal Divisional Office, said the drive against illegal brick kilns will continue.

## Affordable beef

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package will help people a lot," said Baki Billah, a customer.

Earlier on November 24, the market was jointly launched by the upazila administration and Amra Kalaparabashi, a voluntary organisation.

There is also a donation box placed in the market, where people can leave some goods for those who are financially struggling to get essential items.

Nazrul Islam, a member

Amra Kalaparabashi, said, "Our initiative aims to provide some relief to both farmers and buyers as they can buy and sell goods in this market without involvement of any syndicates."

Echoing him, Md Rabiul Islam, upazila nirbahi officer of Kalapara, said, "Syndicates have continuously increased the prices of daily necessities through market manipulation. That is why such a farmers' market is so important."

### Tender Cancellation Notice

Date: December 19, 2024

**Tender title: Procurement of Cleaning Services**  
Invitation Ref. No. & Date: icddr,b/SCM/GoB/OTM/Pkg#PS-04/2024-25, Dated: 10-11-24  
Published in: The Daily "Ittefaq" & "Daily Star" on November 10, 2024 and Addendum published on 04-12-2024.

The above tender for Procurement of Cleaning Services is hereby cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances.

Senior Manager  
Supply Chain Management  
Tel: 02-222277001-10, 16340  
Ext. 4405/4400

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০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৭  
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*(স্বাক্ষর)*  
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সচিব  
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