



Tk 20,000cr BB fund to revive closed factories

Defaulters, launderers, fraudsters to be barred from getting loans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday launched a Tk 20,000 crore pre-finance scheme under its total Tk 60,000 crore stimulus package, aiming to revive large industrial and service-sector enterprises that have either shut down or are operating below full capacity due to a shortage of working capital.

BB issued detailed guidelines for the scheme – “Closed Industry and Service Sector Facilitation Pre-Finance Scheme.”

Under the guidelines, loan defaulters and those involved in money laundering, fund diversion, and fraud will be barred from accessing the low-cost loans.

Any existing loan account cannot be adjusted or settled using loans obtained under the scheme.

The central bank will draw funds from the surplus liquidity held by scheduled banks and lend them to participating banks at a low interest rate.

The banks will then pass these funds on to eligible borrowers as working capital at an interest rate of only 7 percent.

The stated purpose is straightforward: many large factories and export-oriented businesses in Bangladesh still have functional machinery but cannot operate at full capacity because they lack the cash needed to pay workers, purchase raw materials, settle utility bills, or fulfill export orders.

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THE ELUSIVE HUNTER

A sleek, spotted Asian leopard cat -- one of Bangladesh's most elusive felines -- rests on the forest floor in Moulvibazar. Barely larger than a house cat, this nocturnal hunter prowls forests, grasslands, wetlands, and even tea estate edges, feeding on rodents, birds, lizards, frogs, and insects. Its sharp hunting skills make it a natural pest controller. Native to a vast range stretching from the Russian Far East through China, the Himalayas, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, the leopard cat shelters in dense vegetation, tree hollows, rocky crevices, and forest undergrowth. Solitary and secretive, it is also an excellent climber and swimmer, with partially webbed toes that help it navigate wet habitats. Interestingly, the popular Bengal cat breed traces its ancestry to this wild species. Although listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List, leopard cats face growing threats from habitat loss, hunting, illegal wildlife trade, and retaliatory killings.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Low-use home users spared power tariff hike

BERC keeps previous rates for 0-50, 0-75 slabs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) has withdrawn its electricity tariff hike for lifeline residential users -- low-income or marginal consumers -- just a day after announcing the increase, keeping the previous rates unchanged from the June billing month.

In an order issued yesterday, the regulator said the revised tariffs announced on June 3 for lifeline residential consumers using 0-50 units and first-slab residential consumers using 0-75 units would no longer take effect.

Under the latest decision, the lifeline tariff will remain at Tk 4.63 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), instead of rising to Tk 5.32 per kWh. Similarly, the first residential slab tariff will stay at Tk 5.26 per kWh, instead of increasing to Tk 6.18 per kWh.

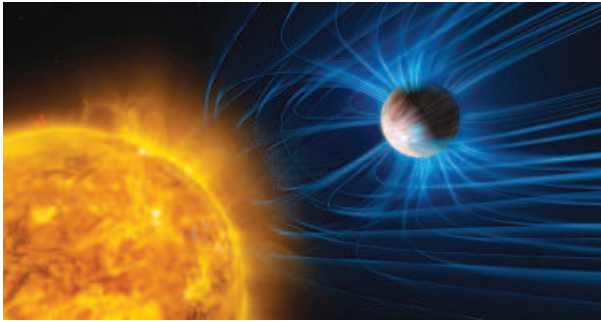
BERC said the decision followed

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Astronomers find exoplanets with magnetic fields

REUTERS, Washington

Based on the behaviour of winds on seven large and hot gas exoplanets, astronomers have obtained the strongest evidence to date that planets beyond our solar system possess magnetic fields, like Earth and five other planets in our solar system.



The finding, based on observations by telescopes in Chile and Hawaii, deepens the understanding of exoplanets by showing that at least some share an important characteristic present in all but two of the solar system's eight planets.

While none of the gaseous exoplanets in this study are candidates for hosting life, a magnetic field could be one of the factors that helps make a rocky planet like Earth habitable.

These exoplanets each orbit very close to a large and hot star, with one side permanently facing the star and the other side perpetually facing away, as the moon does with Earth.

Road crashes claim 281 lives in Eid rush

Says RSF, motorcycle crashes account for over 44% of fatalities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 281 people, including 34 women and 48 children, were killed and 837 others injured in 292 road crashes across the country during the 13 days before and after Eid-ul-Azha, according to the Road Safety Foundation (RSF).

In a press release yesterday, the foundation said the data was compiled from reports published in nine national dailies, 17 online news portals, electronic media reports, and the organisation's own independent sources.

During the 10-day Eid-ul-Fitr travel period from March 16 to 26, at least 274 people were killed and over 1,500 others wounded in 342 road crashes nationwide, according to RSF.

As per the foundation's analysis, the Eid-ul-Azha travel period saw an average of 22 deaths per day on roads.

Among the victims were 37 pedestrians.

Motorcycle crashes, which accounted for the highest number of deaths, claimed the lives of at least 124 riders and pillion passengers in 141 incidents, representing 44.12 percent of all fatalities, the release said.

The fatalities also included 48

people travelling in three-wheelers, 32 in trucks, covered vans, and pickups, 21 in buses, 11 in cars and ambulances, and eight in locally made motorised vehicles. Thirty-three drivers and

Dhaka division recorded the highest number of casualties, with 101 deaths in 95 crashes. Sylhet division saw the lowest, with seven deaths in nine crashes. Among the districts, Faridpur logged the highest death toll, with 28 fatalities in 19 crashes.

transport workers were among the victims.

The RSF added that the casualties were not limited to roads. Thirteen waterway accidents left eight people dead and 15 injured, while 24 sacrificial cattle also died in the incidents. In addition, 22 railway accidents claimed 17 lives and injured nine others.

According to the analysis of crash

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Khalilur hints at keeping UN, ministerial responsibilities

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, who has been elected president of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), yesterday indicated that he may continue serving as foreign minister while carrying out his UN duties.

“Will I leave this job? Is that the question? Don't be so hurried. There is a precedent,” he told reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday amid speculation that he might take leave from his ministerial duties.

He cited the example of Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, the last Bangladeshi to serve as UNGA president during the 1986-87 session.

“I was his private secretary. He performed both responsibilities full time,” Khalilur said. “That was the

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Union Parishad elections likely in October

Schedule expected in August

AHMED DEEPTO

Elections to local government bodies are expected to begin with union parishad polls in October, with the schedule likely to be announced in August.

Polls to around 4,581 union parishads, the lowest tier of local government, will be held in four or five phases. The Election Commission will then continue the process in stages for other tiers -- city corporations, municipalities, upazila councils, and district councils.

“We are planning to begin phase-wise union parishad elections in October. The schedule may be announced in August,” Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmanel Masud told this newspaper yesterday.

“If union parishad and municipal elections are not held, upazila elections cannot be conducted. Chairmen of union councils and municipalities are ex-officio members of upazila councils. Therefore, union parishad and municipal elections must come first,” Masud explained.

“City corporation elections can be held at any point in between, but district council elections must come at the very last,” he said.

Bangladesh has 13 city corporations, 500 upazila councils, 61 district councils, and 4,581 union councils.

No local government polls have been held in over two years, leaving the commission with a significant backlog as the tenures of many bodies have already expired.

The elections will mark the first major nationwide political contest since the February national election. It is crucial for restoring elected leadership to local government institutions that have largely been run by

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2 dead, 1 hurt in construction site cave-in

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two construction workers were killed and another was seriously injured after a section of earth collapsed during culvert construction work in the Darlanagar area of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The incident occurred around 11:30am at the Marine Fisheries and Wildlife Research Centre of Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

Sub-Inspector Saiful Islam, attached to the police camp at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, said the deceased were identified as Mohammad Ilyas, 35, and Md Rakib, 20. The injured worker, Md Shahjahan, is currently undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Fire Service and Civil Defence Deputy Assistant Director Syed Muhammad Morshed Hossain said firefighters rushed to the scene after receiving information. “The accident occurred when a section of soil suddenly caved in while workers were digging a foundation for a culvert.”

Workers at the site said the victims were immediately rescued by their fellow workers and taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital in critical condition, where two of them were declared dead.

Md Ilias, former member of Jhelongjha Union Parishad, alleged that the construction work was being carried out without adequate safety measures.

No all-out Iran war unless US troops killed

Trump tells aides privately; UN peacekeeper killed in Lebanon amid Israeli strikes despite ceasefire

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump has told aides privately that he would consider ending the ceasefire with Iran if Tehran kills American troops, US officials said, insisting that the weekslong pause in airstrikes remains intact despite a steady stream of violent skirmishes.

US, Israel aim to sow 'division' after defeat: Khamenei

Negotiations with Iran proceeding 'very well': Trump

Hezbollah rejects truce plan as Israel keeps up strikes

The president's reluctance to reignite the war suggests he might be willing to withstand smaller flare-ups for weeks—or even months—to avoid a broader conflict in the Middle East, The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday.

Trump also said negotiations with Iran are proceeding “very well” when asked by White House reporters whether a ceasefire involving Iran remains in effect.

Despite the tensions following Kuwait's announcement that Iranian strikes caused casualties and facility damage, Trump expressed optimism over ongoing diplomatic efforts.

In a written message, Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei

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