

Govt to float Tk 100cr fund for small NGOs

Plan to raise maximum ceiling for govt micro-credit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will float a Tk 100 crore fund to support small NGOs with no direct access to external donors.

A 'Small NGO Foundation' will be formed with people from the government and non-government organisations to operate the fund to be kept in bank as fixed assets.

The money will be given as grants for work in health care, sanitation, education, environment and other social sector development programmes -- but not for running micro-finance business.

Half the amount would come from the budget that allocated Tk 50 crore for such a head, while the remainder would be pumped in in next five years.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting between Finance Minister Saifur Rahman and NGO leaders. Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, Founder Chairman of Brac Fazle Hasan Abed, its executive director Abdul Muid Chowdhury and NGO personality Rasheda K Chowdhury were present, among others.

Sources said the meeting decided that the foundation would

provide fund at local level to small NGOs that do not receive any fund from abroad.

They said that the structure of the proposed foundation would be finalised soon and placed for cabinet approval.

The guidelines for the proposed foundation would be finalised within a month and it would come into being by December, sources said.

Interest proceeds from the seed money would be disbursed among the small NGOs with budget not exceeding Tk 5 crore and network at

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PHOTO: AFP

Firefighters inspect destruction to the Staten Island Ferry boat Andrew J Barberi that collided with a pier at a ferry terminal in New York Wednesday, leaving at least 10 dead.

10 killed as ferry hits NY dock

AP, New York

A Staten Island ferry slammed into a pier as it was docking Wednesday, killing at least 10 people, tearing off victims' limbs and reducing the front of the mighty vessel to a tangled mass of wood, glass and steel. At least 42 people were injured.

The ferry pilot, responsible for docking the vessel, fled the scene immediately after the crash, went to his Staten Island home and attempted suicide by slitting his

wrists and shooting himself with a pellet gun, a police official told The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. The pilot was rushed to the same hospital as many of the victims and underwent surgery.

After interviewing another crew member, authorities began investigating whether the pilot was asleep at the wheel as the boat approached land, a law enforcement source told the AP.

The 310-foot ferry, carrying

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For whom UK transit visa not required

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Under the new stricter transit visa rules to enter the United Kingdom that took effect from yesterday, people who hold an UK visa or certain other visas and residence permits do not require to have a Direct Airside Transit Visa (DATV).

A transit visa would not be required if travellers are in possession of one of the following:

1. A valid visa for entry into Canada or the United States of America, and a valid ticket enabling the holder to travel by air from another country or territory to the country in respect of which such a visa is held via UK;

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US sails easy at UN voting on Iraq resolution

AFP, United Nations

The United States got unanimous support of the UN Security Council yesterday, after Syria joined France, Germany and Russia in backing a new resolution on Iraq's future.

The United States carried the day with a 15-0 vote, in a key diplomatic victory just days after Washington said it might abandon hope of getting the council to back the plan.

Syria, the only Arab nation on the council and a critic of US policy in Iraq, decided to back the measure

just hours after the European holdouts -- all of which opposed the war on Iraq -- said they would give their support.

"Clearly the goal is not a piece of paper in 'New York,'" said a US official who asked not to be named.

"What we hope it will accomplish is additional troops, additional money, greater assistance for the people of Iraq and unity on the council."

With victory already assured Wednesday, when diplomats said

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Germany wants military co-op

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Germany is eager to strengthen ties with Bangladesh and increase cooperation to the benefit of the two countries.

"We already have excellent relations and cooperation...We want to further increase bilateral collaboration in all fields, including the military to military cooperation," German Ambassador in Dhaka Dietrich Andreas said.

The envoy was speaking at a press conference in connection with the three-day visit of a high-powered armed forces delegation from Germany that began yesterday.

Vice Chief of the Armed Forces of Germany (deputy chief of the joint command of the three forces) Lt. General Drik Boecker leads the three-member delegation.

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Annan warns of Islam-West rising hostility

AFP, Putrajaya

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan warned yesterday of rising hostility between Islam and the West, describing it as "ugly, dangerous and wrong."

In a statement to the opening of a summit of the 57-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Annan said Western governments must address the grievances of Muslims, while Islamic states needed to make greater efforts to overcome their problems.

He said he hoped to see Christians and Muslims reconciling in Sudan and perhaps Cyprus.

"Yet there is, in too many places, a feeling of rising hostility between Islam and the West. This is ugly, dangerous and wrong," said the statement delivered by the UN special representative to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi.

"We must unite our efforts to address the extremism that is, alas, on the rise, not only in Islam but

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Shell denies plan to explore in Sundarbans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of persisting rumours and an unsubstantiated complaint, Shell Oil yesterday reiterated that it has no plans to explore in the Sundarbans, a world heritage site.

The energy ministry yesterday asked the global oil giant if it intends to explore in the Sundarbans under the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for block 5.

Energy and environment ministries convened the meeting after receiving a complaint last month from Syed Margub Morshed, chair-

man of Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Authority (BTRC), that Shell might be taking preparations for a seismic survey in the protected forest.

At yesterday's meeting, Shell clarified that it never had any plan to hold exploration activities in the Sundarbans and that it has been regularly updating Petrobangla about its activities in the area. So there should not be any confusion.

Shell explained that back in 1999, even before signing the PSC for block 5, it had announced not to

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Star salutes O, A levels star performers today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star holds today its Fifth Award Giving Ceremony to honour the students who achieved outstanding results in the O and A Level examinations in June 2002 to June 2003 session in Bangladesh.

Former chief adviser of the caretaker government Justice Habibur Rahman will be the chief guest and British High Commissioner David

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 17		5-31 pm
Oct 18	5-57 am	

Prayer Timings		
October 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-25
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-38	5-43
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		