

## Master plan underway for upgrading port services

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 18: A ten month long study to prepare an integrated 'master plan' for upgrading the services and facilities of the country's ports is on the anvil.

Disclosing this at a press briefing here today at the Port Training Centre Chairman of the Chittagong Port Omar Hadi said that the study project for a national ports plan, already awaiting final approval from the Planning Commission, would cost Taka 4 crore 45 lakh.

The integrated plan will provide advanced technology in cargo handling, extra port facilities and a uniform tariff system at the Chittagong, Mongla and Narayanganj ports, the chairman hoped.

He pointed out that the master plan, which was formulated for Chittagong port only in 1965, has not been updated over the past 30 years to cope with the latest cargo handling demands.

The port chairman, however, informed newsmen that Chittagong port had earned Taka 145.68 crores during the past nine months of the cur-

rent fiscal (July '93 to March '94) by handling 69,72,519 MT of import and export cargo. During this period the country's main seaport handled 1,26,292 containers while 818 ships called at Chittagong, he added.

Giving a break-up of the corresponding period of the previous fiscal ('92-'93) he said that cargo handling had stood at 67,03,558 MT 1,08,201 containers and 778 vessels.

In the '92-'93 fiscal, Chittagong port handled 86,47,414 MT cargo and earned Taka 187.58 crores as revenue while during that period the revenue expenditure was recorded at Taka 143.44 crores.

He said that measures were underway to procure more equipment for handling container cargo at the port's newly-built multipurpose berths.

To earn a better reputation for Chittagong port by providing required services and facilities to its users through ensuring quick transportation at the least cost is my main mission here," Hadi said.

## Labour force should be development partners'

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a roundtable discussion on workers in free market conditions yesterday demanded that the country's labour force should be made development partners to attain better economic growth.

In a free market climate, the fate of the entrepreneurs and employers are closely linked to those of the workers, they said.

Making Our Economy Right (MOER), an organisation campaigning for a free market, organised the roundtable discussion at the National Scouts Bhaban in the capital to analyse and discuss the free market reforms in the country.

Conducted by Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud of the Dhaka University, the roundtable was participated by columnist Syed Ali Kabir, industrialist Feisal Siddiqui, Prof. Abu Ahmed, Hafez Ghani of the World Bank, Zahiduzzaman Faruq, economic editor of the Daily Ittefaq, Nizam Ahmed, Syed S Kaiser-Kabir, Awami League leaders M Aktheruzzaman and Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Zillul Hye Razi, Mujibur Rahman Bhuiyan of the Jatiya Sramik League, KB Ahmed, Khaleda Anwar of the Jatiya Sramik League, and Ataur Rahman of the Gano Forum.

Prof. Abu Ahmed said the labour force should not be considered as opponents to the entrepreneurs and the workers wage should be tied with productivity.

Feisal Siddiqui said that the country's transformation from a controlled economy to a free market should be made cautiously and the problems of the workers be identified to closely involve them with production.

Aktheruzzaman, however, said the concept of a free market economy might not auger well for the existing economic

structure of the country.

Zillul Hye Razi said, "We have now no choice but to opt for a free market under the changed circumstance with the signing of the GATT."

Zahiduzzaman Faruq said the country's labour force has largely been viewed as a strong political rather than economic agent while the workers' rights have usually been realised by non-working labour leaders.

Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud suggested that the workers' wages should be congruous with the socio-economic condition of the country.

Any government intervention would only worsen the situation of the workers as well as national productivity, he pointed out.

**BCL suspends gherao plan**

The Awami League-backed Chhatra League did not stage its gherao programme of the residence of the Provost of S M Hall yesterday, responding to the request of the Provosts' standing committee, reports UNB.

The Chhatra League gherao programme, as announced Saturday, was to be held yesterday morning to press for its demands, including ensuring peaceful co-existence of different student organisations on the Dhaka University campus.

The announcement suspending the programme was made from a rally in front of Modhu's Canteen, which was addressed by the Chhatra League DU unit president KHM Lizu and general secretary Pankaj Devnath.

The speakers said that they were suspending the gherao programme as requested by our respected teachers' and the Provosts' standing committee.

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government immediately.

The JP leader also observed that if the Opposition were to choose the second option, it should prepare a calendar of anti-government agitations without delay, the meeting sources said.

Suranjit Sengupta of the Ganotantra Party (GP) felt that the Opposition had been left with no option but to keep on putting pressure on the government to meet the demands.

"We can consider a negotiation with the treasury bench only when it comes forward to discuss ways of resolving all the problems now hindering a sound growth of democracy," Sengupta said.

The GP leader also favoured entertaining any ruling party initiative for negotiations coming directly from the Prime Minister herself.

Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers' Party (WP) told the meeting that the Opposition must keep on bearing pressure upon the government to make sure that a congenial atmosphere was created for the Opposition to play a constructive role in the House.

Menon, however, felt that the Opposition should not boycott the coming session because it would give the government an upper hand in launching propaganda against the Opposition parties.

Menon also told the meeting that his party would not

**Opposition strategies**

support an Opposition alliance with the Jamat.

Moulana Obaidul Huq of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), although supporting a united opposition move, did not favour a continuous boycott of Parliament sessions. The IOJ leader observed that the boycott would only isolate the Opposition from the people.

Despite differences of opinion regarding attending the next session of Parliament, the Opposition parties yesterday were unanimous on the need for asserting the demand for the next national polls under a caretaker government.

Leaders of all the parties attending yesterday's meeting emphatically told The Daily Star last night that they were committed to removing their differences on the burning issues with a view to taking a strong and united position against the government.

The more than two-hour long parley, which began at 12:30 pm, was attended by Sheikh Hasina, Abus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed and Mohammad Nasim of the AL, Moudud Ahmed and Anwar Hossain Manju of the JP, Rashed Khan Menon of the WP, Suranjit Sengupta of the GP and Moulana Obaidul Huq of the IOJ.

Earlier, the American ambassador in Bangladesh David N Merrill called on Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament chamber at 11:30 am.

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US Ambassador David N Merrill called on the Opposition Leader in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Sangsad Bhaban office yesterday. — Star photo

## US envoy meets Hasina

US Ambassador to Bangladesh David N Merrill called on Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her parliament chamber yesterday, reports UNB.

The new ambassador and the Awami League chief discussed matters relating to political, economic and social affairs of the two countries.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed, SAMS Kibria and Abul Hasan Chowdhury were present.

## One held with 46 passports at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Immigration police arrested one Ismail Hossain, 25 with 46 passports at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning.

Ismail was due to fly for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by a Bangladeshi Biman flight, BG 080 at 8:30 in the morning.

Immigrationmen challenged Ismail on suspicion and found 46 passports hidden in his handbags.

Ismail was handed over to the Cantonment police and detained for interrogation.

The immigration police arrested three persons with 220 passports at the ZIA on Friday last.

## Dacoity at Khilgaon

By Staff Correspondent

A group of armedmen barged into the house of one Zakir at 433/C Khilgaon Chowdhurypara at around 4 am yesterday and looted Tk. 70,000 in cash and other valuables at gun-point and decamped with the booty within half an hour.

A case was lodged with the Sabujbagh police station.

## DCC staff crushed under bulldozer

By DMCH Correspondent

A Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) staff — Mohammad Abul Hossain, 45 — died tragic death while bulldozing some unauthorised houses at Mirpur Section 12 yesterday afternoon.

Hossain slipped off and fell under the wheels of the bulldozer and died on the spot. He was helper of the vehicle, police said.

A City Corporation team had gone on an eviction drive at Mirpur Section 12, Block-C around noon yesterday.

## Japanese coalition

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Coalition representatives were due to meet later in the day to confirm a new policy platform and then get down to the business of choosing a successor.

Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata remained the coalition's favourite. But with new rebel groups emerging, it was possible the coalition — already divided into two opposing camps — could formally split and form new alliances.

On Monday six lawmakers became the latest dissidents to bolt the once-dominant opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), handing in their resignations to party headquarters.

"We want to work with the coalition since we agree with most of its policies," said Shokei Arata after resigning.

Arai and the five other rebels are all from the large LDP faction headed by ex-foreign minister Michio Watanabe. He has threatened to lead a large-scale rebellion, launch a new party and make a bid for the premiership himself.

Yoshihiko Noda, the LDP leader Yohei Kono met Watanabe on Monday to try to persuade the veteran politician to remain loyal.

Replies to another question, Romesh Bhandari said, "I don't think the Indian government is supporting the so-called Shanti Bahini." He also declined to comment on the

## Environmentalists demand

## 'Return US toxic waste immediately'

By Staff Correspondent

A group of environmentalists yesterday demanded immediate return of the US-manufactured toxic waste stored in Bangladesh to the country of its origin.

They said the Gaston Copper Recycling Corporation, one of the three US companies penalised for exporting toxic fertiliser to Bangladesh, is not willing to arrange disposal of the waste unless it is paid 250,000 dollars by Bangladesh.

If the April 30 deadline for the payment is crossed, Bangladesh may have to pay 800,000 dollars to ship the toxic fertilizer back to America for disposal, the environmentalists pointed out while speaking at a press conference.

UBINIG, the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), Nijera Kori and the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) jointly organised the press briefing at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Farhad Mazhar of UBINIG, Phillip Gain of SEHD and Shamsul Huda of ALRD spoke and answered questions from the newsmen.

Expressing grave concern over the deadlock over shipping back the toxic waste, they commented that stalemate was "artificial" and the result of non-cooperation by

If the company failed to submit a detail disposal plan to the US court by April 30, the entire fine money would go to the US treasury, they cautioned.

A Senior US District Judge, in a sentence, fined the fertilizer manufacturing company one million dollars for their involvement in posing a grave threat to the environment in Bangladesh.

Under a guilty plea agreement, 600,000 dollars of the fine paid by Gaston Corporation could be used for transport and safe disposal of the fertilizer from Bangladesh.

This amount is 250,000 dollars short of the estimated disposal costs in the US, the environmentalists said at the press conference.

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