

# Saifur to turn screw on financial insttts

'Real sector should get support'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday hinted at tightening the belt of the financial sector in the coming years to compel its institutions to support the growth of the 'real economy'.

"The banks are busy making hundred per cent profits overnight but do not reduce the interest rate. I'll make it sure that the banks cannot go away with windfall profits without contributing significantly to the industrial development," Saifur Rahman said at a contract-signing ceremony at the Sonargaon Hotel.

The minister indicated regressive tax on the banks' earnings from next year and reforms in the insurance sector as well.

The Lafarge Surma Cement Limited signed a contract with the Kobe

Steel Limited, Japan on a US\$100 million integrated cement plant with a production capacity of 1.2 million tons a year.

At present, the country's annual cement requirement is around six million tons.

The US\$255 million Lafarge Surma Cement project at Chhatak in Sunamganj is expected to offer primary shares by the end of this year before going for production in 2004.

The minister hopes the Lafarge Surma Cement's share plays an important role in shoring up confidence among stock market investors.

Saifur also pointed an accusing finger at the bureaucracy in multilateral institutions like the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector lending affiliate of the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank

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## SSF bars Thai PM's press coverage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Special Security Force (SSF) barred journalists, both from local and national dailies and agencies, from covering Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's visit and daylong official programmes here yesterday.

They were denied security passes without assigning any specific reasons.

The Chittagong Reporters Council (CRC) in a statement strongly protested the SSF action and termed it a 'serious infringement' on professional rights of working journalists.

The CRC President Osman Gani Mansur and General Secretary Moazzemul Hoque in the statement said such 'behaviour' by a government agency is not desirable during the rule of a democratic government.

They said many people including government and non-government officials, and journalists were harassed on several occasions by the SSF members in the past.

"Unfortunately, such harassment has not stopped yet," the

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## By-election in DCC ward No 8 today

BSS, Dhaka

The by-election in ward number-8 of the Dhaka City Corporation will be held today, a press release of the Election Commission said.

The Election Commission has taken all necessary measures to hold the election in a free, fair and impartial manner. The voting will be held from 8 am to 4 pm.

Police and para-military BDR personnel have been deployed in the area. Special Court has been constituted for summary trial of criminal activities including false voting.

A total of 15 candidates are contesting the election.

The seat fell vacant following the death of ward commissioner Saidur Rahman Newton.

The area of the ward comprises Mirpur Section-1, Uttar Bishil, Zoo residential area, Botanical Garden residential area, Nababerbagh, Chatbari and BISF Staff Quarters area.

## Left hand of police informant severed in Khulna: 4 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Miscrants cut off left hand of police informer Hira, 22, at about 11:30 pm on Tuesday.

Earlier, he was abducted from near Shankha Cinema Hall and taken to a place at Basupara.

The abductors severed his left hand, tying up with a tree.

Police have so far arrested four persons in this connection. They are Benu, Milon, Liton and Gazi Hossain.

Benu is younger brother of KCC Ward Commissioner Golam Mawla Shanu, prime accused in AL leader SMA Rob murder case.

Victim Hira recently helped police raid some hideouts of drug traffickers.

# WorldTel wants its deal probed

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has decided to investigate the WorldTel's 'controversial' deal for installation of 3,00,000 fixed telephones in the capital, on a request from the company which was awarded the deal during the immediate past Awami League (AL) rule.

Official sources said the BTRC would also look into the BNP-led coalition government's allegation that the deal was not a transparent one.

This was the first ever deal for installing and operating a private telephone exchange in the country, to break the state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board's (BTTB's) monopoly in fixed line telephony.

As the present government in its white paper on 'corruption' of the AL government branded the deal as a 'black one', the WorldTel claimed that there was no corruption in the process of the deal. Subsequently, the

company requested the BTRC to look into the matter to determine whether it has eligibility to continue the project, the sources said.

Controversy clouded the project with the BNP government filing cases against the AL government's post and telecommunication minister Mohammad Nasim on charges of corruption in the project.

The Bureau of Anti Corruption (BAC) filed a case with Ramna Police Station accusing that in order to 'illegally award' the Barmuda-based WorldTel the contract for installing 300,000 fixed phones in the city, Nasim had appointed a private firm - Consosietes Limited-- as consultant without any bidding.

The consultant made 'fictitious recommendations' for the WorldTel, the lone bidder for the project, to make its financial proposal look 'lucrative', the BAC said.

Nasim appointed the consultant although the ministry concerned did not have any fund for this and made

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PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

The already rundown Dhaka-Tangail route has been reduced to a mud road. Downpour over the last few days has worsened its condition. Vehicles using the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge and from 22 northern districts ply the highway on which traffic congestion is common.

# Jordan's no to use of force against Iraq

AP, Amman

Jordan rejects the use of force against Iraq and will not allow foreign troops to use its territory in an attack against its eastern neighbor and main trade partner, a Cabinet minister said yesterday.

"Our position is well known and very clear," Information Minister Mohammad Affash Adwan told The Associated Press.

"We will not allow our land and our skies to be used as a launching pad for any foreign troops to mount an attack on Iraq. Jordan rejects the principle of interfering in the internal affairs of any brotherly Arab country under any justification," he said.

The New York Times reported yesterday that U.S.

military planners were considering using bases in Jordan to launch air and commando raids in the event of an attack on Iraq to oust President Saddam Hussein - a stated objective of the Bush administration.

"We are against any strike against Iraq and we believe that the Iraqi problem can only be resolved through dialogue between Iraq and the United Nations," Adwan added.

Jordan, as one of Iraq's neighbors, would logically be considered a staging ground for any attack on Iraq. President Bush ( news - web sites) vowed earlier this week to "use all the tools at our disposal" to remove Saddam.

Bush believes Saddam has the means and the

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PHOTO: STAR

Middlemen at the Zia International Airport bargain with an incoming passenger over carrying his luggage yesterday. Complaints of passenger harassment at the airport are rife.

## UK moves to legalise cannabis

AFP, London

A long-awaited British government move effectively to decriminalise cannabis in the biggest shift in drugs policy in 30 years got off to a bad start Wednesday when a senior drugs advisor quit in protest.

Keith Hellawell, a former police chief, said the shift was a softening of the law and sent out the wrong message.

"It's moving further toward decriminalisation than any other country in the world," Hellawell told BBC radio.

"I have resigned over this issue and over the issue of spin."

Home Secretary David

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# Flood in fresh areas forecast

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The areas in the downstream of the Padma river at Shariatpur, Madaripur, Faridpur, Munshiganj and Manikganj districts are going to face normal to moderate flooding in the next few days, highly placed sources monitoring the flood situation said yesterday.

The forecast followed after major rivers continued to rise due to heavy rains and onrushing water from the upstream of Padma. The river Meghna, which carries the flow of the Padma and Jamuna rivers to the Bay of Bengal, was still flowing below the danger level, but the slow drainage down the river along with water-logging along the coastal

areas is complicating the situation, the sources said.

The floods and water-logging due to rains over the past few days have affected some 956,371 people in 17 districts and 57 upazilas of the country.

Some 3622 homesteads and crops in 1211 acres of land have been completely destroyed, according to statistics available from the control room of the Disaster Management Bureau yesterday.

The floods have washed away 45 kilometres of flood protection embankments, 119 bridges and culverts, and 36 kilometres of roads, sources at the control room said about the extent of damages.

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## Laden alive

AFP, Dubai

A top al-Qaeda official emerged on television overnight to reconfirm the good health of the terror network's leader and prime suspect in last September's anti-US attacks, Osama bin Laden, and his cohorts.

"Sheikh Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar and the symbols of jihad, including Ayman al-Zawahiri and Sheikh Suleiman Abu Ghaith, are in good health," Abu Laith Allibi said in a tape aired by the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC), which said it was made several weeks ago.

"I want also to reassure the Mujahedin about the fact that Mullah Omar has been able to assemble the Mujahedin who have been scattered and who are in the process of regrouping," warned Allibi, a Libyan Islamist who joined the Afghan Mujahedin, or holy warriors, in the 1980s to fight the

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## Double-murder 12 awarded life-term in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

A court here Tuesday convicted 12 people, six in absentia, and sentenced them to life term imprisonment in a double murder case.

The convicts are Akram Hossain, Akhter Hossain, Kamal Sheikh, Habil Sarder, Aftab Sarder, Syed Sheikh, Iman Ali, Amjad Sheikh, Rezaul Islam, Mannan Chowdhury, Jumman Chowdhury and Majid.

According to the prosecution, the convicts called Abdur Razzak and Azizul Hakim out of their houses at village Baro Bhuiyan in Batiaghata upazila on Sept 11, 1991 and killed them. Their bodies were recovered from river Kajibacha three weeks later.

The investigation officer submitted a charge sheet to the Sessions Judge's Court after a case was filed against 14 people.

Six of the accused were in the dock during the verdict.

Another accused, Khorshed Sarder, died during proceedings of the trial.

After examining the records and witnesses, the Additional District and Sessions Judge-2 handed down the judgement.

## Musharraf sets polls for Oct 10

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf has ordered long-awaited parliamentary elections to be held on October 10, a government spokesman said yesterday.

"I can confirm that they have been scheduled for the 10th of October," said Information Ministry Secretary Anwar Mahmood.

## 'Kala' Palash nabbed in Comilla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

'Kala' Palash, an alleged criminal accused in at least fourteen cases of crime including murders, was arrested from a residential hotel at Courtbari in Comilla in the early hours of yesterday.

Police brought Palash to the city yesterday noon and took him to different parts of Motijheel and Khilgaon in a bid to seize weapons owned by him and hidden in those areas.

Police said the accused was also arrested earlier on several occasions. Palash was accused in fourteen cases including murder cases with Motijheel, Sabujbagh and Ramna Police Stations.

Kala Palash hogged the headlines after he and his gang allegedly sprayed bullets on a BNP-backed Jubo Dal activist, Mizanur Rahman, 29, twice within 30 min-

utes to ensure his death in the city's Rampura on May 29. Two others were also injured in the second attack.

After the first attack on the sleeping Jubo dal activist, a gang led by Palash sprayed the injured activist with bullets as he was being taken to a city hospital. Following the killing, police arrested the wife of the accused.

## Listed criminal Jabbar held at Cox's Bazar

BSS, Cox's Bazar

A listed criminal was arrested with arms from his house at Badsha Ghuna of the town yesterday.

Police said the arrested criminal Abdul Jabbar, the gang leader of notorious Jabbar Bahini is wanted in murder cases and criminal activities.

Acting on a tip, police raided the residence of Jabbar at Badsha Ghuna in the early hours of yesterday and arrested him.

Police recovered three country-made guns, a shotgun, a pistol, a sawed-off rifle and five bullets from Jabbar's house during the raid.