

DS-CAMPE ROUNDTABLE

Govt welcomes pvt sector contribution to basic edu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will welcome any private sector initiative in its basic education programme, like setting up a foundation or trust in conjunction with it, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said yesterday.

He was responding to a suggestion made in a roundtable for formulating an institutional framework, whereby the private sector will take the leadership in providing basic education while the government will

work as a catalyst.

The round table titled 'The Role of the Private Sector in Local Resource Mobilisation for Basic Education' was co-organised by The Daily Star and the Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) at Sonargaon Hotel.

Saifur said the international community appreciates the tremendous progress Bangladesh has made in basic education, including an increased rate of enrolment and bringing a huge number of girls to

schools through stipend programme. The government is interested to allocate more resources in the sector, he added.

Representatives of different chambers, business leaders and educationists, who participated in the discussion expressed keen interest in contributing to the over all human resources development of the country.

But the attending private sector entrepreneurs identified lack of quality education and skilled teach-

ers, poor educational infrastructure and outmoded syllabus as some major impediments to more successful basic education.

Pointing out that the private sector is actively participating in higher education including some selected areas of higher secondary and undergraduate education, the private sector leaders said they are also willing to contribute in the government's basic education programme. But, absence of an

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PHOTO: STAR

The Daily Star and Campe hold a roundtable on 'Role of Private Sector in Local Resources Mobilisation for Basic Education' at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

US soldier kidnapped, Japanese freed

AFP, Baghdad

A 20-year-old US military reservist was paraded as a hostage by insurgents in Iraq as talks resumed Saturday on ways to end the bloodshed in Fallujah, the Sunni stronghold west of Baghdad.

But as Al-Jazeera television broadcast images of Private First Class Keith Matthew Maupin surrounded by masked and armed insurgents, two Japanese hostages were released in Baghdad after three days in captivity.

Sheikh Abdul Salam Kubaissi, a senior member of the Committee of Muslim Scholars, told AFP the two were in "very good health" and had been handed over to the Japanese embassy. Three other Japanese hostages were freed Thursday.

Maupin was shown by the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera sitting on the floor in US military fatigues and a standard-issue floppy hat. He seemed scared and avoided looking at the camera.

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Ship sinking near Patenga coast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A cargo ship owned by the state-owned Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) started sinking near Patenga coast on Friday, as seawater entered into its hatch following a leakage in the engine room, official sources said.

The 750-ton capacity ship, BB 1138, remained half-sunken yesterday, as huge water flowed into the hatch, the sources added.

The leakage developed in the engine room after it returned empty from Narayanganj where it carried clinker from Chittagong, they said.

Efforts are on to salvage the troubled ship, BIWTC sources said, adding that tugboats have left the port to carry out the salvage operation.



PHOTO: STAR

A half-sunken Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation cargo ship at the outer anchorage of the Chittagong Port. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

Bush, Blair support UN broad control over Iraq

AP, Washington

President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, standing united on two turbulent fronts, endorsed giving the United Nations broad control over Iraq's political future Friday and said a much-criticised Israeli settlement withdrawal plan is a solid move toward Middle East peace.

Blair seconded Bush's comment about going through a hard time in Iraq, where violence is spreading and casualties are climbing. "It was never going to be easy and it isn't now," said the British leader, a strong supporter of Bush's strategies in Iraq, the Middle East and elsewhere

despite harsh criticism and even ridicule at home.

Palestinian and other Arab leaders have been outraged that Bush endorsed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's strategy to keep Jewish settlements on the West Bank and refuse Palestinian refugees the right to return to Israel, a fundamental shift in American policy.

In a news conference with Bush in the White House Rose Garden, Blair gave unqualified support to Bush's view that Sharon's plan represents a step forward not backward for Palestinians' statehood aspirations. "Let's not look this particular opportunity in the eye and then turn away," Blair said. "I don't think that

this ends anyone's dream." He urged other nations and international organizations to explore ways to help Palestinian leaders seize an opportunity.

Bush called on the Palestinian people to do their part by finding "leadership that is committed to peace and hope." The administration refuses to deal with Yasser Arafat.

Both Bush and Blair defended Sharon's intentions, insisting that the Israeli leader wants a state for Palestinians.

"The impression I got from having sat with the man right

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KEPZ chief clinically dead in Bangkok

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The body of Golam Rabbani, managing director of Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) and also an ex-naval commodore, may be flown back to Dhaka from Bangkok today.

The physicians at the Bamroongrad Hospital in Bangkok, where he was undergoing treatment since Wednesday, declared Commodore Rabbani 'clinically dead' on Friday, dashing all hopes to bring him back to life, sources said.

He was likely to be declared dead following the withdrawal of life-supporting ventilator sometime yesterday.

Rabbani, also the former Chittagong Port Authority chairman, came under attack on April 11

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Regional council to oversee CHT uplift efforts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to delegate the authority to oversee development in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region to its regional council in line with the peace accord on the highlands.

A meeting of the cabinet committee on the CHT peace accord implementation decided the move with Local Government and Rural Development and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair.

The cabinet committee also

decided to arrange employment for the refugees repatriated from India under special consideration. The meeting however did not discuss the land dispute in the hill tracts.

"The regional council is supposed to oversee all development work in the CHT region, as the accord stipulates, but we need to sort out how the regional council would act," Moni Swapan Dewan, deputy minister for the CHT affairs and member of the committee, told The Daily Star last night.

"If the government and the

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CTG ARMS HAUL Dr Kamal asks AL to go to JS to demand independent probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President of Jatiya Oikya Mancha Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday urged the main opposition Awami League (AL) to go to the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) to press for formation of an independent, impartial national committee to probe the biggest-ever arms haul.

"Please go to parliament, even it is for a day, to demand an impartial experts' committee," he said, adding that such a probe body should include national and international experts.

Dr Kamal, also president of Gonoforum, was speaking at a programme at the city's Mahanagar Natyamancha on the occasion of the Mujibnagar Day yesterday. Jatiya Oikya Mancha organised the programme to observe the day as a day for national unity.

Recalling the spirit of unity in the 1960s and during the Liberation War, Dr Kamal called upon all contemporary public figures to sink their differences, uphold the cause of national security and work together for the socioeconomic

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EXPLOSIVES SEIZURE Bank, customs officials' roles under lens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Authorities of all land ports have been asked to exercise maximum caution in handling imported goods following Wednesday's seizure of about 14.5 metric tons of explosive material that came from India through Bhomra land port in Satkhira.

The seized consignment of calcium carbide, a highly inflammable chemical that the Benapole customs commissioner says can be used for making powerful bombs, is now in Benapole customs warehouse. Some samples of it were sent to Dhaka for chemical test.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police (Khulna Range) Abdul Aziz Sarker said Ganesh Chandra Saha, who was arrested for importing the material bypassing rules, has given them some 'important clues' to involvement of some influential persons in the affair.

Abdul Aziz said questions have also been raised on the roles of the bank officials concerned in opening letter of credit (LC), authorities of Bangladesh Shipping Inspection and a section of customs officials in this matter. Intelligence agencies are working hard to gather more clues, he added.

Ganesh, son of Shankar Saha of Jahirpar village under Moksdepur upazila of Gopalganj district, owns a shop named Tarakeshwar Bhandar at 7/1 Khalishpur Housing Estate, Khulna, which was the expressed destination of the cargo.

Police said Ganesh has admitted of importing another consignment, of 11 tons of calcium carbide, from India through the same land port in March last year. It is meant to be used for ripening fruits, particularly mangoes, and not for making bombs, Ganesh told his interrogators yesterday, the third day of his

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PHOTO: STAR

The branch of a tree shoved into a lidless manhole in front of the Rail Bhaban on Abdul Gani Road in Dhaka warns traffic of the danger of falling into the pit. Such scenes are commonplace in the city of over one crore people.

Machine readable passports soon

UNB, Dhaka

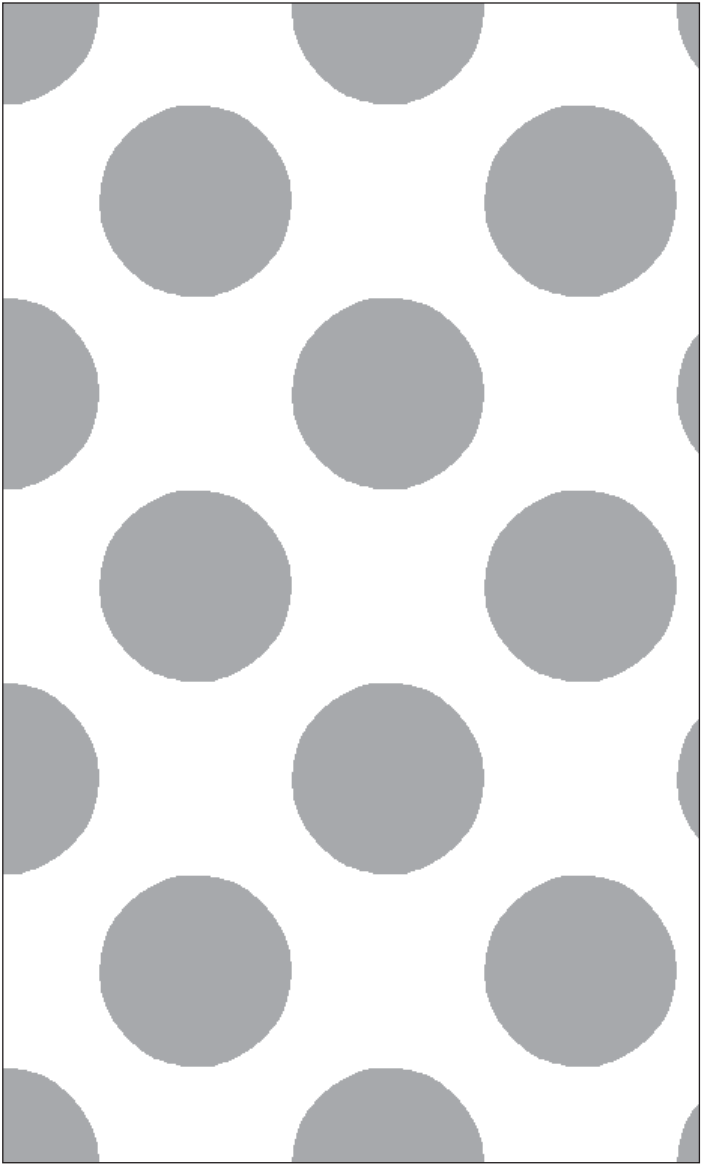
The government will shortly introduce machine readable passport (MRP) replacing the existing one.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday, said a press release.

The meeting was told that such a passport is being used in most countries of the world as it prevents passport forgery.

A committee headed by the additional secretary of home ministry was formed to take steps for introducing MRP at the earliest. The committee is to submit its report within 60 days. Besides, the committee will recommend measures for introducing National Identity and Bio-metric Visa.

Home Secretary Omar Farroque, the director general of the Passport Department and senior officials were present.



Myanmar junta allows Suu Kyi's party to reopen HQ

No word on the leader's release

REUTERS, Yangon

Military-ruled Myanmar has allowed Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy to reopen its headquarters nearly a year after it was closed in a crackdown against the opposition, a party official said yesterday.

Other party offices across the country remained shut and there was no word on democracy icon Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest at her Yangon home.

"Officials informed us that we can re-open our headquarters effective this morning," Than Tun, a member of the NLD's executive

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Hasina renews call for unity to dislodge govt

Lefts join AL's meet on Mujibnagar Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday renewed her call to all like-minded parties to launch a united movement to dislodge the coalition government.

"Let's move together to free people from the misrule of the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance and restore democratic rule," she said at a discussion in observance of the historic Mujibnagar Day at Paltan Maidan in the capital.

Hasina, also leader of the opposition in parliament, said unity of pro-

liberation, progressive and secular forces is a must to put an end to corruption and violence.

Referring to the recent BBC Bengali Service listeners' poll showing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the greatest Bangalee of all time, the AL chief said, "I am the daughter of the greatest Bangalee and I have nothing more to get."

Hasina said, "If I had greed for power, I could become prime minister for a second term in 2001 by promising to sell out the country's natural resources."

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Pak foreign secy not coming tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The visit of Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokar, who was scheduled to arrive tomorrow, has been rescheduled in the first week of next month.

Foreign ministry sources said Riaz was scheduled to arrive in

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Prayer Timings		
April 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-24	6-28
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Budget steps to ease rice production cost on cards

Anwar tells workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar yesterday said the cost of rice production is alarmingly high in Bangladesh, but the next fiscal's budget will provide enough support measures for farmers to offset the high costs.

"Cost of rice production in Bangladesh is the highest in the world excepting for a few developed countries where farmers are provided with a high-level of subsidies. But we cannot raise the rice price upsetting the parity with rice prices in the neighbouring countries. You'll

see measures favouring farmers in the next budget so that production costs could be lowered," the minister said.

He was inaugurating a two-day workshop on Uptake Methods and Pathways at the auditorium of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

The Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance (PETRRA) project of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the DAE organised the workshop to showcase and disseminate ideas on as many as 20

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