

# Tough law to stop river occupation on cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to pass a stringent legislation and amend the law to stop encroachment of rivers and ensure their natural flow in the national interest, water resources ministry officials said.

The ministry placed a plan to a cabinet meeting on June 7 packing the proposals to erase the flaws in the law that water downs the moves to stop reckless use of water.

The plan allows no installation within 50 yards of the banks of a river and wants to raze all illegal structures in a tough line with adequate legal coverage.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmad said his minis-

try placed the scheme for coordinated utilisation of water after working out the plan along with eight other ministries including the local government, rural development and cooperatives, shipping, agriculture, land, fisheries and livestock and environment.

He said the cabinet appreciated the plan and formed a committee to prepare a comprehensive proposal in next three months.

Hafiz was made chairman of the committee and the names of its members will be announced in a day or two.

"We will start functioning immediately after the formation of the full-fledged committee because a coordinated plan is urgently required for the national interest,"

Hafiz added.

The proposal says the eight ministries related with water and rivers will play their roles to protect rivers and other water-bodies.

On extraction of sand from riverbeds, the draft plan says permission from the Water Development Board will be required for the purpose as indiscriminate extractions over the years changed the natural course of rivers, causing adverse effects.

The proposal also calls for punishment to people who will obstruct river flows, currently commonplace across Bangladesh by fishermen and farmers who use river waters in irrigation.

State Minister for Water

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## Play due role in strengthening democracy

PM urges heads of JS bodies

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the chairmen of the parliamentary standing committees to play their due role in strengthening parliamentary democracy in the country.

Expressing her satisfaction over performance of the standing committees, the prime minister emphasised maintaining transparency and accountability in activities of all ministries.

She called upon the parliamentarians to utilise the opportunities provided by the people through their mandate for overall progress of the country and emancipation of the people.

Khaleda, also the Leader of the House, was talking to chairmen of five parliamentary standing committees when they called on her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to apprise her of their committee activities.

They are Hajee Mozammel Hossain, chairman of the

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PHOTO: AFP

ORANGE BLUES: The Netherlands goalkeeper Edwin Van Der Ser, left, at full stretch as the ball swirls past him to find the back of the net during their Euro 2004 group D clash against Germany yesterday at Dragao Stadium in Portugal.

# Iraq oil security chief shot dead

AFP, Kirkuk

Ghazi Talabani, the security chief for Iraq's northern oil fields, was assassinated yesterday outside his home in Kirkuk, Iraqi police said.

"Ten minutes ago, he was attacked by armed men outside his home near the governorate building. He died instantly," said Kirkuk police chief General Turhan Yusef.

"One of his bodyguards was seriously wounded."

Talabani, a cousin of Kurdish political chieftain Jalal Talabani, headed security for the Northern Oil Company (NOC), which presides over oil production in northern Iraq.

The security chief's body was riddled with bullets and delivered

to the morgue in Kirkuk, 255 kilometres north of Baghdad.

The killing was the third major assassination since June 12 when the country's deputy foreign minister was shot dead on his way to work in Baghdad, followed the next day by the murder of an education ministry official.

Talabani was the key link between US forces and NOC and the private security firm Erinyas as they tried to shield Iraq's northern fields from attacks.

It was a largely futile battle as constant sabotage on the north's main export line from Kirkuk to the Turkish Mediterranean terminal of Ceyhan had effectively shut down the route since the fall of president Saddam Hussein in April 2003.

Talabani, 54, who studied in

Germany and formerly worked as an engineer for NOC, was charged with the company's security dossier after Saddam was ousted from power. He was very close to his powerful cousin Jalal.

The killing could aggravate the oil-rich city's ethnic tensions, with its volatile melting pot of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen.

Late Tuesday, gunmen lobbed a grenade and fired a volley of rocket-propelled grenades at the home of Kirkuk university's dean Abbas Mohammed Athar but he escaped unscathed, Yusef said.

Five Kurds from Kirkuk were shot dead and mutilated on their way home from Baghdad on Monday when their car broke down near

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## 15 injured as cops, bus workers clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least 15 people including a police constable were injured in a clash between police and transport workers at Rupatali bus terminal yesterday morning.

The clash erupted as police arrested four transport workers from the terminal at around 3:30am. Earlier on June 12, transport owners filed a case against the workers following a tussle among them.

The transport workers went into rampage and blocked the roads at 4:00am to protest the arrest. Police charged baton to disperse agitating workers and the workers reiterated.

However, police cleared the roads at around 9:30am but transport communications with other districts in the division remained suspended until yesterday afternoon as transport workers did not return to work.

# New hope for home helps

## ILO scheme gives them a chance to education, health and training

ABDUL KADER

Unlike many other working children in Dhaka, 12-year-old girl Togor is lucky enough to work under an employer who possesses the sensitivity to let her have an access to education and other basic human rights.

A domestic help at Kayedtuli of old Dhaka, Togor's smiling face gives the impression that her life is not all about sadness or gloom. Work under an employer with a kind heart, coupled with the child labour elimination project of the

International Labour Organisation (ILO) has set her life well on track.

The ILO with a fund of Tk 2 crore from the US Department of Labour in January 2002 started the project aimed at providing 5,000 out of the estimated three lakh children working in domestic labour in the capital with access to education, health care and skill training.

Togor is one of the beneficiaries of the project.

Five different non-governmental organisations (NGO) in Dhaka are working to

implement this project titled "Prevention and Elimination of the Worst Form of Child Labour in the Formal and Informal Sectors in Bangladesh".

The ILO may consider running this programme further, if Togor and other beneficiaries of this programme show the programme worked well in getting them properly educated, trained and equipped for the future. In that case, the rest of the children working as domestic helps in Dhaka and elsewhere may

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## Traffic tails go long as rainwater floods city streets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rainwater clogged in many city streets after a heavy downpour yesterday evening, creating long line of traffic tails.

According to the Met office, the capital experienced 51 millimetres (mm) of rainfall.

According to city traffic control office, hundreds of vehicles were stranded in long queue as rainwater flooded the main roads in Sayedabad, Mouchak, Dhanmandi road No. 27 intersection, Asad Gate, Gulistan roundabout, Sadarghat to Gulistan, Farmgate, Mirpur Section 10, Mohakhali, Rayerbazaar, Mohammadpur and other areas.

In an emergency measure, Dhaka City Corporation deployed workers

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# Saifur pledges child-friendly budget

## Mock parliament session with kids

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in a mock parliament session of children yesterday assured them of considering their views in the next budget to protect child rights.

If a set of recommendations on child rights is sent to the government through the 'Child Parliament' two months before the next budget, the government will consider the proposals, he said, taking a question from Laboni Siddique, a child parliament member from Tangail.

Saifur spoke as the chief guest in

the mock parliament's budget session on 'Child Budget Discussion 2004 - Protection, Health, Education and Entertainment' at Cirdap organised by Save the Children, Australia and financed by Plan Bangladesh.

The children's parliament, attended by its Speaker Zahidul Hasan, deputy speakers Shaiful Islam and Zannatul Ferdous Tumpa and 87 members from 31 NGOs, observed that a UN charter clause gave children the rights to express opinions on child rights, but they could not engage in budget discussions.

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PHOTO: STAR

WE WILL ROCK YOU! Child parliamentarians raise their hands yesterday to speak in a mock budget session on 'Child Budget Discussion 2004 -- Protection, Health, Education and Entertainment' at Cirdap organised by Save the Children, Australia and financed by Plan Bangladesh. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman spoke as the chief guest in the session.

## 100 centres for blood transfusion soon

UNB, Dhaka

Some 100 more safe blood transfusion centres will be set up in the country soon to check various blood-borne contagious diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain said this in a meeting of national steering committee on implementation of the three-year Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPS) at his ministry yesterday.

In the meeting, some 20 operational plans of HNPS were

approved involving an estimated cost of Tk 1,752.55 crore. Earlier, 11 operational plans were approved on June 2.

State Minister for Health Mizanur Rahman Sinha, Planning Commission Secretary M Fazlur Rahman, Health Secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal, Establishment Secretary Safaraj Hossain and high officials concerned were present in the meeting, said a handout.

The health minister told the meeting that awareness programmes were not enough to prevent fatal diseases like

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## First mobile phone virus created

REUTERS, Amsterdam

A group of underground virus writers has showed off what is believed to be the world's first worm that can spread on advanced mobile phones, but security software companies say the virus had no malicious code attached.

The worm, named Cabir, was sent to security software firms Kapersky Lab of Russia and US-based Symantec by a member of 29a, a group of virus writers from the Czech Republic and Slovakia who pride themselves in creating "proof of concept malicious viruses," Kapersky Labs spokesman Denis Zenkin said.

"This is the very first version of a network worm which propagates via mobile phones," he said yesterday.

The worm is designed to work in smartphones running on Symbian and Series 60 software, Symantec said on its Web site.

This software is used to power millions of Nokia phones, such as the popular 6600 model.

Nokia was not immediately available to comment.

The worm is not regarded as dangerous because even if it spreads it carries no code that destroys files or executes other damaging operations, the security software firms said. The virus attempts to jump from phone to phone by using the handset's wireless short-range Bluetooth connection. It scans the environment for other Bluetooth-enabled devices.

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| Prayer Timing              |       |        |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
| June 17                    |       |        |
|                            | Azan  | Jamaat |
| Fair                       | 4-05  | 4-40   |
| Zohr                       | 12-45 | 1-15   |
| Asr                        | 5-00  | 5-15   |
| Maghrib                    | 6-50  | 6-55   |
| Esha                       | 8-15  | 8-45   |
| Source: Islamic Foundation |       |        |

# Sellers ask govt to lift tax, VAT on books

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Samity (BBPSS) yesterday asked the government to withdraw 15 percent tax slapped on import of books and VAT (value added tax) on their sale and supply.

The BBPSS leaders demanded cancellation of the compulsory pre-shipment inspection (PSI) system for importing books and withdrawal of duty on newsprint import in the proposed budget for the FY2004-2005.

They said the new duty will raise the price of books that will, in turn, hit the poor students hard.

"On the one hand, the government is saying no VAT has been slapped on book supply and sale but the National Board of Revenue

(NBR) is issuing letter to us for paying VAT on the other," said M Abu Taher, president, BBPSS at a press conference in the Jatiya Press Club.

Taher said import cost has notably increased because of import tax and compulsory PSI system, creating complications in the import process. The customs authorities always keep the imported books under 'Other Books' category and charge 15 percent tax.

He said though tax has been lifted from text, reference and religious books, the customs authorities consider only medical and engineering books as textbooks. They don't consider dictionaries and books on arts and social

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# al-Qaeda threatens to kill US hostage

REUTERS, Riyadh

Al-Qaeda guerrillas have shown images of a blindfolded American hostage and say they will kill him if the Saudi government fails to free jailed militants within 72 hours.

"My name is Paul Marshall Johnson and I am a citizen of the United States," a slurred voice with an American accent said in a recording on an Islamist website on Tuesday, "I work for Apache helicopters."

The threat to kill Johnson, which follows a spate of suicide bombings and shootings in the

past six weeks, raised the stakes in al-Qaeda's war to topple the kingdom's pro-US monarchy and drive out Westerners from the world's largest oil exporter.

"If the tyrants in the Saudi government want to secure the release of the American hostage, they must release our mujahideen held hostage in its jails. They have 72 hours from today or else we will sacrifice him," said an al-Qaeda statement carried on Sawt al Jihad Website.

The statement, dated Tuesday, was signed by the Qaeda Organisation in the Arabian Peninsula. Sawt al Jihad has carried

similar messages in the past.

On Saturday, al-Qaeda said it was holding Johnson, a US engineer and the first Westerner to be kidnapped in a wave of militant attacks in the kingdom that began more than a year ago. It also claimed responsibility for killing American Kenneth Scroggs, who was shot dead as he parked his car at his villa.

Saudi government foreign affairs adviser Adel al-Jubeir told CNN that his government was looking into the situation and consulting the United

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