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Waste extravaganza at water ministry

Planning ministry shoots down a scheme that aimed to spend a fourth of outlay on officials' luxury

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

In an extravagant bid of corruption-driven fund waste, a water ministry project outlay involved buying 416 cars to go with 62 photocopy machines, 510 computers,

123 air-conditioners, 102 slide projectors, 102 fax machines, among other items.

A fourth of the spending of the Tk 954 crore project was on officials' comfort, consultants and out-of-proportion equip-

ment. But then the planning ministry has rejected the water management scheme that already got the green light of support by the World Bank (WB).

The project was aimed to build

and rehabilitate dams, sluice gates, dredge canals and construct irrigation infrastructures in farmers' interest, but water ministry officials shaped it for personal gains, even deleting some essential components, sources said.

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AL may support Mannan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) is likely to lend support to Abdul Mannan, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) candidate in the July 1 by-election in Dhaka-10 constituency.

"Awami League will provide all out support to Abdul Mannan against the ruling four-party alliance candidate in the by-election and formally announce it in a couple of days," a senior AL leader said yesterday.

Leaders and workers of the AL and its front organisations will then campaign for the BDB candidate, he said on condition of anonymity.

This development followed BDB candidate and party Secretary

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PHOTO: STAR

HARD RAIN: Heavy shower for the better part of yesterday forces many commuters like the two on a rickshaw near the foreign ministry to drench on the way to workplaces.

More rains, water levels rise in most rivers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's rivers have started to swell as torrential rains swept many areas with the start of the monsoon.

The capital yesterday experienced heavy rainfall for the third consecutive day while most part of the city went under water due to poor drainage system.

Hundreds of vehicles were stranded in traffic backlogs as major roads, lanes and by-lanes went under water.

The capital yesterday recorded

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Outlaws kill three

UNB, Chuadanga

Underground operatives slaughtered two youths and gunned down another at Damurhuda on Friday night.

Police yesterday recovered the bodies of Oliar (35), Alihim (38) and Giasuddin (35) and sent those to hospital for autopsy. Locals said extremists picked up Oliar and Alihim of village Garbaria in sadar upazila from their houses at dead of night and later left the bodies slaughtered at adjacent Hanar Baradi field.

Similarly, extremists picked up Giasuddin from his house at Dudpatila village in Damurhuda upazila and shot dead in a field in Garbaria.

Sources said Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janojuddha) by phone claimed responsibility for the killings. They said they have eliminated the three for their misdeeds including extortion and rape in the area.

Police suspect internal feud in PBCP might have been the reason behind the killings.

Another report said two young men died and 25 were injured in lightning at Damurhuda in the afternoon.

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Saudi says chief of al-Qaeda killed

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia announced yesterday it had dealt a body blow to al-Qaeda gunmen who have terrorized Western residents of the kingdom, by killing their alleged chief Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin and three comrades as well as arresting 12 others.

The interior ministry said the four were shot dead by security forces in Riyadh on Friday night, shortly after "al-Qaeda in the Arabian peninsula" posted grisly photos on websites showing the beheading of American aeronautics engineer Paul Johnson. The victim's severed head was placed on his back.

The beheading, which sparked international outrage, climaxed a spate of fatal attacks against Westerners in Riyadh and other parts of the kingdom since early May.

"Abdul Aziz bin Issa al-Muqrin, who claimed to head the gang of taker (holding others as infidels) and bombings and issued statements (claiming responsibility) for

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DCCI, Ficci term budget industry-unfriendly

Doubt investment growth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chiefs of two key chambers at a meeting yesterday said as the proposed budget for next fiscal year (FY) is 'not industry friendly', they have reasons to have reservations about feasibility of the Board of Investment's (BoI) target to bring about a significant increase in private investment.

The business leaders -- Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and

Industry (DCCI) President Fazle RM Hasan and Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) President Mahubul Jamil -- were responding to BoI Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman's disclosure that his board projects an average annual increase of Tk 12,000 crore in private investment in the next three years.

The meeting on 'Investment Trend and Budget 2004-05', sponsored by the BoI, was organised by

Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) at a city hotel.

In line with the millennium development goal, Mahmudur Rahman told the meeting the BoI also aims to increase the contribution of private investment to the gross domestic product from the current 17.5 percent to 20 percent by the next three years.

He said the board targets to increase private investment by

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Morshed blames global politics for OIC defeat

Says SQ Chy's comment on Jewish machination not govt version

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday blamed a number of recent developments in global politics for Bangladesh's defeat in the election to the post of secretary general of the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

"There was no single reason for the defeat; instead, a number of changes in the world scenario caused it," he said without elaboration. The defeat, however, will not change Dhaka's role in the OIC, Morshed said at a press conference at his foreign ministry office.

"Although Bangladesh received verbal or written support from 30

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Tadao Chino

ADB president due tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Tadao Chino arrives in Dhaka tomorrow on a two-day visit.

During his visit, he will meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman and senior government officials and discuss ways to

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Containers pile up at Ctg Port for tardy railway

RAFIQ HASAN

At least 600 containers loaded with imported items have been stuck up for several weeks at the container yard at Chittagong port, causing delay in the berthing of ships and unloading of cargo, sources said.

The container congestion resulted from Bangladesh Railway's (BR) delay in carrying them to Kamapur Inland Container Depot (ICD) in Dhaka.

Political programmes, acci-

dents on train lines and some other factors at times affect railway transport and lead to such congestion at the port yard, the sources mentioned.

The shipping ministry at an emergency meeting yesterday discussed the issue and asked the BR to take up a crash programme to ease the container congestion. It also asked the railway to arrange special train services to carry the containers, if necessary.

Director general of the BR and chairman of Chittagong Port

Authority (CPA) were present at the meeting chaired by Shipping Secretary Ismail Zabihullah.

The meeting was told only two trains now carry about 120 containers a day to Dhaka from Chittagong port but about 70 per cent the containers arriving at the port are Dhaka-bound.

The meeting also discussed building a separate rail track between Dhaka and Chittagong for carrying containers only.

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EC yet to get govt response to army deployment

Mannan files writ petition for execution of EC decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is uncertain whether the government will deploy army in each polling

centre for Dhaka-10 by-election slated for July 1.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed last week in a letter

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Anthrax vaccines sent to Bandarban to check 'disease'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

The Department of Livestock, Bandarban yesterday sent anthrax virus protection vaccines to Lama upazila after the deadly germ was found in the carcass of an elephant at Yangchha in the upazila.

In a bid to check possible spread of the disease among local cattle, the department sent 700 vaccines to the affected area, forest official Tapan Kanti Dey told The Daily Star yesterday.

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Budgetary provision too little to upgrade education: Experts

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The proposed budgetary allocation for education sector would not make any notable contribution in raising the education standard, fear experts.

They said, although the sector is

awarded with the highest allocation so far, only a trickle of it goes to developing textbooks and other learning materials -- key to raising standard of education.

The allocation for education in the proposed budget for the next

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30 crocodiles arrive from India soon

NURUL ALAM, Ctg

The Forest Research Institute (FRI) is ready to receive 30 crocodiles as a gesture of goodwill from India, officials said.

The formalities between the governments of Bangladesh and India have been complete to bring 30 crocodiles from Chennai-based crocodile bank to the port city-based institute, they added.

Twenty crocodiles will be released in the safari park in Dulahazara of Cox's Bazar resort town and the rest will be sent to Dhaka zoo.

The FRI will send its Divisional Forest Officer Moklesur Rahman to India on June 22 to bring the crocodiles from Chennai. Moklesur said his visit was worked out after the Chennai crocodile bank agreed to

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