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Rupali Bank to find it easier to sell off stakes

Its British consultant says

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Rupali Bank will find it relatively easier to attract private investors as it has a strong brand name and a large network of branches country-wide, but a number of risk factors may discourage prospective investors, says the bank's British consultant.

British consultant GBRW in a report has identified the risks and opportunities for potential investors and says a number of investors are already keen on buying stakes of the Rupali Bank.

The consultant has met officials of the Standard Chartered, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), Citibank NA, State Bank of India and other foreign banks to determine whether they could have a potential interest in the bank, the report adds.

The government, however, must seek quality of investors instead of

big sales price while selling the smallest nationalised commercial bank (NCB), the consultant notes.

"Any strategic investor will need to have significant banking expertise, management capabilities, a credible track record and be prepared to put forward a significant amount of its own capital," the consultant adds.

It throws light on five investment opportunities for the bank. The

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PM urges all to support anticrime drive

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the people of all faiths to extend support to the anticrime drive for sustaining its success through further improving the law and order situation.

She made the call when a delegation of Bangladesh Christian Association met her at the International Conference Centre (ICC) on the eve of the holy Christmas, the biggest festival of the Christian community, to be

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PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exchanges pleasantries with Hajj-goers aboard a Biman flight after inaugurating 'Biman Hajj Flight 2005' at Zia International Airport yesterday.

Geeteara Safiya reelected Dhaka Club president

UNB, Dhaka

Geeteara Safiya Choudhury was reelected president of Dhaka Club in the election held yesterday.

Geeteara, managing director of Adcomm Limited, bagged 550 votes while her rival Selim Bhuiyan polled 520 votes.

Members elected to the executive committee are MA Momen (Murad), Syed Saiful Arefin, Mahmood Koli, Lutfi Nazib Khan Rumi, Khairul Majid Mahmood, MS Nawzia Islam Rasa, Enamul Huq, Firoz M Khan, Abdul Jalil and AA Ibrahim Kaju.



PHOTO: STAR

Opposition leaders and workers observe a daylong hunger strike in the city protesting the government's inaction in tracking down the culprits of the August 21 grenade attack even four months into the incident.

Opposition activists stage hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leaders and workers yesterday were on a daylong hunger strike in the city protesting the government's inaction in tracking down the culprits of the August 21 grenade attacks even after about four months of the incident.

The programme organised by Jubo League, the youth wing of the AL, started at 10:00am and continued till 5:00pm.

Senior leaders of the AL and its different front organisations, Workers Party of Bangladesh and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Rumsfeld warns of more unrest in Iraq after polls

AFP, Washington

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned Wednesday that the deadly chaos in Iraq will likely continue after the January 30 elections, as the military's top general said the attack on a base in Mosul was apparently a suicide bombing.

Rumsfeld's remarks came one day after 22 people, including 14 US soldiers, were killed when a blast ripped through a US Army base's tent in which soldiers and civilian contractors were having lunch in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

Another 69 people, including 44

US soldiers, were wounded in one of the deadliest assaults against US troops in Iraq.

"I think looking for a peaceful Iraq after the elections would be a mistake. I think our expectations level ought to be realistic about that," Rumsfeld told reporters at the Pentagon.

"These folks have a lot to lose: The extremists and terrorists and the people who are determined to try to take back that country are determined not to lose," Rumsfeld said.

"And they are going to do everything they can to see that that

opportunity they have succeeded, and we've got to do everything to see that they fail," he said.

General Richard Myers, the chairman of US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the blast was probably the work of a suicide bomber.

"At this point, it looks like it was an improvised explosive device worn by an attacker," Myers said in the joint news conference with Rumsfeld.

"We have had a suicide bomber apparently strap something to his body... and go into a dining hall," he said, adding that the military was

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Blue, White panels share Duta seats

DU CORRESPONDENT

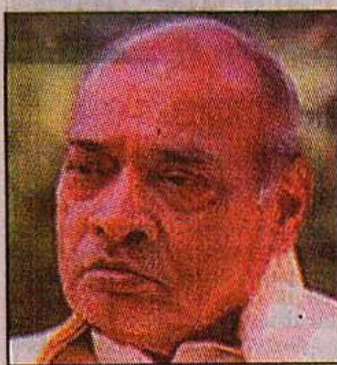
Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and Prof Mohammad Akhteruzzaman of the main opposition Awami League-backed 'Blue Panel' were re-elected president and general secretary of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) yesterday.

The ruling BNP-Jamaat-backed 'White Panel' got the posts of vice president, joint secretary, treasurer and five members of the executive committee.

The Blue Panel also secured five posts of member of the 15-member executive body.

Dr Tazmery Selima Akhter Islam was elected vice-president, Dr ABM Obaidul Islam joint secretary and Dr

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Narasimha Rao passes away

PTI, New Delhi

Former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, the first politician from outside Nehru-Gandhi family to head a government at the Centre for a full five-year term, died on Thursday after a bout of serious illness over the past fortnight.

Pioneer of the liberalisation process in the early nineties, 83-year-old Rao died of cardiac arrest at 2.20 pm. He was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences on December 9. He suffered from multiple ailments and had a history

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Zealots declare new plan against Ahmadiyyas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islamist zealots yesterday announced a yearlong agitation programme to press the government to declare Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim.

"We're giving a final ultimatum to the government... the government will have to take the responsibility for any situation if our demand is not fulfilled by that time," said Nazmul Haq, secretary general of International Khatme Nabuwat Movement, Bangladesh (IKNMB), a platform of Islamist fanatics that stirred anti-Ahmadiyya movement

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Palestinians vote in landmark elections

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinians across the West Bank began voting yesterday in the first council elections in 28 years which will act as a barometer for next month's presidential ballot.

They are the first municipal elections in the Palestinian territories since 1976 and mark the first time that the radical Islamic movement Hamas has taken part in the

democratic process.

More than 140,000 electors were choosing from 886 candidates, including 139 women, as they select local council officials for the town of Jericho and 25 villages in the West Bank. A second tranche of elections will take place on January 27 in 10 other localities in the Gaza Strip.

Among those who cast their ballot was Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qorei, a resident of the

village of Abu Dis on the edge of east Jerusalem.

"This is a first step towards democracy and the establishment of our future state," Qorei told reporters after voting in the Abu Dis youth club.

"These elections are being held in difficult conditions. But they are a reflection of the democratic voice that we have chosen to build our Palestinian state."

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US envoy meets Hasina, Joy

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Harry K Thomas met Awami League (AL) President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence yesterday.

Talking to the reporters after the meeting, the envoy said he came to pay his respect to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. "I was in the States and Sheikh Hasina was also in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Babar asks Rab to be alert to 'mistakes'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar yesterday directed the Rab members to remain alert to mistakes that might spoil the success they have achieved so far in combating terrorism and improving law and order.

The government is committed to uphold the image of the elite force keeping it free from politics and narrow interest, he said addressing the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at the headquarters of Rab, Chittagong, in Patenga.

The state minister reminded the Rab members of the task they were assigned to and directed them to take care so that not a single innocent person suffers during their operations.

Assuring the elite anticrime force of all-out support, Babar asked them to take action without fear against the criminals irrespective of their

party affiliations.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Chittagong Range, Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan, Chittagong Metropolitan Police Commissioner Amzad Hossain, Additional Director General of Rab Lt Col Fazlul Bari, Commander of Rab, Chittagong, Lt Col Quazi Emdadul Haq and Superintendent of Police, Chittagong, Mahbubur Rahman were present.

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Prayer Timing December 24

| | Azan | Jamaat |
|---------|-------|--------|
| Fajr | 5-25 | 6-00 |
| Juma | 12-30 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 3-45 | 4-00 |
| Maghrib | 5-24 | 5-27 |
| Esha | 7-00 | 7-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

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