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Prof Wahiduddin suggests forming task forces to check rice price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent economist Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud yesterday said he has proposed to the caretaker government to form two task forces to keep rice price within the purchasing capacity of people at all levels, and ensure food security for all.

"Recently, I proposed to the government to form two task forces -- food management and security task force and agricultural production support task force," Wahiduddin said while addressing the inaugural session of a two-day workshop in the capital.

Giving details, he said food management and security task force will oversee food procurement, import and distribution channels so that people at all levels can have food grains, especially rice, within their purchasing capacity.

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Cheated workers forced to buy fake passports

High commission in KL allegedly unwilling to help them

PORIMOL PALMA

The Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia allegedly has been exhibiting unwillingness to stand by its compatriot migrant workers there, while a well organised racket of Bangladeshi passport forgers comprising nationals of both countries is raking in a large sum of money by selling fake passports to workers desperate to return home.

Migrant Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, who were cheated and abused, are being forced to buy the fake passports because the high commission allegedly is not helping them in obtaining the travel documents required to return

home, according to sources observing manpower trade between the two countries.

Involvement of some official of a few airlines and of Malaysian immigration at Kuala Lumpur Airport in the racket is also suspected, as they recently allowed a group of workers to travel with fake passports, the sources added.

The hapless workers are being put in the predicament by their Malaysian employers or employment agents who confiscate their passports on arrival there, but finally either leave them unemployed or employed in jobs with remunerations less than what they had been promised, or abuse them

in many ways at work, forcing them to leave the jobs, the sources said.

The nightmarish details of the ill fate of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia, the gruesome greed of the passport forgers, and the stone cold alleged indifference of the Bangladesh High Commission towards its compatriots came to light after 45 Bangladeshis, who had returned home from that country on April 25 using fake passports, told the immigration police here that they had to pay 3,000 to 4,000 Malaysian Ringgit equivalent to Tk 60,000 to Tk 80,000 to get each of the light blue forged passports, while the colour

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2 muggers beaten to death in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Two alleged muggers were beaten to death in the port city and in Fatikchhari upazila on Thursday.

In the city, an alleged mugger was caught while taking away a cellular phone and money from a passenger at a point at Tigerpass intersection.

As the passenger screamed for help, locals caught him and beat him up leaving him fatally injured. He was sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

The deceased was identified as Kamrul Hasan, 25, from East

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Road crashes kill 9 in 5 districts

STAR REPORT

Nine people died and 34 others were injured in road accidents in Rangpur, Kushtia, Jhenidah, Sylhet and Patuakhali districts in the last two days.

In Rangpur, a coal-laden truck skidded off the Rangpur-Bogra highway and fell into a ditch at Dharmadas under Rangpur Sadar upazila at about 5:30am yesterday, killing three labourers on the spot and injuring nine others, according to our correspondent.

The dead are Mukul Chandra, 25, Mokbul Hossain, 38, and Al

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Diarrhoea situation worsens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The diarrhoea situation across the country has worsened during the last few days.

The International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B) treated 545 patients yesterday, as of 7:00pm.

Around 2,529 people were diagnosed with diarrhoea across the country between Wednesday morning and Thursday morning and one person died of dehydration, according to the control room of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

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Car plunges into river, 3 of a family missing

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Three of a family went missing in the Padma as a car carrying the family of four skidded off a pontoon and plunged into the river at Mawa Ferry Ghat yesterday.

The missing were identified as Rezaul Karim, 55, an architect from Lalmatia of Dhaka, his wife Shahana Karim, 41, and their son Safat Karim Koushik, 10.

Nusrat Jahon, Rezaul's daughter, was found unconscious and

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Bangladesh Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) brings out a procession on Shilpikala Academy premises on May Day as it could not stage such programmes on Dhaka streets due to the State of Emergency.

Century-old monastery lies in ruins

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

A 127-year-old Hindu monastery at Goyhata in Nagarpur upazila goes to rack and ruin with wild plants pervading the structure that still boasts some intricate terracotta plaques.

Locally known as Uday Tara Chowdhurani Matha, it has developed several large cracks in walls and columns, raising the spectre of a cave-in. Besides, rainwater entering through the slits has made its base liable to subsidence.

For years of neglect, its upper part looks likely to tumble down, posing danger to the pedestrians and students of the nearby schools who pass by it every day.

Zamindar Kalikumbar Sen Chowdhury built the monastery in memory of his mother Uday Tara in Bangla year 1288. He brought masons and construction materials from India for the purpose, said Wazed Ali Fakir, an octogenarian at Goyhata.

Originally, the structure was 150 feet in height and that included a 30-foot pinnacle. But it came down below 85 feet after parts of it collapsed in thunderbolts--one in 1949 and two after 1971.

Mahadev Kumar Das, secretary of Goyhata Kalibari, said a five-foot Shivalinga (a symbol of Lord Shiva) was stolen during the devastating floods in 1988 while a three-foot statue of seated Nandi (a bull that, according to Hindu myths, would carry Shiva) was stolen just before independence.

Mahadev said the Hindu community at Goyhata had taken initiatives to renovate the matha on several occasions, but could not find construction materials to match the original ones.

"Special types of materials including bricks of 6/2.5 inches were used," he added.



The 127-year-old Uday Tara Chowdhurani Matha in Nagarpur upazila of Tangail lies in a dilapidated condition with most of its plaster fallen off and plants growing through cracks.

18 killed in Yemen mosque blast

AFP, Sanaa

Eighteen people, mostly soldiers, were killed in Yemen yesterday when a blast blamed by authorities on Shia insurgents exploded at the entrance to a mosque in the rebels' stronghold.

A booby-trapped motorcycle exploded as hundreds of Muslim faithful were leaving the Bin Salman mosque in the northwestern town of Saada after Friday prayers, according to military sources at the site.

Forty-five people were wounded.

The attack on the mosque, located near an army barracks, raised fears of an escalation in violence between the government and Shia rebels whose insurgency in the mountainous province of Saada has claimed thousands of lives since 2004.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but a local official told AFP the attack bears the hallmarks of the "Huthis," as the rebels are known.

"Terrorist criminal followers of the terrorist Abdul Malak al-Huthi are behind this ugly crime," an interior ministry official told the Saba state news agency, referring to the rebels' field commander.

Military sources said the dead were mostly soldiers, but they also included women and child beggars who had been waiting for worshippers outside the mosque. Most of the injured were soldiers.

Ambulances rushed to the scene of the attack, which some witnesses said may have targeted the mosque's imam, or prayer leader, Askar Zuail. An army officer who adheres to the rigorous Salafi school of Sunni Islam, Zuail has used his sermons to mobilise worshippers against the Shia rebels.

Witnesses said the cleric had just left the mosque and was not hurt.

Local sources said the imam is an aide to Ali Mohsen, military commander of the northwestern region who has led the battle against the insurgents.

Mosques in Yemen cater for both the majority Sunni community

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Suicide bombings kill 35 in Iraq

AP, Baghdad

The US military yesterday blamed al-Qaeda in Iraq for a double suicide bombing that killed at least 35 people during a wedding procession through a crowd of people cheering the bride and groom in a town northeast of Baghdad.

The attack Thursday evening came amid heightened worries that al-Qaeda militants are regrouping, despite recent security gains by US-led forces. The terror network announced April 19 that it was launching a one-month offensive against US troops and US-allied Sunnis.

"al-Qaeda in Iraq continues their malicious tactics against the people of Iraq and their way of life," the military said in a statement.

"They seek violence and chaos in Iraq."

Thursday's blasts occurred in Balad Ruz, a predominantly Shia Muslim town 45 miles northeast of Baghdad. An Iraqi female suicide bomber imitating pregnancy detonated the first bomb, the military said. A male bomber also blew himself up.

The woman bomber blew herself up as people were dancing and clapping while members of the passing wedding party played music. The male bomber attacked minutes later as police and ambulances arrived at the scene, said Maj. Gen. Abdul-Karim al-Rubaie, head of the Diyala provincial operations centre that oversees Balad Ruz.

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Palm oil prices higher than govt-fixed rate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Retailers across the country continue to sell palm oil at Tk 103 to Tk 104 a litre even though the government fixed its retail price at Tk 96 three days ago.

Prices of chicken, onion, fish and pulse rose in the wet markets of the capital during the last two days. Prices of different varieties of fine

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Prayer Timing		
May 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-31	6-35
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



Mothers of two schoolboys found dead Thursday grieve the loss of their sons. Story on page 1.

Judges to be reinstated on May 12: Sharif

AP, AFP, Lahore

Former Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif said yesterday that judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf will be reinstated on May 12.

"God willing, all the deposed judges will be restored on May 12," Sharif told reporters in the eastern city of Lahore, after returning from Dubai where he held talks with

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Girl commits suicide after being 'raped'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A garment worker died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) Thursday after taking poison the day before. She was reportedly gangraped on April 25.

Nurjahan, 25, of North Adabar in the city was admitted to DMCH immediately after taking poison.

Talking to reporters at DMCH,

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Bush seeks \$770m to face food crisis

AFP, Washington

US President George W Bush urged lawmakers Thursday to approve 770 million dollars in new aid to cope with soaring food prices that have left many hungry and fuelled angry protests around the world.

"With the new international funding I'm announcing today, we're sending a clear message to the world that America will lead the fight against hunger for years to come," he said in a hastily called public appearance.

Warning that "more needs to be done," Bush said the monies would be in addition to another 200 million dollars the White House freed up earlier this month and urged the US Congress to act "as soon as possible."

"In some of the world's poorest nations, rising prices can mean the difference between getting a daily meal and going without food," he said, as millions of workers around the world made soaring food prices their May Day battle cry.

"The American people are generous people and compassionate people. We believe in the time-

less truth, to whom much is given, much is expected," said the US president.

Experts blame soaring prices on a confluence of factors, including trade restrictions; increased demand from a changing diet in Asia; poor growing weather; rising use of biofuels that rely on staples like corn; and soaring fuel prices that make transporting foodstuffs more expensive.

"The World Bank said last month that a doubling of food prices over the past three years could push 100 million people in poorer developing countries further into poverty.

The Bank, which launched a "New Deal" to fight hunger, estimated that 33 countries were threatened with political and social unrest because of the skyrocketing costs of food and energy.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pledged in a statement that lawmakers "will respond rapidly to the growing urgent need for international food assistance," though she did not explicitly mention Bush's request.

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