

Private University

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the meeting to give their opinions.

A total of 54 private universities are now operating in the country under the private university act and a section of them have allegedly been involved in malpractices like sales of certificates cashing in on loopholes of the existing act.

These so-called private universities are also alleged to be imparting substandard education.

Tasked with the job to ensure quality education of these universities, the UGC will place the draft act soon before the government after consultation with stakeholders concerned.

The UGC will scrutinise the opinions derived from the meeting and then forward it to the education ministry with its own suggestions and observations on the existing act, said sources.

"We have invited stakeholders concerned to the meeting for their opinions and we will scrutinise the opinions and make our own observations on the act," UGC chairman Prof Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star.

"We will send it to the education ministry after finalising it and the ministry will do the rest," he added.

A timely private university act is needed for the sake of ensuring quality education in private universities, he said adding that the government has taken the matter very seriously.

Private universities came into operation in 1992 under the Private University Act 1992 that was later amended in 1998.

Following a proposal of the UGC to bring private universities under strict discipline the immediate past caretaker government promulgated the Private University Ordinance 2008.

But owners of the private universities opposed the move. The present government did not ratify the ordinance and so the ordinance became lapse.

At that time, the UGC strongly persuaded the education and law ministry not to drop the ordinance but owners of private universities lobbied against the move of the UGC.

Contacted, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the government is planning to formulate a new act for private universities to ensure standard education.

Army probe

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information but admitted that he does not have the army probe report, our staff correspondent reports.

Quoting the army probe report, a number of newspapers recently reported involvement of some Awami League (AL) lawmakers in the incident.

Ashraf said it appears from the newspaper reports that the enquiry report was half-done, UNB adds.

On the government's probe into the incident, he said, "We will have to see who would be the beneficiaries, what would be the consequences, who were involved with the carnage," adding that all BDR men were not involved in the incident.

He said they did not get any report from any probe committee. He urged all not to misinterpret the reports on the BDR carnage.

On his Sunday's comment that Tk 15 crore was allocated by a vested quarter to spread confusion about the BDR mutiny, Syed Ashraf said they got the information from their own sources. "We know the names but we do not want to disclose now. We are watching them," he said.

Meanwhile, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday questioned the veracity of newspaper reports on the findings of the army probe of the BDR carnage, claiming that the newspaper reports are based on speculations, UNB reports.

"Only the investigators know about the findings of the probe and I think the newspaper reports were based on speculations," said Faruk who has been assigned to coordinate the enquiry committees formed to investigate the BDR massacre.

Faruk said the coordination committee would today receive reports from subcommittees working to make recommendations on restructuring BDR.

"The reports would make recommendations on restructuring BDR, its new name, uniform, laws and motto," the commerce minister said, adding that the committee would sit soon with the reports and place those before the government after necessary scrutiny.

"The government wants to modernise the BDR through required changes so that it can work as a modern force in line with the present necessity," he added.

"We are taking opinions of all concerned in this regard," he added.

As per the draft of the new act each private university will have a syndicate comprising VC, Pro-VC, treasurer, one dean, one departmental head and a member of academic council nominated by the VC, an educationist nominated by the government, three members nominated by the Board of Trustees and a member nominated by the UGC, said sources.

The law also suggests formation of a nine-member Board of Trustees for every university and the board will nominate a member from the board as its chairman, sources added.

One must have 20 years of teaching or administrative experience or 10 years of teaching and 10 years of administrative experience to be eligible to become a vice chancellor (VC), it says.

The proposes that each university will have to have Tk 5 crore deposited with any scheduled bank approved by the government as Reserve Fund, said sources.

Morshed Khan

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They were earlier sentenced to imprisonment of different terms in these cases. Both of them are now behind bars.

A division bench of the HC comprising Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice M Marzi-ul-Huq granted them bail upon separate appeals filed by them against the sentence and conviction awarded them by trial courts.

The bails will remain valid until the disposal of their appeals pending with the HC.

A special court on August 4, last year, sentenced Morshed Khan to 13 years in jail for amassing illegal wealth and concealing information about it.

The two bribery cases against Manju were filed with Shahbagh and Dhanmondi police stations in Dhaka on July 25, 2007. The special courts sentenced him to seven years in jail in each of the two bribery cases.

In compliance with the recent Supreme Court orders, Morshed and Manju surrendered to the lower courts on May 6 and 10 respectively. The courts sent them to jail for serving the sentences denying their bail prayers.

Earlier, the High Court refused to grant bails to a dozen bigwig fugitive convicts as they sought bails in corruption cases after surrendering.

Barrister Rafique-Ul Huq appeared for the petitioners, while Deputy Attorney General SM Abdul Mobin stood for the government.

Workers' strike

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pulses and fertiliser.

Lighter vessels after unloading cargoes from mother vessels at outer anchorage arrive at 16 different terminals at Sadarghat, Majhirghat and Bangla Bazar where the ghat workers are engaged in unloading the goods from the lighter vessels to load the waiting trucks. The contractor concerned of each ghat pays Tk 7.20 to workers for carrying per bag of goods. Around 200 workers work at each ghat.

Demanding Tk 10 for carrying each bag, the workers stopped working in the morning.

"We have long been demanding Tk 10 wage for per bag cargo unloading. We gave an ultimatum on May 2 this year but the contractor don't pay any heed to our grievance and we are forced to go on strike," said Abdul Khaleque, general secretary of Chittagong Ghat and Godown Workers Union.

However, Vice Chairman of Lighterage Vessel Owners and Contractors Association Haji Shaheque Ahmed refuted the allegation and said the workers went on a wildcat strike.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) president and convenor of Water Transport Coordination Cell (WTCC) MA Latif MP termed the strike 'unexpected' and said it would leave a very negative impact on the inland water transport of cargoes.

"As a result of the strike, the mother vessels at outer anchorage will have to suffer most for each day of delay in unloading of cargoes," he said in a statement.

WTCC Secretary Commodore (ret'd) AZ Nizam told The Daily Star that they have already been facing shortage of lighter vessels.

Commodore Nizam said out of 36 vessels unloading of cargoes of 26 vessels was to be done yesterday.

Arms shop

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he was beaten black and blue by the angry mob.

Halim was indiscriminately stabbed all over the body. He was rushed to the Orthopaedic Hospital (Pongu Hospital) in a critical condition.

Detained criminal Farhad, 32, was also admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) under police custody.

Kotwali police said at least three muggers stormed into the firearms sales store 'Shikari and Shikar' located on the second floor of a three-storey building in Islampur lane around 1:30pm to loot firearms.

"As the gang of criminals were attempting to loot firearms, Abdul Halim, manager of the store, yelled for help and the thugs stabbed him indiscriminately with machetes," said sub-inspector Firoz Ahmed of Kotwali police station.

By the time pedestrians and people from next-door shops rushed to the spot and caught one of the muggers, he added.

Locals said Farhad was entangled in wires as he jumped through one of the windows of the building to elude the mob. The rest two, however, gave them the slip, police said.

Lying on the DMCH bed, Farhad told The Daily Star that he tried to snatch arms from the store to take vengeance on his enemies.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) sources said the criminals belong to notorious criminal Dakat Shahid of Old Dhaka.

One of the Rab officials said the criminals led by Sajahan went to loot firearms from the store owned by Mohammad Nasir.

Ctg arms haul

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PP Kamaluddin told The Daily Star yesterday evening that the ex-NSI chiefs on remand could help interrogators find out the origin, place of shipment and destination of the deadly consignment of arms as well as from where the financial support came from.

Our Chittagong office reports: Interrogators are now questioning the two former NSI chiefs with focus on finding out the real culprits, identity of the smugglers, origin, destination and place of shipment of the 10-truckloads of arms and ammunition.

However, sources in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), investigating the case, said no more remarkable information could be gleaned from the two ex-NSI chiefs.

Instead of mounting pressure on them, the investigators are trying to gain trust of the accused creating a friendly atmosphere, the sources said. However, they could be placed in remand again for interrogation at the Taskforce Intelligence (TFI) cell if this technique fails to produce desired results.

Bifurcating into two groups, CID investigators continued quizzing the two former NSI directors general yesterday at CID Chittagong divisional headquarters. They are on three-day remand.

The teams, each with two to three members, separately interrogated the two throughout the day. CID's ASP Ismail Hossain Khan, the fourth investigation officer of the case, also joined in the quizzing.

Rezaqul Haider and Abdur Rahim were arrested at their homes in the capital Saturday following the confessional statement of NSI former director (security) Sahab Uddin.

4 city gunfights

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Shamim and Rubel were found with bullet wounds after the criminals left the spot, police said.

They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Talking to The Daily Star at DMCH, Shamim claimed himself to be a tea vendor while Rubel, an electrician.

Yet in another incident, one criminal was wounded in a gunfight between Rab and his cohorts in the city's Turag area yesterday.

Rab said, the criminals opened fire on Rab men when they raided the house of drug peddler Nazmul Hasan to recover arms. A gunfight ensued that left Egramul Islam Babu wounded, it added.

Later, Rab held Babu along with two pistols, 41 bullets and three snatched mobile phone sets.

In Mirpur, mugger Rabiul Islam Babu was wounded in another shootout between Rab and his accomplices near Bangladesh Krishi Bank Institute at about 2:30am.

Some muggers opened fire on the law enforcers when they chased them. When Rab shot back, Babu received bullet wounds. His accomplices, however, managed to leave the spot.

Babu was held along with a pistol and four bullets.

Law enforcers

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The government will gradually bring other government departments under the comprehensive policy, he added.

The state minister raised the topic of increasing allowances and perks for law enforcers while a scheduled agenda on giving judicial and other allowances to members of Bangladesh Judicial Service was being discussed at the meeting.

Sohel Taj said as a part of a short term plan officers-in-charge (OCs) of police stations will be given the status of first class government officials, and risk allowances for law enforcers will be substantially increased. He also said mini barracks will be built for accommodation of OCs in metropolitan areas.

Talking to The Daily Star, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury also said the government is planning to increase allowances and perks for law enforcement personnel as well as for members of the judicial service.

Sohel Taj said the government's mid-term plan includes increasing salaries of law enforcement personnel and modernisation of equipment for having a modern professional police force.

Praising the performance of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in combating terrorism, he said Rab will be modernised further, and the number of its personnel will be increased.

The state minister said the government will increase the number of law enforcement personnel in line with population increase. Ten Thousand new law enforcers will be recruited every year for the next three years, said Sohel Taj.

The newly launched roving teams of police will also be expanded to curb criminal activities in the capital, he added.

Focus on troubles

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However, Singh did not elaborate on the problems in the neighbourhood but apparently referred to the troubles in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Singh also said the new government will continue with the policies and socio-economic development programmes of UPA years besides implementing the promises made in the party manifesto.

"Manmohan Singh said the new government is assuming office in the backdrop of a deep global recession and serious troubles in the immediate neighbourhood. He said he was confident that the clear mandate received by UPA would enable the new government to respond to these two immediate challenges effectively," AICC General Secretary Janardhan Dwivedi quoted Singh as saying at the CWC meeting.

Addressing the meeting, Sonia Gandhi asked the party men to build on the momentum of Congress' electoral victory and start working on restoring the party's "historical" role as the natural party for governing India.

SINGH RESIGNS
Fulfilling the last formality for beginning a second successive term, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday submitted the resignation of the council of ministers headed by him to President Pratibha Patil.

"The Prime Minister submitted his resignation and that of his council of ministers to the President who asked him to continue till an alternative arrangement is made", a spokesman of Presidential Palace said.

Earlier this morning, Singh presided a meeting of the outgoing cabinet, which recommended the dissolution of the 14th Lok Sabha so that a new House can be constituted. The President later dissolved the Lok Sabha.

Manmohan Singh, 76, is set to be elected as the leader of Congress Parliamentary Party at its meeting today paving the way for his becoming the prime minister again. Party chief Sonia Gandhi, elected Lok Sabha member from Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, will be the CPP Chairperson.

Later, Singh will meet Patil to stake claim to form the government and the president is expected to invite him to form the new ministry.

Congress-led UPA, which won around 261 seats in the parliamentary elections and is short of 111 of the majority mark of 272 in the 545-member Lok Sabha, is reportedly planning to submit letters of support from at least 20 MPs in a bid to obviate the need for seeking a confidence vote in the House.

Congress sources said the new government is likely to be sworn in either on May 20 or May 22 as May 21 is the birth anniversary of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

ADVANTAGE CONTINUED
The BJP has persuaded L K Advani to continue as Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha in an apparent move to avoiding a race in the party for the post among its next rung of leaders after the party's defeat in general elections.

CABINET BRIEFING

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Abul Kalam Azad said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured the people of the country that there is no reason to panic due to the current world economic recession, as her government already adopted 'homespun' measures for making the economy vibrant.

The downturn in the global financial system will not have any serious harmful impact on the country's economy, the press secretary quoted the prime minister as saying.

At the meeting Hasina, also the president of AL, said the main need of the people is availability of food, if sufficient food is produced, crises like the global economic recession will have no adverse impact on the country, as the economy has checks and balances.

On the downside at the economic front the prime minister said the government is fully aware about the probable impacts of the global recession, and is taking necessary precautionary measures to avert its impact.

She also attached importance to having better coordination in public-private partnership in the financial sector for a balanced and vibrant economy.

Azad also said the cabinet approved a Bangladesh-Bhutan Trade Agreement, and sent back the Financial Reporting Act 2009 back to the ministry concerned for correction. The proposed act had been sent to the cabinet for final approval.

The cabinet also dissolved a national committee formed in 2005 for investigating the reasons for diseases in Sundari trees in mangrove forests.

The 20-member committee comprising six members of parliament was supposed to make recommendations, but it did not, Azad said.

Govt seeks

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company that taxes would be deducted from the payables to the company. It however now has the third unit installed too, but has been refraining from launching the power plant, while hammering on its demand for tax exemption.

Frustrated by Harbin's non-cooperation, PDB issued several notices primarily warning it of cancellation of the contract for its failures, and setting the primary ground for contract termination. The power ministry meanwhile sought legal opinions and sat with Harbin over the issue.

"We hope we will not have to cancel the contract and the Chinese government would help us resolve the matter amicably," said the source adding, "The foreign ministry formally wrote to the Chinese embassy to intervene."

Using the influence of now-defunct alternative centre of political power, Hava Bhaban, during the four-party alliance rule, Harbin won PDB's contracts for Tongi 80 MW peaking power project, Fenchuganj 90 MW project, and Chandpur 150 MW power project, while controversies surrounded the process of awarding the projects to the Chinese company.

The Tongi plant came into operation in 2005, but tripped more than 100 times in its two years of guaranteed operation. The Chandpur project was cancelled last year when Harbin demanded 10 percent increase in the project budget, which the government declined.

Regarding the Tongi project, it was later found that while Harbin won the project by quoting low prices, after getting the award the company took a few extra million dollars from PDB by drawing up an additional budget.

Tender were invited for the Fenchuganj scheme five times, each of which were cancelled under pressure from vested interest lobby that failed to bag the deal.

During the fourth bid, a Japanese company Sumitomo offered to do the job with the lowest cost of 85 million dollars, but that was cancelled without any good reason.

Through the fifth tender invitation Harbin was awarded the job in 2005. On top of that Harbin was given a 10 percent down payment in violation of government rules.

However, Harbin's problems emerged soon after the 1/11 change in the country's political scenario in 2007.

The local agent of Harbin along with some others filed an extortion case against Giasuddin Al Mamun, a friend of BNP Senior Secretary General Tarique Rahman who is also a son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, saying they took Tk 5 crore for awarding the Tongi power project to Harbin during the four-party alliance rule.

Meanwhile, the caretaker government that came to power through the regime change, probed into the Chandpur power project, against which also there had been allegations of foul play by another competing Chinese bidder, and which were found to be true by a committee of the planning ministry.

Amid such a complex scenario, Harbin made its claim of tax-free power projects, saying no power project contractor had ever paid such taxes.

PDB however already paid more than 60 million dollars to Harbin for the three units of 90 mw Fenchuganj plant.

New scheme

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private sector specialist, with secretarial services provided by the finance division. Under the authority a number of committees will select various types of projects.

Currently, Private Sector Infrastructure Committee (PICOM) works under the Board of Investment (BoI). PICOM already approved a number of projects in the private sector over the last few years. Once the PPP budget is approved, PICOM will work under the finance division.

Already the finance ministry identified some 30 projects, which might be brought under the PPP budget. The identified projects include construction of Dhaka-Chittagong expressway, construction of an elevated expressway in the capital, and a number of projects for solving the crisis of debilitating traffic jams in Dhaka city, the sources said.

Finance minister Muhith told journalists, "There will be an authority for implementing the budget, but government officials will not be in charge of the authority. It will not be run by the government rules for ADP either. In addition to infrastructure building projects, the PPP budget will fund projects in education, health and social sectors."

Some projects under the PPP scheme might even be completely funded by private sources, the minister added.

The government will also formulate a five-year work plan to build a 'Digital Bangladesh', the planning phase for which will start in the next fiscal, the minister announced.

Prabhakaran

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confirmed the news, and a formal announcement of his death was expected to be made at 1230 GMT.

The defence ministry said troops also killed Prabhakaran's deputies -- Sea Tiger leader Colonel Soosai and LTTE intelligence chief Pottu Amman.

Also killed were the rebel leader's 24-year-old son Charles Anthony, the group's political wing leader B Nadesan, and the head of the LTTE's defunct Peace Secretariat, S Pulidhevan.

The pro-rebel Tamilnet website said the LTTE leadership had appealed to the Red Cross to be evacuated, and that "initial reports indicate a determined massacre by the Sri Lanka Army."

In a dramatic announcement, the Tamil guerrillas had acknowledged Sunday that their battle for an independent ethnic homeland had reached its "bitter end" -- signalling Asia's longest running civil war was all but over.

The separatist rebels were once one of the world's most feared guerrilla armies, and ran a de facto mini-state spanning a third of the island before the government began a major offensive two years ago.

A last gasp appeal for peace talks -- rather than a surrender -- was flatly rejected by the government, and the defence ministry sent in troops with a brief to capture "every inch of land" for the first time in decades of war.

Rajapakse will open a new session of parliament Tuesday with an address that will officially mark the end of the war.

The capital Colombo, which has been frequently hit by Tiger suicide attacks over the past quarter century, saw street celebrations -- with residents setting off firecrackers and waving flags.

"This is a victory against terrorism. I am very proud of our forces, of what they have done," said Ashani de Silva, a Colombo student, as national flags were put up over shops, homes, offices and cars.

Victory euphoria also gripped Sri Lanka's stock exchange, with the main index jumping 6.45 percent.

Authorities had been determined to capture, kill or recover Prabhakaran's body amid fears his escape could have led to an attempt to rebuild the LTTE and usher in a new cycle of violence.

The Sri Lankan government's moment of triumph has

also come at the cost of thousands of innocent lives lost in indiscriminate shelling, according to the United Nations. The UN's rights body now wants a war crimes probe.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, the only neutral organisation that has been allowed to work in the war zone, has for its part described "an unimaginable humanitarian catastrophe."

The European Union on Monday also called for an independent enquiry into alleged human rights violations, saying it was "appalled by the loss of innocent civilian lives as a result of the conflict and by the high numbers of casualties, including children."

The estimated 250,000 people displaced by the war are being moved into state-run "welfare villages" -- camps ringed by barbed wire and another source of international alarm.

Rights workers, aid groups and journalists are also being denied free access to the north.

Suu Kyi

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house arrest, under which she could also be barred from standing in elections due next year.

"The trial has started," a Myanmar official told AFP on condition of anonymity, without giving any more details about the hearing which is being held behind closed doors.

Security forces barred the ambassadors of Britain, France, Germany and Italy from the jail as they attempted to gain entry to the trial, a western diplomat said.

US national John Yettaw is also on trial over the incident earlier this month in which he used a pair of home-made flippers to swim across a lake to the residence where Aung San Suu Kyi is kept in virtual isolation.

A US embassy car entered the prison compound but a spokesman for the US embassy in Yangon was not immediately able to confirm whether Yettaw was receiving consular assistance.

The trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent most of the last 19 years in detention, comes just days after she was imprisoned at a "guest house" inside the Insein prison compound on charges of breaching security laws.

Her lawyer said that she would protest her innocence.

Swine flu

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been treated since Wednesday told the New York Times.

His death brought the toll in the United States to six. While only a fraction of the 66 deaths in Mexico, the United States accounts for more than half of the overall caseload from a virus, which has been reported in 40 countries.

As the WHO began its annual assembly in Geneva, officials within the UN organisation said that 8,829 people have been infected with (A/H1N1).

The figure is rising rapidly, increasing the likelihood the organisation will raise its pandemic alert level to a maximum level six. It is already at level five, indicating that a pandemic is imminent.

The top level would indicate sustained community transmission in a second region outside the Americas.

WHO Director General Margaret Chan, who would have the power to declare a pandemic after consulting a panel of scientists, said there was pressure to move to the maximum alert level.

"We're all under pressure to make urgent and far-reaching decisions in an atmosphere of considerable scientific uncertainty," she said at a special debate on A(H1N1).

Chan said there was still a big need for information on the virus that first emerged in Mexico and the United States a month ago.

"We need to warn the public whenever necessary but reassure them whenever possible. This is a difficult balancing act."

Keiji Fukuda, acting assistant director general of the WHO, told AFP the organisation was "looking very carefully at the situation" in Japan.

The rapid rise in infections there has highlighted the difficulties facing authorities as they try to contain the spread of the virus.

Until Friday, Japan thought it had kept the virus at bay, after detecting four people who tested positive when they flew in from North America and immediately quarantining fellow passen-

gers. The majority of the scores of new cases are concentrated in Kobe and Osaka after two high schools from those areas met for a volleyball tournament, with some players and coaches feeling feverish after the games.

"Considering the situation, it is possible that the infections spread through volleyball games," said Toshizo Ido, the governor of Hyogo prefecture, which includes Kobe city.