

LIKE KUALA LUMPUR, BANGLADESH CAN BE BUILT ON GRADE 500 STEEL

BSRM **treme** the next generation steel

TRANSTEC 3

TRANSCOM DIGITAL

Your Trusted Electronics Retailer

BNP's 'media' plots under JS scanner

Parliamentary body to probe anomalies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday decided to investigate anomalies, if any, in allotment of 30 plots to a number of media firm owners, and BNP loyalists and leaders during the regime of the immediate past BNP government, on around 14 bighas of land in the capital.

The parliamentary standing committee on housing and public works ministry took the decision and asked the public works department to come up with a report in its next meeting detailing the allotments.

Disclosing the decision to journalists after a meeting of the committee in Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, its chief ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury said, "We want to see how the health ministry land, which had been earlier allocated for setting up a hospital, was allotted to a number of people."

He said the committee will also examine whether there was any irregularity in the process of allotting the plots.

The immediate past BNP-Jamaat alliance government allotted the plots at Tejgaon industrial area in the capital at a cheap rate of Tk 30 lakh a bigha between 2002 and 2006 while the market price was around Tk 50 lakh to Tk 1 crore a katha.

The allotments drew public attention as

most of the plots were allotted to media firms owned or backed by BNP leaders and loyalists. Since then, the area became popularly known as 'BNP Media Palli'.

According to a public works department report, which was placed before the parliamentary committee, the BNP government during its earlier tenure between 1991 and 1996 also allotted 45 plots to individuals while the last AL-led government made only eight such allotments between 1997 and 2000.

Talking to reporters the parliamentary committee chief said they also asked Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) to take necessary initiatives to stop illegal filling up of wetlands in and around the capital.

PLOT ALLOTTEES

People who got the plots are Shafiq Rehman, former editor of Jai Jai Din Publication Ltd (three bigha), M Enayetur Rahman, International Channel Ltd (owner of nTV) (one bigha), Md Hashmat Ali, managing director, Dainik Amar Desh, (one bigha and 15 katha), Aminul Islam, chairman, Brothers Garments Ltd (one bigha), Md Lutfur Rahman Badal, managing director, Dipor Ltd (19.82 katha), Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anne, BNP lawmaker, BU Chowdhury of Auto Flour Mills (five katha), Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, proprietor of

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



The smile on the face of this girl says it all -- her dreams for the future -- as jubilant students of Viqarunnisa Noon School in the city flash V-signs yesterday in celebration of their success in SSC examinations.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

10-TRUCK ARMS HAUL Another ex-NSI officer held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers yesterday arrested former National Security Intelligence (NSI) official Major Liakat Hossain in the capital in connection with the 10 truckloads of arms and ammunition in Chittagong.

Sources said the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is investigating the case, rounded up Liakat around 2:00pm. He is now under its custody.

The arrest was made as Liakat's involvement with the seized deadly weapons and ammunition came up in the statement of detained ex-NSI director Wing Commander (retd) Sahab Uddin who was earlier grilled by the investigators in the Taskforce for Interrogation (TFI) cell.

During the arms haul incident, Liakat was the deputy director (technical) of the NSI and he played vital roles in the planning of the arms deal, sources said.

Wishing anonymity a top security official said Liakat, who

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

TFI 'awe-struck'

Fails to get new info from Rahim; the ex-NSI boss sent back to Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators could not glean any new information from former NSI chief Brig Gen (retd) Abdur Rahim about the smuggling of 10 trucks of arms during his remand at taskforce for interrogation (TFI) cell in Dhaka.

TFI officials were rather busy making Rahim's stay at the cell comfortable, arranging television, refrigerator and air cooler for him, sources said.

Assistant Superintendent of Police of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Maniruzzaman, who is investigating the arms haul case, told The Daily Star that they were taking the former National Security Intelligence (NSI) boss to Chittagong yesterday at the end of the six-day interrogation period.

Rahim might be produced before the Chittagong court with a prayer for taking him for further interrogation in connection with the haul of 10 truckloads of arms and ammunition at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Company Ltd in the early hours of April 02, 2004.

Sources close to the TFI cell informed that junior officials

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Dakhil exams see 85pc pass rate

70pc in SSC (Vocational)

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pass rate in this year's Dakhil examinations under the Madrasa Education Board at 85.85 per cent is the highest among the ten education boards of the country.

The results of the SSC (vocational) exams under the Technical Education Board this year are also significantly better compared to the previous year.

The pass rate this year is 70.9 per cent, up from 62.88 per cent last year.

Also this year, female candidates have performed better than males only under the Technical Education Board.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

GPA-5 ACHIEVERS Viqarunnisa, Ideal, Monipur on top

DU CORRESPONDENT

Viqarunnisa Noon (VN) School, Ideal School and College and Monipur High School from Dhaka secured the top three positions amongst GPA-5 achieving institutions from around the country in the SSC examinations this year.

Viqarunnisa topped the list of highest GPA-5 achievers with 887 students achieving the feat followed by Ideal School and College with 745 students and, Monipur High School with 556 students.

Other toppers on this list from across the country include Motijheel Model High School with 450 students, Collegiate School, Chittagong with 346, Milestone College with 330, AK High School with 327, Rajuk Uttara Model School and College with 326, Uttara High School with 312, Motijheel Govt Boy's High School with 291, Dhaka Residential Model College with 268, Comilla Zilla School with 264, Dr Khastagir Govt Girls' High School, Chittagong with 229, Khulna Zilla School with 199, Cantonment Public School and College, Rangpur with 197, Cantonment Public School and College, Bogra with 174, Blue

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

2,726 schools achieve 100pc pass rate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of schools and madrasas with 100 per cent pass rate in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Dakhil examinations has increased by about 16 per cent while the number of institutions with zero per cent pass rate has declined.

A total of 2,726 institutions achieved 100 per cent pass rate in the SSC and SSC equivalent examinations this year while the number was 2,272 last year.

Of those, 107 institutions are from Dhaka, 22 from Rajshahi, 45 from Comilla, 33 from Jessore, 28 from Chittagong, 35 from Barisal, 39 from Sylhet and 34 from

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Home to form cell to check extortion using phone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry is going to form a cell comprised of ministry officials and policemen to expedite efforts in combating extortion through telephone calls.

The move came after a delegation of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) met Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday and informed her about unabated threats over telephone from criminals for money.

"We will open a cell which will work in collaboration with real estate businessmen to fight the menace," Sahara Khatun told reporters after the meeting at her ministry. "Terrorism, extortion and extremism have long been taking place in the country. We are committed to arresting the criminals and dismantling their groups."

She said police are already conducting drives all over the country to arrest those who are blackmailing people for money.

REHAB President Tanveerul Haque Probal said they are receiving calls for sums ranging from Tk 20 lakh

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

| Prayer Timing | | |
|---------------|-------|--------|
| May 27 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4-05 | 4-40 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 5-00 | 5-15 |
| Maghrib | 6-43 | 6-47 |
| Esha | 8-05 | 8-35 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

WB offers help for hydroelectricity, gas exploration

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) is satisfied with the spending of its funds in Bangladesh during the first five months of the present government and pledged increased assistance for rapid socio-economic development of the country.

Pulok Chatterji, WB's executive director for the South Asian Region, made the recognition when he called on Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina at the PM's office yesterday morning.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed newsmen after the meeting, where the prime minister and the multilateral donor agency's official discussed a wide range of issues, including the country's financial policy.

Hasina deplored that despite having all prospects, Bangladesh could not attain development at the desired pace as

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

FUEL BILL JS body chief crosses swords with counsel for Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former BNP senior joint secretary general Tarique Rahman's counsel Mahub Uddin Khokon yesterday demanded an unconditional apology from a parliamentary sub-committee chief Shajahan Khan, for alleging that Tarique had taken fuel allowance from the parliament for a vehicle he had used in a political tour.

In his reaction, Shajahan Khan, also an Awami League

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Humanitarian catastrophe feared in Pak war zone

70pc of Swat capital under troops' control

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistani security forces said yesterday they were closing in on Taliban bastions in the northwest as a rights group warned of a humanitarian catastrophe for those trapped in the war zone.

As a punishing offensive against the Islamist insurgents entered a fifth week, security officials said troops had secured 70 per cent of Mingora, the capital of the scenic Swat valley and a crucial tactical battleground.

"Some 70 per cent of the area in Mingora is under control of the army," said a senior military official, who asked not to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

"Security forces have strengthened their

positions in Mingora and search operations are being carried out in the areas which are under our control."

Taliban extremists bent on imposing a harsh brand of Islamic law had for the past weeks patrolled the streets armed with guns and rocket launchers, but a Mingora resident said now their bodies littered the roadside.

"Taliban were seen patrolling in my area until four days ago but now army troops are moving here in a big number," said Ahmadullah, who gave one name only and owns a pharmacy in Mingora's Malukabad neighbourhood.

"There has been intense firing in Mingora during the last few days. We still hear firing but

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Lawmakers' team to visit Tipaimukh

Says Faruk Khan

UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday said the prime minister will send a team of parliament members and experts to the Tipaimukh dam site in India for a firsthand view of the gigantic project involving a common river.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a regional seminar at Sonargaon Hotel in the city, he deplored that those who are talking much on the issue actually talk without knowing the fact.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

OnlinePoll ✓

Do you think the government should audit the parliament expenditure annually and make it public to tackle corruption such as paying fuel bill for Tarique Rahman?

Yes (95.98%)
 No (3.74%)
 No Comments (0.28%)

Total votes: 722

TODAY'S POLL

In view of the death toll in cyclone 'Aila', do you think government's cyclone preparedness is adequate?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

AA- CREDIT RATING OF EBL UPGRADED

| Rating | Long Term | Short Term |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| 2008 | AA- | ST-2 |
| 2007 | A+ | ST-3 |

CRISL upgrades the long term rating (entity rating) of Eastern Bank Limited to "AA-" from "A+" and short term rating to "ST-2" from "ST-3" based on 2008 performance.

Banks rated in this category (AA-) are adjudged to be of high quality, offer higher safety and have high credit quality. This level of rating indicates a corporate entity with a sound credit profile and without significant problems. Risks are modest and may vary slightly from time to time because of economic conditions.

The short term rating "ST-2" indicates high certainty of timely payment. Liquidity factors are strong and supported by good fundamental protection factors. Risk factors are very small.

EBL thanks its valued stakeholders for making it happen.

Eastern Bank Ltd.

Eastern Bank Ltd. Simple. Much.