Import of 2.5 lakh tonnes of wheat okayed

UNB, Dhaka

The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday approved eight proposals including import of 2,50,000 tonnes of wheat and construction of a 10storey NSI building in the capital. A meeting of the committee with

Finance Minister AMA Muhith in the chair gave its nod to the proposals placed by different ministries. According to a proposal of the

food ministry, the Directorate of Food will import 1,00,000 tonnes of wheat under two separate tenders. Under one tender, Glenco BV will

supply 50,000 tonnes of wheat at a cost of Tk 96.57 crore as each tonne will cost \$ 240. The same Dutch company will

supply another 50,000 tonnes of wheat at a cost of \$261.25 per tonne under the other tender. The consignment will cost Tk 103.19 crore. As per other proposal of the ministry, the Directorate of Food will

import 1,50,000 tonnes of wheat

directly from Ukraine under a government-to-government contract. The meeting also approved a cost extension proposal of the railways ministry to raise the contract value of Tongi-Bhairab Bazar section double

line track construction project. With this approval, the contract value of the project has been increased by 33 percent or Tk 439.42 crore. The original cost of the project was Tk 1,405 crore.

3 'robbers'

FROM PAGE 16 Hearing the news, locals came to the spot and surrounded the house. Seeing this, the gang opened fire, leaving a youth injured, said Anwarul Arif, a former member of Paindong Union Parishad.

Locals chased the robbers and caught them. They then beat the trio to death on the spot, said Mofiz Uddin, officer-in-charge of Fatickchhari Police Station.

On information, police recovered the bodies. They also got two guns on the spot.

Court summons

manufacturing company Hindalco, its chairman and leading Indian industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla, and former Indian Coal Secretary P C Parakh among the six accused.

The court yesterday rejected Central Bureau of Investigation's finding in its final report that there was no prosecutable evidence against anyone, and asked all to appear before it on April 8.

Manmohan, who was prime minister for 10 years until his Congress party lost power in May last year, was reportedly questioned by CBI in January in connection with the allocation of a coal field in a coal block in eastern Indian state of Odisha to Hindalco.

At the time, Manmohan had held the charge of the Coal Ministry. Hindalco, which is part of the \$40 billion Aditya Birla Group, had first been refused the coal field it sought but the decision was later overturned.

The company has denied any wrongdoing and the former prime minister in a statement in 2013 had defended the action.

The court had in December last year asked for Manmohan to be examined after Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) suggested it would like to drop the case against Hindalco.

Meanwhile, Manmohan Singh said, "I am upset" but expressed confidence that he would prove his innocence in a fair trial.

"Of course, I am upset but this is part of life," he told reporters here when asked for his reaction on the court order.

"I have always said I am open for legal scrutiny... I am sure the truth will prevail and I will get a chance to put forward my case with all the facts,"

Manmohan said. He said he respected the judicial process in the country and "I hope in a fair trial I will prove my innocence."

Asked whether he would contest the case, he said he would discuss the issue with his legal team.

Manmohan Singh's party, Congress, charged ruling BJP with making cheap political capital out of the summons to him to divert people's attention from the "black law" on land acquisition.

"Manmohan Singh's integrity, fairness, impartiality and adherence to transparency is unquestionable", the party's Communication department in-charge Randip Surjewala told

reporters. Downplaying the special court's order summoning the former PM as an accused, he said, "It is part of the ongoing judicial process. Manmohan Singh has always stood for transparency... On examination of full facts, it

will unequivocally (uphold) the fairness, transparency and integrity". The Supreme Court had last year scrapped nearly 214 coal blocks allocated by successive governments over the past two decades.

Ministers irked by poor

FROM PAGE 1 employment ministry decided this.

Ministers and high officials at the meeting were unhappy with the performance of project officials, the Department of Immigration and the IRIS. One minister even said that the government and Bangladeshi expatriates were being held hostage by the IRIS.

Officials of the IRIS have been asked to appear at the next meeting on March 19 to explain as to why they failed to do their job despite repeated warnings over the last one year, meeting sources said. Expatriates' Welfare Minister

Khandker Mosharraf Hossain came down heavily on the company and also the officials of the MRP project for making uncertain the fate of several million expatriates. He expressed doubt whether 37

lakh expatriates, who are still carrying the old hand-written passports, would get the new MRPs before the November 24 deadline set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

After the deadline, foreign countries may not accept the old passport and a large number of the expatriates may be sent back home, hitting hard remittance which is a lifeline of the country's economy. According to a report placed by a

senior official of expatriates welfare ministry, the situation in the three major labour receiving countries --Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Malaysia -was of particular concern.

"About 35 lakh expatriates are living in the three countries but only 10 lakh of them have MRPs. And it was because of the failure of the IRIS," said the official.

If the MRP issuance was not expedited, he feared that most of the expatriates would not get the new passport, which would put Bangladesh in a debacle.

In the meeting, Minister Mosharraf wanted a number of explanations from Project Director Brig Gen Masud Rezwan but he could not explain everything, sources present at the meeting claimed.

Some of his explanations, including

that of IRIS's obstruction to integrating new passport offices with the mainframe, were not acceptable and the meeting decided to involve Buet experts to know the facts, said officials at the meeting.

He said the government was going to purchase necessary equipment and involve sufficient manpower to speed up MRP issuance through Bangladesh missions, especially in Saudi, the UAE and Malaysia.

The project director had opposed the idea in the meeting.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad, secretaries of foreign and home and other senior officials of ministries concerned were present.

The ministers and officials were surprised to see no IRIS representative at the meeting. Pointing to a retired major in the

meeting, the project director had said the retired major was representing the IRIS. But the state minister for home said he never saw the major in any past meetings. He asked as to why IRIS had no representative in the meeting, another official present in the meeting said. "Do you understand how we are held hostage to the IRIS? One crore

will be a debacle," Minister Mosharraf was quoted as saying to the project director in the meeting. A number of officials raised the issue of non-cooperation of the IRIS

expatriates will be held hostage and it

for which MRP issuance by the missions were being hampered. The project director said IRIS would

provide software and authorisation. However, IRIS had been refusing to

give that for more than a year.

Minister Mosharraf asked the project director to tell IRIS to provide the software right now. "We don't have time to waste," sources quoted him as

saying. After the meeting, Mosharraf told reporters that the government would do everything to ensure the MRPs for expatriates before the deadline.

Hartal on with stray

FROM PAGE 16

FROM PAGE 1

Commission.

across the country.

order," she observed.

court order.

happen."

In Feni, a gang of suspected hartal supporters hurled two crude bombs and set alight four auto-rickshaws and a human haulier on Mizan road in the town around 7:30am.

In Narsinghdi, two people suffered burn injuries as alleged pickets hurled a petrol bomb at a truck at Chaitab Panchdona on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Sadar upazila Tuesday.

Trucker Sohrab Mia and jhoot trader Al Imran were admitted to a local hospital. Sohrab suffered burns to 18 percent of his body while Imran received 10 percent, Putul Roy, Narsingdi Civil Surgeon, said. The truck came under attack when it

was heading to Dhaka after loading jhoot (garment waste) from Chowala charge of Narsingdi Sadar Model Police Station.

PM added, "Whatever people want will

A Dhaka court on February 25

issued warrants of arrest against

Khaleda in the Zia Orphanage Trust

and the Zia Charitable Trust graft cases

filed by the Anti-Corruption

On March 1, another court issued a

warrant allowing police to search

Khaleda's Gulshan office for commu-

nication devices allegedly being used

for carrying out subversive activities

the laws of the land and had created a

bad precedence by disobeying the

surrender before the court when an

arrest warrant is issued against them.

According to established norms and

rules around the globe, responsible

citizens will comply with the court

She said the law would take its own

course and none was above the law.

"The orders have come from the courts

and the government and the law-

enforcement agencies will act accord-

Hasina said Khaleda did not obey

"It is the duty of every citizen to

Wait for warrant

leaders and activists, including district BNP president Khairul Kabir Khokon, in this connection. A person was also arrested.

incidents of crude bomb explosion in the capital yesterday, sources at the DMCH said.

MARIAM DIES

The seven-year-old girl, who had been fighting for her life for the last 36 days, died at the DMCH around 6:30pm yesterday.

DMCH from a Gazipur hospital on February 4 with 45 percent burns. Four other arson victims of the same incident were also shifted to the hospital

Rupa received free treatment as an area of the town around 9:45pm on arson victim at the DMCH. Prime Tuesday, said Abul Kashem, officer-in- Minister Sheikh Hasina also donated Tk 10 lakh for her treatment.

A case was filed against 19 BNP concerned contributed to the report]

ingly," she noted.

she said.

a failed state."

with her now.

militants in the country.

Funerals

FROM PAGE 16

the dogs in 2006, and stopped repairing them in July 2014.

Some businesses have been set up to repair the dogs, and are keeping them alive. But with a shortage of spare parts, some of the dogs are dying entirely and so are holding funerals to say goodbye to them.

Mourners recently held a funeral for 19 of the dogs, at an altar at the Kofuku-ji temple in China prefecture.

The Aibos were taken to A-Fun, a repair company, in the hope of saving them -- but the company had to lead a funeral for those that could not be revived. The funerals are important for

the dogs' owners, who can develop deep attachments to the dogs. "I can't imagine how quiet our living

room would have been if Ai-chan wasn't here," Sumie Maekawa, an Aibo owner, told The Wall Street Journal.

The name Aibo stands for artificially intelligent robot.

Salahuddin

FROM PAGE 16

[Tuesday]," Salahuddin's wife Hasina Ahmed told The Daily Star.

Quoting the owner of the house, she said law enforcers on six vehicles went to the house on Road 13/B of Sector-3 in Uttara around 9:40pm. Showing identity cards of the Detective Branch (DB) of police, they asked the security guard of the building to open the main door to it.

But as the guard refused to oblige, law enforcers kicked the gate repeatedly. At one stage, the guard opened the door and allowed the law enforcers in. The lawmen then turned off the power in the building, she added.

"Sensing something wrong, he [Salahuddin] phoned me around 10:08pm and tried to tell me something, but someone on the other side hung up. Since then, he has been out of contact," said Hasina, also a former lawmaker.

The law enforcers tied his hands, blindfolded him and took him away from the house.

Meanwhile, the BNP in a press release yesterday alleged that a team of 20/30 members of police, DB and Rapid Action Battalion picked up the joint secretary general of the party along with his two staff, including a woman, on Tuesday night.

Salahuddin had been discharging the duties of the party spokesperson since the arrest of Rizvi Ahmed, another joint secretary general of BNP, on January 31, added the release. Law enforcers, however, have

denied picking up Salahuddin. Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they had no information in this regard.

Police did not receive General Diary that Salauddin's wife wanted to file with Uttara [West] Police Station last night.

"She [Salauddin's wife] told me that she wanted to file a GD as her husband was missing. I requested her to talk to the OC. She did not come later," SI Ashiqur Rahman, duty officer of the police station, said.

Bonya won't

FROM PAGE 1

started walking out of the book fair, the boi mela, and I don't exactly remember what time. It has to be around 8:30 or little after that," she said.

Bonya said Avijit and she were talking about going home and having dinner while coming out of the book

"We were supposed to go back home and have dinner ... I think I was holding his hand and we were just talking...

"I do not remember anything from that point until I was in some sort of vehicle and someone was carrying me and I remember I was soaked in blood. Most probably, I am not sure, most probably, Avijit's head was on my lap. I was telling someone 'where are you taking me, taking us'. That's all remember," Bonya said, adding that she had lost consciousness many times in Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

She said she first realised about the attack when she was at the DMCH.

"The first time I realised that I don't have a thumb and I have quite a few stabs on my head and I was soaked in blood that Avijit was still alive, lying on a stretcher beside me," she said.

"Doctors were going back and forth and I was telling them 'please take care of him because my condition is better

an incident could happen in a crowded place like TSC on Dhaka University campus with so much security around.

in such an organised way, in such a public place, maybe it's time for us to re-evaluate what kind of situation we are dealing with," she said. Meanwhile, detectives in

Bangladesh yesterday handed over the evidence related to the murder of Avijit to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for DNA test. DB Inspector Fazlur Rahman, also

the investigation officer of the case,

handed over 12 to 13 pieces of evidence, including two machetes used in the killing, to the FBI team that came to Dhaka last week to help the investiga-"The evidence will be examined at the FBI laboratory [in the US]. Once we get the results, we will try to match

sioner of the DB, told reporters at his He said Shafiur Rahman Farabi, the prime suspect of Avijit murder, gave names of some people with whom

killers," Monirul Islam, joint commis-

'Arsonist' dies

FROM PAGE 16

dent of police (Circle) in Laxmipur, said Arif was a Shibir activist.

He claimed a group of BNP and Jamaat-Shibir men hurled petrol bombs at vehicles in Kamalnagar area

prompting law enforcers to retaliate by firing back, he added. The ASP said police caught Arif with bullet injuries.

from near his home before he was shot. sister Shahnaj Begum said he was just a

his family in Laxmipur once in two or three months.

"Police held him after some unknown people set a vehicle on fire on the road," she said.

along with my mother and two sisters rushed to the [Kamalnagar] police station and saw some police men were beating my brother," she alleged.

to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital where he told them that he was blindfolded and taken to a field with hands and legs tied with a rope, she added. "When a policeman aimed a gun at

him, another told him [the law

enforcer not to kill him [Arif], but to

Shahnaj claimed they came to know in the city around 1:30am. He is also being treated at RMCH.

> AC Iftekhar claimed police recovered the bullet-hit body of another man in Bhadra-Jamalpur area after they went there on information.

Locals identified the deceased as Ripan, 25, of Shyampur area in Rajshahi. He had bullet wounds in his chest and was assumed to have died on the spot he was found.

beat up the PCJSS supporters with sticks.

Police said they detained one Morshed Alam, 24, in

ets blocked the road in the town's traffic intersection area in the morning. Public transport stayed off the roads and most of the shops kept their shutters down during the hartal hours yesterday.

Mondir area on Bandarban-Rangamati road near Bandarban town around 10:30am, disrupting traffic on the road for about an hour. Abidur Rahman, a leader of Jago Parbatyabashi and joint

convener of Bandarban district Jubo Dal, said they enforced the hartal as it has become difficult for local traders to operate businesses due to "extortion by PCJSS men".

influential Awami League and BNP leaders under the banner of Jago Parbatyabashi want to disrupt peace in Bandarban by enforcing hartals, he complained. Jago Parbatyabashi on February 25 had formed a human

alleged extortion by PCJSS men in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Activists of both the AL and BNP joined the programme. Contacted, Devdas Bhattacharya, superintendent of

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He was no spy

FROM PAGE 16

members didn't recognize him when they talked to him on Skype. The man they knew as a kind and funny brother and son who was once a volunteer firefighter had grown a long beard and was carrying a rifle.

His father tried to help him get home, sending him money and even enlisting the Red Cross. But his son never made it back to Israel. About a month ago, Said Musallam said, he was told his son was taken

by ISIS when he was on his way back and trying to cross the border.

A video posted Tuesday on ISISaffiliated social media accounts shows a man who appears to be Musallam on his knees, wearing an orange jumpsuit. An adult ISIS fighter and a child-

- both in fatigues -- stand behind him.

The adult, speaking French, gives a command to the child to go forward with the killing. The child steps in front of the man and raises

Meanwhile, five people, including two cops, were injured in four separate

Mariam Akter Rupa was taken to the

[Our correspondents from the districts

Hasina, also president of ruling

Awami League, said the political office

of Khaleda should be searched

urgently. "This is a mystery why she is

staying at her office leaving her home,"

The premier reiterated her firm

commitment to bring all the culprits

responsible for killing people through

arson attacks during the BNP-Jamaat's

leader", the PM said, "It seems she

[Khaleda] wants to establish a militant

rule in the country. That is why she is

burning people and destroying their

properties in a bid to make Bangladesh

She said there would be no room for

Hasina said people of the country

had rejected BNP-Jamaat's "burning

and killing people through petrol

bombs" and for this leaders and activ-

ists of Khaleda's own party were not

Bangladesh globally by doing such

subversive activities, Hasina alleged.

Khaleda had tarnished the image of

Terming Khaleda a "militant

ongoing hartals and blockade.

Bandarban tense FROM PAGE 16

Our Bandarban correspondent reports: Pro-hartal pick-

Criminals removed two spans of a Bailey bridge in Sonar

KS Mong Marma, a central PCJSS leader, claimed that the allegation of extortion against their men was baseless. A few

chain in front of the Bandarban Press Club to protest

police in the district, said necessary steps have been taken to avoid any untoward incident in Bandarban.

were patrolling the major roads in the town at night, he added.

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... take care of him first.'" Bonya said she did not think such

"If they [killers] can act so quickly,

those with those of the suspects, and eventually it will help identify the

Farabi discussed the murder plan.

One of the two shot in Rajshahi was

identified as Sabuj. He was undergoing

treatment at Rajshahi Medical College

another, was shot in Bhadra-Jamalpur

He claimed that he, along with

shoot him in the leg. He then shot three to four bullets on Arif's right leg,"

Junayed Kawsar, assistant superinten-

around 1:00am on March 2. They also opened fire on police,

However, Arif's family members said the youth was neither involved in politics nor resorted to any violence. They claimed police had picked up the youth Rejecting the police claim, Arif's

carpenter in Feni town and used to visit

She told The Daily Star that Arif was "picked up" by police when he was returning home from a nearby local market. He had come to Laxmipur on February 27 to visit his sick grandfather.

"As we heard the news of his arrest, I

about the police shooting on his brother later on March 2. After the incident, Arif was admitted

area around 4:45am yesterday after being detained by police. Assistant commissioner (AC) of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Iftekhar

Shahnaj added.

RAJSHAHI INCIDENT

and Hospital (RMCH).

detained them. He said Sabuj, 25, of Mirzapur area, was a notorious Shibir cadre and an accused in 15 cases. According to the police official,

Alam, however, denied that police had

Sabuj was with police while the law enforcers were raiding Mirzapur area to retrieve arms. His cohorts threw cocktails at the

Sabuj was shot in his left leg while

trying to flee from police custody.

police, forcing them to open fire in retaliation, said Iftekhar. The other injured, also shot in the leg, was identified as Ashif Islam Shuvan, a known "mugger".

The police official said Shuvan was shot when law enforcers opened fire after his accomplices blasted a crude bomb during a police raid in Hetomkhan area

Balaghata in connection with the incident.

Members of the army and Border Guard Bangladesh

Ahmad Musallam said he'd seen the video of his brother and was devastated by his death.

what appears to be a 9 mm semiau-

tomatic handgun and shoots

Musallam in the forehead. The

man immediately falls forward to

the ground. The child appears to

then fire at least two more shots

into the body.

"I used to take care of him and babysit him when Mom went to work," he said, crying. "Mohamed is not a brother. He is a son."