

**Bush waives Pak export restrictions**

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush on Wednesday waived restrictions on exports to Pakistan, saying it would ease the democratic transition in the South Asian nation and help combat terrorism.

In a memo to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Bush said he was easing prohibitions under the Appropriations Act, which targets countries where a democratically elected government has been overturned by a coup, according to a White House statement.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf grabbed power in a bloodless coup in October 1999, named himself president in June 2001 and was elected to a five-year term in a controversial election in April 2002.

Bush said the waiver would "facilitate the transition to democratic rule in Pakistan" and is "important to United States efforts to respond to, deter or prevent acts of international terrorism," according to the statement.

"Accordingly, I hereby waive, SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

**RURAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME**

**42,000 women unpaid for 6 long months**

MAHBUB-E-WADUZZAMAN, back from Mymensingh

About 42,000 women working under the Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) in 4,150 unions across the country are living in destitution, as the Local Government Division has not released the funds for their salaries of the last six months.

The RMP was undertaken in 1983 with the goal to contribute to long-term sustainable socio-economic development of rural Bangladesh.

Although the programme, jointly funded by the Government of Bangladesh, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the European Commission (EC), had been designed in line with the 'food-for-work' concept, within a few years it was redesigned to provide employment to approximately 42,000 rural

disadvantaged women, and to maintain 65,000 kilometres of rural earthen roads. The government provides 55 percent of the fund for the programme, which is scheduled to end in June 2006.

It was expected that after the completion of the programme these women would be adequately skilled to lead their lives towards a sustainable and secured future.

Under the programme, there are road maintenance associations (RMA) with 10 members in each union. These associations are basically self-managed teams. Each RMA member is recruited for a four-year cycle to experience two major components of the RMP, road maintenance component (RMC) and income diversification component (IDC).

CARE Bangladesh also plays a role in maintaining quality of the roads and provides technical support and training to the RMA women

so that they can learn different income generating activities. It is mandatory for every road maintenance crew to save Tk 14 out of her daily wage of Tk 55.

However, due to the suspension of salary payments for six months these women workers have been thrown back to their previous situations. They have been incurring huge burdens of loans following the suspension.

During a recent visit to Mymensingh, The Daily Star talked to some of the RMA women in the district.

Halima, 33, a road maintenance worker of Satroschia village under Muktagachha upazila, whose eight-year old daughter Shilpi died of diarrhoea within 42 hours without having proper treatment,

expressed grave sorrow and said, "I begged for money from everybody, the neighbours, the union chair SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

**Hasina vows to rein in prices if voted to power**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said if her party is voted to power again, they would bring down the prices of essentials, fertiliser, seeds and fuel within the reach of the common people.

"If we come to power again, we will take all steps to control prices so that people of all income groups could afford to buy essentials and farmers could buy fuel, fertiliser and seeds at lower prices. We will also ensure that all the unemployed get jobs," she said.

Hasina, also leader of the opposition in parliament, was speaking on the occasion of Jatiya Party vice chairman Abdul Wahab Sarker and two others' joining the AL at its Dhanmondi office in the capital.

The two others are former director general of narcotics directorate Bazlul Hasan Chandan and former superintendent of jail Jahangir Alam.

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**33 killed in religious violence in Pakistan**

**5 more die in Afghanistan**

REUTERS, Kohat

A suspected suicide bombing and gunfire killed at least 29 minority Shia Muslims in northwestern Pakistan yesterday and gunmen killed at least four more people in an attack on a bus, officials said.

The bombing targeted a procession in the town of Hangu in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) to mark Ashura, the holiest day for Shias. Officials reported several blasts.

Abdul Rashid, medical superintendent at the Hangu hospital, said 29 people had been confirmed dead there.

"We have 29 confirmed dead bodies," he told Reuters. "Some of them have bullet wounds. All of them are Shias."

A leader of the Shia procession, Maulana Khurshid Anwar, said a bomb exploded near a stage where he was about to address Shia mourners.

Enraged Shias set shops and a bank on fire and fired shots into the air in the town 200 km west of Islamabad.

Superintendent Mohammad Ayub, of the Hangu police, said four people died in a shootout during a curfew imposed after the bombing - one policeman, a soldier, and two civilians.

In another incident, unidentified gunmen opened fire on a bus outside the town, killing four passengers, including a woman, and injuring two, said a paramilitary commander, Aziz Rehman.

NWFP police chief Riffat Pasha said the bombing was a suicide attack and troops were sent to help restore order. Security forces put up barricades on roads leading to Hangu.

"We have sent armoured personnel carriers there, and the Frontier Constabulary is also there," Pasha told Reuters. "The situation is pretty much under

control." Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao said there had been three blasts and it could have been a suicide attack or caused by time bombs.

Pakistan has suffered Islamist sectarian violence for years, most of it directed by majority Sunni Muslims against Shias.

Hangu Mayor Ghani-ur-Rehman said he did not believe this traditional rivalry was responsible. "I think it is not a Shia-Sunni affair - it is terrorism," he said, adding that there were also Sunnis in the procession, including himself.

"I don't believe Sunnis of Hangu would attack the Shias."

Thousands have died in violence between Sunnis and Shias since the 1980s.

But analysts say that in recent years attacks by Sunni groups linked to al-Qaeda have appeared to have had a broader aim of desta SEE PAGE 19 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

Panicked Ahmadiyyas in Dhanikhola of Trishal in Mymensingh attend a meeting under police guard yesterday fearing their mosque will be taken over by anti-Ahmadiyya zealots.

**RU PROF MURDER 'Mastermind' Shibir leader flees as cops delay action**

ANWAR ALI and ABU KALAM, Rajshahi

Rajshahi University Islami Chhatra Shibir President Shalehi, one of the two suspected masterminds of Prof S Taher Ahmed murder, has managed to go into hiding as police delayed taking action against him apparently due to ruling alliance pressure.

Meantime, Shibir yesterday staged a huge showdown on the campus and threatened to stall all activities and teach journalists "a proper lesson" if Shalehi was

"disturbed".

Sources said top ruling alliance leaders in Rajshahi including a lawmaker asked police to stop implicating a teacher and a Shibir leader in the killing.

The leaders also asked police high-ups not to harass anyone that may tarnish the image of the ruling alliance, the sources added.

All three suspected killers -- Jahangir, his brother Abdus Salam and their relative Nazmul -- in their confessional statements named Shalehi and Prof Taher's colleague SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

**Ahmadiyyas live on their nerves**

Trishal bigots to capture mosque today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Members of Ahmadiyya community and other residents of Dhanikhola village in Trishal are passing their days in panic as the Anti-Ahmadiyya zealots have announced programme for capturing their mosque after the Jum'a prayers today.

To prevent any untoward incident, some 500 members of law enforcement agencies, including Armed Police, Rapid Action Battalion and Bangladesh Rifles will be deployed in the area, police said.

Several rights organisations and the civil society have vowed to stop SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

**EC ignores law on demarcation of constituencies**

Last delimitation took place 11 years ago

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) has been in violation of delimitation laws for not taking any steps to demarcate the parliamentary constituencies since the last population census held before the eighth parliamentary election in 2001.

According to Delimitation of Constituencies Ordinance, 1976, delimitation of territorial constituencies is to be done on completion of each census to have a balance between the electoral districts in regard to the number of voters. It has to be done for the purpose of the general election following the latest survey of population.

"The Election Commission has not held a single meeting to discuss

delimitation of the constituencies," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the EC should immediately take a decision in this regard after reviewing the relevant laws. "We can still discuss the issue if the chief election commissioner convenes a meeting," he observed.

The EC delimited the constituencies and published a list of those on May 30, 1995. But the commission now seems unlikely to initiate the delimitation process before the ninth general election scheduled for early 2007, said sources.

According to the existing voter list, each of 67 constituencies has SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

**Iran dismisses US threat over nukes**

China welcomes Tehran's talks with Russia

AFP, REUTERS, Jakarta/Beijing

Iran dismissed as "tough words" the United States' refusal to rule out using military force against the Islamic republic over its controversial nuclear programme.

"We are not afraid of attacks by the United States or by other countries on Iran's nuclear installations because we have nothing to hide, we have no installations to produce nuclear weapons," Iranian Vice President Esfandiyar Rahim Mashae said here after meeting with his Indonesian counterpart.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said this week Washington would not rule out using military force against Iran to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Washington accuses Iran of trying to build a nuclear weapon under the cover of a civilian atomic energy programme -- a charge vehemently denied by Tehran.

Mashae reiterated Thursday that Tehran only possessed "nuclear technology" and did not own nuclear weapons.

"Therefore, what can they attack in Iran? What we have are not SEE PAGE 19 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

A woman scavenges through a pile of used test tubes and syringes dumped by pathological laboratories in the Kalabagan Children's Park in the city.

**Bird flu spreads fast in Africa**

AFP, Kaduna, Nigeria

A disease similar to the lethal H5N1 bird flu is "spreading like wildfire" in northern Nigeria, farmers said yesterday, a day after the country reported Africa's first case of the virus that has killed more than 80 people in Asia.

Nigeria announced Wednesday that the H5N1 strain of avian influenza SEE PAGE 19 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

A boy in knee-deep mud plays with a turtle on the Sitakunda beach yesterday.

**Hanif still in critical condition**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The condition of city Awami League (AL) President Mohammad Hanif, kept on artificial life-support system at Birdem Hospital following a massive heart attack on Wednesday, remained unchanged till last night.

He is still not out of danger, doctors said at about 9:00pm.

Hanif's family members want to take him to Singapore for treatment but doctors at the hospital said he could not be shifted from the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) now. Some doctors from Singapore might come to Dhaka today to see Hanif, sources said.

AL President Sheikh Hasina arranged a special 'munajaat' at her Dhanmondi office yesterday SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

Prayer Timing		
February 10		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-25	6-00
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-57	6-01
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation