

# The Daily Star

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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Minibus strike on Dhaka-Gazipur route**

The owners of minibuses on Gazipur-Dhaka routes Thursday began an indefinite strike after rowdy transport workers had damaged several vehicles. They withdrew at around 11 am their vehicles from the road and decided to continue the strike until a remedy is found, reports UNB.

**Thailand joins IJO**

Thailand has joined the new International Jute Agreement 1989, raising the number of 130 member-countries under the accord to 26. With Thailand, the number of jute exporting members of the International Jute Organisation now stood at four — three others are Bangladesh, China and India. The rest 22 members are jute importers, reports UNB.

**Jamaat 'demand day' April 11**

Jamaat-e-Islami Thursday called for observing 'demand day' throughout the country on April 11 to press for release of its detained leader Prof Golam Azam. In a statement, Acting Ameer of Jamaat Abbas Ali Khan condemned the arrest of his party chief and announced the programme of demand day aimed at building a mass movement for Prof Azam's release, reports UNB.

**Landslides kill 40 in Pakistan**

ISLAMABAD, Apr 2: Landslides and avalanches caused by heavy rains have killed at least 40 people and injured scores more in Northern Pakistan, government officials said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

**SUPPLEMENT**

Today's issue of The Daily Star carries a two-page supplement on Eid-ul-Fitr. The normal Weekend Magazine will appear with the paper tomorrow (Saturday).  
— Management

**Sheri, Iftar timings**

Ramazan April Sehri Iftar  
28 3 6.21 pm  
29 4 4.27 am 6.22 pm

## UN envoy pledges hard work for Rohingyas' return

By Staff Correspondent

United Nations special envoy Jan K Eliasson left Dhaka for Myanmar (Burma) on Thursday, saying he will work hard for the return of the Rohingyas Muslims who have taken refuge in Bangladesh.

"I know it's not an easy problem. But I will work hard to find out a lasting solution and hope I'll be able to make progress," said Eliasson, the Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator of the UN Secretary General.

Eliasson, who held talks with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman during his three-day visit, hopes to persuade Burma's military government to take back the refugees living in 12 squalid camps in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts.

"I hope Myanmar will understand the need to create conditions for safe and voluntary return of the refugees," he



Jan K. Eliasson at the press conference. — Star photo

told a news conference before departure for Yangon, the Myanmar capital.

A time-frame for the solution is not possible, he said, adding "but I can assure you I will work hard."

More than 1,90,000 Rohingyas Muslims have poured into Bangladesh during the last one year from Myanmar's western province of Arakan, once an independent Muslim homeland.

The refugees say they escaped a persecution by Myanmar soldiers, who are allegedly conscripting young men for forced labour, raping women and evicting them from their land.

Myanmar denies the persecution charges but refuses to take back the refugees, saying they are illegal immigrants, a

## 'Like a bird in a trap'

BANGKOK, Apr 2: Tales of Myanmar Muslims being murdered and of mothers and daughters being raped by Myanmar soldiers have been detailed in a letter secretly smuggled out of Myanmar to Thailand, reports AFP.

The letter was slipped to a diplomat by a Muslim villager during a fact-finding trip of Yangon-based envoys last week to the Arakan region where nearly 200,000 Muslims are reported to have fled over the nearby border to Bangladesh to escape persecution.

The letter, seen here by AFP today, told of Myanmar soldiers forcing villagers to work as porters and killing those who disobeyed, of villages being burnt down, and of mothers and daughter being raped.

"We Muslims are like a bird in a trap," said the writer.

"Muslims were treated as animals by the soldiers," he added.

Western diplomats who have seen the letter are convinced the allegation are true.

"This letter simply supports reports from the diplomats who visited the Arakan region. It is further evidence that a concentrated campaign of dis-

## No cut in ADP this year

by Mahfuz Ullah

For the first time in many years the allocation for the Annual Development Plan (ADP) will not be curtailed, this year.

Independent observers viewed enforcement of financial discipline, cut in wasteful expenditures and rationalisation of priorities have contributed to this phenomenal development after a long period of economic mismanagement.

The Ministry of Finance is now busy revising the sectoral allocations under ADP to meet the shortages and made transfers but has not found any reason or scope to reduce the total allocation of Taka 7,500 crore for the ADP.

Ministry sources said till February this year the revenue (tax) collection was 'more than satisfactory' and 'useful spending of foreign currency was brought to a halt.'

Adequate collection of internal revenue is a major reason for which money from the ADP allocation was not drawn back for other purposes, sources said.

During the past regime curtailing the ADP was a regular phenomenon. There was a time when the size of the ADP fund came down from 12 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to a mere five per cent.

Unusual increase in revenue expenditures was the reason for fall in the size.

Talking to The Daily Star, Professor Abdullah Farook, a leading economist and former Member of the Planning Commission, said in the past the size of the ADP fund was unrealistic.

Confirming the improvement in financial discipline Prof Farook, who is also the Chairman of the Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS), said the attitude of the tax payers has undergone a positive change since the present government has come to power.

"In the past people used to grumble about paying taxes but now they feel there is no point in avoiding taxes," Prof Farook observed.

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## Jumaat-ul-Bida today

By Staff Correspondent  
Muslims all over the country observe Jumaat-ul-Bida (the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan) today.

Large number of devotees will attend the Juma prayers in mosques where special 'munajat' will be offered for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

## Police ring JN Hall; 4 held for arms trade

Police arrested four youths, suspected of involvement in arms trade, from different parts of the city Thursday, reports UNB.

Acting on a secret information, a special squad of detective branch ringed Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University Wednesday night to arrest nine youths who reportedly went there to collect arms, a police source said.

The youths, sensing the presence of police, rushed out of the hall premises in two groups.

Police, however, continued their efforts to track the

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EID RUSH: Despite warning people cramming available transports for going home to celebrate Eid. Picture shows homebound people on board launches at Sadarghat in the city. — Star photo

## Trial body plans rally outside Sangsad

By Asiuzzaman

The Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee (or trial committee) would demonstrate in front of Parliament on April 12 to press home the demand of execution of people's court verdict on Golam Azam.

The people's court on March 26 passed a verdict that Golam Azam is punishable to death for crimes he committed during the nine-month Liberation War.

The parliament resumes its session on April 12.

The decision to stage demonstration has been finalised at a meeting of the committee at Taher Auditorium on Thursday, a reliable committee source said.

The committee would also submit memoranda to the Speaker as well as the Members of Parliament.

UNB adds: Meanwhile, the 100 opposition MPs who had supported the open trial of Golam Azam are learnt to be

actively considering tabling in the coming session a bill on the basis of the international law on war prisoners and the Collaborators Act 1973.

The Coordination Committee for Implementation of the Spirit of Liberation War and Elimination of the Killers-Collaborators of 1971 is also preparing to hold rallies at four divisional and important district headquarters and a grand rally in Dhaka after Eid to drum up support to their move.

It continued meetings with different political parties which decided to maintain their unity until completion of trial of the anti-liberation elements, initiated with the trial of Golam Azam.

Political leaders attending the meetings agreed to extend support and cooperation to the coordination committee, but would not come to the forefront of the movement, sources said.

## Identify and defy Jamaatis in administration, asks Nirmul body

The committee campaigning against anti-liberation forces Thursday termed Jamaat-e-Islami "branded enemy of the nation and religion" and appealed to the people to boycott them socially, says UNB.

The Ekatturer Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee in its appeal also urged the people to identify the "Jamaatis" in the administration and "defy their orders".

"Condemn them (Jamaatis), hate them and boycott them," said Col (Rtd) Kazi Nuruzzaman at a press conference at the Nirmul Committee office this afternoon.

Nuruzzaman, in a statement on behalf of the Nirmul Committee, said pro-Jamaat Imams, including the Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, were demanding release of Golam Azam during khutba at different mosques.

"Protest, whenever you will see Imams or Khatibs campaigning Jamaat politics and maintain the sanctity of

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## KAFCO may hit another snag

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Although the KAFCO is optimistic about a 'rapid resumption' of construction work after the issuance of the Letter of Guarantee (LG) for the entire amount of export credit by the Government it seems that another impasse is in the offing.

A press release issued yesterday by KAFCO chief executive announced the receipt of LG 'duly signed' by the Government authorities.

But many officials and observers say that the general contractors' claim of a high amount of cost over-run due to the six-month suspension of construction work might lead to another impasse.

According to the BCIC (Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation) sources the general contractors of the

project have claimed about \$ 49 million as cost over-run which some experts say is 'unacceptable and not reasonable'.

Highly placed BCIC sources said that the negotiations on the cost over-run were on and the Bangladesh government, the largest shareholders, was studying the various aspects of the contractors' claim.

The KAFCO press statement also said that the Board of Directors and the shareholders or 'have expressed their satisfaction that the discussions with the Government have been concluded and that the different problems have now been amicably resolved.'

The general contractors and suppliers include Chiyoda and Marubeni of Japan, Haldor Topsoe A/S of Denmark and

Stamcarbon of Italy. These companies are also shareholders of KAFCO.

The construction work of the largest foreign-invested project was suspended in October last year following the Government's refusal to issue the Letter of Guarantee for the export credit. Last month, after a prolonged uncertainty and high level negotiations the Government 'reluctantly' agreed to issue the LG.

The BCIC represents Bangladesh Government as one of the shareholders of the more-than-500-hundred-million-dollar project that will produce fertiliser for export.

Now, the question that is being raised by concerned quarters is that whether the project would at all be viable

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## Sour tickets for sweet home

By Staff Correspondent

Home-Bound passengers trying to reach their respective destinations before Eid-ul-Fitr packed the city's bus and railway stations and launch terminals on Thursday.

The rush increased tremendously on the day as the 5-day government Eid holiday began.

Taking undue advantage of the situation, black marketeers have become active around the stations and the private buses are selling tickets at higher than the normal rates.

Desperate passengers, making their once or twice yearly trip home, were seen buying tickets at enhanced rates ranging anywhere be-

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## Cresson quits over election defeats



Edith Cresson with President Francois Mitterrand (right) and new prime minister Pierre Berégovoy (left) in May last year in Paris after her takeover as French premier. —AFP file photo

PARIS, Apr 2: Edith Cresson, named less than 11 months ago as the first woman prime minister of France, resigned Thursday following devastating election setbacks for the Socialist Party. She was replaced by Finance Minister Pierre Berégovoy, reports AP.

Cresson, named last May by Mitterrand, has shouldered much of the blame for two humiliating election defeats for the Socialists the past two Sundays.

Since the second rout, Berégovoy's name surfaced as the leading contender to replace Cresson. His fiscal policies have won praise for stabilizing the franc and reducing inflation, although they have failed to halt a rise in unemployment to a near-record 9.9 per cent.

Both Berégovoy and Cresson are longtime Mitterrand loyalists.

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