

Hasina to open Ctg int'l airport today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the newly built MA Hannan International Airport at 10am today.

The fifty-year old airport was developed at a cost of Tk 540 crore with financial assistance from the government of Japan through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

The airport was modernised with a view to improving air safety, establishing a viable alternative to the Zia International Airport, creating employment opportunities, facilitating overseas investment and tourism and promoting economic and commercial facilities in the region.

The airport with a 1.80 lakh square feet terminal building and other modern facilities like boarding

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Khurshid Anwar replaces Irfan Raja as Pak Deputy HC

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Khurshid Anwar has replaced Irfan Raja as Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner in Dhaka.

He took charge last week and was introduced to guests at the Pakistan Day Reception on the Chancery premises yesterday. Earlier, he was a minister in his country's mission in Ottawa.

Irfan Raja was expelled from Bangladesh on December 15 last following his unwanted remarks on the country's Independence War.

Pakistani High Commissioner Iqbal Ahmad Khan said yesterday his country regards Bangladesh as a reliable partner in the region.

The reception was attended by nearly 1000 guests from a cross-section of people including politicians, diplomats, civil and military officials.

5 hurt as muggers hurl crackers near Bangabazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people suffered burn injuries when a gang of muggers hurled crackers near Bangabazar in the city yesterday.

The gang was snatching money and valuables from pedestrians near Bangabazar in the evening. They hurled crackers as local people chased them.

The injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. They included Rehana, 35; Sukur Ali 18 and Ali Hossain, 28, hospital sources said. Identity of two others could not be known.

In another incident, housewife Rozina Begum, 22, was bullet hit in a gunfight between two rival groups of miscreants at Dhalkanagar in the city's Gandaria area yesterday afternoon.

She was hit while crossing a road. In a critical condition, she was sent to the DMCH.

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

Time to grow up
Column: If You Ask Me
Almas Zakiuddin

Business 6 & 7

NBR to cut customs tiers by 75pc for RMG exports

WB wants India to better investment climate

Literature 9

Ethnicity and politics in Bangladesh, A poet to watch out for

Supplement 8

One page special supplement on World TB Day 2001

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 24		6.10pm
Mar 25	5-58 am	

Prayer Timings

March 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-10	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-30
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-21
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Ershad to be shifted to hospital today for negotiations?

Manzur removed as Secretary General

ZAYADUL AHSAN

In a fresh bid to facilitate negotiations with the government, Chairman of Jatiya Party HM Ershad may be shifted to the prison cell at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMUH) from Dhaka Central Jail today.

The government yesterday gave a 'green signal' to the jail authorities in this regard, official sources said.

In a dramatic development, JP (Ershad) Secretary General Nazir Rahman Manzur was removed from his party post, a party press release

said last night.

Presidium member A B M Shajahan has been made acting secretary general, the press release said.

JP sources said this virtually means another split in the party.

However, party sources said late last night that hectic lobbying was going on for withdrawal of the press release.

Nazir Rahman Manzur, when contacted, told this correspondent, "I cannot be removed this way without approval of a party council". Ershad may be lodged in either of

the two rooms of the prison cell on the second floor of a BSMMUH building. The rooms were refurbished yesterday.

The Jail Superintendent, Jailer, deputy jailers along with other jail officials inspected the prison cell yesterday.

Following a routine check-up, two doctors advised Ershad bed-rest although his health condition was "not bad", sources said. However, his wife and JP Presidium member Raushan Ershad, who visited him at

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

BSC (edn) assoc threatens class boycott from Apr 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of BCS General Education Association at a rally yesterday threatened to boycott classes for an indefinite period if their demands are not met by April 9.

"We will boycott classes from April 10 if our demands are not met by April 9," one leader of the association said amidst cheers at a rally at Dhaka College yesterday. The rally was attended by hundreds of government college teachers from the city and elsewhere in the country.

Speakers at the rally said about 4,000 teachers in government colleges were not promoted in the last five years and that hundreds of teachers are retiring every year without having been promoted for a long time.

They said many of the teachers were not promoted for the last 20 or

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

2 gunned down in Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

Armed rivals in a sudden attack gunned down two people and injured at least 20 others after storming a house at Dhaparagram in Mirpur upazila yesterday morning.

Police and witnesses said as a sequel to a previous property-related dispute, members of Hamid group raided the house of a Mohi group supporter at about 10 am and opened fire indiscriminately.

Motalib, 25, and Abdur Razzak, 35, were killed in the violent attack while at least 20 people suffered injuries.

Of the injured, Nazrul, 20 and Solaiman, 25, were admitted to Kushtia General Hospital.

"Around 150 rounds of ammunition were fired during the terrible gun attack," says a report from the area.

Police sent the bodies to the hospital morgue. A case was filed with the local police station.

Hasina throws challenge to Khaleda Prove your prowess by ousting govt in 3 months

UNB, Tongi

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday threw a challenge to opposition leader Khaleda Zia to prove her prowess by ousting the government in three months.

"I am giving her three months' time. Present parliament will continue till July 13 and its tenure will end on July 14. Oust my government through movement if you can..." she said at a huge workers reception at Tongi maidan marking the handover of eight textile mills to a new management forged with the workers.

Amidst cheers and slogans, Hasina rebuffed the opposition ultimatum for her government to quit by March 30, asserting that as

Khaleda had failed to oust her government in past four years and nine months so would she also fail to do so in next three months.

Denouncing the opposition ultimatum and nonstop hartal on April 1 and 2, the Prime Minister said she had voluntarily offered election before June 12 and transfer of power to a caretaker government after April 17, but Khaleda Zia rejected it since she does not believe in democracy and election.

"Khaleda Zia knows it well that if there is free and impartial vote, she would not be able to go to power even with her four-party alliance of defeated forces," Hasina said.

About hartal on April 1, she said Khaleda Zia wants to fool people by

calling hartal on April 1. She urged industrial workers to continue production in mills and factories on April 1 and 2 and make Khaleda Zia the "April fool" instead.

The Prime Minister said after a protracted struggle, democracy and voting rights of the people had been established. People got back their right to vote under a caretaker government.

"Inshallah, free and fair election will take place under a caretaker government," Hasina said, adding: "Whatever conspiracy is cooked up by defeated forces of '71, 90 and 96, none would be able to snatch the voting right of the people."

Referring to Khaleda's threat of dragging Hasina out of power, the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Mir crashes safely into Pacific near Fiji



First Mir crew members Leonid Kizim (L) and Vladimir Solovoyov (R), who arrived in Mir space station March 13, 1996, are displayed on a screen in the Space Mission Control Centre in Korolyov yesterday with Mir model in the foreground. Mir space station sunk in southern part of Pacific Ocean yesterday morning.

AP, Nadi (Fiji)

The Mir space station finished its 15-year voyage yesterday in a shower of fireballs, its wreckage streaking through the atmosphere and plunging into a water grave in the South Pacific.

On the other side of the globe, Russian controllers shook hands and congratulated each other on the successful demise of the space station that had been the glory of their space programme. Russian and Australian officials said the downing of the aging Mir went perfectly, hitting within an ocean target area hundreds of miles from any land.

"The event is over and no one is crying," said Yuri Koptev at Russian Mission Control outside Moscow.

Four fragments from the disintegrating station flashed above the palm trees and beaches of Fiji like white balls of fire, with a swarm of smaller debris in their wake. The debris illuminated the early evening sky for about eight seconds, then four thunderous sonic booms shook the island about three minutes later.

"It was like someone shining a spotlight in your eyes, it was really intense," said AP Photographer Rob Griffith, who watched the Mir roar

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Japan to extend GSP to LDCs including Bangladesh for 10 yrs

MONJUR MAHMUD

Japan has decided to extend Generalised System of Preference (GSP) to the developing countries for another 10 years till March 2011.

Sources in the Japanese Embassy in Dhaka said Bangladesh would also get special consideration provided to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) under which it would get 'duty free and quota free preference.'

All developing countries will be eligible for GSP and all LDCs for special consideration, upon request.

About 360 items will be added for duty free and quota free treatment for LDCs. Under this measure, around 99 per cent industrial products including all textile and clothing products from LDCs will be 100 per cent duty and quota free.

Japan's decision followed its Customs Tariff Council's review which said there is a general consensus among the international community that GSP should be maintained and improvement of market access for LDCs is one of the common issues which should be addressed by developed countries including Japan.

Besides, GSP has contributed to promotion of export from and increase of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

8 political, business leaders in Khulna still on 'hit list'

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Eight political and business leaders here are still on the 'hit list' of extremist organisations.

The 'hit list' has been prepared by leaders of PBCP and BCP now in jail, according to sources in different intelligence agencies.

The 'hit list' has been given to the members of the outlawed parties now at large, who have taken shelter in different areas in the city in disguise and are maintaining regular contacts with their 'bosses' inside the jail.

Some security guards of the district jail are allegedly acting as messengers, carrying the letters and information, the sources said.

The 'hit list' contains names of a top leader of Fakirhat upazila, a Juba League leader of Dumuria upazila, a Jubo Dal leader of Phultala upazila, two KCC ward commissioners, a UP chairman of Rupsha upazila and two influential leaders of Khulna city and district Awami League, the sources said quoting confessions of arrested members of those two parties.

The arrested are holding secret meetings at some cells at dead of night in presence of jail guards, the sources said, alleging serious security lapse in the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



The Association of Regulatory Affairs of Bangladesh (ARAB) brought out a procession in the city yesterday urging political parties to include remedies to the deadly environmental pollution in their election manifestoes.

Russia retaliates, expels 4 US diplomats

First step in a series: Moscow

AP, Washington

In the first apparent retaliation for the US expulsion of 50 Russian diplomats, the Russian Foreign Ministry yesterday told four US Embassy officials to leave country, while the US State Department said 46 more would be sent home by July 1.

The US deputy chief of mission, John Ordway, was called to the ministry to be read an official protest of the US expulsions and warned that the deportation of four embassy officials was just the first step in a series.

"J Ordway was read a decisive protest in connection with the unlawful activities of a number of official American representatives in Russia," the ministry said in a statement.

"It was announced that four employees of the American Embassy in Moscow should leave

Russia in the few next days for activities incompatible with their status," the statement continued, using the usual euphemism for espionage.

"J Ordway was also apprised about other measures for stopping unlawful activities of official American representatives in Russia." The terse statement did not elaborate, but in Washington, the State Department said 46 more US diplomats would have to leave the country by summer.

Russian officials at the highest levels had been working out what they called an appropriately "painful" response to the imminent expulsion of four Russian diplomats, and the demand that 46 others leave the United States by July.

Russian officials called the US move politically driven and a throw-back to the Cold War, and warned it

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Sindhis threaten to secede

BSS, New Delhi

The World Sindhi Institut e yesterday threatened the military regime in Pakistan to follow the path of Bangladesh people in 1971 if it did not stop violation of human rights and exploitation of Sindhi people.

Addressing a press conference here, President of the Institute Munawar Leghari and Adviser Zahid Mukhdom said Sindh in Pakistan today looked like one big concentration camp where the Pak army had permanently occupied the villages there, exploiting natural resources for the benefit of Punjab by military-bureaucratic oligarchy and persecuting Hindus and other ethnic minorities.

They said Sindh was no longer going to tolerate exploitation, destruction of its cultural identity, disregard to its tolerant and Sufi lifestyle and humiliating treatment to its people. They said the Sindhis were exploring various options, including self-determination.

The institute leaders questioned the legal and moral identity of Pakistan after 1971 when its former

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8