



## Maradona Argentina's cheerleader!

AFP, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona has been drummed into service as a television cheerleader to rouse his sleeping countrymen into getting up for Argentina's World Cup matches.

The former Argentina captain stars in an advert for satellite DirectTV where he madly bashes away at drums to wake up the soccer-mad nation in time to catch the action from Japan and Korea.

"I really enjoyed the job, I hope it'll help wake everyone up in time for the matches," said Maradona.

Because of the time difference Argentina's first round Group F matches against England, Nigeria and Sweden will take place either in the dead of night local time or early in the morning.



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The Daily Star  
RANGOS TOSHIBA  
WORLD CUP QUIZ  
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## Export target slashed Negative growth in a decade

MONJUR MAHMUD

In the face of the worst-ever export performance, the government has slashed this fiscal's export target by US\$1220 million.

With the revision, the target has

been brought down to \$5950 million from \$7170 million.

"In fact, this fiscal's export target was very ambitious and the changed global situation dented our export performance. So, we had to set a realistic revised target," said a

highly placed source at the commerce ministry.

After considering the first nine months' performance (July-March) and the current trends, the ministry revised the target, which is still over \$500 million short of last fiscal's

export earnings.

And this means that for the first time in a decade the country is going to face a negative growth in exports.

"We expected that exports would recover in the third quarter (January to March period), but that did not happen. Jute goods and agricultural products apart, all major sectors are showing negative growth trends," noted a commerce ministry official.

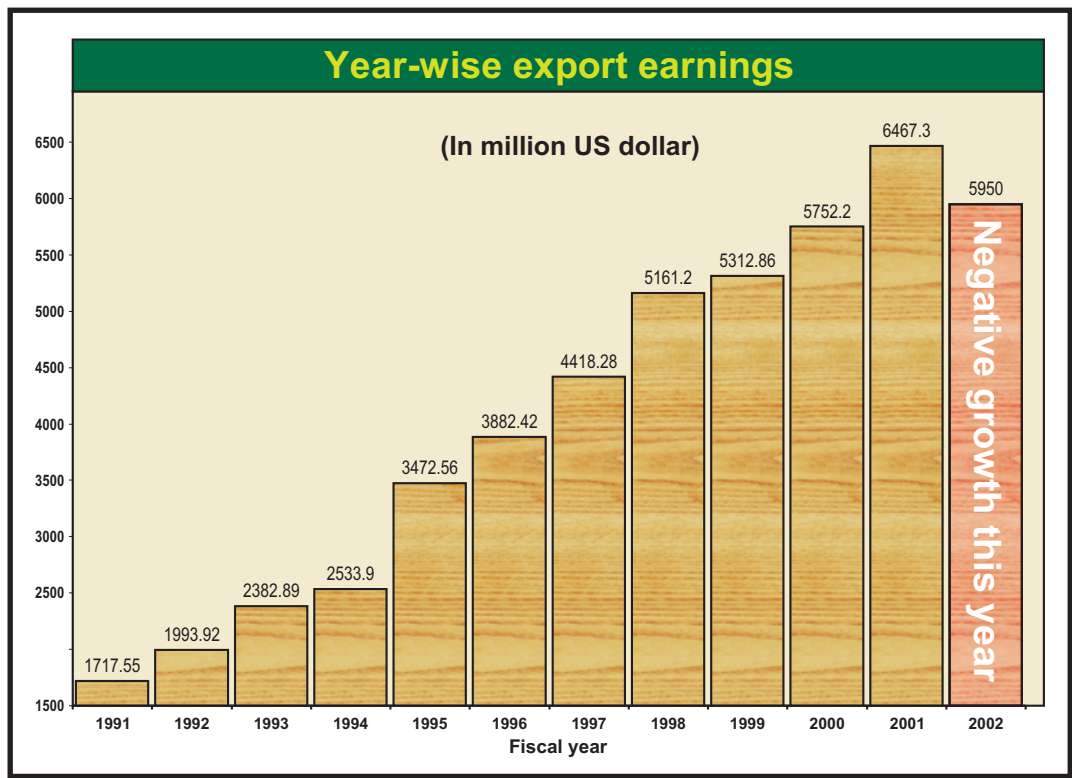
The export earnings in January, February and March had been \$538.86 million, \$496.80 million and \$418.20 million respectively against the monthly average target of \$597.50 million, the official added. The earnings were \$1605.98 million in the first quarter (July-Sept), \$1389.14 million in the second quarter (Oct-Dec) and \$1453.86 million in the third quarter (Jan-Mar).

Readymade garment (RMG), which contributed 52 per cent to last fiscal's \$6467.30 million export earning, is set to face a massive setback this fiscal. Around \$500 million was rubbed out from this fiscal's \$3700 million target.

Knitwear, which contributed 23 per cent to last fiscal's earnings, is the second largest export earner after the RMG. But it also had to meekly accept an around \$170 million slash. The target was revised down to \$1530 million from \$1700 million.

"Even then we would not be able

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## Magurchhara compensation claim Ministry to 'review' file approved by it twice

SHARIER KHAN

In a self-contradictory move, the state minister for energy has asked Petrobangla to send back to the ministry the file on Magurchhara gas blowout compensation claim.

The energy ministry had twice approved the claim earlier.

The move is apparently aimed at further delaying the process of claiming compensation, sources claimed. There was a move to

reduce the compensation claim to a level agreeable to Unocal, they said.

But State Minister Mosharrif Hossain says the move is 'cautionary'. Since Petrobangla is dealing with an issue that may lead to an arbitration with Unocal, it should seek foreign experts' advice on Production Sharing Contracts (PSC).

The state minister also hinted to the Petrobangla chairman during a conversation on the issue last week that the claim should be 'reduced'. It should be 'genuine' and not 'inflated', he told the chairman, according to the sources.

Petrobangla on Wednesday readied a letter for US company Unocal, claiming Tk 3900 crore compensation for damaging a gas reserve of 245 billion cubic feet at Magurchhara. But before the letter could be sent, the state minister intervened and asked Petrobangla chairman to withhold it.

Petrobangla Chairman Syed

Sajedul Karim told The Daily Star Wednesday that contents of the letter were approved by the energy ministry and the Petrobangla Board twice.

"But we have suspended (its delivery)," he said without elaborating. "We will review the contents again," he said.

Insider sources said, as some quarters alerted Unocal beforehand about the contents of the letter and as the letter was at Petrobangla for delivery, the company's local chief Scott A Barber rushed to the state minister in the evening. After a long meeting, the state minister called the Petrobangla chairman and asked him why the letter was being sent now.

The chairman explained that the letter was being issued upon approval by the energy ministry and the Petrobangla Board twice after legal vetting.

The state minister asked him not to send the letter to Unocal and to send back the file to the ministry for

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## Shibir cadres capture RU press club

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Rajshahi University Press Club (RUPC) was forcibly occupied Thursday night by armed cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the student front of the ruling alliance's partner Jamaat-e-Islami.

Sources said a group of about 15 ICS cadres equipped with firearms, sharp weapons and iron rods, and led by an RU proctor Nurul Absar and a 'controversial' advisor of RUPC professor Abdur Rahman Siddiqui swooped on some members of the press club and drove them out of the campus.

In a press statement yesterday, RUPC convenor Majedul Islam alleged that ICS cadres captured the club and threatened the members with dire consequences if they opposed the take-over. The statement also demanded removal of proctor Nurul Absar.

The RUPC advisor professor Abdur Rahman Siddiqui and a former RUPC member Quamruzzaman Korban have long been trying to capture the club and create division among the members, the statement said.

Many club members said the RUPC general election has

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## Govt's quest for new home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is seriously looking for a competent party leader and an efficient bureaucrat for the home ministry who can improve the law and order situation with an iron hand.

Sources said Prime Minister Khaleeda Zia, now in New York for treatment, has asked one of her senior cabinet colleagues over telephone to find out such a competent party leader.

She also asked the minister to find out a senior bureaucrat who can fully devote as home secretary because Dr Saadat Husain is acting as home secretary in addition to his charge of the cabinet division.

She also mentioned names of some secretaries in this regard.

Sources at the prime minister's office said there is shortage of efficient high officials in the administration who can run ministries smoothly.

The sources said the prime minister is determined to remove the home minister as he "failed" to improve the law and order situation and his "insensible" comments created embarrassment for the government.

Sources in ruling BNP said the prime minister recently asked some senior ministers to take charge of the home ministry but most of them declined.

The PMO sources said, one of the senior ministers approached told her that he would not take charge of the home ministry if there remains a state minister in the ministry. The state minister enjoys blessings from the Hawa Bhaban and his authority is not less than that Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, according to the senior minister.

"It is not possible for any one to run the home ministry independently if a junior minister or others influenced activities," he added.

According to PMO sources, the home minister can not implement his decisions as the state minister shares almost equal authority.

BNP sources said the prime minister is serious and may go for action on her return from the USA. Some state ministers may be dropped as she received a number of complaints against them.

The sources said the government is also considering downsizing the cabinet and take in some new faces.

## Illegal use of office vehicles on by Titas TU leaders

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Trade unionists in the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited (TGTDCL) continue to flout all rules and norms in using office vehicles.

A trade union leader and nephew of another union leader took two Titas Gas transports, which they were not entitled to, and used those for personal and family use, official sources confirmed.

Such unauthorised use of office vehicles by the Titas Gas' trade unionists continues unabated despite the recent media focus on their activities and the restrictions imposed on them by their umbrella organisation, Jatiyatobadi Sramik Dal.

General Secretary of the Titas Gas unit of Jatiyatobadi Sramik

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## 240 RNC leaders, workers sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

As many as 240 leaders and workers of Rajshahi Nagorik Committee (RNC), including its leader Fazole Hossain Badsha have been sued for their alleged involvement in a clash with police in the city on Tuesday.

Shahidul Haq, officer-in-charge of Boalia thana filed the case yesterday morning under Section 143, 148, 332 and 353 of Bangladesh Panel Code and Sections 3 and 4 of the Explosive Act.

Police arrested three of the accused in the afternoon. They are Shahin, Liton and Mamun.

On Tuesday, police attacked a BNC procession at zero point in Shaheb Bazar area that led to a clash between police and RNC workers.

Police resisted to baton charge, fired tear gas shells and rubber bullets, injuring 25 workers of Nagarik Committee.

The RNC workers also hurled brick chips at policemen and damaged some vehicles.

RNC brought out the procession demanding cancellation of Rajshahi City Corporation election held on April 25.

## PM recuperating from surgery

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleeda Zia is recovering rapidly after a successful operation conducted on her knee in a New York hospital, PM office said here yesterday.

"She is now in good health," PM's press secretary Tajul Islam said in a message from the US city, adding that the surgery conducted on Thursday was "a complete success".

The prime minister, now convalescing at the Manhattan Hospital for Special Surgery, urged the countrymen to pray for her.

She thanked those who from home and abroad inquired about the latest situation of her illness.

## Saifur for drastic cut in phone installation rate

UNB, Dhaka

Unusually high installation charge of telephone, often censured by subscribers and foreign investors, also annoyed the finance and planning minister who stressed drastic cut-backs in the rate, even making it as low as Tk 4,000.

"Exorbitant rate of installation is absurd ... It should be Tk 4,000-5,000," Saifur Rahman said.

People in the T&T are not willing to reduce the charge, the minister told a function marking the World Telecommunications Day here yesterday stating that T&T business should be based on phone calls, not on lines.

Official installation charge for telephone is Tk 18,400 and getting connection is uncertain even after paying this fat amount. A survey on 500 major Japanese companies found that telephone in Bangladesh is the second most expensive in the region after Myanmar.

"For someone who is not a minister like me, it will take six or nine or even 12 months to get the connection. They (T&T people) will



Saifur Rahman

say there is no cable, no line etc," said the outspoken minister echoing a common allegation.

But someone may get it done "otherwise," the minister said in an oblique reference to underhand dealings for getting a phone connection.

He reminded all concerned that

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## Tayebur outlines priorities A metro govt could serve people better

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Mayor of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Sheikh Tayebur Rahman thinks a metropolitan government can serve the people better.

But this is not possible in the current political situation, he told this correspondent yesterday.

The corporation must be empowered to acquire land, control traffic system and purchase transports, he said.

"I cherish in my mind the idea of making the KCC a dreamland. I want Khulna city to be the most beautiful and modern one.

"The four-party alliance is in power and I have been elected mayor as its candidate. So, this is the opportune moment for development work," Sheikh Tayebur Rahman said.

In reply to a question he said he failed to solve the problem of water scarcity faced by the city dwellers. "I also failed to achieve the desired goals in maintenance of roads, development of education, health and drainage systems and eradication of mosquito. This time, these sectors will be given top priority," he said.

Sheikh Tayebur Rahman who has been re-elected for another five years said Khulna city will not be less important than Dhaka after construction of bridges over Padma



Sheikh Tayebur Rahman

and Rupsha rivers and Khan Jahan Ali Airport.

He said dredging of Mongla port will give a boost to economic activities.

The 68-year old Mayor said he has no plan to increase taxes.

"I am determined to ensure an honest, transparent and corruption-free administration. I believe in quality and not in the number of officials and employees," he said while reiterating his commitment to make Khulna a 'model city' with co-operation of all political parties.

"I have no doubt in getting co-operation. I hope all political leaders

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