



## Musharraf due in Dhaka July 29

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf is due to arrive here on a three-day official visit on July 29, sources said.

He will hold official talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on bilateral, regional and international issues.

This would be the first official visit by a SAARC head of state or government after the BNP-led alliance came to power.

Officials of the two countries are working out the details of the Pakistan president's itinerary.

## No nod for structures in illegal Ashuliya schemes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas has said those who would buy plots from unauthorised projects like the New Uttara Model Town in Ashuliya would never be given permission for construction.

Talking to some reporters at his office yesterday, the minister expressed his grave concern over the earth filling of flood retention zones on the outskirts of the city. He warned of an 'environmental disaster' due to the unplanned urbanisation.

The government has imposed a temporary suspension on all earth filling operations at various peripheral points of the city.

Abbas said an inter-ministerial meeting would be held today at his

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## A puzzling question

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Who prepared the list of 25 categories of Bangladeshi products for zero-tariff access to the Indian markets? This has become a puzzling question even for the commerce ministry.

At a press briefing yesterday, Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed Chowdhury said he could not trace any documents related to the list in the ministry or even at the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), both of which are responsible for such a list and for maintaining related documents.

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Special Focus on Chittagong

Sun Rises Sun Sets

July 3 6-50 pm

July 4 5-16 am

Prayer Timings

July 3

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	6-59
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Magurchhara blowout

# Unocal asked to pay \$685m in damage

SHARIER KHAN

Five years after the Magurchhara blowout, Petrobangla finally claimed US\$ 685 million from US oil company Unocal for damaging the gas structure of the well.

The claim was based on a probe committee report filed a few months after the blowout on June 15, 1997. The report remained a classified document till early last year.

The probe report identified faulty gas well design, lack of supervision and negligence of operation of Occidental during the drilling of the gas well as the reasons for the blowout.

The claim was supposed to be filed in mid-May, but was finally sent to the Unocal office yesterday morning.

In its claim, Petrobangla said the blowout was due to negligent operation

by Occidental, which later sold its Bangladesh operation to Unocal. As a result, huge volume of gas was burnt up and a significant quantum became unrecoverable in the prospective gas structure.

Petrobangla was to submit the claim in mid-May after getting it approved by the energy ministry and the Petrobangla Board and vetted by legal experts. But then it was stopped at the directives of the State Minister for Energy Mosharraf Hossain.

Later, Petrobangla sent a letter to the energy ministry, noting that the submission of the claim was stopped through a verbal instruction from the energy ministry.

But on Monday, the energy ministry in a letter to the Petrobangla flatly denied giving any such verbal instruction.

"The letter said the ministry never asked Petrobangla to stop the pro

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## ETV's plea for appeal against licence cancellation rejected

### Channel gets 5-week stay order against HC verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday rejected the Ekushey Television's (ETV) leave to appeal petition, upholding the High Court Division verdict that the ETV's licence was illegal but stayed the execution of the verdict for five weeks.

The ETV would have to file another petition within the five weeks for a review of the rejection. Had the Appellate Division not issued the five-week stay order on the execution of the High Court verdict, the ETV would have had to

suspend broadcasting from yesterday.

The Supreme Court yesterday also rejected four other leave petitions challenging the High Court verdict on the ETV. Chairman of the ETV AS Mahmud as well as the Citicorp International Finance Corporation and Waterford Partners LLC, the government and the petitioners filed these petitions.

Citicorp has invested Tk 10.02 crore and Waterford Partners Tk 1.84 crore in the ETV Limited. As foreign investors, they are seeking protection of their investment.

The government filed another petition contending that the High Court Division verdict in one place had observed that the government did not co-operate with the court in submitting the ETV's contract-related documents. But such observation should not be included in the verdict, he said.

Headed by Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury, the full bench of the Appellate Division comprising Justice Ruhul Amin, Justice KM Hasan, Justice Abu Saeed Ahammed

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## 'No plan for golden handshake to sectt staff'

BSS, Dhaka

The government yesterday categorically said it has no plan for golden handshake to officials and employees of the secretariat.

"Attention of the government has been drawn to press reports on golden handshake to officials and employees working in various ministries and divisions," an official press release said.

The release said the reports were not based on facts and the actual position was not reflected.

It said that a letter was issued on June 27, 2002, to examine the situation as to what kind of changes might occur in the quality and pace of work if the recommendations of

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Passers-by view the tail section of the crashed Tupolev passenger jet on a country lane in Ueberlingen, southern Germany, yesterday. The aircraft was destroyed in a mid-air collision with a Boeing cargo jet, killing at least 71 people.

## Mid-air collision kills 71 over Germany

### 52 children, teenagers among the dead

AFP, Germany

A Russian charter airliner carrying a group of young people to a beach vacation in Spain collided with a cargo jet over southern Germany overnight killing all 71 people aboard the two planes, officials said yesterday.

Russian officials said that 52 children and teenagers from the republic of Bashkortostan were among the 69 people aboard the Bashkirian Airlines flight. All were presumed dead.

The aircraft, which was en route to Barcelona from Moscow, crashed into a Boeing 757 cargo aircraft shortly before midnight Monday with two pilots aboard about 11,000 meters (36,000 feet) above Lake Constance near the Swiss border.

The collision was the worst such air disaster since two planes collided in India in 1996, killing 349 people.

The children travelling were star students who had won the trip for outstanding performance in school, according to a government minister from Bashkortostan, an oil-rich republic in the Urals region.

The holiday was sponsored by a national organisation affiliated with UNESCO.

"My son is 14 and he always dreamed of going to Spain to see the ocean," wept the mother of Bulat Biglov. The parents of the children were taken to a location in Ufa ahead of their departure to the crash site in Germany.

Russian officials and Swiss air traffic controllers, who were monitoring the airspace around Lake Constance, appeared to be at odds over the cause of the crash.

"It seems that there is a human factor at work here," a senior official of the Russian transport ministry, Alexander Neradko, said, without saying who he thought was responsible -- the Russian crew of the Tupolev 154 jet or the two-man crew of the Boeing 757 belonging to the DHL shipping company.

He added: "But such things do not happen on their own. A number of factors are involved in such accidents, including what happens on the ground."

The Swiss air traffic control service, Skyguide, said

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## Canada offers free access of goods

### Apparels, textiles and farm products on list from January next

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Canada has offered Bangladesh duty and quota free access of its apparels, textiles and agricultural products from January next year.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmood Chowdhury disclosed it at a press briefing at the ministry's conference room yesterday.

However, three types of agricultural products -- dairy, poultry and eggs -- will not come under the offer, the minister said.

The commerce ministry received

a letter from the Canadian government on Monday in this regard. Canada took the decision on June 27.

Earlier, Norway had offered similar access of all products from LDCs, including Bangladesh, from July 1.

According to the Canadian offer, products have to comply with the rules of origin requirements to get the duty and quota free access, Khosru said.

Bangladesh has been trying to diversify its market instead of con-

centrating on a few countries to increase its exports and reduce risk of external shocks from any of the big markets, Khosru said.

"Earlier, we were confined to three or four markets. Now we are trying to tap new ones", he said.

He said Bangladesh requested different developed countries including Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and other Scandinavian states for duty and quota free access of Bangladeshi goods.

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## Govt urges KSA to act against middlemen

RAFIQ HASAN

The government will urge Saudi Arabia to take legal actions against expatriate Bangladeshi middlemen who are involved in hundi and 'visa counselling' business.

The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment will write to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urging them to take up the issue with the Saudi authorities, according to sources.

The ministry is also preparing a list of leading expatriate Bangladeshis who are involved in hundi and 'visa counselling'.

According to sources, a dozen Bangladeshi expatriates are involved in the 'hundi' business and are manipulating the 'visa counselling' prices.

The migration cost to Saudi Arabia could be reduced by almost 50 per cent if the activities of the gang led by a physician turned recruiting agent is stopped, the sources said.

The migration cost for Bangladeshi workers to Saudi Arabia went up due to the 'visa advising' trade.

The list of those accused would be handed over to the Saudi authorities for legal action, sources said.

When contacted Mohammad Quamrul Islam the state minister for the expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry admitted the matter and said he already spoke to the home minister on any possible action to be taken against the gang.

He also acknowledged that a formal letter would be sent from his ministry to the foreign ministry in this regard.

The migration cost for Bangladeshi workers to Saudi Arabia would further increase as the Saudi Arabian airlines -- Saudia -- recently increased the fare.

The Saudia charges up to Tk 6,000 more than other airlines on the same route.

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## Golden Kahn

AP, Tokyo

German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn won the Golden Ball award yesterday despite giving up a pair of goals to Ronaldo in Brazil's 2-0 victory in the World Cup final.

He becomes the first goalkeeper to do so.

The 33-year old Kahn allowed just three goals in the tournament and defeated Ronaldo in the media vote for the World Cup's outstanding player.

Kahn received 147 votes, followed by Ronaldo with 126 and South Korean captain Hong Myung-bo with 108.

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## Six killed in Sirajganj truck accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least six people were killed and 15 others injured when a truck with 25 labourers aboard skidded off Baniaganti Bridge and fell into a ditch near Jamuna Bridge West Police Station yesterday morning.

Police and local people said a fertiliser-loaded truck bound for Gaibandha from Chittagong met with the accident at about 6.30 am when the driver lost control over the steering.

Of the dead, four were identified as Abdul Motaleb, 30, Mridul, 35, Ramidur, 35 and Abdul Motaleb, 36. They all hailed from village Sreepur of Gaibandha district.

Identity of two others could not be known till 5pm yesterday.

On information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies and rescued the injured persons.

Ten of the injured were admitted to Sirajganj General hospital while five others released after first aid.

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## Hasina gets bail in graft case

### She claims to have saved US\$2b by appointing consultancy for GSP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday granted bail to Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina in a graft case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order at 2:30pm on a bond of Tk 50,000 with two guarantors -- advocates Sahara Khatun and Quamrul Islam.

Accompanied by frontline party leaders and scores of lawyers, Hasina

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