

# Rajuk 'revives' project to fill up canal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has 'secretly' revived a project to fill up a natural canal in the city's Mohammadpur area next to the martyred intellectuals' monument and build a truck terminal there.

The Haikkar Khal winds its way from the Turag in the northwest through Mohammadpur and joins the Buriganga river in the south. The authorities have built a small culvert over the canal on the road to Basila from Mohammadpur to ensure flow of the canal.

Over the years, Dhaka has already lost 22 natural canals due to similar 'mindless' decisions by the successive governments.

Originally the Tk 2 crore project was approved by the DCC under the cover of building a children's park. The commissioner of ward No. 46, Abu Sayed Bepari, initiated the land-filling after getting 'green signal' from top officials of the DCC and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

Bepari told The Daily Star that the "people of the area do not want any canal there". He said there would be no problem if the canal was filled up for accommodating 2,000 trucks. He said the project was okayed by former mayor Mohammad Hanif, but it was shelved because of press reports.

"Trucks create a big problem there and the traffic commissioner



Witness to mindless action... A dredger operates to fill up the Haikkar Khal near the martyred intellectuals' monument at Rayer Bazar to build a truck terminal there.

PHOTO: STAR

# Ban on foreign jobs for maids may go

RAFIQ HASAN

The government is thinking of withdrawing restriction on female workers from going to Middle Eastern countries as domestic helps.

"We may go for export of female workers if the conditions of female workers sent by other countries are found satisfactory," said State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam.

The ministry is collecting data and also contacting other countries in this regard before finalising its decision, the state minister informed.

According to sources, the Director General of Bureau of Manpower Export and Training (BMET) Shahudul Haque will attend a conference on 'Foreign Domestic Migrant Workers' in Colombo at the end of this month.

The conference, organised by the Malaysia based

NGO CARAM (IOM), is likely to address problems and prospects of domestic helps working in the Middle East.

The DG would share his experience of the conference and apprise the ministry of the state of domestic helps working in the oil rich countries, the source said.

Currently, the government does not allow overseas employment of female workers as domestic helps fearing sexual abuse and harassment.

Only expatriate Bangladeshis or government officials are allowed to bring female workers as domestic help.

Unofficially though, many female workers from Bangladesh are travelling to the Middle East and working as domestic helps.

According to recruiting agencies, there is a huge demand for female workers as domestic helps in the Middle East. Government's restrictions bar them from

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# PM orders checking fund misuse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has instructed all concerned to check misuse of government funds and ensure accountability at all levels for the development of the country.

Proper utilisation of resources and accountability at all levels are a must for development, she said and asked government officials and employees to work with honesty and sincerity, keeping this in view.

Khaleda was speaking at a high level meeting at the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry yesterday.

"Our resources are limited, but we must carry out development programmes to eradicate poverty, create employment opportunities and above all to ensure development and welfare of the people. This is possible

through proper utilisation of resources and checking misuse," she said.

The prime minister, who attends her Secretariat office once a week, yesterday visited the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry to see for herself the activities of the ministry. She had a lengthy meeting with the ministers concerned and high officials.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, State Minister Ziaul Haq Zia and Deputy Minister Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu were present at the meeting.

Mannan Bhuiyan apprised the prime minister of various activities, programmes, ongoing projects, state of implementation of those and projects to be taken up by the ministry.

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## Hartal on Aug 22 to protest Malibagh killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national Muslim Committee of Bangladesh has called a half-day hartal on August 22 in Dhaka in protest of the Malibagh killing.

This was declared at a meeting held at the Baitul Mukarram mosque yesterday afternoon with the committee's chairman Muhammad Shahidul Islam in the chair.

Meanwhile, the police were making little headway in Thursday's Malibagh Mosque murder investigation.

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## BNP men's attack on Pran Plant closure leaves 800 jobless

ANWAR ALI

About 800 workers including 500 females have become unemployed following closure of the mango processing plant of Pran Agro Ltd in Natore on Wednesday.

The district administration has not yet taken any step for reopening of plant.

The workers are now being threatened by a local gang allegedly belonging to BNP leader and UP chairman Golam Sarwar not to join

work, sources in the area said. Golam Sarwar enjoys the blessings of Deputy Minister for LGRD Ruhul Quddus Dulu.

The plant was declared laid off on Wednesday evening as terrorists belonging to Sarwar allegedly drove away the workers when they were going to the plant for a meet with its authorities.

The Friday's monthly meeting on law and order in the district, participated by Ruhul Quddus Dulu and State Minister for Youth and Sports

Fazlur Rahman Patal did not discuss the matter, official sources said.

Rather, Natore DC Sadar Uddin Ahmed claimed at the meeting that law and order in the district was 'satisfactory'.

The superintendent of police, Nazrul Islam, when contacted said police are ready to take all possible measures to ensure security of the workers.

Talking to newsmen, Golam

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## Ratna's 'killer' confesses

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Rubel, arrested in connection with the murder of five-year-old girl Ratna, gave a confessional statement to a metropolitan magistrate yesterday.

Sabujbagh Police produced Rubel before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 11:00am yesterday. Later, he was taken to the chamber of Metropolitan Magistrate Shamim Ara Khatun where Rubel confessed to his involvement along with three others in the killing.

After recording his statement, the court ordered him to be sent to

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## Opposition rejects Pak constitutional package

AFP, Lahore

Pakistani lawyers and political parties Saturday rejected constitutional amendments proposed by President Pervez Musharraf saying that his military regime had no power to alter the document.

At a joint meeting here they said the amendment to the constitution was the "sole and exclusive function of parliament."

The meeting, convened by the Pakistan Bar Council and attended by representatives from across the country as well as heads of major political parties, said if their members were elected to parliament they would undo the amendments if Musharraf imposed the package.

Musharraf, who came to power in a bloodless coup in 1999, proposed a set of more than 20 changes to the country's 1973 constitution that would bolster his power and give the military a permanent role in politics.

The package includes the establishment of a National Security Council - which is to be headed by Musharraf and will include army, navy and air force chiefs - and powers to sack the elected prime minister and cabinet.

Opposition leaders have slammed the move, saying it would give the armed forces a constitutional role in the country's politics. Self-exiled two-time ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto has meanwhile voiced her concerns about the

proposed constitutional changes, adding her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was clearly being targeted by Pakistan's military elite.

"The PPP's two elected and democratic governments were destabilised in the past because the military ... found their hawkish policies were undermined by the presence of a political force with an independent base," she said in a statement.

"The military hardliners are today looking for a dummy parliament and a dummy prime minister so that those policies can continue unabated. I caution the world community from putting all its eggs in one basket, and that too in the basket of a military dictator," she said in reference to widespread Western support for Musharraf's leadership of Pakistan.

Musharraf, who insists his government was authorised to make changes under a May 2000 Supreme Court ruling, has said the changes were aimed at ensuring "checks" on government power.

He has announced parliamentary polls for October 10, but political activities such as public rallies have remained suspended since the coup.

Saturday's meeting, participated in by leaders of major parties, demanded a lifting of the ban on

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## Alliance rule marked by unusual brutality: Hasina

UNB, Gopalganj

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed the government for setting the worst instance of barbarism by unleashing massive repression and killings and urged the people to "resist" this regime.

"This government has created a dreadful situation in the country...even killing musallis at mosques and snatching food from the poor," she said.

Addressing a workers rally at the local party office, the Awami League president said the government destroyed the food security of the people by dumping rotten Indian wheat in go-downs.

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## Nafa returns after surgery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran journalist Shehabuddin Nafa returned home last night after undergoing brain surgeries in Sanghai, China.

Nafa went to China on a trip of the Jatiya Press Club recently and fell sick. Later, he was diagnosed to have brain tumors.

He had undergone two surgeries.



PHOTO: STAR

Protesters bring out a procession in the city yesterday demanding immediate trial of the killers of Rubayet Ahmed Bappi, a Class III student of the Armentola Govt. High School.

## Israel's plan to expel Arafat irks Palestinians

AP, Jerusalem

Palestinian officials on Saturday slammed an Israeli television report claiming the army had a contingency plan to expel Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat by force.

The report, which did not cite any sources, said the plan had been approved in principle by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and entailed a raid on Arafat's Ramallah compound by special forces who would ensure he was not harmed physically during the operation.

"We denounce the mere thinking of such despicable ideas - at a time when we are trying to revive the peace process the Israeli government is thinking such ideas," said Palestinian minister Saeb Erekat, speaking from Cairo, Egypt.

In Hebron on Saturday Israeli troops rounded up and detained several dozen Palestinians checking their identification cards and taking them to Israeli-controlled segments of the city, witnesses said. The army said it was checking the report.

Channel Two TV said on Friday that Arafat would be taken from his headquarters to a waiting helicopter and flown nonstop to an Arab country which has no diplomatic relations with Israel and no close ties with the United States, Israel's premier ally, the television said, naming neighboring Lebanon as a possible destination.

The report said the scenario was a contingency plan, not necessarily likely to be implemented anytime soon. Aides to Sharon have said they will stand by a commitment to Washington not to injure Arafat but they have not ruled out expelling him at some point.

Erekat was in Cairo after traveling to Saudi Arabia and Jordan to brief foreign ministers on his recent trip to Washington where he met with U.S. officials including Secretary of State Colin Powell. Speaking by telephone, Erekat said his talks with Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres were also discussed.

On Friday the military destroyed the house of Iyad Sawalha, an Islamic Jihad member who was responsible for a suicide attack in which a bomber

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 18		6-29 pm
Aug 19	5-35 am	

Prayer Timings		
August 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-30	5-00
Zahr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-39
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation