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PHOTO: STAR

Seen on an aerial photograph, Barapukuria Coal Mine Project, the first in Bangladesh, looks set to go into commercial operation in October.

# Country set to enter mining era

## Commercial production of coal, hard rock from October

SHARIER KHAN

Against many odds, the first two mines in the country are coming into commercial operation in October, opening up two new sectors -- coal energy and granite production.

The North Korean built Maddhyapara Hard Rock project and Chinese built Barapukuria Coal Mine project of Petrobangla will also employ thousands of people directly in the industrially backward northern region.

"Both these projects saw many hurdles. But both of them have now come to a final shape with more than 80 percent work completed," said a top official of Petrobangla. "We can now confidently say they will come into operation in October if nothing unusual happens."

The impact of operation of the Tk 1431-crore coal mine project will not be felt immediately as its main consumer -- the 250 megawatt Barapukuria Power Plant-- will start operation several months after the mine is ready for commercial production.

The mine has 64 million tonnes of high quality coal, which in terms of thermal value

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## Dhaka firm on One-China policy

*PM assures envoy*

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday reaffirmed Bangladesh's 'One-China' policy.

"Bangladesh has been following this principle and will remain firm on this stand," she was quoted as saying to Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Chai Xi who made a courtesy call on the prime minister at her office.

During the meeting, a host of issues, including bilateral cooperation, trade and commerce, investment and the forthcoming World Conference on Poverty

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## Dhaka to work with Delhi soon on Ulfa issue

*Shashank tells Indian daily*

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, *New Delhi*

Indian Foreign Secretary Shashank told the Indian Express, a leading daily of the country, that during his recent visit to Dhaka, he had the impression that it would 'very soon cooperate' with New Delhi on the issue of using Bangladesh by United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa) leaders as a base for their secessionist activities.

"In return, Dhaka has asked for some alleged criminals who are now living in India," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

India has asked for the particulars of Indians detained in Bangladesh jails so that persons like Anoop Chetia, who is in Bangladesh jail now, can be provided with consular access, Shashank said to the daily.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

# Thousands line up asking govt to go

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of activists of Awami League (AL) and its affiliates lined up along the major city roads yesterday demanding immediate resignation of the government for its 'total failure to deliver on its promises' including checking price hike of essentials and law and order downslide.

Locking arms with each other, the protesters formed the 'no-confidence human wall' extending from Pallabi to Bahadur Shah Park.

The human chain ran through Mirpur 10 and 1 roundabouts, Darussalam, Shyamoli, Asad Gate, Dhanmondi Road 27, Russell Square, Science Laboratory, Elephant Road, Bata intersection, Katabon, Eastern Plaza, Bangla Motor, Moghbazar intersection, Mouchak Market, Kakrail intersection, Bijoynagar Road, Paltan intersection, Noor Hossain Square, Nayabazar and English Road.

During the hour-long programme from 4:01pm, participants held banners with the slogan 'no more of this government' written on them in a show of non-confidence in the 30-month coalition rule, demanding for the government to step down to make way for mid-term elections.

Many wore headbands, badges and ribbons while others carried

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PHOTO: STAR

Senior Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad, *extreme left*, leads a 'no-confidence human shield' joined by thousands of supporters of the main opposition party in Dhaka yesterday, as it builds up an anti-government campaign.

## All govt offices wired via e-mail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All government offices were wired via email yesterday in an effort to establish e-governance and benefit from information and communications technology (ICT).

The Ministry of Establishment implemented the Tk 6.19 crore project to provide web and email facilities.

Civil servants would now be able to get latest government information just by clicking on the website www.pac.moe.gov.bd

The website will also have information on transfer, promotion and notifications of government officials.

The officials can also check their web-based email when abroad.

Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, principal

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## Revenue target falls Tk 372cr short in 8 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The revenue collection in the first eight months of the current fiscal year fell Tk 372 crore short of target set by the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The shortfall stood at Tk 358 crore in February alone.

Series of hartals, strikes at Benapole land port and duty reduction on soyabean, onion and other items caused the shortfall, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman told newspersons after attending the meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry yesterday.

The revenue collection witnessed 9.24 percent growth against the NBR growth target of 17 percent

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REPORT ON HUMAN DEV

## Reforms fail to rein in unemployment

*Joblessness rises 3.3%, employment 1.6% a year in 1990s*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite various economic reforms throughout the 1990s, there was little improvement in employment-generation situation in the country.

From 1990 to 2001, unemployment in Bangladesh increased by 3.3 percent a year, said the 'Report on Human Development in South Asia-2003,' prepared by Human Development Centre, a Pakistan-based regional think-tank, and launched yesterday at a meeting organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Quoting the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the report showed that during 1995-2000 annual growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) in Bangladesh was 5.1 percent, labour force 2.6 percent and employment only 1.6 percent.

"Economic reforms even left negative impacts on employment growth in some cases," said CPD Trustee M Syeduzzaman, presiding over the meeting, "partly due to obligatory compliance with conditions imposed by funding countries."

Adverse impacts of trade liberalisation, economic reforms in wrong order, gender inequity, reduction in public expenditures and lack of effective programmes to develop income generating skills have all led to a shortfall in job opportunities, the CPD trustee observed.

Economist Professor Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar

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## Asif strikes SAF gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Asif Hossain Khan claimed Bangladesh's first gold in the Ninth SAF Games when he won his favourite 10m air-rifle event in Islamabad yesterday.

The 18-year-old, who shot to fame at the 17th Commonwealth Games in Manchester two years ago, ensured that the Bangladesh anthem was played at the Shooting Range Pakistan Shooting Complex by collecting highest 693.6 points on the second day of the regional sporting extravaganza. Indian Sanjeev

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

# *Met office warns of drought*

*Boro harvest might suffer if the spell continues*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country is facing a drought-like situation due to scarce rainfall in the last three months, forcing farmers to depend on ground water ever receding to deeper depths for Boro cultivation this season, Met office sources said.

The country experienced a drastic fall in rain this year with 73 percent less rainfall than expected in January-February while the shortage was 53 percent till March 20, the sources said.

The meteorological department has informed Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) about the unusually low rainfall and asked it to prepare for additional irrigation measures for Boro cultivation.

"Drought has not set in yet, but we are closely monitoring the situation," said Arjuman Habib, deputy director of Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

Boro accounts for nearly 50 percent of the country's total rice production of 1.3 crore metric tons.

An official from the agricultural department said although rain is not crucial for Boro cultivation, which is largely dependent on irrigation, low rainfall is likely to harm normal production.

Besides, price hike of diesel used to run irrigation pumps coupled with power shortfall lower prospects for Boro harvest this season, he said requesting anonymity.

Irrigation for Boro usually runs from mid-February till mid-April. But uninterrupted irrigation is essential for good production.

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# BGMEA wants govt to complete full term

BSS, *Dhaka*

Garment manufacturers and exporters, the leading foreign exchange earners and private sector employers of the country, said they want a democratically elected government to complete its term, in line with norms and rules of democracy.

Leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) expressed the view when a 19-member delegation of its newly elected body made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

"BGMEA is above politics. We are always against hartals. We think a democratically elected government should complete its full term," said BGMEA President Annisul Haq.

Congratulating the new BGMEA body, the prime minister hoped that it would work to maintain a congenial atmosphere in the country for unhindered production and business.

"Only government policies are not enough. A good internal atmosphere is also necessary for production and development," she added.

She said any politics that goes

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Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation
Scholarship for meritorious and needy students

Date of Submitting application extended from 10th April to 10th May 2004

Reference is made to the advertisements published in the Daily Star and The Daily Ittefaq on February 9, 10 & 26, 2004 inviting applications for Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation Scholarship.

The last date of submitting application has been extended up to May 10, 2004.

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# Hosts in trouble

REUTERS, *Multan*

India's bowlers made inroads into the Pakistani batting, leaving the hosts an uphill battle to avoid the follow-on in the first Test on Tuesday.

Yasir Hameed (91) and captain Inzamamul Haq (77) made useful contributions but Pakistan still trailed India's mammoth first innings of 675 for five by 311 runs.

They had reached 364 for six by close of the third day's play and need another 112 runs to avoid the follow-on.

All-rounder Abdul Razzaq was batting on 47 with Moin Khan (17), the last recognised batsman, was bowled between his legs by occasional spinner Sachin Tendulkar off the day's last ball.

Irfan Pathan picked up two wickets while Zaheer Khan, Lakshmipathy Balaji, Anil Kumble and Tendulkar added one apiece, making more of an impression on a flat wicket than Pakistan's bowlers had.

Left-arm paceman Pathan, playing his second series after making his debut in Australia last year, struck the first blow when opener Taufeeq Umar (23) edged an outswinger to stand-in skipper

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