



PHOTO: STAR

Cartoonist Shishir Bhattacharya puts his signature on a protest banner in front of National Museum yesterday in solidarity with a movement to demand direct election to women's reserved parliamentary seats.

PM asks banks to fund RMG support industry

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the banks and financial institutions to quickly go for financing investment in establishing export-oriented garment and backward-linkage industries at the lowest possible interest.

The prime minister made the call while she was opening a three-day TexBangla fair 2004 at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel under the auspices of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA).

A total of 42 stalls have been set

up for exhibition of textiles. There are 626 textile mills as members of the BTMA, employing some 1.5 million workers, the opening function was informed.

The prime minister, however, noted that the scheduled banks had already taken a number of steps towards promoting investment at the government's instance.

"We will have to give importance to setting up backward-linkage industries to cope with the competition the country will face after phasing out of the quota free facilities

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Saved by a whisker

Schoolchildren escape death as 200-kg pillar misses them by a foot

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Several children and their parents at Sunnydale School at Dhanmondi in the capital miraculously escaped death or serious injuries yesterday as a 200-kg concrete pillar from an adjacent under-construction highrise fell down less than a foot away but hit a child's mother in the arms injuring her.

The pillar from the sixth floor of the building fell on the tin-roofed driveway at the school on Road-13 as KG-1 students lined up on it to be picked

up by their parents.

The pillar crushed the tin roof and fell to the ground.

Construction of the 18-storey building by a developer is going on without using any safety net whatsoever.

Immediately after the incident, agitated parents caught some construction workers and an engineer at the site and handed them over to Dhanmondi Police Station. A case might be filed against the developer for not using safety net around the

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CCCI worried at rising crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong Chambers of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) yesterday expressed grave concern at the alarming slide in law and order in the port city.

The rising killing, robbery, violence, extortion and mugging are a

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| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| April 14 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4-35 | 5-10 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-45 | 5-00 |
| Maghrib | 6-24 | 6-28 |
| Esha | 7-45 | 8-15 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

8 Russian hostages freed in Iraq

US chopper crashes; GI killed; Sadr's aide released after detention

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Five Ukrainians and three Russians have been freed, a day after they were seized in Iraq, where a US military crackdown has led to the kidnapping of dozens of foreigners and a flareup of violence.

A US soldier was killed and near the hotspot of Falluja, witnesses said, and a US MH-53 helicopter crashed southeast of here yester-

day and marines who rushed to secure the crash site came under attack and sustained casualties, a marine officer said.

The officer said it was not known how many people were aboard the helicopter, which can carry up to 55 people.

He said the aircraft did not belong to the Marine Corps, but to another US government agency.

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