

PM lays foundations of 6 uplift projects in Chittagong

BSS, Ctg

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated half a dozen development projects in Chittagong involving about Tk 1,100 crore.

After flying to the port city in the morning, the prime minister spent a busy day laying the foundations of Tk 439 crore third Karnaphuli Bridge at Char Chaktal, Tk 500 crore Foy's Lake Development Project at Pahartali and Tk 95 crore three-star Motel Saikat complex near Chittagong train station.

She also laid the foundations of a Tk 10 crore multistorey building of Chittagong Education Board at Sholoshahar and the Tk 5.13 crore Chittagong Women's Technical Training Centre at Nasirabad.

Besides, the prime minister inaugurated the Tk 8 crore extended complex of Jamiatul Falah Masjid-cum-Islamic Centre at Dampara in the city.

Several ministers, lawmakers and local leaders of the four-party alliance accompanied the prime minister.

Business leaders said the planned third Karnaphuli Bridge, beautification of Foy's Lake and construction of Motel Saikat will give a tremendous boost to tourism in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Rangamati districts.

Officials said the third Karnaphuli Bridge will open new avenues of industrialisation in the southern part of the Karnaphuli river and extend the port city, which is already crammed due to unplanned urbanisation.

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BBC to tell Star reporter's story

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Special Correspondent of The Daily Star Morshed Ali Khan yesterday left Dhaka for London en route to Rwanda on a special assignment commissioned by the BBC Radio-4.

The BBC will document Morshed's long journey to the Rwandan capital to trace his 10-year-old daughter Aougy and also focus on the children of the Rwandan war that cost the lives of millions of men, women and children. The 30-minute BBC programme would be aired on June 10.

Morshed adopted Aougy while her parents deserted her during the bloody massacre in Rwanda in 1994. Morshed was then working for the United Nations peacekeepers as a linguist. He was instrumental in setting up the first Red Cross centre at the Stade Amahoro, which sheltered over 4,000 refugees fleeing from an unprecedented massacre.

Dhaka dropped from US travel warning list

UNB, Dhaka

The validity of travel warnings the US State Department issued on January 25 this year for American citizens intending to visit Bangladesh has expired and the country has been de-listed.

A foreign ministry announcement yesterday said the effect of the forewarning expired on April 15 and it has not been renewed upon the expiry of its validity.

"As such, the name of Bangladesh has been dropped from the list (concerned)," says the ministry release.

However, the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement applicable to all countries remains valid. It was issued on March 23, 2004 by the State Department and expires on September 23.

The special security alert was declared in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States.



PHOTO: STAR

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina addresses a huge rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka yesterday, marking Mujibnagar Day in memory of the formation of Bangladesh's first government in Meherpur on April 14, 1971.

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Spanish PM orders Iraq pullout

AP, Madrid

Spain's prime minister Sunday ordered Spanish troops pulled out of Iraq as soon as possible, fulfilling a campaign pledge to a nation recovering from terrorist bombings that al-Qaeda militants said were reprisal for Spain's support of the war.

Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero issued the abrupt recall just hours after his government was sworn in, saying there was no sign the United States would meet his demand for United Nations control of the post-war occupation. His ultimatum for keeping troops there.

Zapatero's Socialist party won the March 14 general election amid allegations that outgoing Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, by backing the war in Iraq, had provoked commuter-train terrorist bombings that killed 191 people three days before the vote.

Though Zapatero had promised to remove Spanish troops, his immediate action was a bombshell, and a setback for the United States as Spain's new foreign minister prepared to travel to Washington to discuss the dispute.

The Bush administration has been eager to maintain an international veneer on the increasingly besieged coalition force in Iraq, which is dominated by its 130,000 American troops.

In a five-minute address at the Moncloa Palace, Zapatero said he had ordered Defense Minister Jose Bono to 'do what is necessary for the Spanish troops stationed in Iraq to return home in the shortest time possible.'

He cited his campaign pledge to bring the 1,300 troops in Iraq home by June 30, when their mandate expires, if the United Nations failed to take political and military control.

"With the information we have, and which we have gathered over the past few weeks, it is not foreseeable that the United Nations will adopt a resolution" that satisfies Spain's terms by its deadline, Zapatero said.

The latest polls show 72 percent of Spaniards want the troops withdrawn.

The government did not say when it would start removing its forces, but officials in Cairo said Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher was told by his Spanish

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Information secy transferred to Planning Commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The establishment ministry on Sunday transferred Information Secretary Tazmul Alam Siddiqui to the Planning Commission as a member and appointed the additional secretary at the Prime Minister's Office as acting secretary of the information ministry.

Official sources said the transfer was made covertly at a time when Siddiqui was on an official tour to Malaysia. The first term of his contract expires in August.

Information Minister Tariqul Islam yesterday admitted that he was not consulted beforehand. "I knew nothing of the transfer and was not consulted about who will be posted to my ministry. I came to know about the transfer and posting after the publication of official notification," he said.

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PRAMANIK MURDER Charges pressed against Babul

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Badda police yesterday pressed charges against Jamuna Group Chairman Nurul Islam Babul and five others in the Alam Pramanik murder case.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka against Babul, Shamim Islam, Babul's son, Amir Hossain, Mohammad Ripon, Saidur Rahman and Dewan Ali. Dewan is absconding, while the rest except Babul are free on bail.

Of the accused, Nadim Chowdhury, Amzad Hossain alias Titu, Abdul Khaleq and Ezaffar Hossain have been dropped from the charge sheet as the allegations brought against them were not proved.

In the charge sheet, 25 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

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RU APPOINTMENT IRREGULARITY

Department head resigns in protest

ANWAR ALI and ABU KALAM, Rajshahi

A departmental chairman at Rajshahi University (RU) resigned yesterday in protest at the controversial recruitment of 544 employees.

Prof Mahtab Ali, chairman of zoology department, resigned after he was asked to accept nine of the new recruits.

"Authorities pressed me to accept nine employees appointed against five vacant posts. But I couldn't stand it and so resigned," Dr Mahtab told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

The chairmen's council, provosts' council and senators have also expressed concern at the recruitment, which they claimed was done without any advertise-

ment and proper scrutiny of merit. They said the recruitment was unnecessary, illegal and politically motivated.

The chairmen's council and provosts' council yesterday from two separate meetings placed a three-point demand that included immediate cancellation of the appointments, confirmation of previous appointments and ensuring appointment of skilled persons. They asked the RU authorities to meet the demands soon.

The RU Teachers' Association (Ruta) and Progressive Teachers' Association (PTA) yesterday evening sat together to discuss their role against the recruitment that plunged the campus into chaos for the last two months.

Earlier in mid-April, PTA and 27

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3 killed as twister hits Mymensingh

STAR REPORT

A tornado lashed three upazilas of Mymensingh Sunday evening killing at least three people and injuring 50 others.

Sufferings of at least 3,000 families rendered homeless in Wednesday's twin tornadoes in Mymensingh and Netrakona meanwhile are mounting due to inadequate relief, lack of rehabilitation measures and torrential rains yesterday and the day before.

The three killed Sunday evening are Ayenun Nesa, 50, Mamtaz Begum, 26, and a three-year-old child. They died on the spot, Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) sources said.

Another victim of the twin tornadoes, Arosh Ali, 45, died yesterday at the MMCH, raising the death toll to 72 in the two districts.

A total of 280 people injured in the tornadoes are now under treatment at the MMCH and 278 at Netrakona General Hospital. They

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Traffic barred for PM's rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Roads in the port city were clogged yesterday due to a public meeting of the four-party alliance at the Outer Stadium.

The general public had to face the music as many key thoroughfares were kept off limits by the authorities until late afternoon.

City dwellers, especially

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Prayer Timings		
April 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-27	6-31
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

GUIDELINE TO WORK TOGETHER

JS bodies mum about graft before April 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most of the parliamentary standing committees formed to ensure transparency and accountability of the government have apparently become inoperative because of the opposition deadline to unseat the coalition by April 30 and the prime minister's guideline for them to 'work together' with the ministries, highly placed sources said.

The ruling coalition members of the committees now seem unwilling to raise their voice against alleged corruption and irregularities in various ministries, several chairmen of the bodies told The Daily Star,

seeking anonymity.

Most of the standing committees including 39 on the same number of ministries do not have the main opposition Awami League's representation. The second largest opposition party in parliament, Jatiya Party (Ershad), has members in some committees. But they are not often allowed to discuss any important issue at the committee meetings, they allege.

Most of the standing committees are just waiting for expiry of the April 30 deadline as the heads of these bodies have been advised not to criticise government activities at

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Musharraf signs law giving Pak military political role

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf yesterday approved a controversial bill setting up a National Security Council which critics say would give the military a political role.

The NSC bill has already been passed by the two houses of Pakistani parliament. Officials said it was forwarded to Musharraf, who approved the bill on Monday.

The new law calls for establishing a 13-member National Security Council made up of military chiefs and nine civilian leaders to shape policy on national security issues.

Musharraf, who is also the coun-

try's army chief, will head the council, which he says will only be a "consultative" body.

But critics have charged the council will give military brass a say in the policies of a democratically-elected government.

Musharraf, who seized power in a military coup in October 1999, held elections in October 2002.

The main opposition Pakistan People's Party of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has vowed it would overturn the new law when it gains the parliamentary strength to do so.

Pakistan has been ruled by generals for almost half of its 57-year history.



PHOTO: STAR

Traffic congestion blocks the busy Mirpur Road in front of Dhaka College yesterday. Such scenes of gridlock are commonplace in Dhaka.

Critically ill Maradona on life support



AFP, Buenos Aires

The condition of Argentine football legend Diego Maradona, fighting for his life in hospital here Monday after heart failure, has been complicated by a lung infection, his personal doctor said Monday.

However, Alfredo Cahe said the 43-year-old Maradona's condition had improved.

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