



PHOTO: STAR

Part of the busy Gabtoli Bus Terminus in Dhaka turns into an impassable patch of sticky mud and stagnated rainwater, making long-haul travels by bus all the more difficult.

Special district cells to prevent human trafficking soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to form a special cell in each district, administrative unit and metropolitan city to prevent trafficking in women and children in the wake of US blacklisting of Bangladesh for its not doing enough to combat such trafficking.

"The cell will start working across the country from July 1," Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shahudul Haque told The Daily Star on the phone last night.

A woman sub-inspector will lead the five-member cell that will work under the supervision of its unit chief. The cells will also keep a close eye on cases filed for trafficking until trials of those are complete.

"Previously, there was a lone cell at the Police Headquarters to combat trafficking in women and children but we decided to strengthen it considering the present situation," Shahudul said.

Asked whether an increase in trafficking prompted him to take the decision, the IGP said, "I will not put it this way. You've seen recent reports on the issue, which have prompted me to take the decision."

"I myself have taken the decision after consulting all concerned."

The Police Headquarters in a press release yesterday asked for information on trafficking that can be provided to the cells or to the headquarters on phone or by

email. The phone numbers are 9564775, 7124000-49 (ext 2037) or at 999 (Dhaka Metropolitan Police exchange) and the email address is anrkm1@bdcom.com.

The US on Monday blacklisted Bangladesh among 10 nations for failing to fight international sex trafficking, opening the way for possible sanctions. The list can lead to cut-offs in non-humanitarian and non-trade-related US aid unless Dhaka demonstrably improves its records by October.

Bangladesh was moved from "Tier 2" to "Tier 3" as it failed to make significant efforts to prosecute traffickers and address the complicity of government officials

Say sorry for Iraq war

NYTimes asks Bush

AFP, Washington

The New York Times yesterday called on President George W. Bush to apologise to the American people for going to war on Iraq after an official probe into the September 11 attacks found no evidence linking Iraq and al-Qaeda.

"Now President Bush should apologise to the American people, who were led to believe something different," the Times editorial said.

"Of all the ways Mr. Bush persuaded Americans to back the invasion of Iraq last year, the most plainly dishonest was his effort to link his war of choice with the battle against terrorists worldwide."

A panel investigating the 11 September, 2001 attacks said Wednesday there was no "credible evidence" Iraq had helped Osama bin Laden's extremist al-Qaeda network to attack the United States and no sign of any "collaborative relationship" between Baghdad and the group.

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UN agency admits error in report on Iran nuke

AFP, Vienna

The UN atomic agency admitted yesterday to having made a mistake in a June report on Iran's nuclear programme that said Iran had failed to inform it about importing magnets for advanced centrifuges.

An Iranian interviewed in January had mentioned importing magnets, but the fact was not mentioned in an IAEA report in June on Iran's nuclear programme, a senior

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SQ Chy returns home today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and defeated candidate for the secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Salauddin Quader Chowdhury return home from Turkey today amid a wave of criticism over Bangladesh's poor show in the voting.

Political leaders, former diplomats and social organisations slated the government for 'wasting an opportunity' to secure the post

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Prayer Timing		
June 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-05	4-40
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Proposed housing policy ignores crumbling old buildings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities have virtually ignored the problem of ramshackle buildings threatening to crush down on their residents in Old Dhaka and other places in the proposed national housing policy.

The policy mainly dealing with providing housing facility for middle- and low-income groups was discussed at a seminar at the housing and public works ministry yesterday.

The proposed housing policy, 2004 dedicated only a few lines to

renovating old buildings, but experts believe greater focus should be placed on old buildings the collapse of which might claim lives.

The death of 18 people in an old house collapse in Shankhari Bazar in the old quarter of the capital earlier this month brought the concern that the current measures failing to ensure people's safety to a head.

"We've received a number of suggestions, including some on old buildings. We hope to incorporate some of them in the policy after discussion," said Iqbal Uddin

Ahmed, acting housing and public works secretary.

PROPOSED POLICY

"The thrust of our focus is housing for all. If we can implement properly, the proposed housing policy will resolve the acute housing problem," said Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas.

He said integrated inter-ministerial efforts were necessary to resolve the problems.

The proposed policy called for arranging subsidised land and easy

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Saddam to be under US watch in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

The United States and Iraq are close to a deal to transfer ousted dictator Saddam Hussein into Iraqi legal custody although he will remain under the lock and key of US wardens, a coalition source told AFP Wednesday.

Saddam will be under Iraq's legal jurisdiction, but the US-led coalition would still guard the former head of state, the source said.

"This is the arrangement we're close to reaching," the source said, adding: "This is probably what's going to happen."

US overseer Paul Bremer broached the possibility of such an arrangement Tuesday after US President George W. Bush expressed fears that the Iraqis could not guarantee Saddam stayed behind bars.

"If they ask for him, which I have every reason to believe they will... we'll turn him over," Bremer told the Washington Post, adding that

"legal custody and physical custody can be two separate things."

Iraq's Justice Minister Malek Duhan al-Hassan said he believed America would turn over the toppled dictator who once struck fear into the hearts of millions, but the US-led coalition's help was necessary.

"Saddam Hussein will be under our responsibility after June 30 but we can ask the coalition to provide additional support to guard him for an undetermined period of time,"

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Blanc warns France of complacency



AFP, Paris

Former defensive stalwart Laurent Blanc has warned France against complacency following the stunning 2-1 Euro 2004 win over England.

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TODAY'S MATCHES	
BULGARIA vs DENMARK	Live at 9.55 pm
ITALY vs SWEDEN	Live at 12.40 am (Saturday)



PHOTO: AFP

Portugal midfielder Maniche hammers in a pile-driver into the net of Russia during the Euro 2004 match at the Da Luz stadium in Lisbon early yesterday.

Transport strike continues in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Transport workers of Barisal-Rupatali bus terminal continued with their strike programme in Barisal till yesterday evening.

Transport workers called the indefinite strike demanding immediate release of their arrested leaders, withdrawal of cases lodged against them and cancellation of an agreement between transport workers and Barisal Bus Owners' Association.

Barisal City Corporation Mayor Mujibur Rahman Sarwar yesterday noon held an emergency meeting with corporation officials and ward commissioners at Nagar Bhaban to resolve the crisis at the bus stand, sources said.

The meeting decided to lodge a case against the people involved in the June 12 rampage at the bus terminal.

Canada questions Fenchuganj power plant deal process

SHARIER KHAN

Canada has questioned fairness and transparency of the government's tender process as it pursues a deal with a Japanese company to set up a 90 megawatt power plant in Fenchuganj ignoring an offer of a Canadian company.

The Canadian government says it finds 'unacceptable' the way the tender process has been dealt with.

The Power Development Board (PDB) picked up Japanese company Sumitomo in March in the fourth re-tender of the 90mw project as it appeared to be the lowest bidder with an offer of \$83 million. Its nearest competitor Canadian Lavalin offered \$89.5 million for the job.

It, however, soon turned out that Sumitomo's offer lacked some tender specifications including performance guarantee and supply of spare parts for the plant. Moreover, the Japanese firm proposed increasing its financial offer by another \$2 million. Such deviation is supposed to lead to disqualification of Sumitomo's offer, but the PDB and Power Ministry went ahead with its bid.

The ministry is now preparing documents for the Cabinet Purchase Committee's approval, sources said.

In a letter to the state minister for power earlier this month, C a n a d i a n

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Abducted Rangpur madrasa principal freed in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Sadullapur police on Wednesday freed an abducted madrasa principal from Gaibandha.

A police team rescued Maulana Basir Ahmed, 70, principal of Motherganj Senior Madrasa at Pirganj upazila in Rangpur, from the Bajruk Rasulpur village house of Mujibar Rahman in the night, sources said.

They also held Mujibar and seized a motorcycle, sources said.

A gang picked up Basir from his home Tuesday night and drove him on a bike to Gaibandha, police said.

The principal said the gang kidnapped him in connection with recruitment of teachers in his madrasa and election to madrasa management committee.

Abductors also forced him to sign a paper on handing over of his charges at the institution, Basir added.

A case was lodged with Sadullapur Police Station.

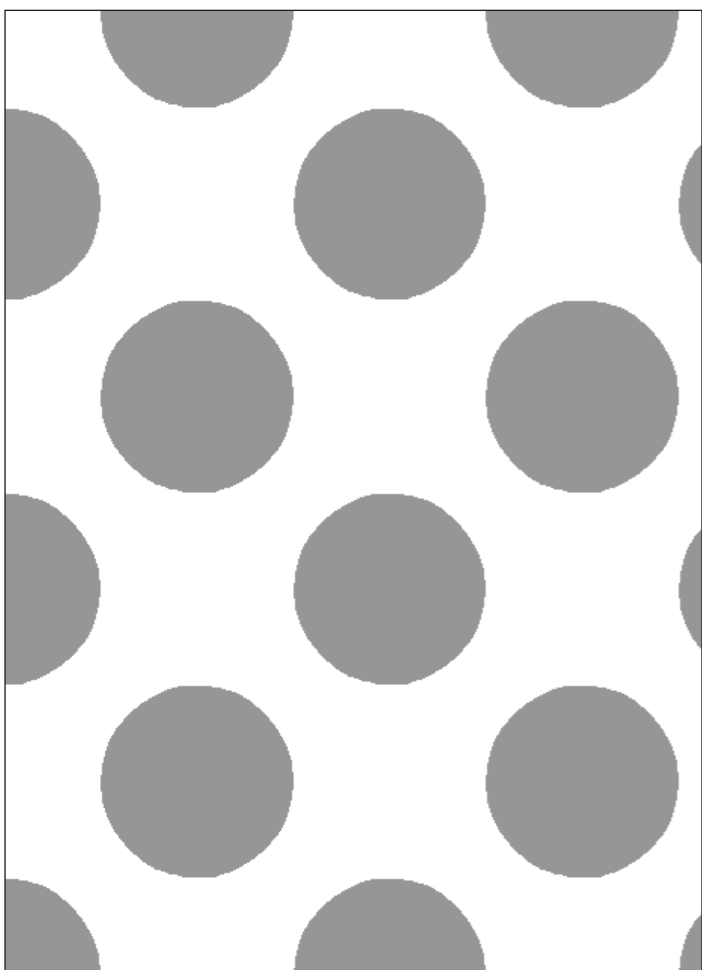


PHOTO: STAR

Workers carry out brickwork to extend sidewalks of Nawabpur Road in Dhaka to four feet each yesterday, narrowing the busy thoroughfare.

Hasina blasts govt for defeat in OIC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday blasted the government once again for nominating a controversial person for the top job of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) and observed that the defeat in the election tarnished country's image.

"We had a real scope for winning the post of OIC secretary general this time around. But Bangladesh squandered the opportunity when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia picked a candidate who is an anti-liberation person and known for his international arms smuggling link," said Hasina, also the Awami League (AL) president.

She was addressing a rally at Gazipur Stadium, where people gathered on the chehram of AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, who

was gunned down on May 7.

The AL chief reiterated that the BNP-Jamaat alliance has established a reign of terror by rewarding killers.

"People want peace and security, and ouster of this regime is the only way to ensure these," she said.

The free fall of law and order led all to wonder whether any government exists now, she said.

Hasina said it is now clear that Juba Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarker and people close to the prime minister were involved in the killing of Ahsanullah Master.

"Killers get rewarded while the innocent people who protested the killing are being harassed by police," said Hasina demanding immediate arrest of the lead killers

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