

## Hop over Mohakhali snarl-up

PM opens first flyover; promises many more structures, underground railway

REZAUL KARIM

Bangladesh yesterday entered a new era of communication with the opening of country's first flyover at Mohakhali in the capital, a vital step towards easing the city's traffic congestion.

"Flyover once was a dream and is now a reality...A long-felt need is fulfilled today," said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia before opening the huge overpass to traffic.

Unveiling a long-term master plan on transportation for the capital that includes construction of more flyovers and an underground

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A few thousand curious people race up the flyover at Mohakhali soon after the opening of the country's first overpass yesterday although pedestrians are restricted from using it.

## Khaleda asks party men to get ready for next polls

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked her party men to brace themselves for the next general elections by rejuvenating the party at grassroots level through electing new committees, giving preference to young leadership.

She told the activists of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to stand by party decision in selecting candidates and vote them to victory.

"The national election of 2007 is very crucial for the people and the country," the prime minister said while addressing the upazila level leaders from Barisal and Rajshahi divisions at the International Conference Center (ICC).

Reminding of the "oppression" on the party workers during the past Awami League rule, Khaleda, also the chairperson of the BNP, cautioned that their sufferings would aggravate if the organisation was not further strengthened at grassroots level.

She once again reminded that the opposition party was trying to create an issue over the caretaker government system in their latest ploy.

"If the opposition does not want

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## Arafat slips into coma

Aides give mixed reports on his health

AGENCIES, Paris

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has been in a coma since Wednesday evening and is now in critical condition in the intensive care unit at a French military hospital, French medical sources say.

"He is still in a coma," the medical sources said.

The report was contradicted by Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei at his West Bank headquarters in Ramallah, however, who told reporters Arafat was not in a coma.

"He is not in a coma," he told reporters. "There have been examinations and results are positive," he said without elaborating.

However, some Arafat aides said doctors carrying out tests on the 75-year-old leader since he was airlifted to France last Friday still did not know what was wrong with him, despite ruling out leukemia.

Arafat's immune system appeared quite weak as his health, which had at first stabilised after he arrived at the hospital on Friday, suddenly deteriorated on



Wednesday, they said yesterday.

"Arafat is in a coma and in a critical condition," a senior Palestinian official told Reuters. He was transferred to the intensive care unit on Wednesday at around 5:00pm (4 p.m. British time).

"He has no immunity whatsoever," another aide said.

Rumours about Arafat's health swirled yesterday as some Middle East media denied he was in a coma.

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## Bar Council to serve showcause notice on Faizee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bar Council yesterday decided to serve a showcause notice on Additional Judge of the High Court Faisal Mahmud Faizee asking him to explain why action would not be taken against him for providing false information while obtaining council's certificate for legal practice.

Faizee, a former High Court lawyer who was appointed an additional judge in August this year and withdrawn from the High Court bench on Sunday following allegation of tampering with his law grad

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## 2 killed in 'crossfire'

2 lynched by mob

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An outlaw and a robber were killed in Khulna and Bogra during shoot-outs with the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the police while two alleged criminals were lynched by a mob at Gulshan in the capital during a Rab raid yesterday.

Mahfuzur Rahman Mafiz alias Nasim, 34, a leader of Purba Bangla Maobadi Communist Party who was arrested in Dhaka on Tuesday, was

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## Islamabad wants FTA with Dhaka

Pakistan PM stresses opening bilateral shipping services

UNB, Dhaka

Pakistan is keen to enter into a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Bangladesh to foster bilateral trade and economic cooperation, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said here yesterday.

The FTA, he said, would spur business and trade between the two friendly countries. Besides, Pakistan is willing to open bilateral shipping services to promote trade.

The Pak leader also stressed the need for expansion of trade in the region through South Asian Free

Trade Area (Safta).

Talking to a group of newspaper editors yesterday morning, Aziz said Pakistan is also willing to help Bangladesh in vertical integration of the country's textile sector.

He also emphasised the need for setting up a Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) development fund for poverty alleviation programmes in the region.

The Pakistan prime minister observed that South Asia has the richest reserve of "human capital"

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## Bush to 'unite' US in second term

Arabs remind US president of Mideast peace commitment

AGENCIES, Washington

US President George Bush, fresh from his triumph in the US presidential election, is set to return to work with a routine day at the White House.

He will hold his first cabinet meeting in two months, and is expected to change his line-up of advisers soon.

Bush, who won both the popular and electoral college votes and has strengthened his control of Congress, has vowed to unite a nation split by his re-election, but

others see the result as a mandate for radical change.

Meanwhile, Arab governments have reminded Bush of his commitment to Middle East diplomacy, in the hope a second Bush administration will pay more attention to one of their top priorities.

The official message to Bush was one of polite cajoling and willingness to work with the United States to revive Middle East talks, which made no significant progress in Bush's first term.

But their emphasis on his past

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## 14 abducted for camel jockeying return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourteen Bangladeshi children, kept at two shelter homes in West Bengal since 2001, returned to Dhaka in the early hours Wednesday.

They are now kept at a shelter home of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) in Agargaon in the capital.

These children, detained in West Bengal during 2001-2003, were being trafficked to Middle East through India where they would have been forced into becoming jockeys in camel race or doing odd jobs.

They had been kept at Ariadah's Dhrubasram and Kishaloy of Barasat, two juvenile homes in West Bengal, at the directive of the Juvenile Justice Court of Kolkata.

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Fourteen Bangladeshi children, who were detained in West Bengal on way to be smuggled to the Middle East as camel jockeys in 2001, returned home Wednesday. The photo was taken at the Dhanmondi office of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association yesterday.

## AL flays govt, BNP calls it politically motivated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition lawmakers yesterday launched a broadside against the ruling coalition for its failure to arrest the skyrocketing of essentials' price, which the treasury bench members countered by labelling the issue as 'politically motivated'.

The opposition MPs demanded immediate resignation of the government for its inability to control the food market, besides asking Altaf Hossain Chowdhury to apologise for bungling his job as the commerce minister.

During the hour-long argument over price hike of essentials, BNP and Awami League deputies also traded accusation of bamboozling the people to distract their attention

from the real causes of the price boom.

The AL MPs alleged syndicates of traders led by BNP men have deliberately pushed up essentials' prices, further boosted by BNP cadres' 'rampant' extortion.

Members of the treasury bench in their turn blamed flooding, rains and opposition's hartals for causing the price escalation. They also claimed the price level of essentials is ebbing thanks to some appropriate and timely government measures.

"Prices of essentials are now within the commoners' reach," announced Altaf Chowdhury.

Responding to an opposition speech, some BNP MPs asserted that no monga or monga-like (near-

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The one time paint for many seasons...

- anti-fungal
- anti-fading
- anti-flaking

House - 10A, Road-50, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212  
Ph: 8817494, Mobile : 0173-031949  
(Close to Gulshan Club)

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