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PM flies to Singapore today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia goes to Singapore today, the first by a Bangladeshi leader in decades, aiming to explore new avenues of economic and commercial cooperation with the southeastern business

In the context of government's "Look East" policy and economic diplomacy, the three-day official tour of the prime minister is seen as "significant" on various counts, new Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin

told reporters on the eve of the visit. Khaleda will hold official talks with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsein Loong on March 21 reviewing the entire gamut of bilateral

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Dumped into desert

24 Italy-bound Bangladeshis return after languishing in Sahara, Mali jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Less than a month into the Mediterranean tragedy, yet another horrible story came to light yesterday as 24 Bangladeshi fortuneseekers returned home a year after travel agents had sent them to western African country of Mali promising to get them job in Italy.

The manpower agents dumped the unsuspecting youths in the deep Sahara desert where they wandered for a few days with no food and water and were thrown into jail in Mali after police rescued them from

formed Bangladeshi Orion Power

Company showed an experienced

Japanese power company -- Nissho

Iwai Corporation -- as the 'lead

sponsor' to pre-qualify in the tender

for this power plant back in

But after pre-qualifying, Belhasa

September 2003.



WITHDRAWAL OF 2 EU ENVOYS

A relative hugs one of the 24 Bangladeshi fortune seekers at the airport as they returned home from African nation of Mali yesterday.

Petrol import may stop to check octane adulteration

The government is likely to stop the import of petrol in a bid to check the adulteration of octane

Octane sells at Tk 35 per litre while the price of petrol is Tk 33 per

But it is alleged that a section of dishonest petrol pump operators are adulterating octane by mixing petrol with it to make extra profit. State Minister for Energy AKM

Mosharraf Hossain said after the present stock of petrol exhausts, the government will stop its import. "We will ask the Bangladesh

Petroleum Corporation (BPC) to

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Jatrabari flyover gets govt nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday approved in principle the sevenkilometre Jatrabari flyover project to be implemented by a joint venture of Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates and India under a 'build. own and operate (BOO)' basis.

If the prime minister endorses the cabinet body nod, Orion of Bangladesh, UAE's Belhasa and Indian Acom will work together to connect the city's Jatrabari with Gulistan in 30 to 36 months at a cost ofTk700 crore.

The flyover will have seven exitentry points including one at Tikatuli and one at Syedabad. But, this is going to be a paid ride

for city commuters. For a five kilometre flyover trip, a motorcyclis will have to pay Tk 5, a CNG autorickshaw Tk 10, car Tk 35, jeep Tk 40, microbus Tk 50, minibus Ti 100 and trailer Tk 200.

It was also proposed that the toll rates would be increased every three years to match the inflation. The Orion-Belhasa-Acomwill collect the tolls for 24 years under the BOO

The joint venture will get a 15-year tax holiday, although the finance minister who chairs the committee meetings earlier downright rejected the idea. The government's draft Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) also discour-ages tax holiday.

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Rice finds Bangladesh becoming 'quite troubling'

BDNEWS, Dhaka

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said Bangladesh is becoming "quite troubling" and there is more that the USA and India could

"There is more that we probably need to do on Bangladesh which is, I think, a place that is becoming quite troubling. So in the region, there is a great deal that we can do," she said in an interview with Raj Chengappa of India's leading magazine 'India

As Chengappa asked on the South Asia region saying: "we're SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

MEGHNAGHAT POWER PLANT

Rookie consortium set to get contract

PDB under political pressure, seeks cabinet body nod tomorrow

SHARIER KHAN

Under the influence of a political lobby, the Power Development Board (PDB) tomorrow seeks approval of the Cabinet Purchase Committee to award a contract to set up the 450 megawatt second phase Meghnaghat Power Plant to an inexperienced consortium.

The UAE-based trading company Belhasa along with newly

Galib denied bail again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A weary looking Asadullah Al Galib, chief of Ahle Halith Andolan, was denied bail yesterday by the Gaibandha magistrate court in two consecutive bomb blast cases.

He was later sent to Gopalganj, where he will face a nine-day

It was the second time Galib appeared before the Gaibandha magistrate court in connection with the bomb cases. At the same time, 15 other militants arrested in the same cases were also produced before

changed the name of the lead sponsor to BN Consortium while submit-Islam Babu, had prayed for bail, but ting bid. Getting away with the after it was denied the court fixed a SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

New foreign secretary not aware of move

New Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin expressed his ignorance of the reported government move to request two European countries to withdraw their envoys from Dhaka for their interference in internal political affairs.

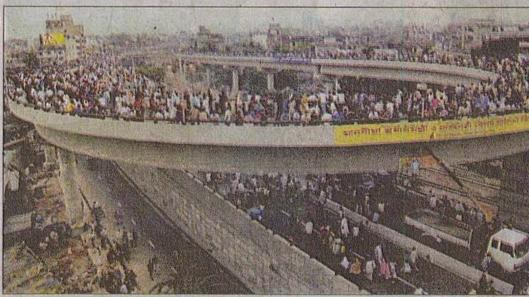
"I've no knowledge about it," he told his first media meeting at the foreign ministry yesterday after-Galib's defence laywer, Sirajul noon, in the wake of a storm stirred over the issue by press reports.

Asked about the prime minister and the finance minister's critical

remarks about what they said for-eigners and donors "dictate," he said, "The prime minister's statement is final and conclusive. I have no comment on it.'

Asked about the reports on US-India joint initiative discussed during US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to New Delhi to deal with security concerns in Bangladesh Hemayet avoided a direct reply, saying: "That's a speculation. I can't react to this speculation.' Hemayet, who took over the

office of the foreign secretary last SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Khilgaon flyover, scheduled to be inaugurated Wednesday, has become a favourite spot with city-dwellers to strol

on tour with india, 2003-04 ate tr. From the pavilion of Pan Macmillan, the grand debut of "Pondits from Pakistan" by Rahul Bhattachurya is taking crease on the pitch of Etc's Pan Macmillan Book Month. Pundits from Pakistan + a book about the extraordinary occasion of the first proper tony by India to Pakistan - the matches, the journeys, the places, the encounters, the interviews, the moods, the players. The author, Rahul Bhatlacharya, will be present for the official Book Launch to personally autoproph each and every copy of the book for you. Are you geared up for the

Dravid puts India in driver's seat

India vice-captain Rahul Dravid struck hundreds in each innings for the second time in his career to help his team push for victory against Pakistan in the second Test on

Dravid hit a masterly 135 after his first innings 110 to steer India out of trouble as they piled on 407 for nine declared in their second innings an hour after tea on the fourth day.

Set an imposing fourth innings target of 422 never achieved before, Pakistan reached 95 for one at stumps but will be confident of securing a draw after their battling display from a worse situation on Day Five in the drawn first Test in

Attacking opener Shahid Afridi

lashed a 59-ball 59 before leg-spinner Anil Kumble removed him when he top-edged a sweep to short third man in the penultimate over.

Left-hander Taufeeq Umar was 29 not out with vice-captain Younis Khan yet to score.

Dravid had earlier anchored the India's second innings to score his 20th Test hundred and steer his team out of trouble.

The 32-year-old played a more cautious knock than his first innings effort sharing in a crucial 165-run partnership with teenage wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik, who missed out on his maiden hundred when he was dismissed for 93.

Leg-spinner Danish Kaneria eventually removed both batsmen in successive overs.

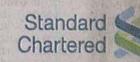
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Our heartiest felicitations to our clients Unliever Bangladesh Limited and Incepta Pharmaceuticals on their winning the Bangladesh Business Award 2004. We are proud of them on their success as the business leaders of Bangladesh.



Celebrating 100 years in Bangladesh