

Koizumi to push for strategic partnership with India

AFP, New Delhi

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said yesterday he will push a strategic and trade partnership with India as the world's biggest democracy moves closer to China. "India is a nation that is full of capability and potential, and it is yet to show its full capacity," Koizumi told reporters during a visit to a Japanese class in a local middle school. Japan and India "must cooperate to realise the full potential of the Japan-India ties. I want to make this visit an opportunity to do that," Koizumi said. The prime minister arrived in India late Thursday seeking to boost ties and win support from a fellow candidate for a permanent UN Security Council seat.

He is the first Japanese prime minister to visit India since his predecessor Yoshiro Mori in 2000. Koizumi was to meet President Abdul Kalam and hold talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh later Friday to discuss tightening the economic, political and security partnership. The two premiers were to sign a joint statement outlining action plans for future cooperation, and confirm that stronger Japan-India relations would lead to stability and prosperity in Asia. "I hope to reach agreement regarding a strategic orientation for the Japan-India Global Partnership in the new Asian era," Koizumi wrote in a full-page "landmark message to the people of India" published in The Times of India. The two were also to call for more

frequent meetings among ministers, dialogue over defence and anti-piracy measures, and increased educational and scientific exchanges. The Japanese prime minister was also to meet Indian business leaders to promote bilateral investment and trade. Koizumi's message said Japan and India should cooperate as "true global partners" in what he termed as a "new Asian era." "We are now in an era in which Asia is currently experiencing a process of transformation and India too is changing, thus elevating the importance even further of India and Japan cooperating as true global partners," Koizumi said. A "new dynamism" was developing in Asia, which could be called "a

\$ 300m WB loan to improve healthcare system

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) has approved \$ 300 million credit to help Bangladesh improve the quality of its healthcare system. The Health, Nutrition, and Population (HNP) project aims to strengthen public health sector management, improve service delivery, and develop health awareness campaigns, especially targeting the poorest households. "While Bangladesh's health indicators have improved significantly over the past decade, the country now faces the threat of an increase in non-communicable diseases, such as cancer and cardiovascular diseases," the bank said in a communiqué from Washington on Thursday. It said communicable diseases such as respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases, malaria, and tuberculosis remain prevalent, while HIV/AIDS rates are rising. An increasing incidence of inju



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A sailor readies lifebelts and life jackets on his vessel in Sadarghat in the city as launch owners have taken precautionary measures for inclement weather. The life-saving equipment, however, is not adequate for all passengers.



PHOTO: AFP

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, left, speaks with Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam, right, at the Presidential Palace in New Delhi yesterday. Koizumi is on a two-day official visit to India.

AL, allies trying to create conflict among Islamic parties: Nizami

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami yesterday alleged the Awami League (AL) and its allies are conspiring to create conflicts among Islamic parties for political gain. "The Awami League's prime target is to create rivalry among Islamic parties so that BNP considers us a burden," he told Jamaat's eighth regional representative meeting at Pallan Maidan in the city. Jamaat on March 13 launched its countrywide representatives meeting in Sylhet and is scheduled to close the programme in Rajshahi on May 13. Jamaat has joined the four-party

Extortionists murder trader in Kushtia, 'crossfire' kills outlaw

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Criminals killed a sand trader and abducted another, while an outlaw was killed in 'crossfire' between police and his accomplices in separate incidents in the district in the last two days. Extortionists in Bheramara upazila on Thursday night killed sand trader Saidur Rahman and took away his motorcycle. Police said the criminals stopped Saidur and chopped him to death near Bahadurpur Bazar when he was riding home at around 10:00pm. Family sources said extortionists had demanded Tk 50,000 from him and threatened him with dire conse-

quences had he failed to give the sum. He had filed a GD (general diary) following the threat. In Daulatpur, criminals stormed into the house of Niyat Ali Pramanik at Palashir Char village and demanded Tk 30,000. On his failure, the criminals abducted Niyat's son Shariful Islam, 25, and demanded Tk 3 lakh in ransom to be paid in five days. Niyat is trying to negotiate with his son's captors and is reluctant to call the police, who could not give details immediately. CROSSFIRE Police said Atiyar Rahman, 40, top cadre of outlawed Biplabi Communist Party (BCP),

No need to go to JS to recast caretaker system: Amu

UNB, Dhaka

A key Awami League (AL) leader yesterday rejected the ruling party's contentions about reforms of caretaker government system, saying that they do not need to go to parliament for recasting the system. "The then BNP government had to amend the constitution incorporating the caretaker system on March 26, 1996 in the absence of the opposition... This time around they will have to do the same," AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu told the private news agency. He rejected BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's suggestion for the Awami League to join parliament and discuss whatever the opposition wants to, by

Flash floods kill 34 in S Arabia

REUTERS, Riyadh

Flash floods killed at least 34 people in Saudi Arabia in the last two days, sweeping cars off roads and destroying houses, newspapers said yesterday. Al Okaz newspaper said 37 people were killed in the southern Asir province and the Red Sea port city of Jeddah. Another daily, Al Watan, put the death toll at 34. Newspapers published pictures of bodies covered in blankets, car accidents on waterlogged roads and dead cattle. Severe rain storms are common in some areas of Saudi Arabia. In January, floodwaters killed 29 people in the western city of Medina.

Pvt companies to check water vessels' fitness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to introduce local classification society (LCS), a system practised worldwide to survey fitness of watercraft. "We are now at the final stage to introduce the system through appointing three private companies to act as local classification society," Shafiqullah, director general of the Department of Shipping, told The Daily Star recently. A memorandum of understanding containing the terms and conditions of their job responsibility will be signed with the companies before giving them final approval for work, he said, adding that the companies will start working within a few weeks. The companies selected for the job are Maritime Classification Society and Associates, South East Register of Shipping and Bangladesh Classification Society. For surveying vessels, checking their designs, supervising the construction and planning of new vessels and issuing survey certificates, the companies will receive government approved fees.

Security around Ahmadiyya mosques stepped up in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police yesterday stepped up security for the Ahmadiyya mosques in Nirala and Labonchora areas, fearing attacks on the mosques by the religious bigots. In the afternoon, Khulna district unit of International Khatme Nabuat Movement Bangladesh (IKNMB) took out a procession in Khalishpur Industrial area demanding immediate withdrawal of the cases against IKNMB local chapter's Nayeb-e-Ameer Mufti Noor Hossain Noorani and Ameer Mahbubul Hasan Mamtazi. Moulana Golam Kibria, general secretary of Khulna district unit of IKNMB, and a member of Khulna Imam Parishad led the procession, which was not allowed to march towards the Ahmadiyya mosques. Addressing a rally at Khalishpur, the IKNMB leaders warned the government of a tougher movement if the cases against Mufti Noor Hossain Noorani and Mahbubul Hasan Mamtazi were not withdrawn.

ELECTRICITY FOR ALL BY 2020 USAID study sees a buoyant economy

SHARIEF KHAN

Electricity for all can push up net gain in national income by Tk 671 billion (\$101.1bn) a year and significantly improve literacy rate, healthcare and women empowerment, says a USAID study. To realise the government's policy of 'electricity for all by 2020', the country will need \$ 1 billion a year till that time or just \$16 billion. A finance ministry projection shows that Bangladesh needs 17,500 megawatt installed power to attain this goal. The USAID study says access to electricity will boost agricultural productivity, triggering a range of off-farm activities. It will also slow migration of rural people to urban areas and reduce associated socio-

political instability. The study on 'Economic and Social Benefits Analysis of Power Trade in the South Asia Growth Quadrangle Region' says that regional power trade among Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan will help Bangladesh reduce trade gap with India and attain better relations with its neighbours. Power trade will encourage trade in other commodities, changing the composition of export baskets of power-exporting countries. Bangladesh's foreign trade figures show the high cost of importing petroleum products and increasing demand for energy—both of which could benefit from value-additions and natural gas-based power exports. Quoting a five-year-old feasibility

report on power export, the USAID report said Bangladesh could annually earn \$130 million from power export to India from a proposed 375 mw gas-fired plant. Interconnecting the power grids of Northeast India and Bangladesh at less cost will reduce the transmission and distribution losses by 90 mw, resulting in a saving of \$79 million in investment for new capacity addition. The report notes that although South Asia possesses vast energy resources including hydropower, forests, coal and gas, per capita energy consumption is very low, accounting for only 5.9 percent of the world's commercial energy consumption. "The region's persistent energy shortages have been a

RO vows to ensure fair CCC polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Returning Officer (RO) for Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) polls yesterday exchanged views with the ward commissioner candidates on how to ensure a free and fair election on May 9. Over one hundred candidates attended the meeting held at Muslim Institute Hall with RO Golam Kuddus, also the additional divisional commissioner of Chittagong, in the chair. Deputy Election Commissioner of Chittagong Bishwash Lutfur Rahman was present at the meeting. As many as 308 people are vying for ward commissioner posts while 83 for the 14 reserved seats for women. A number of ward commissioner

2 to die, 2 get life for killing school girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Speedy Trial Tribunal for Rajshahi Division yesterday awarded two persons with death sentence and jailed another two for life in the Bonya murder case in Bera upazila of Pabna. The death convicts are Farid and Faruk of Basantapur in Bera, while Jamal and Masum were sentenced to life term. Judge AFM Aminul Islam also acquitted two others -- Farid's mother Ferdousi and Jamal's mother Sahera Khatun. Bonya Khatun, a student at Dhobakhola Coronation High School, was killed on October 30, 2003 on way to her home after school. Villagers caught Farid red-handed.



PHOTO: STAR

Dancers bring out a festive rally from the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday to observe the International Dance Day.

Enayetullah Khan successfully operated on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Enayetullah Khan, editor of the daily New Age and weekly Holiday, underwent a successful surgery in Toronto, Canada on Wednesday. During the nine-hour surgery, doctors of the Toronto General Hospital removed a tumour from the head of Khan's pancreas. Soon after the surgery, Khan regained his consciousness and talked with his family members. He is now in the post-operative care.

ISRAELI SPYMASTER SAYS Syrian president could be toppled

AFP, Jerusalem

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad could be ousted from power as his regime fractures under immense political pressure, the head of Israeli military intelligence said in an interview published yesterday. "His regime's stability is in great danger today, more than in the past. The economic problems will get worse" following Syria's troop pullout from Lebanon completed this week, Aharon Zeevi said in the newspaper Yediot Aharonot. "He has problems with the Americans because of terrorists infiltrating from Syria into Iraq, water problems with Turkey, and an argument over territory that he should have transferred to Jordan. "He is seen as a weak leader. I'm not sure that Bashar has the strength

Prayer Timing		
April 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation