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Rocca arrives in Dhaka

To meet Khaleda, Hasina today

UNB, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a two-day official visit to review the Dhaka-Washington bilateral relations.

She will also discuss regional issues and Middle East peace plan with Bangladesh leaders during her stay in Dhaka, official sources said.

The sources told the private news agency that Rocca would hold meetings with Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan and other high

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AHMADIYYA PUBLICATIONS HC extends stay on govt ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday extended the stay on the government ban on Ahmadiyya publications until the disposal of a writ petition filed to challenge the ban.

The HC division bench of Justice ABM Khairul Haq and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir passed the order following a petition that sought extension of the stay, which was valid until May 16.

The government on January 8 last year banned Ahmadiyya publications in an act against the country's rights and civil society groups,

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JS session starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament goes into session today afternoon when obituary reference at the death of main Opposition Awami League (AL) lawmaker and veteran politician Abdus Samad Azad and ruling BNP lawmaker Shamsuddin Ahmed Eshak will be adopted.

AL will decide whether they will join the session after discussing the matter at the working committee meeting this morning, said a senior AL lawmaker.

The AL boycotted the last session and did not join the obituary reference at the death of their lawmaker and former finance minister Shah

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Big plan for next ADP

Upcoming polls to influence size

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The government plans a Tk 24,000 crore Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the next fiscal year, 10 percent higher than this fiscal year's, in view of the next national elections, sources said.

The current ADP of Tk 22,000 crore may be trimmed down to Tk 20,500 crore after the ongoing review. Again, with the elections in mind, the local currency component of the ADP may be jacked up, planning ministry sources said. But the foreign currency component

may be reduced by Tk 1,500 crore.

The ADP figures will be finalised after Finance Minister M. Saifur Rahman returns from the US next Saturday. The National Economic Council will approve the ADPs on May 24.

The current ADP has Tk 14,500 crore in local currency and Tk 7,500 crore in foreign currency.

"Slow foreign aid disbursement because of negotiation delays has necessitated the cut in the ADP," said a planning ministry source.

"We are under tremendous pressure from ministers and law-

makers to increase expenditure in their constituencies ahead of the election," he added.

The finance minister held a meeting with the ministry's resource committee to discuss the next budget and ADP revision. After the meeting, the finance ministry asked the planning ministry to formulate the new ADP keeping in mind a Tk 24,000 crore outlay.

During a pre-budget meeting between Saifur and lawmakers last month, the public representatives demanded at least Tk 1 crore

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Foreign investment grows by 60pc

From \$268.92m in 2003 to \$431.35m in '04, says BoI

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) grew by a robust 60.40 percent in 2004.

According to a Board of Investment (BoI) survey, Bangladesh received FDI worth \$431.35 million last year, up from the previous year's \$268.92 million.

In addition, the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) received another \$154.13 million last year.

Sources said investors from 23 countries registered with the BoI for investment during the year.

Investors from Norway invested \$175.70 million in 2004 followed by those from the United Kingdom (\$72.86 million), Malaysia (\$38.97 million), Canada (\$29.19 million) and Egypt (\$19.96 million).

Investors from Denmark, Switzerland, China, Germany and Hong Kong are the major investors who registered with the BoI.

There was poor response from

the USA, Netherlands, Japan, South Korea and France although the cumulative investment from these countries is very high.

Netherlands' total investment until now stands at \$602.51 million, USA \$585.722 million, Japan \$185.194 million, South Korea \$107.72 million and French \$100.24 million.

BoI sources said the bullish FDI growth can be achieved as foreign investors showed interest in capital intensive energy, telecom and textile sectors.

The board expects the FDI this year to outgrow last year with a number of big league players such as Tata, Orascom and Signtel are likely to invest.

A high official of the BoI told with The Daily Star yesterday that industrial majors have shown interest this year in power generation, coal mining, fertiliser and cement.

JCD activist killed in Rab 'crossfire'

UNB, Narsingdi

A JCD activist was killed and two others were injured in a 'shootout' with Rab at Kararchar in Shibpur upazila yesterday, police said.

They said Nazmul, 32, vice-president of JCD Char Sindhur unit, was caught in the 'crossfire' and died instantly. He hailed from Malita village of Palash upazila.

His two colleagues in the ruling BNP-backed student body—Sohel of Balia village in Palash and Dulal of Bagdi area—were injured and arrested.

Police said one 6.5bore foreign-made pistol with a bullet was

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Sultry weather makes city life intolerable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mercury yesterday rose to 39.4 degrees Celsius, the highest rise so far this season, sending people on the streets panting for water and cool air.

A mild heat wave, the met office said yesterday, hit most of the northern districts, restricting people's movement particularly during midday when the heat from the sun was at its peak.

"It's too hot for me. I drank one can [plastic litre bottle] of water an hour ago but my body still seems to

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HSC exams begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations 2005 begin today under seven general education boards of the country.

Alim, Fazil and Kamil examinations under the Madrasa Education Board and business administration examinations under the Technical Education Board also begin at the same time.

A total of 497,911 candidates under all the nine boards will appear for the examinations this year.

422,474 candidates will appear in the HSC examinations under the seven general education boards, while 27,385 candidates will appear

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Four to die for rape, murder in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Four people were sentenced to death by a court at Bagerhat yesterday in the sensational Komorpur gangrape and murder case.

The condemned convicts are Iddris Shaikh, 28, of Sadar upazila, Shajahan Howlader, 34, of Kachua upazila, Lutfur Joarder, 34, of Swarankhola upazila, and Majnu Howlader alias Sentu, 32, of Patharghata in Barguna. Of them, Iddris and Shajahan were in the dock, while Lutfur and Majnu remained absconding.

Two other accused in the same

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READY RELIEF: Three children get sprinkled to their heart's content during a roadside shower at Eskaton Garden in Dhaka to beat the sizzling summer heat for the last few days.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

Govt to probe deaths in Rab crossfire

Decides cabinet committee

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Amidst controversies over extrajudicial killings, the government yesterday decided to conduct executive enquiry into the deaths in "crossfire" with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

"We will conduct executive enquiry into the incidents," State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar told journalists after a meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order.

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"The enquiry will start shortly," he said.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan who chaired the meeting said an enquiry would take place to examine whether the incidents of death were intentional.

Available statistics show more than 80 people were killed in Rab "crossfire" since the anticrime force went into action on March 26 last year.

4 suicide blasts kill 71 in Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

Four suicide bombs killed at least 71 people in Iraq yesterday, the latest attacks in an escalating campaign of guerrilla violence that has killed nearly 400 Iraqis since a new government was unveiled two weeks ago.

In Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, a suicide car bomber blew up his vehicle among a crowd of mainly Shia migrant labourers from southern Iraq who had gathered to look for work.

Police said at least 33 people were killed and 80 wounded.

A policeman at the scene of the blast in Tikrit, 175 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad, said the explosion was near a police station but the target was the crowd of workers.

"What I saw was a tragedy," said Ibrahim Mohammed, a migrant worker from the town of Kut who witnessed the blast. "Some people had their heads torn off by the explosion, some were burned, some were

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