

PANTHAPATH-RAMPURA Govt to start work soon on elevated roadway

UNB, Dhaka

The government has decided to immediately start construction of an elevated roadway from Panthapath to Rampura at a cost of Tk 530 crore to ease traffic congestion in the city.

The decision was taken at an inter-ministerial meeting at the LGRD ministry yesterday.

Presided over by LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal, the meeting was attended, among others, by Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

The meeting decided to overcome all impediments to construction of the 3.5-km elevated roadway from Panthapath to Rampura.

It also decided quick implementation of the project for expansion of the road from Bijoy Swarani to Rangs Bhaban. Rajuk will take the necessary steps.

The meeting also discussed the problems of Zahura Market and parking facilities along the road from Gulshan-1 to Gulshan-2.

80 dead as bombs mock Baghdad security plan

AP, Baghdad

Thunderous explosions and dense black smoke swirled through the centre of Baghdad yesterday when at least two car bombs one parked in an underground garage tore through a crowded marketplace, setting off dozens of secondary explosions and killing at least 71 people, police said. Another bombing nearby killed at least nine.

The blasts shattered the city centre on the first anniversary, according to the Muslim lunar calendar, of the bombing of the important Shia Golden Dome shrine in Samarra. That attack by al-Qaeda

in Iraq militants set off the torrent of sectarian bloodletting that has turned Baghdad and much of central Iraq into a battleground.

A column of smoke hundreds of feet wide billowed a thousand feet into the air above the market near the east bank of the Tigris River and near the Central Bank building.

Ambulances and pickup trucks rushed many of the wounded to nearby al-Kindi hospital in the largely Shia region that has been hit by a series of deadly bombings since the first of the year.

The worst carnage occurred about 12:25 p.m. shortly after the Iraqi government called for a 15-

minute period of commemoration for the bombing of the golden domed shrine in Samarra a year ago.

The blast obliterated the shops and stalls in a central building in the Shorja market district and billowing smoke blackened the entire area. Police said at least 71 people were killed.

Debris and clothing mannequins were scattered in thick pools of blood on the floor of the warehouse-type building while men tossed plastic chairs onto piles. Two men carried the limp body of

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Huge quantity of fake engine oil seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Joint forces and mobile courts yesterday seized huge quantities of fake engine oil from four factories all over the country.

In the capital, a mobile court raided Khokoner Mobil Ghar in Usabarir Basti in Postagola and seized more than 90 drums of fake engine oil made of burnt and contaminated lubricants along with unusable oils collected from different workshops.

The court led by magistrate Rokon-ud-Dowla issued warrants against owner of the factory Isaq Mia Khokon and owner of the slum Abdul Wahab for allowing such a business.

The court then raided another engine oil factory in Samad Mobil Ghar at Razabari in Postagola and recovered eight drums and five korai (cauldron) of fake engine oil. The court issued warrant against the owner Abdul Samad. The court also ordered to destroy the fake goods.

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PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court with the help of joint forces destroy used engine lubricants at a factory in Postagola in the capital yesterday where the oil was stored for recycling.

Allegations of cash incentives misuse to be probed

UNB, Dhaka

The government is likely to probe the allegations of illegal withdrawal of cash incentives from the national exchequer by some garment owners and exporters.

Finance Adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam, in reply to reporters after his meeting with the leaders of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) at his office yesterday, said the government will look into such allegations.

The interim administration is not aware of illegal withdrawal of cash incentives by any members of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). "But we will look into the matter when allegation

arises," he said.

Asked how long this incentive scheme will continue, he said, "We will think about it when we will prepare the national budget."

Responding to an appeal of the BKMEA leaders for directing banks to give interest-free loan to the association members against cash incentives, the adviser said he is not in favour of instructing the banks by interfering in their lending process. "Most of the time government directed the policy for giving loans, but in principle I am not in favour of that."

He also told the reporters that government borrowings from banks have decreased in recent times, which were on the increase couple of months ago.

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PHOTO: STAR

A bird perching on a silk-cotton flower tries to sip honey from the blossoms that heralds the spring beginning today.

EU envoy backs purge of corrupt politicians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

European Union (EU) Ambassador to Bangladesh Stefan Frowein yesterday said the international community supports the government's crackdown on corrupt politicians, terming the recent arrests the "right thing" to do.

"We, the international community, are very much for the fight against corruption. I think this government is doing the right thing. They are doing what they have to do," said Frowein to reporters when asked for his thoughts on the crackdown on corrupt politicians.

Stressing that the holding of free, fair and credible elections is the first and most important goal of the caretaker government, Frowein said, "We are asking for a timeta-

ble, as the international community." Since the government has left timetable for the elections unclear.

However, Frowein also said that he acknowledges the difficulties the government is facing in announcing the election timetable. It is very difficult, in some cases impossible, for the government to provide one.

"In order to do something properly a lot of things need to be done in parallel ... you are on a multidimensional path because a lot of things are being done at the same time," he said.

"So it is impossible at this point to say this will be done tomorrow or that will be done on that date," he added.

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Detained BNP leaders' bail petition to be heard March 5

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed March 5 for hearing on bail petitions by detained former communications minister barrister Nazmul Huda and nine other BNP leaders arrested for their alleged involvement in activities against the state.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court set the date when defence lawyers led ten separate criminal appeals seeking bails for Huda and others against the rejection orders of the lower court on February 5, 6 and 7.

The nine others for whom the lawyers filed bail petitions are parliamentary affairs adviser to the immediate past prime minister Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, former state ministers for labour and employment, civil aviation,

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ZIA flight operations resume after 16 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Operations of flights resumed at Zia International Airport (ZIA) from around 7:00am yesterday after takeoffs and landings of aircraft were suspended for over 16 hours.

A Boeing 747 aircraft of Saudi Arabian Airlines aborted takeoff on the runway at 2:30pm on Sunday due to a tyre puncture and caused the suspension of landings and takeoffs of other aircrafts at ZIA. The aircraft was removed from the runway at 5:35am yesterday and taken to the hanger for repairing, sources said.

Hundreds of passengers heading for different destinations and relatives of incoming passengers were relieved following the towing of the aircraft.

Around 18 flights were able to take off and land at ZIA till 8:00pm yesterday after the flight operation resumed, civil aviation sources said.

However, the flight schedules are yet to become normal as a number of flights are running behind schedule.

Different airlines have rescheduled their flights after the flight operations resumed yesterday.

Former Iraq VP Ramadan sentenced to death

AFP, Baghdad

Taha Yassin Ramadan, executed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's vice president, was himself sentenced to death Monday for crimes against humanity.

"The condemned Taha Yassin Ramadan shall be sentenced to hanging until death for committing deliberate killing crimes," Judge Ali al-Kahachi said, after the Iraqi High Tribunal met to review an earlier life sentence.

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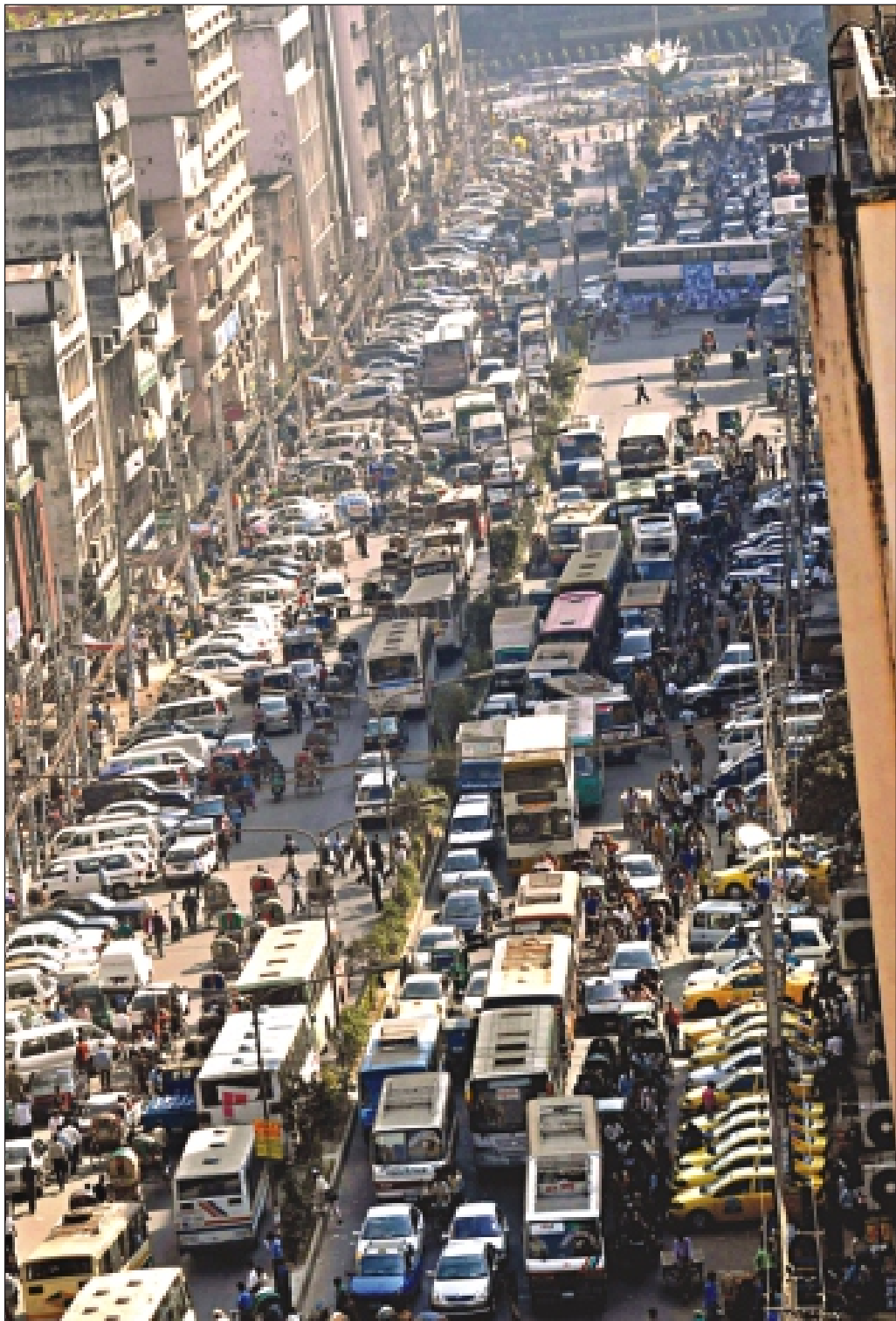


PHOTO: STAR

Cars parked along the sides of a street in downtown Dhaka near Shapla Square adds to traffic congestion by narrowing down road space.

Irani leaders arming Iraqis, says US

AP, AFP, Baghdad

US military officials on Sunday accused the highest levels of the Iranian leadership of arming Shia militants in Iraq with sophisticated armour-piercing roadside bombs that have killed more than 170 troops from the American-led coalition.

The military command in Baghdad denied, however, that any newly smuggled Iranian weapons were behind the five US military helicopter crashes since Jan. 20 four that were shot out of the sky by insurgent gunfire.

A fifth crash has tentatively been blamed on mechanical failure. In the same period, two private security company helicopters also have crashed but the cause was unclear.

The deadly and highly sophisticated weapons the US military said it traced to Iran are known as "explosively formed penetrators," or EFPs.

The presentation was the result of weeks of preparation and revisions as US officials put together a package of material to support the Bush administration's claims of Iranian intercession on behalf of militant Iraqis fighting American forces.

Senior US military officials in Baghdad said the display was prompted by the military's concern for "force protection," which, they said, was guaranteed under the United Nations resolution that authorises American soldiers to be in Iraq.

Three senior military officials who explained the display said the

"machining process" used in the construction of the deadly bombs had been traced to Iran.

The experts, who spoke to a large gathering of reporters on condition that they not be further identified, said the supply trail began with Iran's Revolutionary Guards Quds Force, which also is accused of arming the Hezbollah guerrilla army in Lebanon. The officials said the EFP weapon was first tested there.

The officials said the Revolutionary Guard and its Quds force report directly to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The briefing on Iran was revised heavily after officials decided it was

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SACKED COPS 17 held before submitting memo to CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two police recruits out of 757 recently discarded would be sub-inspectors (SI) and sergeants were detained yesterday when they were preparing to submit a memorandum to the chief adviser.

Several hundred policemen swooped on the fired recruits as they gathered near Crescent Lake and Bhashani Novo Theatre. Police hauled them to Mohammadpur and Tejgaon police stations around 10:45am, witnesses said.

One of the would be sergeants who escaped arrest said a few hundred riot police swooped on them and picked up 20 from Crescent Lake and two others from Bhashani Novo Theatre when they were making preparations to submit a memorandum to the chief adviser.

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