

## Rajuk knocks down parts of unauthorised buildings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The eviction team of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) yesterday demolished a number of structures on Mirpur Road as the owners violated the Rajuk-approved designs for those buildings by not keeping any space for car parking.

Rajuk officials said the owners of all these buildings, mostly markets and shopping malls, showed space for car parking in the approved designs of the buildings but ultimately did not follow them.

The owners of the Badruddoza Super Market opposite Dhaka College showed a big car park behind the market in the original design but they built a residential house there.

When a bulldozer of the Rajuk eviction team went there, one of the owners of the house, who was

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## CPD sees common ground for Saarc agri cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The premier non-governmental research organisation, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), has identified five major areas to strengthen agriculture cooperation among the South Asian countries.

Although the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) is committed to cooperation in agricultural development, there has been a little progress, CPD observed.

Agricultural development strategies should be implemented through public, private, and NGO participation rather than through public agencies only, it suggested.

The identified areas of cooperation are, agricultural research and development, technology exchange, capacity building, harmonisation of standards policies and laws, and participation in World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations on agriculture.

The areas of cooperation were identified by a study done by CPD's Senior Research Fellow Dr Uttam Kumar Dev. The findings of the study were presented at a seminar organised by CPD in Cirdap auditorium in the capital yesterday. CPD Board of Trustees Member M Syeduzzaman chaired the event.

Speakers at the seminar underscored the need for strengthening broader cooperation on agriculture among South Asian nations for overall development and for a common stand at the negotiations at WTO.

They suggested charting a broader action plan for regional cooperation on agriculture and other areas in line with the South East Asian nations under ASEAN, which was initiated in the 1960s.

They said the agriculture sector has developed a lot in the last two decades but cooperation among the regional states has remained very fragile.

Speaking as chief guest, Agricultural Adviser Dr CS Karim said there are many scopes for cooperation among the South Asian states on agriculture. He said the dialogues that have begun should continue for sharing knowledge and experiences among the countries.

He observed that many changes will take place in agriculture and crop patterns in the South Asian region because of climate changes in the future. So the mind set of the people regarding extending cooperation to neighbours should also be changed, Karim added.

He said there are many areas where cooperation exists and the process should continue for bringing more areas into the realm of cooperation.

Agricultural Secretary Abdul Aziz said the main lacking in strengthening cooperation among

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## CG should set timeframe for polls

Khaleda tells McKinnon

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said the caretaker government should set a timeframe for holding the stalled parliamentary elections.

Khaleda made the remark when the visiting Commonwealth Secretary General, Don McKinnon met her at her cantonment residence.

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## ACC files case against CBA leader Firoz

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a corruption case against Firoz Mian, a CBA (collective bargaining agent) leader of BTTB, for acquiring huge properties illegally.

Now detained Firoz was in ACC's list of top 50 corrupt suspects, who were asked by the commission last month to submit their wealth statements.

ACC official Mobara Khanam lodged the case with Ramna Police Station.

According to the case, an ACC investigation revealed that Firoz owned Tk 1.35 crore and he did not mention having Tk 55 lakh in his statement submitted to the commission.

The ACC also found that Firoz does not have any income tax file.

The commission officials said though Firoz was a technician, he earned a huge amount as a CBA leader.

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## Army, Brac selected for Swadhinata Padak 2007

UNB, Dhaka

The government has nominated Bangladesh Army and Brac, a non-governmental organisation, for Swadhinata Padak-2007.

An official announcement yesterday said the army has been nominated for the award in recognition of its glorious and outstanding contributions to the country's War of Independence and public service.

Brac has been chosen for the award for its outstanding social service, it added.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will give away the award to the nominated institutions at a function 11:30am at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city on March 25.

## 6 deer seized from Harris Chy's Kanaighat residence

UNB, Sylhet

Forest officials have seized six spotted deer from the Kanaighat residence of Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

The district forest officials along with police went to the residence at Darpannagar on Monday and seized the deer.

Listed as one of the 50 top corruption suspects by the Anti-Corruption Commission, Harris Chowdhury has been absconding since the crackdown on corrupt politicians by the army led joint forces.

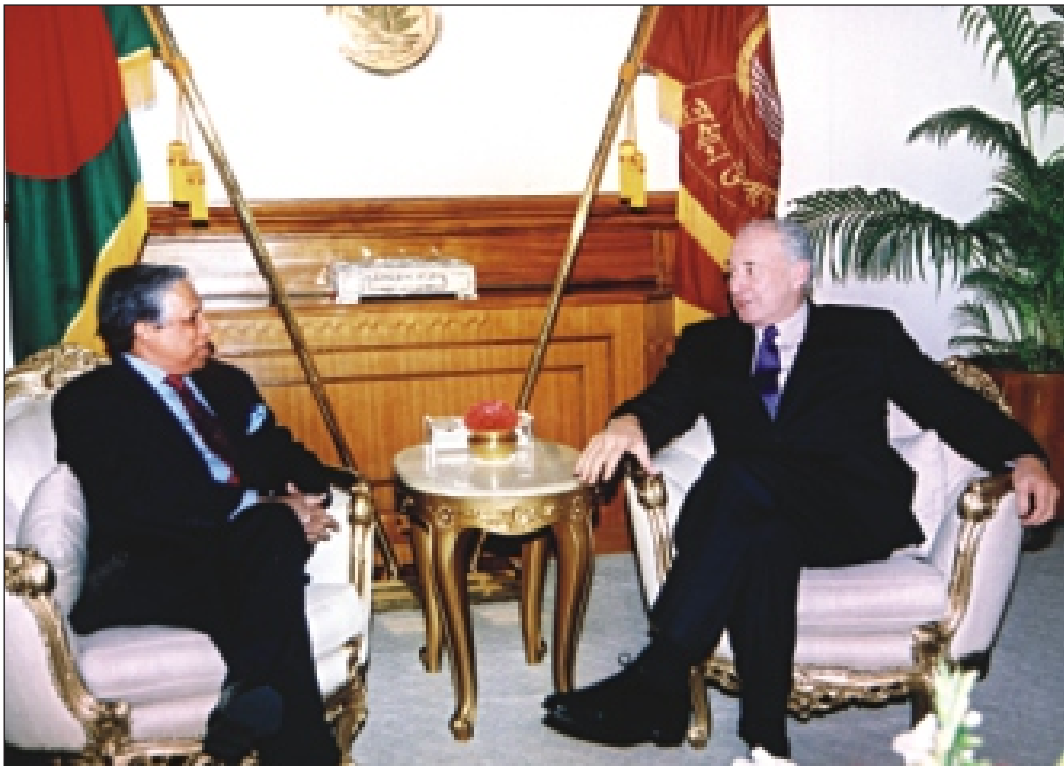


PHOTO: PID

Commonwealth Secretary General Donald C McKinnon calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at the latter's office in the capital yesterday.

## Saddam VP hanged on invasion anniversary

REUTERS, Baghdad

Saddam Hussein's former vice president was hanged for crimes against humanity early yesterday, the fourth anniversary of the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein from power.

Former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan was the third of Saddam's top aides to be hanged since the ex-president was executed in December after a trial in a US-backed Iraqi tribunal that was criticised by human rights groups as unfair.

The executions have done nothing to subdue violence that has



Taha Yassin Ramadan

engulfed Iraq since 2003 and many in Iraq say they have exacerbated sectarian fighting that now borders on civil war.

Shortly after Ramadan was hanged in the early hours, a car bomb near a Baghdad police station killed at least five people and wounded 17. A police source said 30 bodies were found shot dead in different parts of Baghdad on Monday.

The daily bombs and shootings have led to growing calls from some in the United States to withdraw troops from Iraq.

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## Washington for strategic ties with Dhaka for best use of its location

Says Congressman Weldon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US wants to build strategic relation with Bangladesh to utilise the crucial geographical and demographic position of the country.

"Bangladesh has so many positive things, but unfortunately, the US doesn't have any strategic relation with the country," visiting US Congressman Curt Weldon said yesterday adding that from both demographic and geographical perspectives, Bangladesh is of high strategic importance to the US.

The member of the US House of Representatives was talking at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club organised by Global Alliance for Homeland Security

(GAHS), Asian Regional Chapter.

At the invitation of GAHS, Weldon and seven others came to Dhaka on Monday.

Stressing the need for building strategic relation between the two countries, Weldon said, "As we concentrate on Pakistan and India, why don't we pay attention to Bangladesh when she has significant achievements in various aspects."

The US Congressman also gave assurance that he along with his colleagues would muster support for duty-free access for Bangladeshi products to the US market. "The US should import all the products from Bangladesh that she imports from other countries," he added.

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## People's Saarc confce begins in Kathmandu March 23

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The People's Saarc Conference will begin on March 23 in Kathmandu with an objective of developing interaction among the citizens of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries.

The 3-day conference is going to be held ahead of the 14th Saarc Summit in New Delhi on April 3-4.

According to the sources, representatives of civil society, peasants, workers, marginalised group, deprived communities and lawmakers from all eight member countries -- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka -- will participate in the conference in Kathmandu.

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PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion personnel search cars and passengers as security is beefed up in the capital. The photo was taken from Baridhara yesterday.

## Huda denied bail in foreign currency case

DCC commissioner among 1,519 held

STAR REPORT

Law enforcement agencies in separate drives arrested 1,519 people, including a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward commissioner, on various charges during their countrywide drives in the last 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday.

Meanwhile, the metropolitan session judge rejected the bail

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## Fire at nursing home in Russia kills 63

AP, Rostov-on-don

A fire swept through a nursing home in southern Russia on Tuesday, killing at least 63 people, emergency officials said.

It took firefighters nearly an hour to get from the nearest sizable town to the facility in the Azov Sea coast village of Kamyshevskaya, where there is no fire station, said Sergei Petrov, a duty officer at the Emergency Situations Ministry's southern branch.

He said 63 people were killed, one was missing and 33 were injured. There were 97 people in the two-story brick building when the fire broke out, including four employees.

The devastating nighttime fire came less than 24 hours after a methane gas blast at a Siberian coal mine killed at least 97 people in Russia's deadliest mining disaster

in a decade.

Emergency workers received a signal alerting them to the fire shortly after 1 a.m. and headed for the scene from Yeisk, a town about 22 miles away, arriving nearly an hour after the signal, Petrov said. The fire was put out at about 5 a.m., he said.

It was the latest in a number of deadly blazes at schools, dormitories, hospitals and other state-run facilities that have plagued Russia in recent years, underlining rampant violations of fire safety rules and official negligence.

A fire at a drug treatment facility in Moscow in December killed 45 women who were trapped behind locked gates and barred windows, and a blaze a day later killed nine patients at a clinic for mentally ill people in Siberia.

Russia records nearly 18,000 fire deaths a year, several times the per

capita rate in the United States and other Western countries.

Last year, according to the Emergency Situations Ministry, an average of just under 600 fires were recorded daily, killing a total of 17,650 people in the nation of 142 million down nearly 7 percent from 2005 but still working out to almost 50 fire deaths every day.

Over the past year, the ministry has published lists of dozens of buildings, including medical facilities and schools, where glaring fire safety violations endangering lives were discovered. Many have been corrected, it says.

State-run Channel One television reported that the nursing home in Kamyshevskaya, in the Krasnodar region, had recently been renovated and a new fire alarm system installed.



PHOTO: STAR

Construction materials are kept on the pavement of road-128 of Gulshan Avenue in the capital forcing pedestrians to use the street.