

# Bangladeshi school project wins Aga Khan Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A primary school project of Bangladesh, 'School in Rudrapur in Dinajpur' has been selected as one of the 9 projects for Aga Khan Award for Architecture, a triennial prize fund of \$500,000, world's largest architectural award.

Aga Khan himself announced nine recipients of the 2007 Aga Khan Award for Architecture at a ceremony marking the 30th anniversary of the award in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on September 4, according to a press release received in Dhaka.

The school is part of the Modern Education and Training Institute (METI) of a Bangladeshi NGO, Dipshikha, which places works for helping children develop their own potential and use it in a creative way.

The other projects selected by the 2007 Award Master Jury are Samir Kassir Square, Beirut, Lebanon, Rehabilitation of the City of Shibam, Yemen, Central Market, Koudougou, Burkina Faso, University of Technology Petronas, Bandar Seri Iskandar, Malaysia, Restoration of the Amiriya Complex, Rada, Yemen, Moulmein Rise Residential Tower, Singapore, Royal Netherlands Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Rehabilitation of the Walled City, Nicosia, Cyprus.

While announcing the name of the award winners Aga Khan said, "Our attempt and aspiration is to try to have the humility, but also the competence, to understand what is happening and to seek to influence it so that future generations can live in a better environment."

The project in Rudrapur, a village in north-west Bangladesh, was hand-built in four months by architects, local craftsmen, pupils, parents and teachers, using traditional methods and materials of construction but adapting them in new ways with an innovative twist.

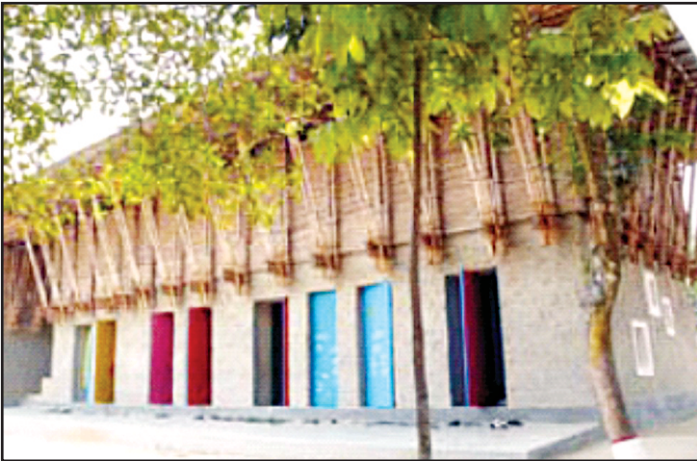
The architects, Anna Heringer from Austria and Eike Roswag from Germany, made every effort to engage the skills of local craftsmen, helping them refine processes and learn new techniques that they could then use to improve the general standard of rural housing.

"This joyous and elegant two-storey primary school in rural Bangladesh has emerged from a deep understanding of local materials and a heart-felt connection to the local community. Its innovation lies in the adaptation of traditional

methods and materials of construction to create light-filled celebratory spaces as well as informal spaces for children," the jury commented in its citation.

The jury says, "The design solution may not be replicable in other parts of the Islamic world, as local conditions vary, but the approach which allows new design solutions to emerge from an in-depth knowledge of the local context and ways of building - clearly provides a fresh and hopeful model for sustainable building globally."

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture was established by the Aga Khan in 1977 to identify and encourage building concepts that successfully address the needs and aspirations of Muslim societies.



The primary school project in Rudrapur.

## Lanka presses France to clamp down on Tamils

AFP, Paris

Sri Lanka's foreign minister said Thursday he had won assurances from French authorities that they will take action to curb the activities of Tamil rebel supporters in France.

Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said his government was "very satisfied" that Paris authorities were clamping down on suspected members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which the European Union has branded a terrorist group.

French police in April arrested 15 suspected members of the Tamil Tigers -- accused of running an extortion racket among Paris' Sri Lankan community.

The foreign minister said 14 of those remained in custody and that Tamil language television was forced to shut down its offices.

"There have been these 14 arrests and the money movement is now coming under serious surveillance," he told journalists at the end of a three-day visit to Paris.

"We still find that developments are taking place through various other hidden channels, which will be dealt with," said the foreign minister.

France is home to about 120,000 Sri Lankan nationals, mostly Tamils, many of whom many enjoy refugee status.

The foreign minister said France and Sri Lanka would sign an immigration agreement to control the flow of migrants, following talks with Immigration Minister Brice Hortefeux.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

The dilapidated portion of Dhaka-Munshiganj highway at West Mukhtarpur poses serious danger to passengers as well as pedestrians, but the authorities remain indifferent. Lack of proper maintenance has led to such condition of the road. The picture was taken yesterday.

# Bush, Putin fail to break missile defence tension

AFP, Sydney

US President George W Bush and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin failed to make clear progress in talks yesterday to defuse tensions over US missile defence plans that have angered Moscow.

The presidents met at a hotel in Sydney as 21 nations attending an Asia Pacific summit here agreed a common statement on climate change after intense wrangling between rich and emerging nations, a source at the talks said.

Before meeting Putin, Bush held talks with South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun after which he said he would consider a formal peace deal to end the Korean war only after North Korea gives up nuclear weapons and programmes.

But it was the US leader's meeting with his Russian counterpart, which came after Putin signed a landmark deal allowing Australia to export uranium to Russia, that dominated the flurry of top level meetings in Australia.

Visibly grim after their hour-long meeting, Putin said the talks had been "above all related to missile defence."

But neither man gave any hint of coming any nearer on Washington's plans to deploy a missile shield in Central Europe which have provoked an increasingly tense standoff between the two sides.

The Russian leader said experts from both sides would meet again soon to inspect a Russian radar station in Azerbaijan that Moscow has proposed using as an alternative to the Central Europe sites.

Moscow says the US plans to deploy elements of a missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic will upset the balance of power, while Washington insists it is aimed against potential attacks from Iran or North Korea, posing no threat to Russia.

The talks, which Bush called "both cordial and constructive," also touched on Iran's nuclear programme, Russia's bid to join the

World Trade Organisation and environmental issues.

While the two men may not have made diplomatic breakthroughs, they could have a chance to untangle their lines in a wilder setting after Putin invited Bush to come fishing in Siberia.

In other developments around the summit, the top US envoy for North Korea announced that experts from China, Russia and the United States would go to North Korea September 11-15 to study how Pyongyang's nuclear facilities could be disabled.

"We want this disabling to take place by December 31st. So we have to look at our ideas for disabling against the actual facility," Christopher Hill said.

North Korea in February agreed to make a full declaration of all its nuclear programmes and to disable them in return for aid, security and diplomatic guarantees, notably normalisation of ties with Washington.

Nuclear deals were also on the

agenda for Putin and host Prime Minister John Howard, who sought to ease fears that planned uranium sales to Russia posed a proliferation risk.

The Australian leader vowed that "any uranium that is sold to Russia will be sold under very strict safeguards."

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum delegates had been struggling to hammer out a statement on climate change, with emerging nations resisting Australia's plans to set clear goals on curbing emissions of greenhouse gases.

But a senior Southeast Asian official closely involved in the talks said late Friday that senior officials had finally agreed on a draft agreement to go to the leaders.

The draft refers only to "aspirational" goals to reduce emissions and affirms that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), which meets next in Bali in December, is the main forum for debate.

# Going to work may ease back pain

BBC ONLINE

People with conditions such as back pain and arthritis need to stay in work as much as possible, a report says.

The Work Foundation says the evidence suggests that being able to work helps sufferers of musculoskeletal disorders recover more quickly.

Yet many GPs and employers wrongly believe a sufferer must be "100 percent well" before any return to work, it says.

Experts agreed, but warned people could do more harm than good unless their work situation was properly assessed.

Such conditions affect more than one million people in the UK and cost society £7.4 billion a year, the Work Foundation says.

It also estimates that they account for up to a third of all GP consultations and cause 9.5

million lost working days.

Around 400,000 people suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, a quarter of whom stop work within five years of diagnosis.

These and another 200 conditions affecting the spine, joints, muscles and tendons, collectively known as musculoskeletal disorders, are the biggest cause of work-related illness in the UK.

The foundation - an organisation which aims to find ways to boost both economic performance and quality of working life - says many sufferers are taking long periods of sick leave or quitting work altogether.

But it says the evidence suggests that people can benefit from going back to work as soon as possible.

GPs and employers need to focus on what people can do rather than what they cannot, the report said.

Changing attitudes

Senior researcher Michelle Mahdon said: "Stress hogs headlines, but in terms of people affected, musculoskeletal disorders are the bigger problem, affecting more than one million people a year - and, of course, their families.

"Work can be both cause and cure.

"It may cause or aggravate symptoms, but evidence is amassing that with the right support arrangements, work can also be part of the recovery by contributing to a person's self-esteem and sense of being productive.

"What urgently needs to change is the attitude of many GPs and employers that a sufferer must be 100% well before any return to work can be contemplated."

Dame Professor Carol Black, the government's National Director for Health and Work, said: "I hope that in time musculoskeletal disorders

will become less relevant to work and working life.

"Until then, efforts to raise awareness of them must continue with ever greater urgency."

'Understand daily living' Professor Alan Silman, medical director of the Arthritis Research Campaign, said that in appropriate cases a return to normal activities could lead to more rapid recovery, although fear of pain and lack of support from colleagues could make it daunting.

"However, work can be a major contributor to musculoskeletal problems through excessive loading, poor posture, repetitive movements and other mechanical causes," he added.

He said each person needed to be assessed individually to evaluate whether the work place environment could be modified to encourage return to work.



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors at an exhibition of Ikebana and Bonsai that began at Orchid Plaza at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday. Radiant Institute organised the show.

# Americans brace for key week in Iraq war

AFP, Washington

War-weary Americans are bracing for a pivotal week in the Iraq conflict with President George W. Bush set to announce whether some of the US troops can start coming home, or not.

And as commander in chief, Bush is ultimately the one who will decide despite a clamour in the Democratic-controlled Congress and among the American public for a withdrawal to begin, experts said.

"Given the constitutional realities, his position is impregnable. There is no way that Congress, unless there are overwhelming majorities in both houses of Congress, can force a change in policy, a withdrawal or a calendar for withdrawal," said Ted Carpenter, vice-president at the Cato Institute.

The White House is due to

publish a report on military and political progress in the four-year-old war by September 15.

And Bush is set to outline whether he believes his strategy of boosting troop levels in Iraq, which now stand at around 168,000 soldiers, has created the right conditions to begin a drawdown of forces.

On the other hand, whether he thinks the troops need to stay on, in which case he will have to plead for patience from an increasingly sceptical public.

About 60 percent of Americans want to see the start of some kind of pullout from Iraq, according to the latest polls, with two out of three opposed to Bush's handling of the war.

Four years after the March 2003 US-led invasion, Iraq is far from the model of democracy for the Middle East, which Bush promised in the

heavy days after the swift ouster of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

The argument for the invasion -- that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction -- has long been discredited, while sectarian violence has claimed a heavy toll among US troops and Iraqi civilians.

Hundreds of billions of dollars have been swallowed up by the war effort, and families and friends have mourned more than 3,700 slain US soldiers.

And a year ahead of the 2008 presidential elections, Iraq is weighing heavy on the political agenda having helped the Democratic Party to a landslide victory in Congress last year.

So far though the Democrats have been powerless to halt the war. And lacking the two-thirds majority required in Congress, they were forced to back down after

Bush imposed his veto in May on a bill, which would have tied funding for the war to a timetable for withdrawal.

"The Democrats have been hoping over the summer that perhaps they could lure some of the more moderate Republican legislators over the aisle. I don't have any reason to believe that's happened," said Stephen Hess from the Brookings Institute.

They did succeed though in wresting from Bush and his Republican administration a pledge to report to Congress on the war.

And with US commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, and Ambassador Ryan Crocker to testify to lawmakers on Monday and Tuesday, the battle is set to heat up.

## 10 detained for links with Hyderabad blasts

AFP, Hyderabad

Indian police have arrested 10 people after failed terror plots in southern Hyderabad city where twin bombings killed 43 people last month, an official said Thursday.

Officers are investigating the August 25 bombings and have questioned several suspects since the attacks, but for various other incidents in previous years, the top police official told AFP.

The 10 suspects have been booked on charges of "waging or attempting to wage war or abetting the waging of war against the Government of India".

"Yes, we have arrested 10 people," said a top police official, who did not want to be identified.

Police said the men were wanted in connection with plots to bomb a temple and murder Hindu nationalist politicians in 2004 -- and were not being held in direct connection with last month's fatal Hyderabad bombings.

## Two women beheaded by militants in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

Suspected Islamic militants beheaded two women accused of prostitution in northwestern Pakistan, police said yesterday, in the latest case of Taliban-style justice in the region.

The bodies of the women in their 40s were dumped on the outskirts of the conservative town of Bannu, near the Afghan border, a day after they were abducted by gunmen, district police officer Dar Ali Khattak.

Pro-Taliban militants in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and its lawless tribal areas bordering Afghanistan are waging a violent campaign for the introduction of strict Sharia law.

A note left with the corpses accused the women of being involved in prostitution with the support of local officials, and warned others like them that they would be punished in the same way, Khattak told AFP.