

Greatest show on Earth opens



AFP, Beijing

The Olympic Games, costing an estimated 40 billion dollars and battered by political and environmental concerns, was declared open yesterday as China displayed its credentials as a modern, confident nation.

President Hu Jintao declared the Games open at the "Bird's Nest" stadium in front of 90,000 spectators and a worldwide television audience of up to four billion.

"For a long time, China has dreamed of opening its doors and inviting the world's athletes to Beijing for the Olympic Games," said Jacques Rogge, the president of the International Olympic Committee.

"Tonight that dream comes true. Congratulations, Beijing."

Minutes later, the Olympic cauldron was lit by Li Ning, the Chinese gymnast who captured

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PHOTO: INTERNET

A blaze of fireworks light up the National Stadium, also known as the Bird's Nest, during the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing on Friday.

2005 TOXIC GAS EMISSION

\$10m equipment retrieved from sealed mine site in Barapukuria

SHARIER KHAN

With help from Chinese experts, Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) has recovered mining equipment worth \$10 million from an underground site that was sealed off in October 2005 following emission of deadly gas there.

The recovery operation launched on July 14 is the third one by the country's first mining company. Replacement cost of the equipment at present market rate is no less than \$20 million, mining sources said.

This pricey set of equipment will greatly help the loss-making BCMCL raise coal production and thus reduce its operational losses.

"Most importantly, the operation gave us priceless lessons and experience," said a top official of the mine. "We now know how to avoid deadly carbon monoxide emission which will be a part of coal mining in the country. We have also learnt lessons in recovery operation and handling safety issues."

Following months-long preparation and injection of anti-flammable chemicals and 3.5 lakh cubic metres of nitrogen in the sealed off site known as 'face 1110' at a depth of 1,100 feet, the rescue operation began on July 14. It had to be suspended on July 24 as the level of carbon monoxide shot up

to 2.5 percent of the air indicating that somewhere in the mine, coal was burning.

The rescue mission returned to the spot on July 28 after pumping in more anti-flammable chemicals to continue recovery of the equipment. Then with a three-day pause from August 2, the rescue operation continues till now. Hundreds of local workers, guided by Chinese experts like Prof Yang and Prof Wen Hu, are working at the site.

"The recovered equipment include 69 pieces of hydraulic powered roof support. There are 13 more such equipment worth \$0.8 million. We are hoping these will also be recovered in the next few days," said the mine official.

All other equipment at the sealed off site have been recovered. These include a shearer, armoured flexible conveyor, stage loader and crusher, 600 metres of Conveyor Belt and some fire fighting devices.

These equipment were put into operation in the mine in 2004, and they are one of the two sets of basic mining equipment. The two sets are required to ensure an annual coal production of one million tonnes, 80 percent of which is supposed to be consumed by Power Development Board (PDB).

But while producing coal from 'face 1110' in October 2005, the BCMCL had to seal off the area

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POLLS UNDER EMERGENCY

Govt, parties must reach understanding

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and HASAN JAHID TUSHER

With major political parties uniting against holding the overdue ninth parliamentary poll under the state of emergency, and the military backed caretaker government making clear its intention of having the election under the emergency, a face off seems a strong possibility.

Although most of the parties accepted the recently held elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities amid the emergency, they have been saying that the government should not plan for holding the parliamentary election under a state of emergency, considering its national significance.

A political analyst and a legal expert observed that both sides must reach an understanding on the issue which is likely to be the focal point of contention ahead of the election.

Meanwhile, both sides, digging their heels in respective positions, have started lobbying the interna-

tional community to gain support.

The government, after the recent violence-free local government elections is pressing for the national election under the emergency, while the political parties are saying the success in holding the recent elections should not become a logic for holding the national poll under an emergency. The parties have been demanding total withdrawal of the state of emergency ahead of the parliamentary poll.

"The government has to sort it out with the politicians, so both sides may reach a consensus before the election. There is no alternative to it," observed Prof Emajuddin Ahmed while talking to The Daily Star last night.

He said a state of emergency and elections do not go together. "If the poll is held under an emergency, the credibility of it will be questioned at home and abroad," Emajuddin, who taught politics at Dhaka University, pointed out.

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Furore rising against Delwar in BNP

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

BNP politicians across the country are finding themselves confused about their political role under the current electoral climate, as the party's Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain has been busy manoeuvring to ensure his 'absolute control' over the organisation, leaving the rank and file directionless, alleged party insiders.

There has also been no effective effort to ensure the detained chairperson's release, they added.

Leaders of the party faction which has been led by Delwar since his appointment as the secretary general by Chairperson Khaleda Zia on the eve of her arrest, alleged that using the name of the party Delwar imposed his personal decision of boycotting the August 4 elections on other leaders and activists.

They believe the decision was wrong, as local leaders did end up participating in the polls bagging rather large numbers of votes, although defeated by AL candidates in almost all places.

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Grassroots of major parties prepare for upazila polls

May ignore party stand

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The grassroots of major political parties including Awami League and Jatiya Party have started gearing up to run in the upazila elections in October while their organisations are still opposed to any polls before the national election.

In the last few days, a number of local AL and JP leaders have met the party high commands and said they want to take part in the local body polls planned to be held under the state of emergency.

Sources said a section of the BNP grassroots too is preparing for the upazila polls on signals from some senior leaders.

Many of AL and JP leaders who live in the capital but plan to vie for upazila parishes have already started visiting their areas to lay groundwork for their bid.

Local leaders of both the parties

are keeping in touch with those in charge of divisional politics in AL and JP.

"Whatever the party should decide, I think most of our grassroots level leaders will participate in the polls," an organising secretary of AL told The Daily Star.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, he said many of them have told him that they would stand in the polls.

Another organising secretary said if the party opts to boycott the polls there would be serious discontent among the rank and file which might have a negative impact on the organisation's preparations for the national polls.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, JP Presidium member Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu said, "We have already talked to around 60 leaders from different upazilas to

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HAMID MIR
From Pakistan

Making of a non-functional president?

Ruling Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League (N) leaders are going to make a new history.

President Pervez Musharraf is no more welcome in any government function. Ruling coalition wants him to become the first ever non-functional president.

Verbal orders have been issued to all the federal government departments and also to the four provincial governments not to invite the president for the opening of any ceremony. All the four provincial assemblies will pass resolutions against the president next week and no chief minister will welcome him in any provincial capital.

Last year, Musharraf declared Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry a non-functional chief justice and this year he is becoming a non-functional president of Pakistan.

Some close friends have already advised Musharraf to step down quietly but he is still confident that

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IMPEACHMENT BID

Musharraf mulls options for a fightback

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf will defend himself against impeachment by the ruling coalition, aides and allies said yesterday, as the US-backed leader mullied his options for a fightback.

Musharraf met senior advisers to discuss his course of action a day after his enemies in the government announced the most serious challenge to the former general since he seized power in a 1999 military coup.

The president could possibly dissolve parliament or even declare a state of emergency, further deepening the political turmoil in the nuclear-armed nation as it faces rising Islamic militancy.

"He is considering the options that are available. He will respond to the government's allegations

and defend himself," a presidential aide told AFP.

Musharraf ally Mushahid Hussain pledged his party's support.

"We will prepare a case, the president should be there (in parliament) and defend himself, and at least say 'I am not a crook,'" said Hussain, secretary general of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q party.

Coalition leaders Asif Ali Zardari -- the widower of slain former premier Benazir Bhutto -- and Nawaz Sharif announced on Thursday that they would seek Musharraf's impeachment for allegedly mismanaging the country.

Officials said parliament could begin the impeachment process as early as Monday, which is also Musharraf's 65th birthday.

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Shibir men assault RU VC, teachers

RU CORRESPONDENT

Shibir cadres assaulted acting Vice Chancellor Prof Mammunul Keramat and other teachers of Rajshahi University yesterday as they tried to talk them into lifting roadblocks they put up on Dhaka-Rajshahi Highway across from the campus.

Several hundred stick-wielding Shibir men, led by their university unit president Delwar Hossain Saidee and general secretary Abdullah al-Nomani, chased the faculty members, threw stones at them and hurled abuses at the proctor, alleging that the university administration failed to ensure their security on the campus.

The acting VC termed the incident regrettable.

The Shibir cadres blocked the busy highway with felled trees from 11:30am for an hour demanding punishment to the locals and businessmen at Binodpur Bazar adjoining the campus who had reportedly beat up two Shibir men on Thursday night.

Sources said the locals flogged the two after seeing them mercilessly beating up a bus helper who

allegedly pocketed the monthly living expenses that the family of one of the students sent through him.

Clashes spread between the Jamaat's student wing and locals following the incident.

The acting vice chancellor and other senior teachers found themselves being manhandled and later chased by Shibir men as they asked them to lift the roadblocks.

Proctor Enamul Haque, who went to the spot along with police shortly after, faced verbal abuses.

Police officials and pro-Jamaat teachers later persuaded the Shibir workers into lifting the roadblocks after assurances that the responsible people, including the bus helper, would be arrested within 24 hours and that the cheated student would get compensation.

Police arrested the bus helper and a restaurant owner at Binodpur.

Shibir president Saidee told reporters that "general students" became unruly seeing the acting VC and other faculty members for the university administration's failure to ensure security for them on the campus.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

An under-construction road along Hatirjheel-Begunbari canal near Sonargaon Hotel in the capital. The road is expected to be opened to public by July next year.

Roads along banks of Hatirjheel-Begunbari canal may open by July

HELEMUL ALAM

The long-awaited roads along the banks of Hatirjheel-Begunbari canal are likely to be open to the public by July next year.

To be laid on embankments on either side of the canal, the 10-km long and 60-foot wide twin roads will start at Panthapath, and then cross Tongi Diversion Road to run till Rampura Road.

Along the way, they will link the others roads in the area through three bridges.

Around 1.7 kms of embankment has already been raised while the rest is expected to be built by the middle of 2009.

The construction is part of a Tk 1473.58 crore Hatirjheel-Begunbari development project undertaken to ease water-logging and traffic congestion in the city.

Professor Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), who is overseeing the technical aspects, said though the embankment roads might be

opened for public use by July, they will take till June 2010 to be completed along with the other work of the project.

Besides constructing roads, bridges and footpath, the project entails freeing the Begunbari canal from illegal structures, getting back the depth of the waterbody and building a sewerage system centring it.

The project involves 300 acres of land and of that, 50 to 60 acres will be used for the roads, Professor Mujibur said.

The three cross bridges will be constructed near the Tongi Diversion Road, in between Tongi and Rampura roads and near Rampura Road, he continued.

Already 46 acres of land is being dug up while 204 more acres will soon come under excavation so the natural reservoir regains its holding capacity, said Mujibur.

The excavation also aims to remove toxic and solid waste off the canal bed to ensure the water is cleaner and purer, he said.

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