

## Warm reception to Sri Lankan president

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman warmly received Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport here yesterday afternoon as he began a three-day state visit to Bangladesh amid red carpet welcome.

A 21-gun salute greeted President Rajapaksa as he alighted from a special aircraft at 1:00pm, accompanied by Sri Lankan first lady Shiranthi Rajapaksa.

Two tiny tots presented bouquets to the Sri Lankan president and First Lady Shiranthi at the VVIP terminal of the airport.

A smart contingent drawn from the three services gave the distinguished visitor a guard of honour at the VVIP terminal. President Rajapaksa was then taken to the presentation line and introduced him with the dignitaries.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, State Minister for CHT Affairs Dipankar Talukdar, the three services chiefs, and senior civil and military officials were present at the airport.

The airport ceremony over, President Rajapaksa and the Sri Lankan First Lady were driven in a ceremonial motorcade to Sonargaon Hotel where they will be staying during the visit.

President Rajapaksa will visit Bangabandhu Museum and lay wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today.

He will also visit the Dhaka Export Processing Zone at Savar, and the Buddhist Temple at Merul Badda in the city.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBBCI) will host a luncheon in honour of the Sri Lankan President at Sonargaon Hotel.

President Zillur Rahman will host a state banquet in honour of President Rajapaksa at Bangabhaban today.

Rajapaksa will meet the Sri Lankan community at Sonargaon Hotel tomorrow before leaving for Colombo in the afternoon.



This road at China Factory More in North Begunbari in the city has been inundated with sewage water overflowing from sewer pipes for the past six months, much to the distress of the locals. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Challenged people deprived of jobs despite quota

*Speakers tell discussion*

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday expressed concern that people with disabilities are being deprived of jobs as 10 percent reserved quota for them in government jobs is not utilised accordingly.

Admitting the fact, a ruling party lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor said lawmakers are conscious about it and he will put the issue before the parliament in future.

Noor, an eminent media personality, said the government is keen to resolve problems of people with disabilities and plans special allocation in next fiscal year's budget for their development.

Handicap International, Bangladesh organised the discussion titled "Inclusion of disability in development: Role of development organisations and media" at LGED

auditorium in the city. Representatives from different organisations of people with disabilities and officials of non-government organisations (NGO) attended.

Media should play the role of a watchdog, ensuring whether rights of people with disabilities are established. The media through its contents could also create mass awareness about the rights and problems faced by such people, said discussants.

Speakers demanded participation of representatives of such people in all development plans for them and implementation processes.

They also stressed on effective development plans to ensure facilities required by people with disabilities during natural disasters.

They also demanded an initiative to count the exact number of people

with disabilities in Bangladesh in order to adopt effective projects for their development.

Thomas Balivet, country director of Handicap International, Bangladesh; journalist Suvaish Saha; and Founder Coordinator of Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed Ms Valerie Taylor; also spoke at the discussion, moderated by Dr Nafis-ur-Rahman of National Forum of Organisations Work with the Disabled.

Meanwhile, National Alliance of Disabled People's Organisations (NADPO), at a press conference yesterday, demanded allotment of 10 percent of the national budget for the development of people with different forms of disabilities.

Speakers at the conference, held at Jatiya Press Club, said there are barely any opportunities for development, training or empowerment

activities for the 16 million people with disability in the country.

There is no national brail printing press, institute to teach sign languages or authority to ensure that people with disability receive appropriate tools for assistance, they said.

"These requirements would not be fulfilled without a proper allotment in the budget, and moreover, the budget's proper utilisation must be ensured," said Abdus Sattar Dulal, president of NADPO.

Around five percent of the budget allotted for the disabled should be used to build capacity and infrastructure for different NGOs working for these people, he said.

"People with disability consist of some 10 percent of the country's whole population. If developed and empowered, these people would prove valuable to both society and national economy," he said.

## Rajapaksa's visit to strengthen ties

*Says FM*

### DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said the visit of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa would infuse new dynamism into the bilateral process and lead to further deepening and strengthening of ties between the two countries.

She said this when she called on the visiting president at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel yesterday afternoon. Rajapaksa arrived here yesterday on a 3-day state visit.

During the call on, they touched upon ways and means to further intensify the mutually beneficial cooperation in various areas, including inter alia, trade and commerce, investment, civil aviation, shipping, tourism, people-to-people contacts, cultural cooperation, education, agriculture, fisheries and livestock, cooperation in health, defence, youth affairs, disaster management, etc.

Dipu Moni underscored the need for

making greater use of the available institutional mechanisms and meet at regular intervals.

The discussions also touched upon the need to explore the various means to enhance bilateral trade and increase people to people contacts and establish linkages between universities, educational institutions, museums, etc.

Dipu Moni also recalled that Bangladesh and Sri Lanka had been cooperating in various regional and international bodies such as Saarc, Bimstec, IOR-ARC, Commonwealth, and Nam and assured that Bangladesh would remain engaged with Sri Lanka in these forums on issues of mutual interest.

The foreign minister also handed over two publications on Buddhism in Bangladesh to the president of Sri Lanka. These publications are a part of the exhibits to be displayed at the Bangladesh pavilion at the International Buddhist Museum at Dalada Maligawa near Kandy in Sri Lanka.

## Dipu Moni for financial security of migrants

### DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday underscored the need for an evacuation framework with institutionalised response for migrants during any emergency situation.

She also mentioned that an insurance scheme or provision of compensation may be explored as part of any such framework to ensure financial security.

The foreign minister said this when the visiting Director General of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) William Lacy Swing called on her at her office yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed many issues related to migration while the foreign minister thanked the director general for the role IOM played during the recent repatriation of migrant workers from Libya.

Referring to climate change induced

displacement, she emphasised that this issue should be included in the global discourse of migration and climate change.

Lacy Swing commended the coherent and determined effort of Bangladesh towards repatriation of over 35,000 Bangladeshi workers from Libya speedily and safe.

He thanked the government and praised its effort in successfully organising the 4th Colombo Process Ministerial Consultation despite facing the recent difficult situation in Libya.

The IOM DG also ensured that IOM will keep working on expanding relationship with Bangladesh and undertake more projects, studies and research work on migration.

He was accompanied by high-level officials from IOM. Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to Geneva Ambassador Abdul Hannan and Director General at the Foreign Ministry Sufiur Rahman were also present.



Guests at a discussion titled "Inclusion of disability in development: Role of development organisations and media" at LGED auditorium in the city, organised by Handicap International, Bangladesh.

### PHOTO: STAR

## PM's intervention sought in saving Prabartak Sangha, Hill

### OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a press conference sought the prime minister's intervention in saving one of the country's oldest philanthropic institution Prabartak Sangha and Prabartak Hill, already recognised as the country's heritage, from land grabbers.

The conference under the banner Prabartak Sangha Rakha O Sangrakshan Committee (committee to save and protect Prabartak Sangha) was held at Chittagong Press Club auditorium on Sunday.

Advocate Chandan Talukdar, the committee's member secretary, reading

a written statement, alleged that leaders of Prabartak Sangha Executive Committee were dealing underhand to commercialise and ruin the sanctity of the hill.

Prabartak Sangha was established in 1921 with 28 acres of hilly land in Chittagong keeping in mind the spirit of humanity and religious spiritualism. But the executive committee members are discarding the philanthropic spirit to fulfill their commercial aggrandisement, he alleged.

The executive committee signed an unjust agreement with a real estate development company, RF Properties

Ltd, to build a multipurpose tower on a 42.5 to 57.5 ratio respectively. Accordingly, the company built a boundary wall around the hill, said Chandan.

He said Department of Environment (DoE) dismantled the wall once on January 24 but the company rebuilt it.

DoE on March 14 issued a notice to the company to dismantle the wall by March 21, which they are still to comply. The sangrakshan committee would organise movements to save the institution and urged for people's support in their movement, he added.

## ATTACK ON BAULS Punishment to culprits demanded

### CU CORRESPONDENT

Udichi Shilpi Gosthi of Chittagong University (CU) yesterday demanded exemplary punishment to culprits who assaulted bauls (mystic devotees) at Char Ramnagar village in Pangsha upazila of Rajbari district on April 6.

The demand came from a human chain organised by the gosthi in front of CU Shaheed Minar.

## Concern over clashes in Khagrachhari

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday expressed concern over Sunday's clash between Bangladeshi and indigenous community people in Ramgarh upazila of Khagrachhari district.

They urged both communities to show restraint and the government to implement Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord and take effective steps to resolve problems in CHT.

Three people were killed, 20 injured and 30 houses and a Buddhist temple were burnt during the clashes over land dispute at Shankhola Para.

Manusher Jonno Foundation and its associate organisation in CHT areas in a press release expressed concern and condemned the clash.

The foundation demanded compensating the victims of the clash and punishment to the perpetrators.

Ain O Salish Kendra in a separate press release voiced the same.

## NU Masters exam May 3

### UNB, Gazipur

Masters Final Year Examination-2008 under the National University will be held on May 3 instead of April 27.

The examination will start at 9:00am.

Earlier, authority announced that the Masters Final Year Exam will be held on Apr 27 but later deferred the exam date due to unavoidable reason.

Schedule of the exam could be seen on NU website ([www.nu.edu.bd](http://www.nu.edu.bd)).