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JHALAKATHI JUDGES KILLING

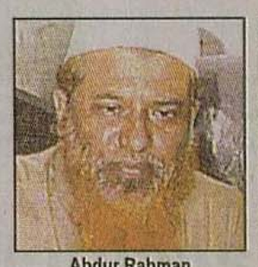
Rahman, Bangla Bhai get 40 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

A trial court here yesterday sentenced top Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai, Molla Omar and Amzad alias Khalid Saifullah to 40 years' rigorous imprisonment for abetting and plotting the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi.

In the first judgement against the four absconding top leaders of the banned Islamist militant outfit, the court jailed them in a case filed under

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Abdur Rahman

Bangla Bhai

Pvt land phone operators asked to start service in 6 months

MONJUR MAHMUD

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) yesterday gave an ultimatum to private land phone operators to start their operations within the next six months, warning them that it would cancel the allocated frequencies if they fail to do so.

The telecom regulator also asked the land phone operators to submit the details of their subscribers including photographs in prescribed forms by February 28 as the first step of compliance with the controversial tele-tapping ordinance.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia stand one minute in solemn silence to pay homage to the language martyrs after placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar at 12:01am today.

PHOTO: STAR

Nation pays homage to language martyrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of people barefoot and singing paid homage to the Language Movement martyrs of 1952 in Dhaka with the clock striking a minute past midnight to mark a day of supreme sacrifice.

President Iajuddin Ahmed led the nation in paying tributes to the language martyrs by placing a wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar, the venue for centrepiece February 21 observance, at 12:01am today, followed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who paused

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

CABINET GIVES NOD TO PROCUREMENT LAW

No clear provision kept for punishing violators

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The cabinet yesterday passed the draft of much-talked about Public Procurement Act, 2006 without keeping any clear-cut provision for punishment in case of violating the law.

In the draft, a drastic change has been brought about regarding the review panel. An option has been kept to make public purchase in the interest of the people while a scope for government intervention is also there in the name of resolving complications.

However, some negative features have been removed. The lottery provision has been omitted, negotiation has largely been cancelled, and the option of purchase in phases has also been obliterated.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Tigers surrender meekly to Sri Lanka

BISHWAJIT ROY *from Bogra*

Enthusiasm was at its zenith when Bangladesh cricketers returned to action after six months to play the first-ever one-day international at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium here on Monday.

But a full house crowd and millions glued to TV sets across the country and abroad were once

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Tata finds discussions brought convergence on four major issues

SHARIER KHAN

Dismissing stalemate over its investment negotiation with the government, Indian giant Tata says the talks so far brought a general convergence of views on four out of six major issues.

Of the two remaining issues, security of gas supply and its price, is the most critical one for Tata as its $2.5 billion proposed investment in Bangladesh largely depends on it. Tata believes the issue can be resolved if the government is a little flexible in considering any of its two options on gas.

The first option is a fixed price of gas and the second one is its flexible price linked to the price swing of steel to be produced using gas. The ups and downs of steel price will determine gas price, having a lower and upper ceiling.

"Since our negotiations started back in May 2005, we have already reached a general understanding on five key areas of our investment," says Tata Group's Resident Director S Manzer Hussain. These are fiscal incentive, land for the proposed plants, infrastructure development, coal mining, power and power purchase issues.

"Any other unresolved matters are easy to resolve," he says. Details of the four resolved issues have not been chalked out but that should not be difficult, he added.

But government negotiators say Tata needs to be flexible on the gas

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Economic growth did not benefit grassroots

Experts tell CPD seminar, call for structural reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been maintaining macroeconomic stability over a long period but could not achieve the expected growth and the result of whatever growth it had posted did not reach the grassroots level, observed some leading economists.

They said because of this reason inequality in the society has become one of the major issues which the government should address immediately for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development in the country.

"Bangladesh is the only country in South Asia which had a macro economic stability over the last one and a half decades but the stability did not bring expected growth. On the other hand some south Asian countries like Bhutan, which had volatility in its macro economy, achieved higher growth," said Debapriya Bhattacharya.

At the same time the result of the growth did not reach the poor due to lack of good governance and other structural problems, he added. Besides, major investments went into those sectors which do not create employment for the poor, he observed focusing on rising inequality in the society.

Governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, however, termed the view as simplistic

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

WIDENING RICH-POOR GAP

Turn in exports turns the wheels too

INAM AHMED

Five years ago, Reshma came to Dhaka city to work as a maid. That was a 24-hour job, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Two years later, she switched to stitching clothes at a garment industry that exports to the US.

Her job transformation has also changed her social and to some extent economic situation now.

"I have bought two cows in Haluaghat," Reshma says. "Whenever I visit my village, I enjoy taking care of them. I bathe them, feed them and milk them."

Reshma's story started because of one thing -- rise of the garment sector as a major contributor to the export basket. But she only represents one side of the story that is wide and diverse with heartbreaks too.

The transformation of the exports structure -- from being based in rural areas to becoming urban centric-- and its change in gender nature have also altered the equality dimension.

When jute was the country's main export item, the activities were more rural based, rooted in agriculture. This had a broad based distributional effect on the rural economy. But slowly jute lost its edge in the export basket from 59 percent of the total export earning in 1983-84 to only 4.7 percent in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

India says bird flu under control

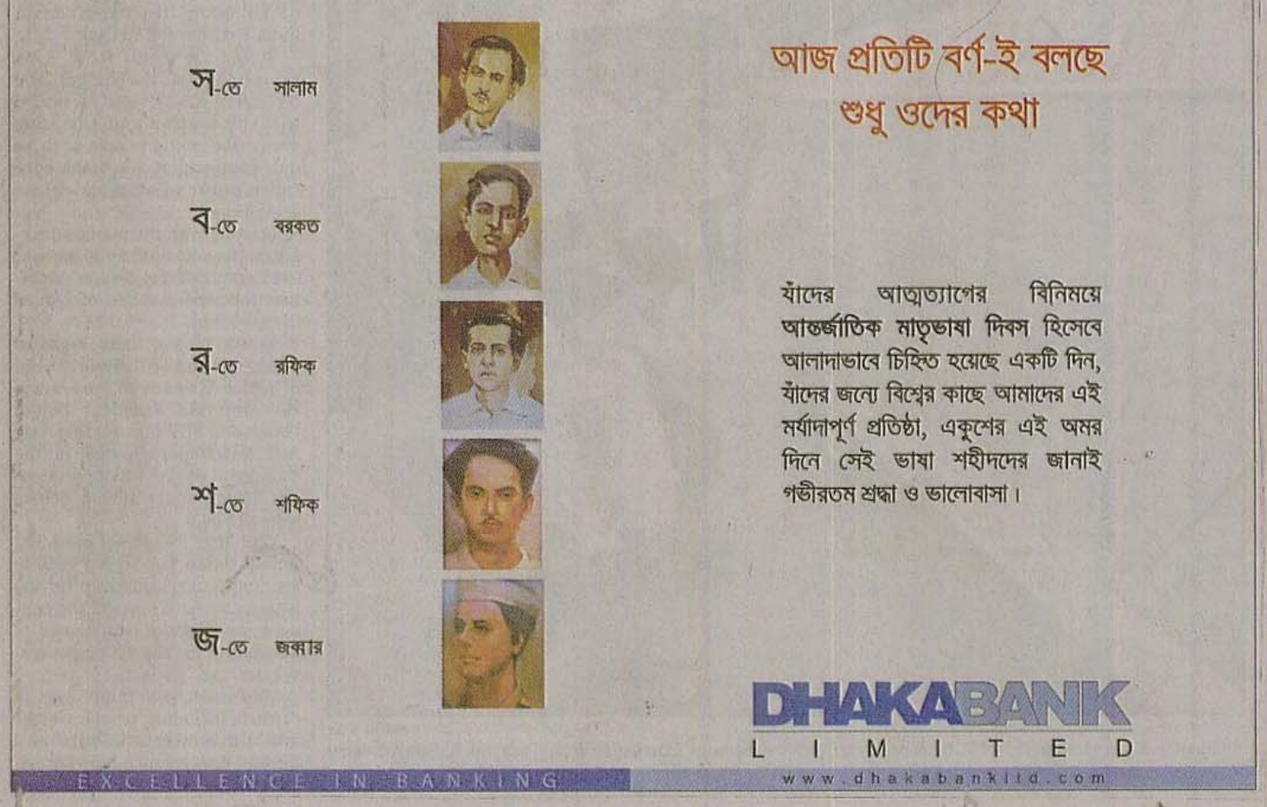
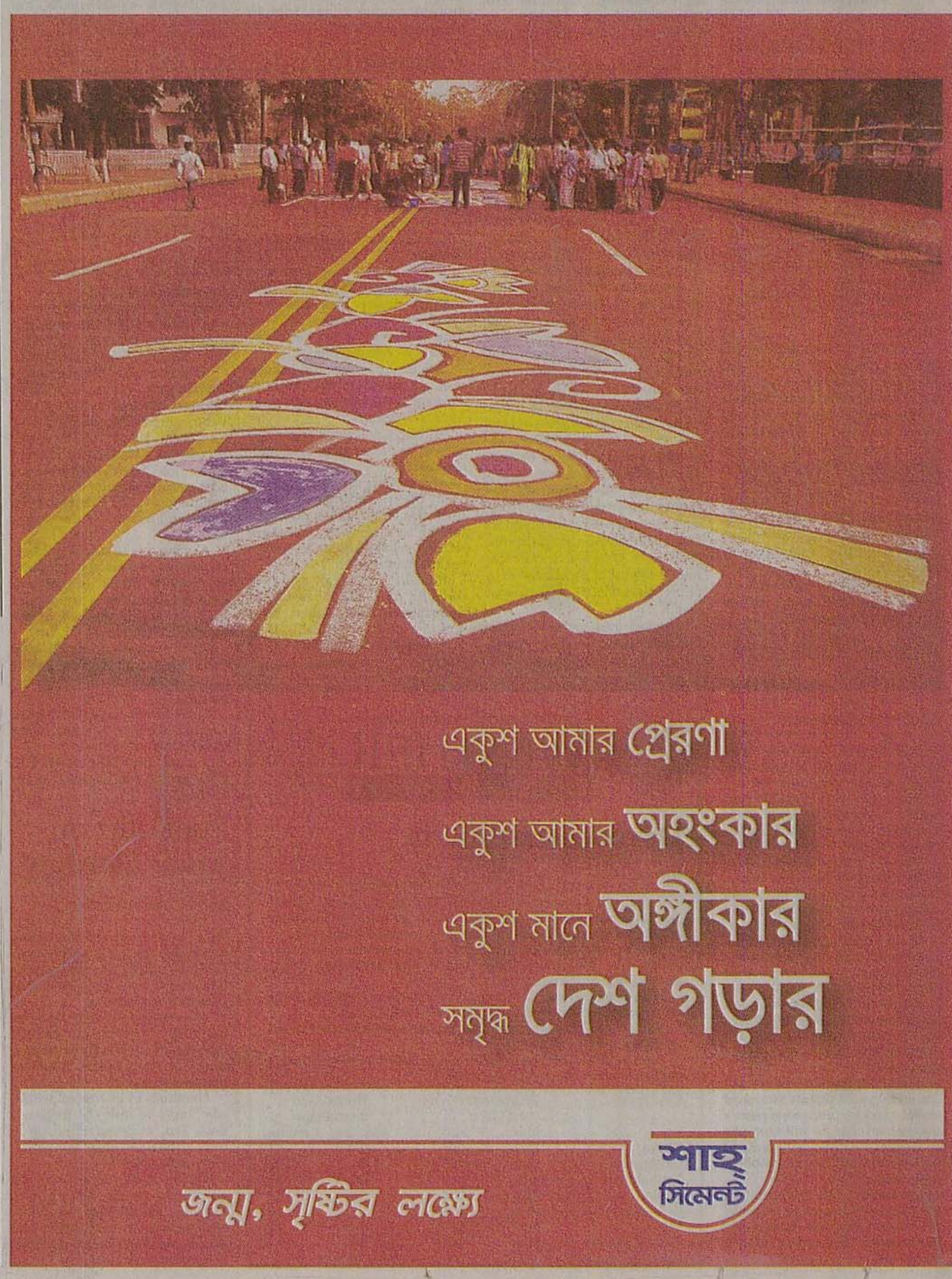
PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, *New Delhi*

Amid continuing chicken-culling operation in Maharashtra and Gujarat, India yesterday said the outbreak of the dreaded bird flu in Navapur area of Maharashtra was under control and no case of humans infected by the disease was reported as yet.

Health Minister Anbumani

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Notice

The Daily Star observes holiday today on account of the "Shaheed Day and International Mother Language Day".

However, the newspaper will come out tomorrow (February 22) under special arrangements.