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US, ROK, EU to get Saarc observer status

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT
Foreign ministers of South Asian countries at their informal meeting yesterday agreed in principle to grant South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) observer status to USA, South Korea and the European Union.
Diplomatic sources said the foreign ministers were however focused on resolving the disputes between India and Pakistan over the South Asia Free Trade Area's (Safat) becoming operational.
Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Indian State Minister for External Affairs E Ahmed, the Maldives State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdullah Shahid, Nepal's Foreign Minister...

PM calls for faster Saarc integration

Council of Ministers meet begins in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called for unlocking South Asia's true potential through faster and deeper economic integration so that this region can play its due part in this Asian resurgence in the new era.
The 21st century is Asia's, said the prime minister, also the current Saarc chairperson, as the foreign ministers of the member countries sat for an important meeting in Dhaka to execute some of the major decisions taken in the forum's recent summit.
"We are happy to see progress in the implementation of Safat. Dividends of economic benefits can play a crucial role in furthering regional cooperation," she said inaugurating the two-day 27th session of the Saarc Council of Ministers at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.
"We must take up high visibility projects and programmes, involving people from all sections of our societies. These could be precursor to a South Asian Economic Union," the prime minister said.
In this context, she mentioned the South Asian Development Fund, which she said can play an effective role in helping the economic integration of the nations. In its third decade, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) can be the vehicle for building a peaceful and economically prosperous South Asia.

Stable, secular Bangladesh needed for region

E Ahmed says
UNB, Dhaka
Indian State Minister for External Affairs E Ahmed yesterday hoped for a truly free and fair election in Bangladesh, saying that a stable and secular democratic Bangladesh is not only in the interest of India, but also for the region.
"There is already an intense debate in Bangladesh on the coming election. I must admit that there is also a keen interest in India... We hope that the next general election will be truly free and fair," he said.
Speaking at a luncheon hosted by India-Bangladesh friendship Organisation at Sonargaon Hotel...



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks at the inaugural ceremony of Saarc Council of Ministers meeting at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

OIC Summit PM flies to KL today

BSS, Dhaka
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia leaves Dhaka for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, today to attend the special OIC summit on the Lebanon situation.
Khaleda, who will lead the Bangladesh delegation at the high-profile OIC summit on August 3, will join other leaders to highlight Bangladesh's position on Middle East and reaffirm solidarity with the OIC member countries.
Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the current chairman of the 57-nation OIC, will open the summit in Putrajaya, Malaysia's administrative centre.
The summit is likely to condemn the Israeli atrocities in Lebanon.
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2001 ELECTION DISPUTES 13 cases still pending as next polls near

SHAKHAWAT LITON
October 27 this year, sources said. Ahead of the parliament election in 2001, the EC through reforms in electoral laws introduced a new system of lodging election dispute cases with the High Court (HC) Division, instead of election tribunals, in a bid for quick adjudication of the cases.
A total of 31 cases alleging various irregularities in the polls were filed with the HC soon after the election in October 2001. Eleven of those cases were dismissed due to reluctance of the petitioners to continue the cases and for lack of their initiatives. Five were dismissed on grounds of lack of merits, one was rejected and one became legally 'ineffective'.
Five of the 13 pending cases remain with the Appellate Division and eight in the HC division of the Supreme Court, sources said referring to a compilation of present status of the cases.
The slow pace of adjudication of election disputes encourages irregularities in elections and...
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ORIENTAL BANK BB to employ auditor to trace irregularities

REJAUL KARIM BYRON
The Bangladesh Bank (BB) decided to employ an external auditor to find out irregularities in the functioning of Oriental Bank and to take actions against the bank's top brass including members of the board of directors, who are responsible for the poor financial standing of the problem bank.
The BB yesterday submitted a report on problem banks including Oriental, which was taken over by the central bank in June due to its poor financial condition, to a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry.
The BB report told the standing committee meeting that an investigation team of the central bank has been inquiring the irregularities in Oriental Bank to identify the people involved in the crimes. Besides, an external auditor Ahmed and Ahmed Chartered Accountants will work for the same purpose, a source present at the meeting said quoting from the report.
Standing Committee Chairman Mushfiqur Rahman presided over the meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and supported the central bank's steps. The committee suggested the central bank to gear up monitoring activities over the banking sector for the interest of depositors.
"Legal actions against the persons involved in irregularities in Oriental Bank will be taken after getting reports from both the..."
SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

ALLIANCE WITH BNP Most JP lawmakers back Ershad

GM Quader skips meeting, Naziur welcomes move
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Most of the Jatiya Party (JP) lawmakers yesterday expressed support for party Chairman HM Ershad to press on with his move to join the ruling coalition.
A few of them, however, strongly opposed the idea at a JP parliamentary party meeting with Ershad, sources said.
JP Presidium Member and brother of the former president, GM Quader, did not attend the meeting.
Meanwhile, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) Chairman Naziur Rahman Manzur yesterday paid a visit to the JP chairman and welcomed his ex-boss for the initiative to join the four-party alliance.
Naziur, former secretary general of JP, had formed the BJP when Ershad left the four-party coalition back in April 2001.
At the beginning of the parliamentary party meeting, Ershad briefed his party lawmakers on his move to side with the ruling BNP, said meeting sources.
Three of the lawmakers expressed dissatisfaction at it while the others said they will support...
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DEATH REFERENCE Bench starts hearing case against JMB top brass

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Proceedings of the death reference case of seven Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders including militant kingpins Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai began in the High Court (HC) yesterday.
Deputy Attorney General Helal Uddin Mollah started reading the paper book (history of the case) and completed reading the first 20 pages of the over 300-page paper...
SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Israel widens ground offensive in Lebanon

3 Israeli soldiers killed as fighting flares up in several hotspots
AFP, Tyre, Dubai
Hezbollah guerrillas fought pitched battles with advancing Israeli forces in Lebanon yesterday after Israel decided to widen its three-week-old offensive despite accelerating international efforts to broker peace.
Media reports said as many as 20,000 troops were pouring into Lebanon, where three soldiers were reported killed as clashes flared in several hotspots along the border zone where Israel wants to eradicate Hezbollah.
Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has rejected mounting pressure for a ceasefire despite an international outcry over an air strike on a village on Sunday that left 52 people dead, mainly women and children, in the bloodiest attack since Israel unleashed its war machine on Lebanon on July 12.
UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was due to hold talks with ambassadors from the five permanent Security Council members on proposals for a ceasefire that centre on the deployment of an international buffer force.
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Members of a Lebanese family make their way through rubble on the Masnaa border with Syria yesterday after authorities closed it to vehicles following Israeli air strikes over the weekend.

5 bullet-hit as JCD factions clash at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT
At least five activists of Jatiyatubadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) suffered bullet injuries and 25 others including a teacher were injured in clashes between two factions of JCD at Jahangirnagar University (JU) last night.
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EC may turn to PMO for fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Election Commission (EC) secretary yesterday said they would contact the Prime Minister's Office, if necessary, to get funds for expediting the task of updating the voter list.
The finance ministry is yet to...
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Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation Scholarship for meritorious and needy students



As a part of Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation's scholarship program for the meritorious and needy students of the country, the Foundation has decided to award 150 scholarships who have passed SSC in 2006. Applications are invited for Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation scholarship from the students fulfilling the following minimum requirements.

Eligibility to apply for scholarship:

Academic level	Minimum CGPA Science Group (Without 4th subject)		Minimum CGPA other than Science Group (Without 4th subject)	
	Students who have passed SSC from the institution situated in 6(six) City Corporation areas	Students who have passed SSC from the institution situated outside 6(six) City Corporation areas	Students who have passed SSC from the institution situated in 6(six) City Corporation areas	Students who have passed SSC from the institution situated outside 6(six) City Corporation areas
SSC	4.80	4.40	4.70	4.30

Amount and Duration of Scholarship:

Academic level	Scholarship period	Monthly Stipend	Annual Grant for Reading Material
HSC	2 years	Tk. 1,000/-	Tk. 2,500/-

Other criteria of the scholarship:

- The scholarship will be renewable from year to year basis for the entire duration of a particular course subject to satisfactory result/academic performance duly certified/recommended by the Principal/Institutional Head.
- Students availing scholarship from other sources will not qualify for Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation (DBBF) scholarship. In case of opting for DBBF scholarship one has to surrender the scholarship already availed from other sources.
- A DBBF scholarship holder shall not apply for other scholarship. In case of availing other scholarship he/she will have to surrender the DBBF Scholarship.
- Prescribed application form will be available in all the branches of Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited. Where there is no branch of Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited, the applicant may apply in plain paper giving personal and academic details along with attested copies of Certificates, Mark sheets, Income Certificates of Father/Mother/Gurdian, 4 copies of recent passport size color photographs (duly attested by the institutional head) and recommendation from the institutional Head/Departmental Head.
- 50% scholarship will be awarded to female students.
- Application should reach to Co-ordinator, Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation, Senakalyan Bhaban (5th Floor), 195 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 on or before September 14, 2006.

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THIRD ODI TODAY Saleh in for Bashir
SPORTS REPORTER
Bangladesh go into the third one-day international against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports Club ground today with a hope to take an advantage in the five-match series.
The series is tied at 1-1 after the Tigers strongly bounced back with a 62-run victory in the second match on Sunday after conceding a two-wicket defeat in the first game at the same venue, only the day before.
Bangladesh Television and satellite channel STAR Sports will beam the match live from the Zimbabwean capital at 1:30pm.
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