

# Time is running out

## Productive border talks by April a must

M ANWARUL HAQ

Dhaka and Delhi may miss yet another opportunity to mend its 4,000-kilometre border fences, if it fails to shortly hold a productive meeting of the Joint Boundary Working Group (JBWG).

The meeting is necessary for resolution of some crucial outstanding issues like undemarcated boundary, transfer of enclaves and adverse possessions.

The opportunity for settlement of the border issues may be lost once again with the mandated one-year timeframe of the Indo-Bangladesh JBWG ending this April.

After years of stalemate, the border issues affecting good neighbourly relations between the two countries are now under the purview of the JBWG set up last year.

Officials in Dhaka say they are looking for an early schedule for the JBWG meeting. The next meet of the JBWG is due to take place in New Delhi.

The contentious issues that fall within the purview of the working group include demarcation of the 6.5-kilometre stretch of the border between the two coun-

tries, exchange of enclaves, adverse possessions and construction of border pillars.

There are 111 Indian and 51 Bangladesh enclaves inside each other's territory. Bangladesh is in possession of 3,000 acres of Indian land, while 3,500 acres of its land is possessed by India.

Most of the unresolved border issues centre around the non-implementation of the Mujib-Indira agreement of 1974.

The first meeting of the JBWG was held in Delhi, which set the terms of reference (TOR) of the group.

The three-day Dhaka meet in July gave opportunity to the delegations of the two countries to explain their positions. The next meeting, already due, is supposed to work out any points of differences through negotiations. The JBWG report is due to be completed and presented to the respective foreign secretaries for implementation within this April.

At the Dhaka talks, agreed minutes were signed and a joint press release was issued. The JBWG meet was

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## Manhunt for 'little' Jonny

STAR REPORT

Police have mounted a manhunt for nine-year old Jonny, a kindergarten student, for a crime he allegedly committed three years ago!

His guardians are now seeking legal assistance of the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) to save him from the police hunt.

Last week, the confused police raided his house in a village in Jhikargachha to arrest him under the Arms Act.

Local people pulled out all the stops to convince the police into believing that they mistook Jonny for the boy they were looking for.

The police said with vehemence that they 'will be back again' to arrest Jonny unless his

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presiding over the 14th meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order at her office yesterday.

## Killing of port workers Ex-minister Talukder Khaleque, 20 others sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A case has been lodged with Bagerhat Court accusing 21 people of killing four persons at Mongla on December 5, 2000.

The accused include former AL minister Talukder Abdul Khaleque, MP, and three police constables.

Moazzem Hossain, a leader of 'Mongla Sramik Unnayan Committee' filed a case with the court on Monday.

In his petition, Moazzem stated that the accused in the case opened fires indiscriminately on a procession of port workers at noon on December 5, 2000 at the instigation of Talukder Abdul Khaleque, killing four port workers.

"I could not lodge the case either with Mongla thana or court due to threats given by Awami League gangsters and Talukder Khaleque who was then state minister for disaster management and relief", the complainant has stated in the petition.

Mongla thana AL president Idris Ali Ijaradar, Secretary of Dock Workers' Management Board Abul Kalam Azad, President of Mongla Bandar Sramik Sangha Sahjahan Shikari, general secretary Mostafizur Rahman, police constables Marsha Chakma and Subedar Nazrul Islam are among the 21 accused in the case.

## Erratum

Due to oversight, the date of arrival of Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Kamal Kharazi was printed as January 14 instead of February 14 on the front page of our yesterday's edition. The inadvertent error is regretted.



PHOTO: STAR

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan addressing the international conference on regional cooperation organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), at BRAC centre in the city yesterday.

# Quest for a new growth quadrangle

## Confce in city to boost economic cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at the inaugural session of a two-day international conference on regional cooperation have underscored greater understanding among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar on economic and

trade issues.

A new 'growth quadrangle' comprising these nations can be developed to explore the untapped resources in the landlocked areas of Myanmar, Southwest China and the northeastern states of India, they observed.

If the historic silk-route could be revived, it would bring a lot of economic opportunities to these areas neglected and undeveloped for long, they said.

The proposed 'growth quadrangle' would also provide more port facilities to the vast area, which needs more outlets to boost economic activities, they said.

"A lot of discussions and exchange of views on cooperation among these nations have taken place...now we need to turn the matter into reality," said Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan while inaugurating the conference

at the BRAC Centre yesterday morning.

He, however, underscored a change in the mindset about cooperation and emphasised development of a regional culture.

Expressing the firm commitment of Bangladesh to any regional and sub-regional cooperation, Morshed Khan said that cooperation could transcend the borders of four nations.

He hoped the conference would yield some objective and forward-looking results.

The inaugural session, presided over by CPD Chairman Prof. Rehman Sobhan, was also addressed by, among others, Asian Development Bank Bangladesh Country Director Toru Shibuchi, Home Minister of Assam State government Pradyut Bordoloi, President of Centre for Policy

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## Contempt petition against Hasina: Next hearing on Feb 11

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday adjourned the hearing of contempt petition filed against leader of the opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina till February 11.

The matter was partly heard yesterday by a division bench comprising Justice Syed Amirul Islam and Justice Sikder Maqbul Haque.

The petition was filed by Advocate Syed Ziaul Karim for reported remarks by Sheikh Hasina about judiciary in an interview with the New York based weekly 'Thikana'.

The counsel of the petitioner Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan prayed for issuing rule and submitted to the court that Sheikh Hasina was cautioned by the highest court of the country for her such com

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## No-one spoke

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday skipped the opportunity to speak on point of order.

In contrast to the events on Tuesday when a good number of lawmakers including several ministers gave the speaker a tough time in their bid to speak on point of order-- which led to chaos in the House, no-one asked for the floor yesterday.

Parliamentary rule on point of order allows a member to raise an issue involving violation of the constitution or the rules of procedure during 'zero hours' (time between two agenda). Traditionally, the MPs are locked in hectic competition to get the floor on point of order to speak about various issues, mostly not covered by the rule.

The situation reached a new height Tuesday when several ministers joined the chaotic competition to speak on point of order. Communications Minister Nazmul Huda blasted Speaker Jamiruddin Sirar as he failed to draw the chair's attention by pressing the button on his desk several times. Allowed only after he rose to his feet and shouted,

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## AL may discuss some 'crucial' issues today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League is likely to discuss today some crucial points regarding changes in its central leadership and new political strategies before further proceeding towards any big anti-government action, sources in the party said.

The meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALWC) will be held at its Bangabandhu Avenue office at 3:00 p.m. today with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The meeting will also discuss its programmes to observe the 50th anniversary of the language movement and the proposed human rights convention, sources said.

As many as 540 leaders from various tiers of the party including some members of the central committee, were earlier served with show cause notices in regard to the AL debacle in the October 1 general election.

The leaders who were given a

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# People already scared of govt torture, terrorism

## Hasina tells partymen at central office

UNB, Dhaka

Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the country entered a state of economic stagnation at the very start of BNP-Jamaat rule for what she said massive corruption and misrule.

"People have already become frustrated, puzzled and scared seeing the misrule, torture and terrorism by the present government," said the immediate-past prime minister.

One of the causes she attributed to this situation is the government's preoccupation with attacking the opposition rather than giving due attention to running the country.

Addressing the leaders and workers of Bangladesh Bastuhara League at her party central office,

she alleged that instead of taking steps for people's welfare the government pitted terrorists and police force against the opposition.

She thought the present government could not maintain law and order and also failed in every sector, which made public life utterly miserable.

"During its three and a half months of rule the alliance government has ruined the economy and destabilised democratic environment in the country," she said mentioning her government's steps for the welfare of common people.

The Awami League chief said the present government is sticking labels on the near-complete projects undertaken by her government claiming those as their success.

"Under the 100-day agenda the present government has successfully hijacked the successes of Awami League government," she quipped, saying that the areas where Khaleda Zia is claiming success were all Awami League's performance.

The opposition leader said her government had taken the decision of giving promotion to the teachers, introduced Imam training project, started women bus service in the city and took a number of steps to remove traffic congestion, including putting 200 BRTC double-deckers on the road.

She told her audience that her

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## 3 get life term for killing school teacher in Barisal

UNB, Barisal

A court here yesterday sentenced three people, two in absentia, to life term imprisonment for killing a school teacher.

The court also fined the convicts Monir alias Harun Khan, Abdul Majid Sardar and Saidul Islam Tk 6,000 each, in default, to suffer two years and three months RI more. Majid and Saidul were tried in absentia.

According to prosecution, the accused with the help of their accomplices abducted headmaster Yasin of Sirpur Primary School in Mehendiganj upazila on May 15, last year.

Later they took him to Harinampur area of Hijla upazila in a trawler, killed him there and threw the body into the river Joyanta. Later his decomposed body was recovered after a month.

After examining the witnesses and records, Additional District and Sessions Judge M Jahangir Alam Mollah awarded the punishment acquitting 11 others.

## Extortion: 8 tribal youths held in Bandarban

BSS, Bandarban

Eight tribal youths were arrested on charges of extortion in remote areas of Bandarban sadar and Ruma upazilas of the district recently.

According to police sources, four members of Pahari Chattra Parishad (PCP) arrested on charges of demanding toll from timber trader Nasir at Kyang Para of Sadar upazila on January 30. They beat up Nasir.

Hearing the incident, police team raided the areas and arrested four PCP members for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Another incident happened on February 4 in the Sang River at Galling of Ruma upazila. Four tribal youths attacked two boats and demanded illegal tolls from boat drivers.

The member of the law enforcing agencies later arrested four tribal extortionists.

Two separate cases were filed with Sadar and Ruma thanas.