

# 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 Jhikargacha 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 Ijazdar, Secretary of Dock Workers' Management Board Abul Kalam Azad, President of Mongla Bandar Sramik Sangha Sahjan Shikari, general secretary Mostafizur Rahman, police constables Marsha Chakma and Subedar Nazrul Islam are among the 21 accused in the case.



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

Confco 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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## 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 said.

The meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) 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 BNJ-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 Bastahara 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.

"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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# Mend shortcomings in bids by May

Evaluation body on submarine cable project asks govt

ABU SAEED KHAN

The Bid Evaluation Committee for Bangladesh Submarine Cable Network (BSCN) project has identified some major weaknesses in the bids and has suggested that if these are not addressed by end-May, the government should re-tender the project or seek an alternative.

However, pinpointing some of the advantages in the lowest bidder's proposal over other offers, the evaluation committee formed by Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) has primarily recommended US company TyCom for the BSCN project that would connect the country with the Information Highway.

The committee noted that while TyCom's bid was as low as US\$ 117.4 million, the bidder has tagged implementation of the project with installation of another of its subma-

rine cable project called SEACN, connecting Singapore with Chennai, India. While the SEACN project is still at a planning stage, TyCom must complete the BSCN project within 18 months of signing the contract.

If TyCom fails to assure the government by end-March implementation of an alternative.

SEACN, the evaluation committee suggested BTTB to consider the proposal of the second lowest bidder- Alcatel. However, Alcatel's \$133.10 million bid is also subject to fulfilment of many conditions.

If neither deal is signed by May 31, the BTTB suggested the government to re-tender the BSCN project or join a submarine cable consortium.

"Consortium cable is always the best option for countries like Bangladesh," said a BTTB source. It

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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 Sripur Primary School in Mehendiganj upazila on May 15, last year.

Later they took him to Harinampur area of Hija 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 Chatra 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.

Heating 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.

Triple murder at Skid Ghat

## Ershad Shikdar, 7 others get life term

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Eight out of the 14 accused in Skid Ghat triple murder case have been awarded life term imprisonment and fined Tk 25,000 each in default to suffer three more years rigorous imprisonment.

Six other accused have been acquitted as charges against them could not be proved.

The judgement in the case was delivered at 3 pm yesterday by Didar Ali Fakir, Additional District and Sessions Judge, Khulna. Four accused in the case were tried in absentia.

Eight accused given life term are Ershad Shikdar, Liaquat Lashkar, Idris Ali Talukder, Faruque Jama, Yunus Sarker, Abdul Mannan alias Mona, Joynal and Barek commander.

The accused acquitted include Noor-e-Alam, approver of all the cases against Shikdar and his accomplices. He has been acquitted in all the cases so far for helping the government in proving the charges with evidences.

Five other accused acquitted in this case are Nasir Khan, Noor Islam alias Noori, Bashir Hossain Babu, Moktar and Noor Mohammad.

Four absconding accused are Joynal, Barek commander, Moktar and Noor Mohammad. Of them, Moktar and Noor Mohammad have been

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