

# The Daily Star

COMMITTED TO  
People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XI No. 41

DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2002

www.dailystarnews.com

16 PAGES PRICE: Tk 7.00

## Myanmar-India gas pipeline via Bangladesh awaits PM's nod

UNB, Dhaka

An international consortium has proposed setting up of a gas pipeline over Bangladesh connecting Myanmar with Indian states of Tripura and West Bengal.

Sources said the energy ministry has put forward the proposal of "Trans-Myanmar-Bangladesh Gas Pipeline" to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for approval on principle.

The consortium mentioned that they got letters of no objection for the proposed gas pipeline from the governments of Myanmar and India as well as of Tripura and West Bengal.

The proposal suggested that Bangladesh government would not make any investment in pipeline construction. The entire investment will be met from foreign private sources, including payment for land acquisition.

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## DB police posted at different points around Sudha Sadan

UNB, Dhaka

Plainclothes and uniformed police have been posted at different points around Sudha Sadan, the Dhanmondi residence of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina.

Detective and uniformed police were seen at entry points of Dhanmondi Road No 5 and 4.

"It appears that the Sudha Sadan has been put under siege ... It is unprecedented," a personal staff of

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## Raw hide deal

### Prices exceed int'l rate by 25 pc

STAR REPORT

The prices of cattle hide on the domestic market have exceeded the international rate by at least 25 per cent.

Leather exporters -- who earn US\$300 million a year -- fear the climbing rate would adversely affect this year's export earning.

And this happened due to the unprecedented number of 'seasonal' traders who ventured to rake in profits through the raw hide business following the Eid.

Moreover, buyers had to pay almost doubly for purchase of sacrificial animals from 22 cattle markets in the city, and traders had faced troubles of random extortion in buying hide.

Also unprecedented was the chaos at the cattle markets, as the authorities allowed a larger number of seasonal traders -- mostly belonging to the ruling party -- to organise five-day makeshift cattle markets across the

country and to raise their profits in anyway they can.

As a result, terrorism, extortion and snatching of cattle were widespread. Many poor cattle vendors from villages were robbed of their lifetime investments or deprived of just prices.

On the other hand, the prices of hide shot up due to an increased number of seasonal traders, while the supply of hide was close to last year's, leather traders said.

The leather sector is the fourth-largest export earner. More than 50 per cent of raw hide is collected during the Eid-ul-Azha.

As a large number of seasonal traders clamoured to buy hide, prices shot up, leather traders reasoned.

Average sized cowhide was sold at between Tk 1,200 and Tk 2,000 apiece this year, whereas the same fetched between Tk 750 and 1,500 last year.

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## Biman to cut one-fourth of its overseas manpower

BSS, Dhaka

The state-owned Biman Bangladesh Airlines has taken steps to cut one-fourth of manpower from its 25 overseas stations including Kuwait, Manchester, New Delhi, Bangkok, Karachi, Kolkata, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Narita to reduce expenditures.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin was informed of the decision by the Biman management at a policy-making meeting held at the Biman's headquarters yesterday.

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## Terrorists-minister meet bares BNP's squabble

STAR REPORT

Press reports with photos of Chittagong's top terrorists posing with state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar have embarrassed the BNP and Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

Some central BNP leaders said the meeting of the top terrorists and the state minister exposed internal conflict in the local BNP leadership.

The CMP has asked its officials to nab the terrorists. Two of the photographed terrorists, Razzak and Iqbal, have reportedly gone into hiding.

Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury and State Minister for Tourism Mir Nasir Uddin are said to be age-old rivals of Labour and Manpower Minister Abdullah Al Noman in Chittagong's politics.

In the central BNP politics Babar and Noman are in

the opposing camp of SQ Chowdhury's.

Some central BNP leaders told The Daily Star that SQ Chowdhury's group deliberately sent some top terrorists to Monday's party meeting to 'embarrass' Babar, who hails from Netrokona.

The incident is further shrouded in mystery as the special branch of police did not alert Babar about the presence of the top terrorists at the meeting venue right beside him.

Chittagong City BNP Vice-president AM Nazimuddin told the press yesterday that many top BNP leaders were unaware of the meeting between local BNP workers and the state minister for home.

Commenting on the terrorists posing with the state minister, Nazimuddin said, "During the Awami League regime, newspapers had printed the photograph of infamous terrorist Mamun [now in jail] with a minister.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No end in sight...on-stream tanneries at Hazaribagh in the city release toxic effluents round the clock into the Buriganga River, putting public health and life forms at high risk.

## 69 Bangladeshis killed by BSF since Apr last

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-nine Bangladeshis were killed in BSF firing from across the border in less than one year.

They were killed in 90 incidents firing since April last year, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury Bir Bikram said at a press briefing yesterday.

Responding to questions from newsmen, the foreign secretary expressed his "profound disappoint-

ment at the unhappy incidents triggered by the BSF". He said he raised the issue "very strongly" with his Indian counterpart Chokila Iyer during his recent meeting with her in Delhi.

Terming those "most unfortunate", the foreign secretary said, "These incidents continue despite our protests. We feel that this situation needs to improve."

Asked why a meeting between

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## New Pak capital ceiling puts cap on Rupali Bank

INAM AHMED

The finance ministry has asked Rupali Bank to merge its lone Karachi branch with that of the IFIC's there by March 15, or wind up business after Pakistan imposed a new capital requirement for foreign banks.

Pakistan recently raised capital requirement for foreign banks to 100 crore rupees. Under the new rules, Rupali Bank will need to infuse another 71.60 crore rupees by June 30 this year and another 25 crore more by December 31, 2001.

Current circumstances suggest the government does not have enough foreign exchange to feed the Pakistan-based branch's capital base.

A merger with the IFIC's Karachi branch is the only option that lurks before Rupali Banks. The IFIC has two branches in Karachi and Lahore.

Meantime, the ministry in a letter to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday said the IFIC has to complete all preparations to float a joint venture bank by June.

Should it fail so doing, branches of Rupali and the IFIC in Pakistan faces closure. The BB has been asked to oversee the formalities to this end.

According to sources, the IFIC also will have to pump around Tk 50 crore to complement the Pakistan guideline.

## 10 BCL leaders arrested without specific charges

### Two get bail, 8 sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives arrested 10 Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leaders including eight central ones, from in front of the residence of Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina on Monday night without showing any charges against them.

The BCL central leaders are Joint Secretary Liakat Sikdar, Publicity Secretary Rafiqul Islam Kotwal, International Affairs Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu, Assistant International Affairs Secretary Khan Moinul Islam Mustak, central unit members Nazmul Hasan Anik, MA Momin Patwary, Nazmul Islam Tuhin and Anisur Rahman Litu. Litu is also general secretary of Bangladesh Ain Samity. Others arrested include Dhaka College BCL Vice-president Swapon Karmakar and Dhaka University BCL leader Fahim Rahman Khan Rani.

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## PM leaves today for CHOGM Dhaka for effective steps to combat poverty

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia leaves today to attend the four-day Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Queensland, Australia.

Several heads of state or government will attend 13th Commonwealth Summit beginning on March 2.

The Commonwealth is a forum of 54 countries, which are former colonies of Britain.

Queen Elizabeth the Second will inaugurate the Summit in Coolom, a sunshine resort in Queensland.

The theme of the forthcoming Summit is "The Commonwealth in the 21st Century: Continuity and Renewal."

The Bangladesh Prime Minister in her speech at the Summit is expected call for "effective international action to help weaker countries" in their

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## Fire damages Chawkbazar telephone exchange

BSS, Dhaka

The 11,000-line digital telephone exchange at Chawkbazar in the city was damaged in a fire yesterday evening, disrupting telecommunications in the area.

Firefighters extinguished the blaze, originated from an electric short circuit, one and a half hours after it broke out, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) sources said.

The damage caused by the fire is yet to be ascertained.

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### Announcement

Due to unavoidable circumstances, The Daily Star of today and tomorrow has been reduced to 12 pages from its normal 16 pages. We regret our readers' inconvenience.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 27		6-00 pm
Feb 28	6-22 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-05	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation