

## GREETINGS



The Daily Star wishes its valued readers, patrons, wellwishers and advertisers a happy Bangla New Year.

## Announcement



2002  
FIFA WORLD CUP  
KOREA JAPAN

See the rules and conditions of the Rangs Toshiba World Cup Quiz, Round 1 on Page 10.

## Shantrash and Terrorism

All sorts of criminal activities of armed gangsters or individual criminals are very often described in our journalism as "terrorism" and its perpetrators as "terrorists". The Bangla word *Shantrash*, which describes the events better, is very casually translated into "terrorism" and put to widespread use. In the post 11 September international world and especially after the US war against the Taliban government in Afghanistan, these two words have acquired some very special meaning, to describe terrorist activities of a particular type. For the sake of responsible journalism we, in this newspaper, have decided to use these words in line with their current international connotation.

-Editor

## Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today (Sunday) on the occasion of Pehela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow (Monday).

## INSIDE TODAY

### Article 4

Sharon defies President Bush  
Column: Spotlight on Middle East  
Muslehuddin Ahmed

### Supplement 5&6

A two-page in-house supplement on 'Pahela Baishakh'

# Denmark slaps corruption charges against shipping minister, blocks aid

## Akbar propels counter charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Denmark has withdrawn US\$ 45 million in aid labelling graft charges against the shipping minister Col (retd) Akbar Hossain in the process of floating tender for repair of four ferries.

"There was a serious intention of corruption in tendering (for) four ferries in Aricha route. The corruption took place at a high level in the shipping ministry, actually by the minister. And that's why we have decided to terminate all sorts of cooperation with that ministry," Peter Lysholt Hansen, under-secretary in Denmark's foreign ministry, told reporters at a press briefing in the city.

He said the Danish government was withdrawing \$5 million earmarked for this year and \$40 million over the next five years for the shipping sector. As a result, Danish assistance to Bangladesh this year will be around 230 million Danish Kroner (DKK) or US\$ 28 million, lower from the original DKK 270 million (about US\$ 33 million).

The shipping minister, however, denied the charges and rather pointed an accusing finger at the Danish authorities.

"I wanted to float an open tender for transparency. But, they (the Danish authorities) were in favour of skirting the tender process to have the job awarded to a company they selected," Akbar Hossain told The Daily Star last night.

However, the Danish under-secretary said, "I will not provide you the specific details of the moves that clearly indicates corruption. We have sent all the necessary information to the government through proper channel."

The Danish Embassy is also planning to inform the matter to the prime minister, he said.

He said the Bangladesh government had urged the Danes to reconsider the aid withdrawal, saying the dispute was because of a "misunderstanding". "It was the only way for us," Hansen responded. "We have an obligation to the Danish taxpayers."

"We will reassess our cooperation in other areas also if the government does not fulfill its commitment," said Hansen.

"Now it's a test for our future relations. It is the poor people of Bangladesh for whom we are doing this," he said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

# Bangabandhu case in bench quagmire

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The hearing on the leave to appeal petition of the Bangabandhu Murder Case would not be held before 2004 unless a judge is appointed on an ad hoc basis at the Supreme Court appellate division to form a three-member bench.

At least three judges are required for the hearing on this case at this division.

At the current line-up of justices to be placed at the division, it now looks that the bench would never have at least three members before 2004 who were not earlier embarrassed to hear the case.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed has

already told the press that no ad-hoc judge would be appointed for this case. And if so, the case would not be on the appellate division's cause list before February 2004.

This case has been plagued with hurdles since its filing in 1996. Till now six justices of the Supreme Court have expressed their embarrassment to hear the case, leading to a crisis of judges.

And the crisis would continue till January 2004 unless a situation arises in which new judges are appointed at the appellate division or the retirement age of justices is extended.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Khaleda's new year surprise for Hasina

STAR REPORT

Sheikh Hasina's Bangla New Year surprise is a gift from no less an arch-rival than Khaleda Zia.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia last night sent a basketful of seasonal fruits, a bouquet, sweets and a sari to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina as Bangla New Year's gift.

Hasina accepted the gifts, but regretted that she could not take the sari, a personal gift from the PM, her arch political foe.

Her aides told The Daily Star last night that she did not accept the sari protesting the repeal of the Bangabandhu portrait act, 'repression' on the minorities and the Awami League workers.

However, she kept the other gifts in appreciation of the gesture of goodwill on the part of the prime minister.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

## PM's directive Tighten security for new year celebrations

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday directed the authorities concerned to tighten security measures to check any untoward incident during Bengali New Year celebrations today alongside intensifying anti-crime drives across the country.

She also directed the law-enforcing agencies to ensure proper application of the newly enacted law for speedy trial guarding against its use to harass political opponents.

The directives of the prime minister came during a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order at her office yesterday afternoon.

Her instructions came on the eve of Pehela Baishakh as many minds are naturally haunted by last year's carnage at Ramna Balmul in a terrible bomb attack on the Chhayannaut concert hailing the Bengali New Year during the rule of the past government.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## IMF mission in city to review PGRF

STAR REPORT

Another International Monetary Fund (IMF) team is now in Dhaka to review issues related to poverty reduction growth facility (PRGF).

The team met Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday and asked for reduction of bank borrowing by the government.

The IMF mission also wanted to know how the loans are being spent and sought transparency in government spending.

According to its quota, Bangladesh can get up to US\$720 million from the PRGF. With its frail balance of payment situation, the government initiated bailout talks with the IMF early this year. But a February mission ended in failure after the government found the IMF conditions too much to swallow.

During its stay till April 18, the team will also review the annual

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

# AL rally in city Apr 20, 5-day street agitation from next day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) will hold a public meeting at the Paltan Maidan in the city on April 20, the party's central committee decided yesterday.

The three and a half hours meeting of the AL Central Working Committee also decided to organise countrywide street demonstration from April 21 through April 25.

Briefing reporters on the meeting's outcome, AL Office Secretary Abdul Mannan Khan said the fresh street agitation aims at protesting enactment of the 'Law and order Disruption Crimes (Speedy Trial) Act', which the party termed a black law to 'persecute the opposition'.

Misrule by the BNP-led coalition government, the growing acts of crimes in the country and the rising 'repression' on the opposition activists are among other issues that led to the party's agitation programme.

The parliament approved the 'Law and order Disruption Crimes (Speedy Trial) Act' last week, five days after it had scrapped a similar legislation the Public Safety Act (PSA) enacted by the immediate-past AL government.

The meeting chaired by party chief Sheikh Hasina was held at the AL central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

Submerged in expectation... a little girl plucks national flower shapla (water lily) to greet Bangla New Year today.

# Bangladeshis face uncertain future in Malaysia

## 70 thousand more may have to return in next 5 months

STAR REPORT

Around 15,000 Bangladeshi workers have already returned from Malaysia as their job contracts expired and about 70,000 more would be back within four to five months if the government does not take immediate initiatives for negotiations in this regard with the Malaysian authorities.

According to sources in Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), job contract of around 1.50 lakh Bangladeshis working in Malaysia would expire this year. Most of them have already completed their job tenure and the Malaysian government refused to renew their work permit.

The number of Bangladeshis working in that country has now reduced to about 1.50 lakh from around half a million in 1996-97.

Although the Malaysian authorities have a plan to recruit around eight lakh workers from 10 developing countries this year, Bangladesh is not included in the list.

BAIRA leaders said they do not yet see 'any effective move' by the government for negotiation with the Malaysian side for extension of job tenure of the existing workers or fresh recruitment of workers from Bangladesh.

But State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Quamrul Islam, when contacted yesterday, said the government has already

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

# Welcome Bangla year 1409

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla Year 1409, will be celebrated across the country today amid traditional fervour, festivities and fanfare.

Millions of Bengalis around the world including a large number of Bengali expatriates will also welcome the first day of Baishakh, the first month of the Bengali calendar, upholding the rich cultural heritage of the country through music, drama, songs and poetry recitals.

Food recipes in almost every Bengali household will centre round traditional dishes such as panta, hilsa curry, dal and various other Bangla dishes.

In observance of the day, traditional fairs and cultural functions will be held in the city as elsewhere in the country. The day is a public holiday.

With the horrible memories of last year's Ramna Balmul carnage still haunting people's mind, this

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7