

LTTE drops demand for separate state

Sri Lanka's bloody civil war

Death toll has reached more than 60,000

- 1948 British-ruled Ceylon gains independence
- 1956 Sinhalese majority government launches nationalist campaign, provoking minority Tamil unrest
- 1972 Ceylon becomes Republic of Sri Lanka; Tamil New Tigers, later Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), formed
- 1983 Civil war erupts as LTTE seeks independent state
- 1990 LTTE controls large areas of north. Peace talks collapse
- 1993 President Ranasinghe Premadasa assassinated by LTTE
- 1995 Sri Lankan army retakes Jaffna peninsula
- 1997 LTTE launches attack in central Colombo after army's costly "Sure Victory" campaign
- 1998 Government bans the LTTE after the bombing of a Buddhist shrine
- 1999 President Chandrika Kumaratunga invites Norway to mediate in peace process
- 2001 Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe agrees to a truce with LTTE (formally starts February 2002)
- September 16 2002 Peace talks begin in Thailand after government lifts ban on LTTE

LTTE are outlawed by Australia, Britain, Canada, India and the US

AFP, Sattahip, Thailand

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels yesterday dropped their demand for a separate state after peace talks here, in a major policy shift that boosted attempts to end decades of bloodshed.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they were not campaigning for Tamil Eelam - their name for an independent state in the island's northeast - but instead wanted "regional autonomy and self-government."

"I wish to impress upon you that the LTTE doesn't operate with the concept of a separate state," the Tigers' top negotiator Anton Balasingham said at the conclusion of three days of Norwegian-brokered discussions.

"Our demand for a homeland is not a demand for a separate state," he told a joint press conference with the Sri Lankan government's chief negotiator, GL Peiris.

The Tamil Tigers' elusive leader Velupillai Prabhakaran had said in April that it was too early for the LTTE to discuss giving up its guerrilla war for "Eelam", a conflict which has left 60,000 dead and devastated the nation of under 19 million people.

But since then the two sides have held several informal meetings and opened the official talks which began Monday at a tightly guarded naval base east of Bangkok.

Balasingham's surprise remarks are by far the strongest indication that the LTTE is turning over a new leaf after staging Asia's longest-running internal conflict.

He also revealed that the progress of the talks had been constantly relayed to Prabhakaran who is holed up in an unknown location in northern Sri Lanka.

Peiris welcomed Balasingham's remarks, confirmed a separate state was not the goal of the LTTE and said the two sides could work towards ending the conflict through power sharing.

Balasingham said it was too early to discuss the question of

HSC results hit a six-year low

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

the result sheets over to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the morning.

Results of the HSC examinations held under the nine education boards, including the Technical Education Board and the Madrassah Education Board, were published yesterday.

Chairmen of all boards handed

the percentage of pass in the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations has edged down to 27.09 from 28.41 last year, with 1,45,818 successful examinees under seven education boards this year.

The percentage of pass this year is the lowest in the last six years, with 28.41 in 2001, 37.05 in 2000, 53.39 in 1999, 44.89 in 1998 and 48.48 in 1997.

This year, as many as 5,38,295 students have sat for the exams. Of the successful candidates, 3,22,022 were male and 2,16,273 female, with 43,845 students achieving first division, 82,248 second and 19,725 third.

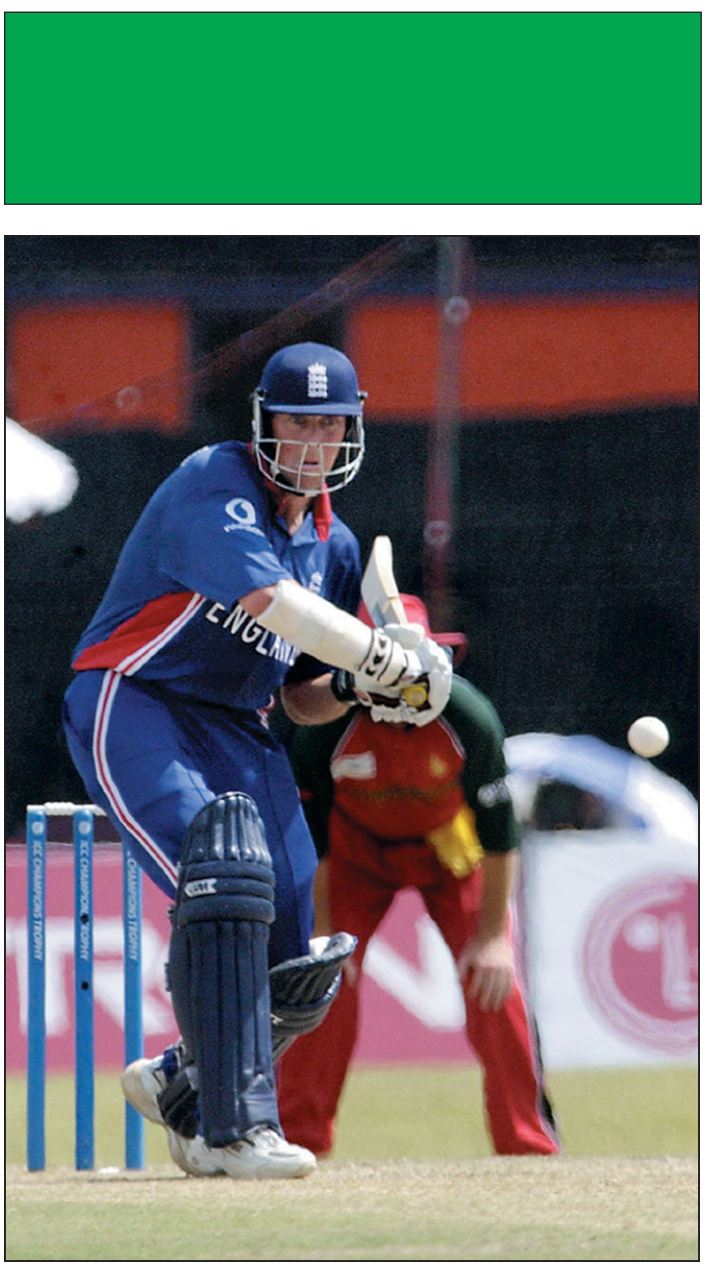
"The percentage dipped due to tight security during exams and inadequate preparation by examinees," reasoned an official of the education ministry yesterday.

Summary trial courts were set up in the areas close to examination centres and the section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) was enforced in 200 yards of a centre

HSC RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Board	No of examinees	Passed	%
Dhaka	1,53,959	56,301	36.57
Chittagong	44,456	9,934	22.35
Comilla	48,534	8,316	17.13
Jessore	74,639	28,623	38.35
Rajshahi	1,63,999	29,812	18.18
Barisal	37,503	8,470	22.58
Sylhet	15,205	4,362	28.69

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



England batsman Marcus Trescothick hits a ball to boundary during the ICC Champions Trophy match against Zimbabwe at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday. (Story on sports page)

MCCI sees signs of economic recovery

STAR REPORT

indicating short-term stabilisation in the economic recovery process.

The economy during January-July 2002 has achieved a higher monetary stability as reflected in lower-than-expected inflation, a stronger exchange rate and higher-than-projected economic growth.

"The relative stability in export performance and rising investment indicated by higher imports of capital machinery also contributed to the economic upturn," said a review of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

It said more efficient utilisation of domestic financial resources and competitive exchange rate for external financial resources caused a further decline in interest rates

the very limited export basket and unpreparedness to face the situation, which is due to arise from further liberalization of imports under the WTO rules," the chamber said.

Poverty both in relative and absolute terms slowed down during the review period compared to the corresponding period in the previous

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Alamgir freed



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir was released yesterday from the Dhaka Central Jail following a six-month detention.

The Awami League leader was set free after the High Court ordered that he be either released Alamgir or produced him before it by 10:00am yesterday.

The jail authorities freed him about an hour before the deadline.

Alamgir was arrested on March 15 from Zia International Airport on his arrival from the United States without any specific charge. Later, the government filed seven cases against him.

From the jail, Dr Alamgir went to the High Court along with his lawyer, Barrister Tanya Amir.

Tanya submitted to the High Court bench of Justice Abdul Aziz and Justice Abdur Rashid that her client had been illegally detained from September 4 to 7 even after he was granted bail in six cases pending against him. However, a fresh case was filed on September 7.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

SHAZNEEN CASE

Shahid's bail petition again rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

"No outsiders can enter my house freely," said Latifur Rahman while being cross-examined by the lawyers for two of the six accused in the Shazneen case yesterday.

The second prosecution witness and father of the victim was cross-examined for about an hour in the Second Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka.

After the cross-examination by the lawyers for accused Shaniram and Badal, Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah adjourned the hearing till September 23.

The adjournment followed a time petition by the defence lawyers, stating that as newly engaged counsels for the two accused, they were yet to go through many of the case documents.

The court also rejected a bail

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Petrobangla, Unocal talk Magurchhara claim today

RAZIUR RAHMAN

Unocal and Petrobangla meet today regarding the contentious compensation claim for the Magurchhara gas field blowout.

Sources said this is the first in a series of meetings between the two sides regarding Bangladesh's claim worth US\$ 685 million to Unocal for damaging the Magurchhara gas structure. The Petrobangla agreed to sit with Unocal following a recent request by the latter.

Unocal will today explain their stand regarding the settlement claim, according to the sources. Unocal took over the assets and liabilities of Occidental, which was the operator of the gas field during the blowout, in Bangladesh after the disaster.

Five years after the Magurchhara explosion, Petrobangla on July 2 claimed US\$ 685 million in damage from Unocal for damaging the gas structure having a reserve of over 245 billion cubic feet of gas. But at

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Bangladesh's test today by Aussie fire

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will try desperately not to become the subject of the biggest embarrassment of the ICC Champions Trophy when face the mighty Australians at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo today.

The contest between Davids and Goliaths will commence at 10am BST (Bangladesh Standard Time), Bangladesh Television and SET Max will cover the match live.

It will be Bangladesh's third meeting with the one-day world champions, but it is certainly not the best of times to face Ricky Ponting's marauding side.

The Australians have just demolished current ICC Trophy champions New Zealand by 164 runs in the opening Pool A match on Sunday

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7