



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A signboard set up by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training on the northern edge of the Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani Lake sums up how the wetland gives place to encroachment.

## Ministry in land grab move

JULHAS RIPON

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has set up a signboard on the northern side of the Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani Lake. The signboard reads that the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training under the ministry owns the land in purchase. But top officials of the Rajuk have said they are not wise to the fact. Contacted recently, Rajuk Chairman Iqbaluddin Chowdhury said he had no information about it either. However, he promised to look into the matter. The area near a culvert under the North Road at Baridhara, where the signboard was set up, is part of the lake, according to the master plan of the Gulshan residential area.

A few years ago, some people staked a claim to the ownership of about seven and a half bighas of wetland and sold it to the manpower bureau that filled up a big portion in phases. Rajuk sources said the landowners got a clearance from the Deputy Commissioner's Office in an underhand dealing for ownership of the land at Bhatara mouza under the Gulshan Police Station. Daliuddin Mondol, acting secretary of the expatriates' welfare ministry, told The Daily Star that the project of the bureau on the land was initiated before he came to the present office three months back. He said the manpower bureau set up the signboard in a corner of the seven and a half bighas of the land that stretches beyond the culvert into the lake. The Daily Star failed to contact

Director General (DG) of the bureau Shahidul Haque for comments even after a seven-day effort. Besides, the fate of the Gulshan Lake Development Project hangs in the balance, as the Rajuk and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works did not deal with the project in an integrated approach. The Rajuk did not take any steps to demarcate and develop the lake despite a recent prime ministerial instruction. Rather, the Rajuk is going to initiate a Tk 50 crore project of building walkways around the lake, ignoring the earlier plan to develop the lake. According to the plan, the project will involve the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), WASA and local stakeholders. But the Rajuk is not working in line with the plan. Although many sewers are still

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## Saber gets bail, HC asks govt to explain his arrest

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, former deputy minister and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina's political secretary, was granted bail in two cases yesterday. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court granted him interim bail in a case filed with the Savar Police Station for an attack on the motorcade of the then opposition leader Khaleda Zia on June 17 last year. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, granted him bail in connection with his arrest on suspicion under Section 54 of the CrPC. Earlier on Monday, Saber was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail on a one-month detention under the Special Powers Act, 1974. He was shifted to the Gazipur District Jail yesterday.

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## Major admin restructuring on the cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major administrative restructuring, the government has started a process to divide 46 ministries and departments into four blocks. A new guideline is being drafted for inter-ministerial transfer of all bureaucrats. Officials from deputy secretaries to secretaries would be transferred within the ministries of a block for improving their efficiencies and having specialised responsibilities. Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday at a roundtable with the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) said the cabinet has already discussed the issue. "A committee has already been formed which is working on it. We will see results within 15 to 20 days." The four blocks will deal with

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## Manju puts army drive to govt failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju yesterday said the government's failure to run the administration has prompted it to call out army to deal with the law and order. At a public rally at Paltan Maidan in the city, he said the administration failed because of its politicisation and naked interference in its functioning. "I had been in government for many years and I can say that the police cannot fail if they are allowed to work without interference by ministers, MPs and party activists," said the former minister who served the Ershad government and the Hasina government. He urged the prime minister to free

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## JS session summoned Nov 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Iajuddin Ahmed has summoned the 5th session of the 8th parliament at 11 am on November 14. The session was summoned under Article 72 of the Constitution, a Parliament Secretariat press release said yesterday.

# 152 arrested, 55 firearms recovered on Day 13

## 2 more die after interrogation; AL MP's residence raided

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police constable and a suspected criminal died yesterday in Chittagong and Sylhet respectively, pushing the number of death following army interrogation to 12 since the countrywide crackdown on criminals began on October 17.

Also yesterday, the army raided the residences of Awami League lawmaker Rafiqul Anwar and former AL MP Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu in the port city. They seized two revolvers and one pistol from Anwar's residence. His family, however, claimed the firearms are licensed.

In the capital, the troops picked up Abu Taher, a transport leader, during a raid on the Fulbaria terminal. Later, he was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a critical condition. Till filing of this report, he was at the intensive care unit of the hospital. On the 13th day of the country-

wide crackdown on criminal yesterday, the army arrested 182 people and recovered 55 firearms from across the country. Our Chittagong correspondent reports that Kala Chand Tripura, a police constable who was allegedly tortured during an army operation

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PHOTO: STAR

IN DRAGNET: Two army men (left) bundle a suspect blindfolded out of a car; and three listed criminals are lined up for photographs at the Basundhara army camp after their arrest with arms and ammunition in the city yesterday.

## FM for elaborate economic focus of foreign policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan has said global challenges have made it "imperative" for Bangladesh to "redefine and elaborate the economic focus" of its foreign policy. "It has been one of the most important objectives of our government to realise our vital economic goals in the field of trade, investment and ICT (information, communications and technology)," the foreign minister told a seminar in the

city yesterday. "We, therefore, have decided to have a fresh look at the performance of our diplomats in terms of their contributions to capacity-building at home through international cooperation, increased inflow of investment and technology and greater market access of our products abroad," he said. The foreign ministry organised the seminar on "The review of the foreign policy of the government and vision for the future" in celebra-

tion of completion of first year of the coalition government. It was held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS). Terming Bangladesh's relation with China, Japan and Korea exceptionally warm, the foreign minister said the government would work hard to push economic cooperation with these friendly countries to a new height. "Bangladesh today is critically poised to cross a new

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## PIO conducts press briefing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Principal Information Officer Khandaker Monirul Alam yesterday conducted the official press briefing on the ongoing army crackdown on criminals and said actions would be taken against any army personnel if found negligent to duty or involved in unlawful activities. "Such incidents would of course be identified and the army has already been investigating some allegations," he said at the briefing at the Press Information Department office.

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## Detention of Sk Selim: HC asks govt to explain

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to show cause in one week why the detention of former minister and Chairman of Awami Jubo League Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP should not be declared illegal. A division bench comprising Justice Abdur Rashid and Justice Siddiqui Rahman Miah passed the order upon a petition moved before the court.

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 30		5-21 pm
Oct 31	6-03 am	

  

Prayer Timings		
Oct 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-33
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## SAARC free trade Move to ready product list

AFP, Kathmandu

South Asian commerce leaders agreed at a meeting in Nepal to work toward a regional free trade agreement, officials said yesterday. The meeting which closed Monday appointed a group of experts to prepare a list of products that would be exempt from tariffs, said Nepalese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Gyan Chand Acharya. The findings will be discussed by foreign ministers during the next summit of the seven-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), scheduled for January in Pakistan. SAARC, founded in 1985, has often been stalled by disputes between its biggest members, nuclear-armed arch-rivals India and Pakistan. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has said his participation in the Islamabad SAARC summit will be determined by whether its agenda focuses on economic rather than bilateral issues. India says SAARC is not the appropriate forum to discuss disputes with Pakistan,

such as the divided province of Kashmir. Acharya said delegates at the Kathmandu meeting were keen to see the early implementation of a South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement. "I saw all the participants, particularly the Indian and Pakistani officials, express a common feeling for the promotion of economic cooperation in South Asia," Acharya said. "Both the Indian and Pakistani commerce secretaries, Deepak Charterjee and Mirza Baig, have shown good team spirit," he said. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka also sent their trade ministers to the Kathmandu meeting. The Indian Ocean archipelago of the Maldives sent the director general of its commerce ministry. It was the first meeting of SAARC trade ministers in four years. Acharya said the ministers will meet again in January in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka to form a common position ahead of World Trade Organization talks in Mexico in December 2003.