

## Columbia crashes

AFP, REUTERS, Cape Canaveral  
 The space shuttle Columbia crashed in Texas yesterday with seven astronauts on board after it lost contact with NASA minutes before landing.  
 Television images showed several white trails in the blue sky, which could be an indication of the breakup of the shuttle because normally only a single trail is visible. Officials immediately warned about the possibility of toxic debris in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.  
 Columbia disappeared from NASA's radar screens at 9:00am (1400 GMT). It was due to land at 9:16am (1416 GMT).  
 There is no possibility that the US

Space Shuttle Columbia could have made a successful emergency landing from the high altitude and speed at which it was travelling when it lost contact with NASA, the US space agency said.  
 "I'm afraid that is not really an option at this altitude," NASA spokesman Kyle Herring told CNN. The shuttle was flying at 200,000 feet at the time, moving at 20,000 kilometers (12,500 miles) per hour.  
 At that speed, it is not possible for the crewmembers to eject safely, NASA said.  
 A White House spokesman said President George W Bush had cut short his stay at the Camp David retreat and would monitor from the shuttle disappearance from the

White House.  
 "The president is returning to the White House so he can continue to monitor the situation from here," Scott McClellan said. "We are continuing to monitor the situation and awaiting more information from NASA."  
 At the Kennedy Space Centre, CNN showed flags flying at half-mast.  
 NASA dispatched search crews to north central Texas early yesterday.  
 Bush was told that NASA lost touch with Columbia but there are no signs at this point that terrorism was involved, US officials said.  
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PHOTO: STAR TV  
 A TV grab taken shows the US space shuttle Columbia followed by multiple vapour trails as seen over Texas yesterday.

## PM opens Ekushey Book Fair

BSS, Dhaka  
 Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged poets, litterateurs, writers and thinkers to "lead the nation in creative fields" to remove frustration, unrest, confrontation and narrowness from the society.  
 "You must work unitedly to preserve our own culture and highlight it globally to help Bangladesh occupy a prestigious place in the comity of nations," she said while addressing the inaugural function of a month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair at the Bangla Academy premises.  
 Khaleda Zia said the government would take constructive steps for the publication industry to grow both in size and quality.  
 She urged the Bangla Academy authorities to take measures for translation of great literary works into English and other languages to introduce the nation's cultural heritage in the international arena.  
 Local and foreign dignitaries including representatives of leading publishing houses attended the function.  
 Presided over by Chairman of Bangla Academy Prof. Wakil Ahmed, the inaugural function was also addressed by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Nazmul Ahsan Chowdhury  
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PHOTO: STAR  
 An innovative bump to prevent rickshaws from jumping lanes at work in front of the Jatiya Press Club. An engineer developed and demonstrated the bump yesterday.

## Trap for lane hopping rickshaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
 An ingenious metal bump on the road can be an enemy to rickshaws and friend to motor vehicles, as an engineer demonstrated yesterday.  
 The device can easily stop rickshaws from leaving their lane and slowing traffic.  
 He also showed several more handy devices to make rickshaws safe.  
 Engineer Mohammad Jahan-e-Alam Borhan of Sutrapur demonstrated his inventions in front of the Jatiya Press Club. Jahan is also the deputy manager of the Medical Solutions Division of Siemens Bangladesh.  
 The barrier, which he named 'rickshaw trap', has metal ribs to block rickshaw wheels, but which allows motor vehicles to pass.  
 Jahan worked for 20 months on his innovations. They include a shock absorber for rickshaws, which often run into each other from behind. Jahan showed that his shock absorber was effective enough to

## Tough criteria for bank directors

STAR REPORT  
 A person convicted on criminal charges or found involved in forgeries, financial crimes or other irregular activities would be barred from sitting on a bank board.  
 The bank reforms committee (BRC), headed by Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, made the recommendation to ensure good corporate governance in banks. The committee was formed last year to suggest ways of reducing huge default loans.  
 The committee also suggested

that a person would be disqualified to be a bank director if any court passed any adverse comment or observation about them in any civil or criminal case. The same rule would apply to a person declared bankrupt by any court.  
 A director would need to hold at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a reputed university and 10 years of management or professional experience, the committee suggested.  
 A person with any track record of breaking any rules, regulations or  
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## Launch fare up by 10 per cent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
 The government yesterday effected a ten per cent increase in launch fare.  
 It is the second time in three months that the fares have gone up. The government effected a 15 per cent increase just one month before the Eid-ul-Fitr last year.  
 A meeting at the Ministry of Shipping, chaired by Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, decided to go for the fare-hike on a demand by

water transport owners.  
 The owners had earlier demanded a 20 per cent increase, saying the fuel price hike made it impossible for them to stick to the previous rate.  
 At yesterday's meeting, the government asked the owners not to load the launches beyond their capacity and ensure adequate number of vessels during the Eid-ul-Azha vacation.  
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## Announcement

To mark its 12th anniversary The Daily Star brings out a thematic supplement titled **Democracy & Development: Casualties of Our Politics** on Monday, February 3, 2003. Some of the most eminent minds of the country address issues close to the hearts of our readers in this 28-page colour special section in addition to the regular 16-page issue.  
 Ask for your copy from the hawkker. Price Tk.10

## Haggling no more

### Autorickshaws run on meters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
 The CNG vehicles started using meters yesterday as per new rules. In spite of it, city commuters faced difficulties yesterday in getting CNG vehicles as many of these not equipped with meters yet did not ply.  
 Some commuters even complained that drivers refused to use

the meter and, taking advantage of the transport crisis, charged high.  
 "When I got a CNG vehicle from Karwan Bazar, the driver said the meter was out of order and I had to haggle over the fare. He charged me Tk 50 just up to Dhanmondi,"  
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PHOTO: STAR  
 A policeman check the meter of an autorickshaw, as the government made it mandatory for the three-wheelers to install meters from yesterday.

## Flag meeting not held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
 A commander level flag meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Border Security Force (BSF) of India scheduled for yesterday at Benapole did not take place with the Indian side saying, "The company commander of the BSF was busy with another business."  
 Earlier on Friday, the two sides had decided to hold the flag meeting as the BSF continued its attempts to push Bangla-speaking Indian nationals into Bangladesh.  
 The Indian border guards also claimed yesterday that Bangladesh had pushed in some of its nationals into Kuchbihar in India, BBC said last night.  
 They also claimed that a flag meeting between the two sides was held at Mathabhanga in Kuchbihar, but the Bangladeshi side did not confirm it.  
 Our Lalmonirhat correspondent reported that the BDR foiled push-in attempts at several border points in Lalmonirhat yesterday.  
 The BSF made the attempts at Nazir Gomani border points in Patgram upazila, about 85 kilometre from the district headquarters. This led to mounting tension in the area  
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 2		5-46 pm
Feb 3	6-39 am	

  

Prayer Timings		
Feb 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-57
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation