

## Dhaka, Delhi talk thorny issues at JEC meet today

NAZMUL AHSAN

After a long six-year gap, the 6th meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) between India and Bangladesh begins today (Monday) in the capital.

Bangladesh side would be cautious in committing to sign any agreement on transshipment or transit with India during the JEC talks in response to the interest of India in this connection.

But it is likely to react positively to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with India.

Meanwhile Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said market access to Bangladeshi goods to India as well as removal of tariff, para-tariff and non-tariff barriers would be discussed at the meeting.

Talking to a group of newsmen at his office he said Bangladesh would discuss everything that reflect wishes and aspirations of

the people.

Bangladesh will put stress on the revision of the 23-year-old Bangladesh-India bilateral trade agreement. But India has been showing little interest on the revision of the agreement by inserting a new clause, demand from Bangladesh, which will provide Bangladesh items duty free access to Indian markets.

Issues like FTA, transit and transshipment are some of the important items to be tabled by the

Indian side in the discussion.

On the other hand, Bangladesh would lay stress on reducing trade imbalance through revision of bilateral trade agreement, elimination of Indian non-tariff barriers on Bangladeshi exporting items and duty free access to all products from Bangladesh to India.

Bangladesh may agree to initiate a dialogue on FTA between the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Audit finds Tk 18cr anomalies in R&H deptt

UNB, Dhaka

An official audit into the Roads and Highways (R&H) Department under communications ministry unearthed Tk 18.35 crore in irregularities and anomalies by the department officials and employees.

Twenty cases of "serious irregularities" were found during 1996 to 2001 fiscal and those were portrayed under 17 audit objections, the audit report revealed.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Akbar faces PM's music Khaleda orders actions against culprits for Meghna tragedy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday came under fire from the prime minister in the wake of the Chandpur launch capsized that has added hundreds of passengers to the list of casualties in a series of such disasters in recent times, sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said yesterday.

During an exclusive meeting with Akbar at the PMO, Khaleda Zia reprimanded the minister for his "inactive" role in discharging his duties. She expressed her dissatis-

faction at his failure to prevent the off-repeated fatalities or take legal action against those responsible for the accidents and demanded explanation for his "poor performance" despite repeated assurances to improve the situation.

Khaleda also questioned the "integrity, sincerity and responsibility" of the minister and his ministry officials concerned, and wanted to know from the minister why he did not visit the spot immediately after the accident.

The prime minister threatened action against Akbar Hossain if he

failed to promptly come up with effective measures to halt such disasters in future.

Later during a formal meeting with some of her cabinet colleagues including the shipping minister, she ordered legal actions against those responsible for the July 8 launch capsized following recommendations of the probe committee investigating the accident.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Lawyers bring out a silent procession as part of their protest at the appointment of a judge to the Appellate Division superseding his senior colleague in the High Court Division.

## Reports on environment court bills placed in JS

BSS, Dhaka

The Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs placed its reports on two bills -- Environment Court (Amendment) and Special Court (Additional Responsibility) -- in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## Lawyers stay out of SC over judge's appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday boycotted both divisions of the court protesting appointment of a judge to the Appellate Division superseding his senior colleague in the High Court Division.

The Bar also said it will boycott

the Appellate Division today as well.

The government appointed Justice MM Ruhul Amin to the Appellate Division from the High Court Division on Saturday. But the appointment superseded the most senior judge in the High Court, Justice Syed Amirul Islam.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Keraniganj murders Charge framed against BNP MP's brother

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Speedy Trial Tribunal-4, Dhaka Division, yesterday framed charges against Reaz Uddin Ahmed Monir, brother of the ruling BNP MP Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu, and 22 others in connection with the Keraniganj double murder case.

Judge Jahangir Alam Mollah fixed July 16 for the trial of the case.

The other accused are Mohammad Mehbub, Zahedul Islam alias Saju, Mahub Hossain alias Palash, Mohammad Arif, Abdul Kader alias Kader, Mohammad Shahin, Jahangir alias Janu, Mohammad Hasan, Moulana alias Malu, Salahuddin, Chandu alias Chand Miah, Talim alias Tailla, Pappu alias Russian Pappu, Mohammad Azad, Mohammad Motaleb, Mohammad Alam, Manzur alias Manzur Ali, Saku alias Shawkat, Javed, Azahar Hossain alias Dhanu, Mohammad Mesbah and Mohammad Mobarak.

Among the accused, Monir and eight others are in the jail custody while 10 others are at large on bail. Talim, Azad, Javed and Mesbah have been absconding since the incident.

The tribunal yesterday cancelled Monir's bail and ordered that he be sent to Dhaka central jail following a prayer by the prosecution lawyers seeking cancellation of his bail.

In the petition, Special Public

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## 50 Sadarghat staff withdrawn, law watch still lax

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday issued a set of orders reshuffling about 50 officials and employees of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and the Department of Shipping posted to the Sadarghat launch terminal.

The orders replacing and releasing the officials and employees came in line with the government decision to change all staff at the terminal due to lax maintenance of discipline and safety rules, shipping ministry officials said.

The scene of the terminal, however, was virtually the familiar one yesterday when hardly any law enforcement efforts could be noticed.

There were over two dozens of big launches moored to the terminal in the afternoon and some of them were loading cargoes, witnesses said.

The number of passengers was thin, a fallout from

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Body-find hope all but over

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The hopes of recovering the missing passengers in Tuesday's overnight triple-deck launch disaster in the Meghna are all but extinguished.

Five days after the deadliest ever launch capsized in the latest in a series of such disasters in Bangladesh, rescuers are yet to trace the MV Nasrin-1 that went down in the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

FOOLS NEVER LEARN... Four days after the tragic launch capsized in the Meghna, an overcrowded launch sallies for Dhaka from Bamna on Saturday. At Sadarghat launch terminal, iron rods are being loaded onto a vessel, a major reason for the capsized in the Meghna.

## Barrister Ishtiaq laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned constitutional expert, lawyer and two-time adviser of the caretaker government Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed buried at the Banani graveyard yesterday afternoon.

Barrister Ishtiaq died of old-age complications on Saturday night at BIRDEM Hospital in Dhaka at the age of 72.

The first namaz-e-janaza was held at the Supreme Court premises after Zohr prayers. It was attended by ministers, parliament members, present and former judges of the Supreme Court and distinguished people.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, former foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad, renowned lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain, Law,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Flood takes more areas in its fold

### DND Dam out of danger

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The flood situation in the central and northern districts has worsened as the rivers in the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and the Ganges-Padma basins are still swelling.

Five people, including children, were washed away by strong currents in flood affected Taras, Ullapara,

Kazipur and Chowhali upazila of Sirajganj district yesterday.

River erosion, collapse of embankments and onrush of upstream water overnight submerged several hundred more villages in northern and northwestern regions.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## DCC nod for limited road digging

ABDUL KADER

Four utility service providers will start digging 18 zonal roads soon on an approval from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

The DCC One Stop Cell, formed three months back to coordinate road digging, gave the approval to Titas Gas, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB), Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) and Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) yesterday, considering their urgency.

The DCC took the initiative to ease the sufferings of commuters, caused by haphazard digging in the city of about 3,000 kilometres of road, the sources said.

The four utility service agencies sought permission for digging 290 kilometres of road, but the DCC approved only 200 metres, mindful of monsoon. The DCC will approve only the essential road digging, Tapan Kumar Das Gupta, chief town planner of the DCC, told The Daily Star.

Road digging by a gas company,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3