

## JEC talks roll onto Day 3 Bilateral agreement to be signed today



PHOTO: PID  
 Visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha meets Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

### DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The meeting of the Indo-Bangla Joint Economic Commission (JEC) has rolled on to the third day, as the paperwork for signing the final agreement could not be finished according to schedule.

"I want to inform the media that final paper works are being typed," said Foreign Minister Morshed Khan. "We will sign the agreement at 9:00am tomorrow (June 16) and brief the media at 9:30am," he assured.

Overshooting the schedule, the foreign minister level meeting failed to brief the gathering media representatives at the NEC auditorium at 5:00pm yesterday. The venue for the brief was shifted to Sheraton Hotel -- rescheduled for 7:30pm which, too, was postponed at about 8:25pm.

By the time the foreign minister made his brief but unexpected statement, the press corps had

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## Vietnamese FM arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien arrives in Dhaka today on a 3-day official visit.

The Vietnamese foreign minister will hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart M Morshed Khan exploring ways and means to increase economic cooperation, volume of trade and investment.

The two foreign ministers will also discuss the holding of the Joint Commission meeting. The Bangladesh-Vietnam Joint Commission was set up in 1997, but it has not met yet.

He will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia tomorrow.

Nguyen Dy Nien will also meet FBCCI leaders over a luncheon at Sonargaon Hotel tomorrow to discuss trade and investment. He will visit Beximco Industrial Park at Tongi.

The visiting foreign minister will inaugurate the Vietnam embassy in Dhaka, reopened after a lapse of 20 years. He will also attend a photo exhibition at the Bangladesh

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## SSC pass rate dips this year

### Minister puts it down to strict anti-copying measures

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations of 2003 under the seven education boards, published yesterday, recorded the average pass percentage at 36.85, lower from last year's.

This year's exam results based on letter grading are 3.03 per cent down from 39.88 per cent last year but 1.63 per cent up from 35.22 per cent in 2001.

Male students with a 38.75 per cent success rate took the lead over females with 34.53 per cent under the seven boards.

Education Minister Dr Osman Farruk yesterday said the percentage of pass in the SSC exams was comparatively low due to strict measures taken against copying and other unfair means.

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PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

Students scramble to see the result sheets posted on a noticeboard at the Viqarunnisa Noon School and College after the SSC exam results were published yesterday.

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## Narrow trade gap to widen co-op, Khaleda tells Sinha

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has called for reducing the huge trade imbalance between Bangladesh and India.

She said narrowing the trade gap will help widen cooperation in other areas between the two next-door neighbours.

Khaleda made the observation when Indian External Affairs

Minister Yashwant Sinha called on her at her office yesterday.

The visiting Indian minister said New Delhi would also like to have an equitable trade relation with Dhaka.

During the meeting, the foreign ministers of Bangladesh and India also briefed the prime minister about the outcome of the Dhaka-Delhi Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting held yesterday.

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## SQ Chy pleads immunity

BSS, Dhaka

The lawyer of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, MP, in a reply to a legal notice by The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said his client's speech in parliament was fully protected and immune from any proceedings in any court under the constitution.

Barrister Rafiqul Huq, the attorney of Chowdhury, in reply to the notice served by Dr Kamal Hossain, legal consultant of Anam, said the news carried by the Daily Inqilab of July 2 was a verbatim report of his client's speech in the Jatiya Sangsad on June 26 this year. The speech was

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## 57 launches found risky and unfit

### Ministry probes how they got licences

REZAUL KARIM

The shipping ministry has identified some 57 passenger vessels as "risky and unfit" and is now investigating how they got the licence of riverworthiness.

Of the "risky and unfit" vessels, 25 are still in operation in Dhaka region, six in Narayanganj, 11 in Khulna and 15 in Barisal region.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Shipping Minister Akbar

Hossain said currently there are 2,100 passenger vessels and the ministry has divided those into four categories after inspection by experts. The A-category is good, B-category is passable, C-category needs repairing while the D-category is risky and unfit for operation.

The minister said an instruction has been given to all categories of vessels to immediately remove

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## Cargo ship with 400 tonnes of rice sinks in Meghna

UNB, Chandpur

A cargo ship carrying 400 tons of rice destined for the government CSD (Central Supply Depot) godown here capsized at the confluence of Meghna-Dakatia at about 3:00pm yesterday.

Officials said the ship MV Pal sailed from Nagarbari, Pabna with the rice. While taking a turn towards the Dakatia river at about 11:30am, the ship went out of control as its steering failed. Driven by the turbulent water, it ran into a submerged stone near the riverbank, which punched a hole in the ship's hull.

On information, MV Hamza and MV Rustom, Fire Brigade and Jubo Red Crescent -- already here for

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## 3 million marooned in flood fury

STAR REPORT

Waters in all major rivers continued to swell, swamping more villages in the northern and central regions and affecting about three million people in 23 districts.

Three children drowned in the raging floodwaters in Gaibandha and Bogra and attendant diarrhoea claimed the life of a young boy in Lalmonirhat on Monday and yesterday.

Lightning killed another two in Lalmonirhat and snakebite killed

one in Gaibandha yesterday. Two had died of diarrhoea earlier.

Land communications between the southwestern and the eastern region were cut off as the Maowa ferry terminal was closed yesterday due to rise in waters in the Padma.

Earlier on Monday, two ferry terminals in Daulatdia and Paturia were shut down, while the Arial Kha terminal also faced closure. The terminals link the southwestern region with Dhaka and other eastern regions.

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