

# FTA with India should be mutually beneficial: FM

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India will take place only if it is considered mutually beneficial.

"If it is not mutually beneficial, FTA will not take place," he said.

Talking to UNB at his office, Khan said, "We will not shy away from the talks on FTA, but it should be clear that the agreement should be mutually beneficial... and it will help reduce the trade gap and protect Bangladesh's interests."

At the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting held here on July 14-16, Dhaka and New Delhi agreed to open talks on the Indian proposed FTA in mid-October.

Asked about commerce minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury's observation on a 4-point prerequisite for talks on the FTA, Khan said, "What the commerce minister stated was not conditions for FTA, but for creating a congenial atmosphere and confidence building to set about the negotiations."

On the proposed Dhaka-Agartala bus service, he said officials in the transport sectors of both the countries are now engaged in discussion and "we're waiting for conclusion of their

## One admits to attacking Kazipara community centre

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One of the two youths, Shahed Ali, caught after the Kazipara community centre mayhem, provided a confession statement before the court.

In his statement Shahed confessed that President of Dhaka City (North) unit of Juba League Abu Bashar masterminded the attack.

According to the statement, Shahed and four others, led by Robin, carried out the attack in the community centre on July 19 in an attempt to kill Shabir Alam Litu, Tejganj thana unit general secretary of Juba League.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar recorded Shahed's statement from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

Locals had managed to catch Shahed Ali and Amir Hossain alias Babu as they were making off after carrying out the attack inside the community centre.

The two were placed on a three-day remand on July 20.

Babu was placed on further two-day remand yesterday when the detective branch (DB) produced Babu before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, with a 10-day remand prayer.

Six gunmen opened fire on the wedding reception of Assistant Organising Secretary of Mirpur Thana unit of Juba League Golam Mostafa Labu at Kazi Community Centre at Kazipara on July 19.

The case was shifted to the DB on July 20.

## Two students stabbed at Kadamtala

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants stabbed two students in separate incidents at Kadamtala under Sabujbagh and Modhubagh under Ramtanana yesterday.

An HSC student of Habibullah Bahar College, Kamruzzaman Dipu, 18, was repeatedly stabbed in front of Kadamtala School by three miscreants appearing in an auto-rickshaw at around 2:00pm.

Dipu, son of Khorsheed Alam of Kadamtala, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Dipu said he could not identify any of the criminals.

In the other incident, Sumon, a class X student of National Bank High School, was allegedly stabbed in the left hand in an attack by three to four youths.

They waylaid Sumon, 15, as he reached Moghbazar at about 2:00pm. He was returning home at 3:00pm. He was found in a charred wreck. Two bodies were taken to hospital, residents said.

The brothers were tracked down after a tip-off from an Iraqi informant expected to get the two \$15 million rewards offered for information leading to their death or capture.

They were holed up in a Mosul villa with a bodyguard and Qusay's teenage son, US officials say.

Armed only with AK-47 assault rifles, they wounded four American soldiers and held out for hours against a devastating array of US firepower, including attack helicopters, heavy machineguns and grenades.

US commanders said Uday, Qusay and the bodyguard were eventually killed when the house was blasted with 10 anti-tank missiles. The teenager made a last stand but was shot as troops raced up the stairs after finally getting into the villa.

The deaths of the brothers, and the capture of a cousin of Saddam who led a Special Republican Guard, brought to 37 the number of Iraqis on a list of 55 most-wanted fugitives to have been caught or killed since Saddam was toppled.

France, which led opposition to the war that toppled Saddam, welcomed the killing of Uday and Qusay but said it could spark revenge attacks. Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said the United Nations should take over his look.

The death of the two sons who were the future of Saddam Hussein's regime marks the end of an era and we can hope that with the capture of Saddam himself the page will be definitively turned," he said.

"One can also imagine resistance... intensifying. That's why for France the key is to press ahead with the political process."

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## Woman beaten to death by relative

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A house-wife was allegedly beaten to death by one of her relatives at Nandigram upazila of Bogra district on Wednesday, following a land dispute.

Police sources said Fatik, the nephew of the victim Puspo, beat up his aunt with a rod during a fight over land on Wednesday at about 11am.

Critically injured Puspo was rushed to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries.

Bogra thana police arrested Nitai Chandra, father of alleged killer Fatik, from Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital campus, when he went to see Puspo.

A murder case was filed with Nandigram thana.

## AES to get

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sell-off only if the two companies give some concessions in return.

The power board initially asks the AES to cancel the two 'priority agreements' with the government that give it first priority right among current and future independent power plants (IPPs) in all respects including getting paid from the PDB, receiving foreign exchange from Bangladesh Bank, getting gas and others.

It also urged the AES to relocate the demised corridor, a strip of land covering the riverfront, at its own cost so that the discharge channel is located within its own premises, and employ credible and well-established international operation and maintenance contractor to operate the two projects.

Following months of negotiation and scrutiny, the energy ministry constituted a committee headed by a member of planning and development at the power board. The committee submitted its report on July 12.

However, lobbyists alleged to have pressed the PDB to expunge a significant part of the original report.

Sources said, the committee recommended cancellation of the priority agreement in a bid to put all IPPs on equal footing. But the PDB modified and re-wrote this recommendation, as priority agreement is part of the security package with lenders. The priority agreement practically puts all other new IPP projects in the next 22 years behind the AES projects, irrespective of future needs and other considerations.

The government granted the privilege to end an impasse with the AES over the debatable awarding of the Meghnaghat 2 project to Marubeni.

"Since the Meghnaghat 2 agreements were never signed with Marubeni, the necessity for the priority agreements was no longer required. The power board believes the existence of the AES priority agreements discourages other financiers to fund new power projects," said a source.

"If the two priority agreements are not made null and void it will be extremely difficult for the government to find any company to invest in another power project," said a source, adding that the Meghnaghat 2 tender received no

The rally also demanded a dialogue of the government with the indigenous people on the Madhupur project, establishment of their constitutional rights and withdrawal of cases filed against them for opposing the project.

Gano Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya said legal actions would be taken if the situation called for.

Presided over by Albert Mankhin, the rally was also addressed by Adibashir Forum General Secretary Sanjib Drong, Benedict Mangsang, Babul de Nakrek, Biu Filomoni Mrong, Anthony Mansang and Maloti Nakrek.

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The investigation of the case submitted a charge sheet against Monir and 22 others on November 20, last year.

Monir and eight others are in the jail custody while 10 others are on bail. Four accused -- Talmi, Javed, Azad and Meshbah -- have been absconding since the incident.

The investigation of the case submitted a charge sheet against Monir and 22 others on November 20, last year.

The defence lawyers, while making submissions on the issue, pointed out that the home ministry had earlier decided to withdraw the charges against the accused since the case was filed on the basis of falsehood and fabrication.

Therefore, the charges brought against Monir and nine others will be withdrawn, the defence lawyers said.

Meanwhile, Special Public Prosecutor, Harun-ur-Rashid Khan told the court that he had earlier received a letter of the home ministry with a direction to take necessary steps for withdrawal of charges against the accused persons. As per direction, he had submitted all documents to the tribunal.

Two men, named -- Amir Abdullah Shakil, 26 and Santu, 30, were shot dead on February 16, last year allegedly by them.

The complainant and brother of the victim Shakil, Amir Hamza, the ruptured pipes also pollute and carry contaminated water to clients' houses, they added.

The systems loss has hobbled the WASA efforts to raise its supply and ensure better supply to customers despite the launch of Sayedabad Water Treatment Plant.

About 75 per cent of WASA's supply network is made of the PVC pipes, which are in a good serviceable condition, the officials said.

The WASA took up Water Pipelines Installation and Replacement project last year.

The total budget for the operation was fixed at taka six crore, said a police official involved in the crackdown. "We

have already received taka two crore."

Under the operation, taka one crore has so far been spent to gather information about the criminals operating in the region.

A number of army officers have been deployed to the BDR and assigned to the drive. Each of them has been given Tk 25,000 as 'source money' to gather information on the criminals, the sources added.

But many officers could not spend the money as their sources of information went into hiding along with the criminals.

Home Secretary Omar Faruk, however, denied the involvement of any army officer in the operation.

The operation was likely to continue for 15 days, but it may lurch into extra time in view of the low success achieved so far, the sources said.

Three main underground parties -- Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), Biplobi Communist Party-Haq Group (BCP) and New Biplobi Communist Party are locked in perennial armed strug-

## Teenage maid found dead in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage maid allegedly 'hanged herself' from ceiling fan in Uttara Sector-4 early yesterday.

Shahida Akhter, a domestic help in the residence of Golam Sarwar Chowdhury, 2/C at road No. 16, was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 12:45pm yesterday, DMCH sources said.

It was said in the inquest report that Shahida might be raped before her death.

But duty officer of the Uttara Police Station denied this allegation.

A person, introducing himself as a detective branch (DB) officer at the DMCH, said Golam Sarwar is brother of a DB officer.

An unnatural death case was filed with the Uttara Police Station.

Meanwhile, a vegetable shop employee in Malibagh died at DMCH yesterday.

Mohammad Khalil, 16, was beaten up by another employee of a neighbouring shop at 6:00pm Wednesday as they locked in argument.

He was first rushed to Malibagh Community Hospital and later to DMCH.

Khalil succumbed to his injuries at 5:00pm yesterday.

## 10 hurt as BCL factions clash in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Ten people were injured in a clash between two rival groups of Chhakra League at Morralganj yesterday morning.

The injured are Elias Hossain, Dulal, 35, Azizur Rahman Palash, 25, Hasib, 28, Golam Kibria Tarik, 28, Aminul Islam Milon, 26, Jamal Hossain, 35, Babul, 26.

They were admitted to different clinics.

The clash took place at around 9am when supporters of the two rival groups -- one led by BCL upazila unit President Mahmud Hossain and the other by General Secretary Elias Hossain -- faced each other in Morralganj town.

Police said the group led by Elias came under attack first.

The clash is a sequel to sharp intra-party rivalry over formation of a new upazila committee of the AL-backed student body.

Police dispersed the feuding groups and brought the situation under control.

## Cairns Test

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Wahmore opted for Sanwar because of his off-spin, which the Australian felt could be vital on the green wicket of Cairns.

The Cairns team will mark the Test debut for 21-year-old Monir, whose introduction in the playing eleven is experimental. Bangladesh bowled and fielded very well in the first Test where Australia could score 407-7 in 118 over.

But the Bangladesh batting remained a cause of concern. The Tigers were bowled out for 97 in the first innings and scored 178 in their second essay.

Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud feared that it would be worse in Cairns if the batsmen fail to apply themselves on this hostile wicket.

He also said that the toss would vital for the visitors.

"I want to win the toss this time and field first," said Mahmud.

BANGLADESH: Khaled Mahmud (capt), Javed Omar, Hannan Sarkar, Habibul Bashar, Mohammad Ashraful, Khaled Mashud, Sanwar Hossain, Mashrafe-bin-Mortaza, Tapash Baisya, Aloj Kapali and Anwar Hossain Munir.

## Spider Web drive in sticky stew

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ters in Jessor, Jhenidah, Satkhira and Pirojpur.

The strategists of the drive thought the criminals of Khulna will try to escape through Jessor, Jhenidah and Satkhira while the criminals of Bagerhat will escape through Pirojpur once the operation gets underway.

The operation blueprint said after the beginning of the drive, the joint forces would comb through the pockets of underground operatives in each union and fan out in the entire region like cobweb.

But proving the strategy erroneous, the outlaws melted away through Gopalganj.

Some policemen maintaining cosy links with the criminals also tipped the outlaws off the drive ahead of its launch, sources said.

Besides, the joint forces could not surprise the criminals as words of the operation spread in the air days before the drive began.

The total budget for the operation was fixed at taka six crore, said a police official involved in the crackdown. "We

have already received taka two crore."

Under the operation, taka one crore has so far been spent to gather information about the criminals operating in the region.

The decades old turf war between arch-rivals PBCP and BCP, believers in extermination of class enemy, gathered pace recently and at least 34 people, including local people's representatives and policemen, were killed in 15 days prior to the beginning of the operation.

Traditionally the extremists were largely armed with 303 rifles, double-barrel guns and in some cases with sten guns, smuggled into Bangladesh by gunrunners from the Louhajah Police Station.

But now the outlaws have equipped themselves with sophisticated modern weapons including submachine guns, AK-47 and other types of assault rifles, available in the black market of Chittagong and the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Extreme left politics trickled into the southwestern region from eastern Indian state of West Bengal where the ideology thrived in 1960s.

The meeting also reviewed the experiences during the past