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## Dhaka to finally sign FTA in BIMST-EC

### Tariff loss compensation issue given up

RAFIQ HASAN

Dhaka is finally going to sign the Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka -- Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC) Free Trade Agreement (FTA).  
An inter-ministerial meeting

yesterday finalised the proposal for signing the agreement for greater economic benefit, which would be forwarded to the weekly cabinet meeting for final approval, meeting sources said.

Bangladesh pulled out of the FTA signing in the last BIMST-EC meet-

ing in the Thal resort town of Phuket on February 8. Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan led the Bangladesh delegation to the meeting.

The main barrier to Dhaka's signing the agreement was a discord among the member states about providing compensation to the

revenue losses of the least developed countries once the deal is sealed.

A previous cabinet meeting, however, cold shouldered the proposal of signing the FTA. Now Dhaka is going to sign the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Shop owners burst into protest as businessman's limbs found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Severed limbs of a city businessman missing since Tuesday last were recovered from several places under Srinagar and Sadar upazila of Munshiganj yesterday and the day before.

The victim, Rezaul Karim Selim, 40, was a watch trader at Azizul Karim Market at Patuatuli in the old part of the city.

More than 300 fellow watch

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Sonali Bank's default loan recovery mission

### 14 top officials to tackle top 40 defaulters with TK 1,555cr in outstanding credit

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Sonali Bank has assigned 14 of its top brass with specific tasks to recover a total of Tk 1,555 crore in outstanding loans from its top 40 loan defaulters.

The country's largest nationalised commercial bank (NCB) in the

first-ever such specific instruction last week asked its two deputy managing directors (DMD) and a dozen general managers (GM) to deal with particular loan defaulters, representing both public and private sectors.

These defaulters in 2003 coughed up only Tk 10.75-crore

outstanding loan to the bank, more surprisingly, with the public sector defaulters repaying nothing at all. As a result, the central bank has increased its pressure on the bank to be more active in loan recovery.

This year Sonali Bank will try to recover the public sector default

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## Cricket wins as India stop Pakistan in a thriller

AFP, Karachi

India overcame a blistering century by Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul Haq to score a thrilling five-run victory in the first one-day international yesterday.

In a dramatic run feast befitting the resumption of cricketing ties between the two South Asian rivals, Pakistan made 344-8 in reply to India's 349-7 before a capacity crowd of 33,000 at the National stadium.

India's left-arm seamer Ashish

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

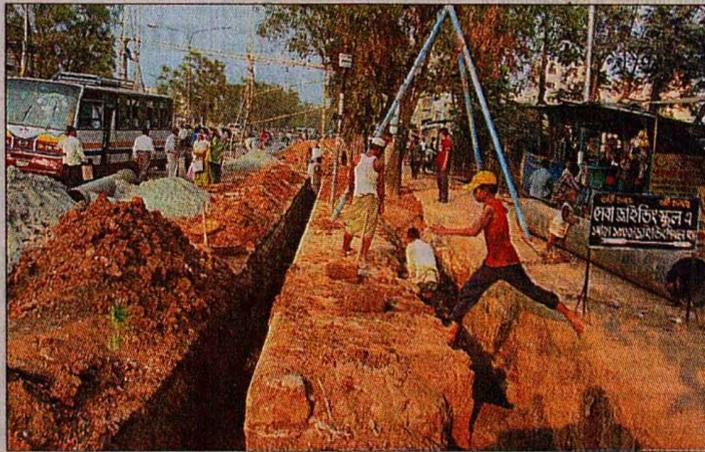
## Oikya Procheshta convention today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-talked-about national convention of Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain under the banner of Oikya Procheshta (unity efforts) is set to be held in Dhaka today from where the prominent jurist is likely to announce 'a platform of national unity'.

Leaders of political parties, social organisations and eminent citizens are likely to attend the programme at Paltan Maidan at 1:30pm, organisers said, adding a draft declaration on forging unity to fight crimes and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



The road near Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur looks like the set for a post-apocalyptic movie, thanks to the endless digging by utility service providers Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority and Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board.

PHOTO: STAR

## BNP goes tough on disgruntled MPs

STAR REPORT

Incensed by the defection of two lawmakers to the alternative political stream, the BNP has started threatening its disgruntled parliamentarians and planned to give the stream a hard time to stem its

flourish.

The high command of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, leader of the four-party ruling alliance, believes that early 'actions' will save the BNP from further desertions, political sources said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## 6 including 4 SSC examinees killed in Ctg car crash

UNB, Ctg

A speeding bus killed six people including four Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinees in a road accident at Barabkunda in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Rejoinder and our reply

The general secretary of ruling BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday protested a news The Daily Star ran the same day titled 'JCD out to 'punish' B Chy, his men'.

A statement signed by JCD's Office Secretary Omar Faruq Safin quoted the general secretary, Azizul Bari Helal, as claiming that the report had misquoted him as saying that it was a decision made by the JCD to resist former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and his supporters.

"It is not true that we have a party (JCD) decision since the JCD does not recognise their (Badruddoza's) alternative stream as a political platform," the JCD general secretary said.

What happened in reality is that people spontaneously resisted those who have betrayed the blood of former president Ziaur Rahman, the general secretary said. Neither the JCD nor any of its leaders or activists was involved with the incident, the statement claimed.

Our Reply  
Westand by our story.

## DEFAULT LOANS Bid to allow dist admin help banks in recovery

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has initiated a move to amend the Money Loan Court Law to allow banks seek the administration's help in recovering default loans through taking over and selling off properties mortgaged by defaulters as collateral.

The law ministry will place an amendment proposal for the law at the Cabinet meeting tomorrow.

Banks reportedly have often

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## PM promises more farm subsidy

UNB, Gazipur

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday pledged increased budgetary allocation and subsidy for agriculture in the coming fiscal and announced a number of other measures aimed at a "new revolution" in the farm sector.

She called upon all concerned, including agricultural scientists, workers and growers, to work in unison to revolutionise the agricultural sector to ensure robust socio-economic development.

"She attached special priority to the agricultural sector in the development process of Bangladesh, an agrarian country having 83 lakh hectares of arable land and 85 percent of its people being dependent on agriculture."

The prime minister was inaugurating the first-ever 'grand confer-

ence' of the agricultural workers and a three-day agriculture technology fair at Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (Bari) in the afternoon.

Government, private, multinational and research organisations, universities and fertiliser factories have together put up 56 stalls at the fair.

Khaleda said the role of farm workers is very crucial to alleviating poverty and attaining food autarky, rural development and economic progress.

She emphasised the need for increasing production side by side with maintaining quality of products to withstand the competition in the context of globalisation and market economy.

She also underlined the importance of making prudent

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## BNP's new bid for dialogue with AL

### Main opposition calls it another 'mockery'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP has again offered to hold dialogue with the Awami League (AL) to resolve the parliamentary stand-off due to the main opposition party's indefinite House boycott since June last year.

Secretary General of the BNP and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday made the offer in a telephonic contact with Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid.

Bhuiyan asked Hamid to convey to his party high command the ruling party's request to join parliament and sit for talks, if needed.

Earlier in January last, Bhuiyan had made a similar offer to Hamid for talks to end the parliamentary stalemate. But the talks did not take place as the AL termed the offer just an eyewash.

During the tenure of the seventh parliament, the then ruling AL used to make similar telephonic offers to the opposition BNP to resolve parliamentary impasse when the latter boycotted the House and was engaged in an anti-government agitation.

The AL started House boycott on June 25 last and has now launched an out-governments agitation.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## 13<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

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