



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority has finally started dredging the Buriganga to save Basila at Mohammadpur from further erosion.

SAARC TRADE TALKS

LDCs to get advantage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trade talks between seven South Asian nations to strike a free trade agreement continued for the second day yesterday with all countries holding bilateral meetings to minimise differences on the negative listing of products.

Apart from negative listings, the high-level expert committee meeting also discussed Rules of Origin (ROO), technical assistance and revenue compensation mechanism issues to reach a consensus and prepare the ground to initiate a Free Trade Area (FTA) in the region from January 2006.

In all of these four issues, the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) -- Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives -- will get preferential treatment from the developing Saarc countries India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, sources said.

"Settling all these four issues will take time. We are trying to minimise our differences and make progress. We are coming closer and seeing a positive trend in the negotiation," AKM Fazlur Rahman, who is leading a nine-member Bangladesh delegation at the talks, told reporters after the meeting.

"It is a complicated negotiation and the expectation should not be that we will be able to settle all these issues in this meeting", he added.

A negative list mentions the products that do not enjoy zero tariff facility under the FTA. Under the ROO, two countries decide what should be the local value addition of a product in order for it to be eligible for free trade.

All the countries had advanced discussions on negative lists on a bilateral basis and talked about their problems with specific products. "It will help us to reach a consensus at the next round of talks in Delhi," said an official attending the meeting.

Developing countries can prepare a list of a maximum of 20 percent products out of 5,226 taxable items but the LDCs can make the list bigger as per preliminary consensus.

Concerning ROO, India and Pakistan sought some special preferences on some items including cotton. But Bangladesh and some other countries insisted on a general ROO in which rules for each country will be common.

"We hope we will be able to have a simplified and general ROO," Rahman said.

According to an earlier consensus, value addition binding for the LDCs will be less but the developing countries have to follow a higher level in this regard.

The Maldives proposed that the

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Troops at pump houses during Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to deploy troops at all the six zonal offices, pump stations and water treatment plants of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) during the month of Ramadan to ensure the smooth and adequate supply of water.

A joint meeting of the six city corporations, Dhaka Wasa and Chittagong Wasa, chaired by LGRD

and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and attended by top officials of the ministry yesterday, took a series of decisions to ensure the uninterrupted supply of water in all the city corporations during Ramadan.

"I want to see a smooth and adequate supply of water throughout Ramadan, especially at the time of Ifar and Sehri. Any complaint of water scarcity will be taken up seriously and the authorities con-

cerned will not be spared for any negligence," Mannan Bhuiyan told the meeting.

The army will assist Dhaka Wasa authorities in maintaining a smooth operation of water pumps, treatment plants and zonal offices. Control rooms will be set up in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet city corporations in order to do so, the minister said.

Bhuiyan instructed all the city

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UK keen to invest in power sector

Jay tells Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Britain is keen to invest in Bangladesh's power sector, visiting British Permanent Under-Secretary Michael Jay has said.

During a call on with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday, Jay said the British government appreciated Bangladesh's economic performance.

"Britain is very impressed with the economic performance of Bangladesh in last couple of years despite external shock like increased oil prices and natural calamity like floods," Jay was quoted to have said while meeting the prime minister.

Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury who was present at the meeting told newsmen that further discussion on British investment in power sector would be held in the near future.

The British Under-Secretary apprised the prime minister that the

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POST-FLOOD REHABILITATION

WB works for urgent resource package

Wolfensohn assures Saifur

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) is "now seriously working on emergency basis" to approve a resource package along with the ADB for post-flood rehabilitation in Bangladesh.

World Bank President James D Wolfensohn stated this in Washington Monday, apprising Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman about the aid package under processing.

"There will be no shortage of

assistance for post-flood rehabilitation and for overall development and poverty-reduction programmes from IDA resources," the multilateral donor agency chief was quoted as saying.

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Opposition backs Skop strike today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) with the support of mainstream opposition parties including the Awami League enforces a 24-hour strike at mills and factories across the country and in the transport sector from 6:00 am today to press home its demands for a national minimum wage for workers, democratic labour laws and reopening of all closed mills and factories.

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PHOTO: STAR

Wrong ride... A minibus, which lost control and went over the median at Banani yesterday, is just another case of reckless driving on the city roads in the absence of police control.

IG prisons transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General (IG) of Prisons Brigadier General Zillur Rahman was transferred to Sylhet Medical College and Hospital yesterday as its director.

The decision of transfer was taken in the wake of allegation of corruption, irregularities and mismanagement in the prison administration and grenade recovery from Dhaka Central Jail on August 22.

Brigadier General Shah-e-Alam has been appointed new IG prisons.

Meanwhile, Abdur Rashid Sarkar, additional secretary to agriculture ministry, was transferred to the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management and Syed Ataur Rahman, managing director of Jibon Bima Corporation, was appointed

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UNCONTESTED POLLS AT BHOLA EC to probe 'unusual' situation

Third phase of municipality elections starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday decided to probe the alleged irregularities in Daultkhan municipality polls as the third phase of the municipality polls starts today elsewhere in the country amid tight security.

In the Daultkhan municipality of Bhola, all the representatives were elected uncontested, as the ruling BNP men reportedly did not allow no one other than of their party allegiance to file nominations.

The EC yesterday at a meeting with the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed in the chair termed the Daultkhan municipality polls unusual and decided to summon the district deputy commissioner, superintendent of police, returning officer and other officials concerned to the EC, sources said.

The EC will not publish official

results of the Daultkhan municipality polls in the gazette until the probe is completed.

"The Election Commission will take stern action if it finds any irregularity in the polls," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star after the meeting yesterday.

Only the local leaders and activists of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were elected chairman and ward commissioners in absence of other party-backed or independent candidates in last July's municipality polls in Daultkhan.

Former chairman and others of Daultkhan Municipality had filed complaints with the EC against the polls and demanded its cancellation.

The EC decided to enquire into the allegations all by itself as the worsening law and order situation

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Rab nabs Kala Jahangir's aide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested an aide to notorious criminal Kala Jahangir from Phultala upazila of Khulna at around midnight on Monday.

Nasiruddin Molla alias Gal Kata Nasir, was caught from his in-laws' house in Damodar village, where he came on Friday night to dodge Rab raids in Dhaka.

Nasir stands accused in several criminal cases in connection with murders and extortion mostly committed at Banani in Dhaka.

He was being interrogated at Rab headquarters at Khalispur till yesterday, said sources.

The same night Rab arrested Ikhtiar Hoassain, 27, a listed terrorist, from Jogipola area in Khulna.

They recovered an US-made revolver and a 20-inch long dagger from him. He too was being quizzed at Rab headquarters.

Nobel physics prize goes to American trio

REUTERS, Stockholm

David Gross, David Politzer and Frank Wilczek won the 2004 Nobel physics prize yesterday for explaining how the basic building blocks of nature, quarks, interact to make a coin spin or build the entire universe.

The American scientists have brought physics one step closer to fulfilling a grand dream, to formulate a unified theory comprising gravity as well -- a theory for everything, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences' citation said.

Their work on the strong force acting between quarks inside the proton and the neutron within an atomic nucleus helps explain an everyday phenomenon like a coin spinning on a table, read the Academy citation.

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Prayer Timing		
October 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-53	5-56
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation