

# The Daily Star

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People's Right to Know

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## Natwar pushes for bilateral FTA

### Morshed focuses on narrowing trade gap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh yesterday said India and Bangladesh need to evolve positions and action plans to counter the common threats of terrorism and religious fundamentalism that confront both the societies.

endeavour to avoid any provocative words or deeds that would inevitably make our bilateral relations and mutual dialogue needlessly more difficult," he said outlining the Indian approach on major bilateral issues.

"Where there are joint projects of mutual advantage, we should not allow politics to trump sound economics. This relates to issues such

as the export of natural gas and the establishment of a tri-nation gas pipeline," Singh said.

The Indian minister was addressing a session of 'Indo-Bangladesh Dhaka Dialogue on Trade, Investment and Connectivity' organised by Centre for Policy

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## Natwar meets Khaleda, hands Manmohan's invitation to visit India

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh yesterday made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and handed her a letter from Indian Premier Manmohan Singh inviting her to visit India.

Singh told Khaleda at her office Manmohan would attend the 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka scheduled for November 12-13.

Manmohan in the letter expressed

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## CEC decides for fresh voter list on his own

### Avoid discussion with 2 commissioners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) in a surprising move and without any further discussion yesterday decided that the voter list for the next general election will be prepared afresh at a cost of over Tk 200 crore.

The decision was made on the basis of Saturday's primary discussion about preparation of the voter list.

The Chief Election Commissioner

(CEC) took the decision unilaterally and then in a file forwarded to the two election commissioners he sought their opinions yesterday afternoon. The election commissioners expressed opinions that the list, be it a fresh or a revised one, be prepared in accordance with the Electoral Rolls Ordinance 1982.

The CEC, however, categorically said that a fresh roll will be prepared. He claimed the decision was made after taking into account the prece-

dents set while preparing the voter lists in the past.

The EC on Saturday at a two-hour meeting failed to reach a decision and said they would take the decision at the next meeting, which was scheduled for yesterday. But the meeting was cancelled to avoid further discord over preparation of the list, as it was 'very much unlikely' for the commissioners to reach a

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## GRAM SARKAR ACT HC verdict stayed for six weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed for six weeks a High Court (HC) verdict that declared Gram Sarkar Act, 2003 illegal and unconstitutional.

The stay order came after the government filed a petition preferring to file a leave to appeal against the August 2 HC judgement.

Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, chamber judge of the Appellate Division, passed the order and directed the government to file a regular leave to appeal petition.

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## India offers edn help to children of war heroes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh yesterday offered to support the children of the freedom fighters of Bangladesh by providing them with educational facilities and scholarships.

"We would also like to support the initiatives to provide healthcare and rehabilitation for these freedom fighters," Singh told the trustees and

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Indian External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh looks at memorabilia at the Liberation War Museum at Segun Bagicha in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



## Media gag continues on 2 ECs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) secretariat officials have been restraining the two election commissioners from expressing their opinions to the media for the last few days.

The restraint has been imposed on Election Commissioners AK Mohammad Ali and M Munsef Ali following serious disagreement between them and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz over declaring the election schedule for women's reserved seats in

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## Local govt bodies to crack down on food adulterators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The city corporations, municipalities and union parishads under the local government will soon start controlling the adulteration of foods throughout the country.

LGRD & Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan gave this directive yesterday while presiding over a meeting at the conference room of the Local Government

Department.

A source present at the meeting said the government has prepared a draft 'amendment' of 'Pure Food Ordinance' to control contaminated foods, which will be placed in the next session of the parliament.

The minister told the meeting that the government has given the responsibility to the local government ministry to control the

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## BENAPOLE STALEMATE NBR, C&F agents still at loggerheads

### Strike may be called at all ports

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Eighteen days into the work abstention by clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents at Benapole land port, officials of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and C&F agents are still at loggerheads.

While the NBR termed the demands placed by the C&F agents as irrational and urged them to

withdraw the work abstention, the C&F agents are planning to extend the work abstention at all the ports across the country.

Export and import through Benapole land port, the largest land port of the country, which contributes around Tk 10 crore as revenue daily, has remained inoperative as the C&F agents called an indefinite

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