

## JS body blasts govt for failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on agriculture ministry yesterday once again blasted the government for its failure to fight Monga in the northwest Bangladesh which has worsened this year due to recent floods in the region.

The government has not taken adequate measures to tackle the near-famine situation and there is a serious lack of coordination among the ministries in this task, it observed.

On the fair price of agricultural produce, the committee said the prices increase due to extortion in transports but the farmers are deprived of fair prices.

The parliamentary watchdog body at a meeting yesterday

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# Monga spills over Rangpur region

## Funds to fight the near famine situation remain unutilised

REJAUZ KARIM BYRON and SUMAN MAHMUD

Monga this year has not remained limited to the greater Rangpur alone, but has spread across Faridpur, Gopalganj and Jamalpur districts, according to a survey of the Relief and Rehabilitation Directorate.

Meanwhile, although Tk 50 crore was earmarked in the budget for facing

monga, the fund still remains intact.

Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat in greater Rangpur as well as Thakurgaon, Jamalpur, Shariatpur, Madaripur, Rajbari, Gopalganj and Sherpur have been found badly affected by monga. Some 40 lakh people are believed to be suffering from appalling poverty in these areas, according to the survey.

Asadul Habib Dulu, deputy minister for food and disaster management, told The Daily Star that his ministry has already sent a proposal to the finance ministry for the release of the fund.

The ministry has also started other programmes to assist the

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## India to expedite FTA with neighbours

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Ahead of Dhaka Saarc Summit next month, India has decided to take a major initiative to expedite Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with neighbouring countries as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday emphasised 'neighbours' acquiring a greater stake in India's economic growth.

"Our neighbours should benefit from India's economic growth," Singh told a meeting of his high-powered Trade and Economic Relations Committee (TERC) yesterday.

Singh wanted FTA with neighbouring countries to be expedited along with other such agreements with the Asean and Gulf countries,

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## JUDICIARY SEPARATION

# Govt plans to pass the buck to next one in power

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The government is planning to pass its responsibility of separating the judiciary from the executive to the next government in power as the October 20 Supreme Court (SC) rejection of its 21st petition put the ruling coalition in an awkward position.

Well-placed sources said the government now ponders over passing the remaining period of its tenure by dilly-dallying to comply with the SC directives on separation of the judiciary.

The government is likely to submit a review petition against rejection of

the time petition.

Everyone has the right to file a review petition against any order, and they are considering the option, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star on his return from abroad yesterday.

The turnaround of the time petition has become a matter of concern for the government, said Moudud. He will discuss it with the prime minister on her return from Saudi Arabia on October 31.

He will also discuss the matter with the attorney general and other legal experts to know its implications, he said.

Moudud went on, "Since there is no time-frame now, we'll have to ensure that no conflict arises between the judiciary and the executive."

Asked whether they would implement the SC directives on separation of the judiciary during their tenure, the law minister said, "We stand by our promise."

He, however, claimed much has been done for separation of the judiciary. "We have prepared four draft rules and have already formed judicial service commission."

Although separation of the judiciary is one of the ruling

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## SAFTA IMPLEMENTATION

# Saarc experts hope to resolve contentious issues at next meet

REZAUZ KARIM

The contentious issues relating to the implementation of the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta) will be resolved in the 12th meeting of the Saarc Committee of Experts (CoE) scheduled to begin late November.

The member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) are committed to enforce the Safta accord from January 1, 2006 by resolving the three unresolved issues, officials in Dhaka said.

The contentious issues are the rules of origin, sensitive list of prod-

ucts and the revenue compensation mechanism of the Safta accord.

The officials said the issues related to the technical assistance for the least developed countries (LDCs) in the seven-nation forum were sorted out during the 11th meeting of the CoE held in Kathmandu earlier this month.

"Excepting some disagreements, the experts of the member states have finalised the entire volume of the Safta accord. We are hopeful to finalise the remaining issues during the next meeting

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PHOTO: STAR

With Eid-ul-Fitr about a week away, vendors occupy the footpath at Farmgate in the capital, causing a nuisance to the pedestrians.

## SAARC SUMMIT

# Programmes almost finalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has almost finalised the programmes of the two-day SAARC Summit next month, while other bodies looking for security, accommodation, transportation and protocols stepped up preparations.

Official sources said rehearsals

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## Correction

A news item headlined "Petrobangla boss Osmani removed under pressure" published yesterday, inadvertently contained a paragraph that read, "Due to the transfers, the energy ministry is running without any secretary or additional secretary at present." Actually, the ministry is running without any additional secretary only.

## News analysis

# Power disaster due to dubious policy

SHARIER KHAN

In recent months, realising its failure to open new avenues -- some shady and some unrealistic -- to increase power generation before the next general election.

But the government would have nothing to worry about had it not cancelled Bangladeshi firm Summit Power's bid for the Sirajganj 450 megawatt power project in January 2004.

Summit had finalised its bid and had the cabinet purchase committee's approval. It had gathered more

than \$150 million loans from the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank when the government decided to cancel it.

The plant was supposed to produce 150mw power within 13 months of agreement and 450 mw within 24 months. Despite the possibility of delays, this plant would add to the power supply to some extent before the next elections.

The behind-the-scenes reason for cancellation of the bid was that the chief of Summit Power is an Awami League (AL) parliamentarian. The official reason, as a letter

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