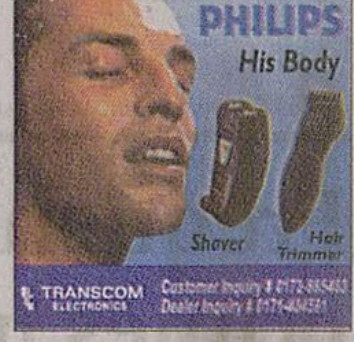




# The Daily Star

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## Safta comes into effect today

PTI, New Delhi  
South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta), which paves the way for free trade in goods among the Saarc member states, comes into effect today. As per the agreement, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will bring their customs duties to 0-5 percent by 2013. The least developed members Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal and Bhutan will do it by 2018. India being the larger and relatively developed economy will be providing concessions to the least

## Bangladeshi designed car unveiled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
The first ever automobile Leepu F-21 designed by a Bangladeshi was launched in Dhanmondi in the capital yesterday. Nizamuddin Awlia Leepu, the designer, formally switched on the ignition of the car at his Jikatola home-cum-workshop around 1:00pm. He said the design of the car is unique and not a replica or

## Shahjalal newsprint gets costlier from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Bashundhara Paper Trading, a local newsprint mill, increases the price of its Shahjalal newsprint by Tk 6,000 per tonne again from today. The price of newsprint has increased Tk 13,000 per tonne in the last six months, said a Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) press release.

## Sun also rises despite political heartbreaks

INAM AHMED  
Politicians may have failed again last year, but the private sector has not. With perseverance, innovation and resilience, it has written another inspiring chapter in the just-concluded year. The result is an encouraging growth in the industrial sector, much of which came from small enterprises. The latest Quantum Index of Production (QIP), which excludes the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), shows a 8.8 percent growth in July-August of the current fiscal year (FY) against last year's 6.85 percent. Sectors such as pharmaceuticals and textiles pumped much of the steam into the growth engine and an exponential advancement of the service sector, especially the tele-



The Daily Star wishes its readers, advertisers, patrons and well-wishers a Happy New Year.  
Advance raids on DU halls 75 problem revellers picked up  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Police picked up 75 persons, mostly outsiders, during precautionary raids on different dormitories of Dhaka University early yesterday in a bid to prevent

## Militancy overshadows public security

SHAKHAWAT LITON  
An alarming escalation of Islamist militancy and suicide bomb blasts was the biggest threat to public security as it overpowered all other kinds of criminal activities, political violence and killings in the year 2005 that ended yesterday. But negative politics has buried people's expectation of rooting out the militants who have established a reign of terror by carrying out countrywide serial blasts and attacks on courts and other establishments, killing judges, lawyers and commoners. The government's role in tackling the militancy has been questioned as it turns a deaf ear to the allegations against Jamaat-e-Islami, some ministers and ruling party lawmakers of patronising and protecting the militants. The new year starts with the opposition seeming to focus their agitation on the resignation of the four-party government accusing it of harbouring militants and failing to govern the country efficiently in the last four years. In the last year of the coalition government, the politics is heading towards further confrontation as both the government and opposition are preparing to face each other in the street with an eye to the upcoming parliamentary election. The year 2005 that began with the assassination of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria in a grenade attack witnessed new dimensions in violence and terrorism, human rights violation and ended with a presidential ordinance on wiretapping. Skyrocketing prices of essentials,



PHOTO: STAR  
The Ceramic Lake in Mirpur in the city turns alive with thousands of migratory birds flocking together over the water body.

## City welcomes migratory birds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Bird lovers in the city yesterday welcomed varieties of migratory waterfowl through a festival at the Ceramic Lake in Mirpur. In the morning, when the sun was not quite hot yet, a few hundred people of all ages, including children accompanied by their mothers, gathered at the lakeside to watch the migratory birds. Sharifuddin Ahmed, a retired government employee, brought his granddaughter Trisha to watch the birds. "The festival does not have any age-limit, so both of us are enjoying it," Sharifuddin said. "I do not know the names of the birds but that does not hold us from enjoying the way they are flying and landing." Five-year-old Pritha came to the festival with her mother. She would later join an art competition arranged by the organisers.

## FRESH VOTER ROLL Listing starts today amidst controversy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Amid countrywide demonstrations by the main opposition Awami League (AL) against the move to prepare a fresh electoral roll, over two lakh enumerators recruited controversially begin today the weeklong process of collecting information about the prospective voters. Meanwhile, the High Court is scheduled to hear tomorrow the two writ petitions challenging the legality of the preparation of a fresh roll following the unilateral decision of the chief election commissioner.

## India goes for dams ignoring eco-disaster

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
India strives to emerge as an electricity supplier to the power-hungry Southeast Asia by generating hydroelectricity from scores of dams it is building, including the highly controversial Tipaimukh dam, causing colossal ecological damage to its northeastern part and entire Bangladesh. Rights activists from the Indian states of Assam and Manipur spoke of India's plan to sell power to Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand at the International Tipaimukh Dam Conference (ITDC-2005) in the capital that ended yesterday with the adoption of 'Dhaka Declaration.'

Happy New Year  
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