

## Delhi agrees to address Dhaka's concern for trade gap

## Quizzing of Bangla Bhai begins

Both sides sign trade, anti-smuggling deals; consent to start Sealdah-Joydevpur train link

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA and REZAUL KARIM, New Delhi

India yesterday sought Bangladesh's cooperation in fighting terrorism and agreed to address Dhaka's concern over yawning bilateral trade gap as the two countries signed two agreements, including one on joint efforts to check illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh pose for photograph at a ceremonial reception in New Delhi yesterday.

### PM for common water sharing approach

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India last night said it wants to see Bangladesh "strong" and "stable" even as Dhaka opposed New Delhi's ambitious river interlinking

project saying it would cause "unmanageable economic and ecological consequences".

Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia also sought duty-free

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### Ceremonial reception to Khaleda

REZAUL KARIM, from New Delhi

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday began the official leg of her three-day visit to India with a warm ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the presidential palace.

Khaleda Zia, who arrived here Monday afternoon, said she was impressed by the reception and looking forward to fostering "a very important" bilateral relationship.

"I came here with an open mind and will discuss everything of

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### STAR REPORT

Investigators yesterday began interrogating Bangla Bhai, 15 days into his arrest in Mymensingh, focussing primarily on the militants' potential plan for further attacks, stock of firearms and explosives, and dens.

Members of the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) started grilling the second-in-command of Jama'at-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Rab-1 headquarters on receipt of permission from a Mymensingh court.

Sources said the interrogators are quizzing him primarily to know about whereabouts of the JMB leaders and activists on the run, stockpile of explosives, and operations that might follow the recent crackdown on militants.

Law enforcers said the militant kingpin, who also used to spearhead the vigilante campaign of Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMB) in the northern districts, might have some significant information that the JMB chief or other top leaders may not know.



The interrogators may bring Bangla Bhai face to face with JMB chief Abdul Rahman and Majlis-e-Shura members Aatur Rahman Sunny, Abdul Awal and Hafez Mahmud to match his statements against those of the others.

Currently, Rahman and the other detained Shura members are also being interrogated by the TFI.

A cognisance court of Mymensingh placed Bangla Bhai on a 10-day remand. On his release from Bangladesh Rifles hospital yesterday morning, he was taken to Mymensingh under escort of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police.

Security was stepped up in Mymensingh town, especially in and around the court area since early morning, reports our

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### KIBRIA MURDER CASE SC rejects leave to appeal petition against HC order

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday rejected the leave to appeal petition against a High Court (HC) verdict that affirmed the lower court's order, rejecting the plea for further investigation into former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria murder case.

Within three hours of charge framing by the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Sylhet, against 10 accused of Kibria killing, the Supreme Court on February 7

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### GARMENT EXPORTS NBR smells rat in cash incentive scheme

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is suspecting misappropriation of about Tk 100 crore of the government's cash incentive facilities by a section of unscrupulous readymade garments (RMG) makers.

NBR's intelligence wing is investigating the matter and primary findings show that about 30 apparel firms are guilty of abusing the facilities in collusion with a section of corrupt bank officials.

NBR sources said the firms violated Bangladesh Bank's Foreign Exchange Circular no 9 enforced in March 2001 which says the firms that are entitled to bond facilities in export will not be allowed to receive cash incentives.

But the suspected firms received a large amount from the government as cash incentives despite their entitlement to bond facilities.

The firms received the cash incentives by submitting con-

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### IGP, 14 cops sued for attack on Jubo Mahila League activists

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Three Jubo Mahila League leaders yesterday filed three criminal cases against the inspector general of police (IGP) and 14 police officials for attacking the opposition activists during their Election Commission Secretariat besiege programme and hartal on March 12 and 13.

Farida Yasmin Jhuma, Asma Akter Luna and Sabina Akter Tuhin filed the cases with the Chief

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### Dhaka pitches for market access, corridor to Nepal

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA and REZAUL KARIM, from New Delhi

Bangladesh today made a strong pitch for greater market access for its goods to India and a corridor through India to send exports to Nepal and Bhutan. It also expressed willingness to consider a limited bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Speaking at an interactive ses-

sion with representatives of apex Indian chambers of commerce and industry yesterday afternoon, Bangladesh Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman also sought from India more investment in Bangladesh. He suggested the \$2.5 billion investment proposal by the Tata Group in Bangladesh could transform the relations between the two neighbouring countries.

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### BNP'S REFORMS LETTER AL takes it positively, to respond soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the 14-party opposition coalition will sit again today to formulate a response to the ruling BNP's letter seeking names of representatives from Awami League (AL) for the proposed committee to discuss electoral reforms.

They were expecting advice from Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina on the matter last night.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil

was tasked with communicating over telephone with Hasina, also AL president, who is now in the US for treatment. AL sources however said the opposition coalition will send a reply within four to five days.

The AL-led 14-party opposition coalition yesterday at an emergency meeting discussed BNP's letter and raised several questions about it.

The coalition leaders said BNP did not specify the nature of the

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# Welcome

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