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## Talks finally start today

Both sides rigid on Hasan, authority over defence and EC reconstitution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid heightened hope in the public mind, the much awaited dialogue between ruling BNP and opposition Awami League (AL) kicks off today in Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban to break the ongoing political impasse over longstanding proposals for electoral reforms.

On the eve of the secretary-general level formal talks, BNP Chairperson also Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and AL President also Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday in parliament expressed their hopes that the dialogue will be meaningful.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, who will sit for one to one talks at 11:30am today, were busy yesterday in last minute preparations in consultation with their respective party high commands.

The AL presidium sat for an

emergency meeting last night to hammer out the last minute details of its strategy for the first day of the talks. "Our presidium met tonight to strategise," said Abdul Jalil after the meeting last night but he declined to elaborate.

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### MAJOR REFORM PROPOSALS

- The president will appoint acceptable persons as chief adviser and advisers to the caretaker government in consultation with all political parties.
- The Ministry of Defence will be under the caretaker government during its tenure.
- The chief adviser and advisers will not be member of any political party or its affiliated organisations.
- The appointments of the chief election commissioner and other commissioners have to be done in consultation with political parties. The number of election commissioners will also have to be determined.
- The EC will have its own independent secretariat free from any executive control.
- Computerised voter lists and voter identity cards will have to be prepared and electronic voting will have to be introduced.

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## EFFECTIVENESS OF 8TH JS Final day's sitting sees healthy debate

PM attends 195 out of 373 workdays, Hasina below 50

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current parliament sat on the last workday yesterday before curtain is brought down on it after 23 days amid debates between the ruling and main opposition parties over the effectiveness of the House in the last five years.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar in an inventive move declared names of 21 lawmakers who attended maximum of the 373 workdays in 23 sessions of the House since October 28, 2001 when the current parliament started.

The Speaker declared to reward these lawmakers to encourage others to attend the House regularly as the current parliament has faced severe quorum crisis since the beginning because of absence of the main opposition Awami

League (AL).

Despite the ruling alliance's two-thirds majority in the House, the functions of the House were stopped on several occasions due to quorum crisis or absence of 60 lawmakers in the chamber.

The current parliament, which is second to fulfil the five-year tenure, was lucky yesterday to have the main opposition lawmakers on the last workday. The previous parliament did not have that luck.

In her speech concluding the 23rd session of the current parliament, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia termed this completion of tenure "a milestone" for parliamentary democracy.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar termed the five years of the House, which expires on October 27;

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Agitating jute mill workers stage a sit-in near AK Khan Gate in Pahartali in the port city yesterday, blocking the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway for four hours, to press home their demands for payment of arrears.

## Order given to arrest local operators of terrors hiding abroad

UNB, Dhaka

The home ministry has directed the intelligence agencies to arrest the local operators of the top terrorists hiding abroad, as the authorities have information that they were planning to kill personalities like former vice-chancellor of National University Dr Aftab Ahmed.

The directive came from a meeting on law and order at the home ministry yesterday with State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar in the chair.

A home ministry official said the intelligence agencies have been asked to gather information about the local operators so that they could be put into jails.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Home Secretary Safar Raj Hossain, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Anwarul Iqbal, Director General of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) MA Aziz

Sarker and other officials concerned.

Emerging from the meeting, the state minister told journalists that the investigation into the killing of Dr Aftab is progressing "reasonably well".

About the country's law and order situation, Babar said the law and order is now better and it will continue to improve.

"I've ordered the law enforcers to take necessary steps so that the situation cannot deteriorate after the present government hands over power to a caretaker government," he said.

Referring to a list of syndicates responsible for the price hike of essentials, the minister said he did not get any list of syndicates from the commerce ministry to arrest them.

Replying to another query, the state minister said illegal toll collection from the vehicles carrying

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DEMAND FOR SALARY  
Jute mill workers block Dhaka-Ctg highway for 4hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Thousands of people travelling to the port city and the capital faced immense sufferings yesterday as the agitating jute mill workers in Chittagong blockaded the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at different points of the division to press home their demands for payment of

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### ANNOUNCEMENT

To morrow, Friday, The Daily Star will publish two-page special: Election 2007-A.



New Arithmetical, an in-depth analysis of the upcoming election scenario by Nazim Kamran Choudhury, the man who correctly predicted the 2001 election result. Please make sure not to miss the publication of his sensational findings.



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জাতির জনক

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মভূমি  
গোপালগঞ্জে

স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ব্যাংক লিমিটেড -এর

২৪ তম শাখা

শুভ উদ্বোধন

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উদ্বোধন করবেন

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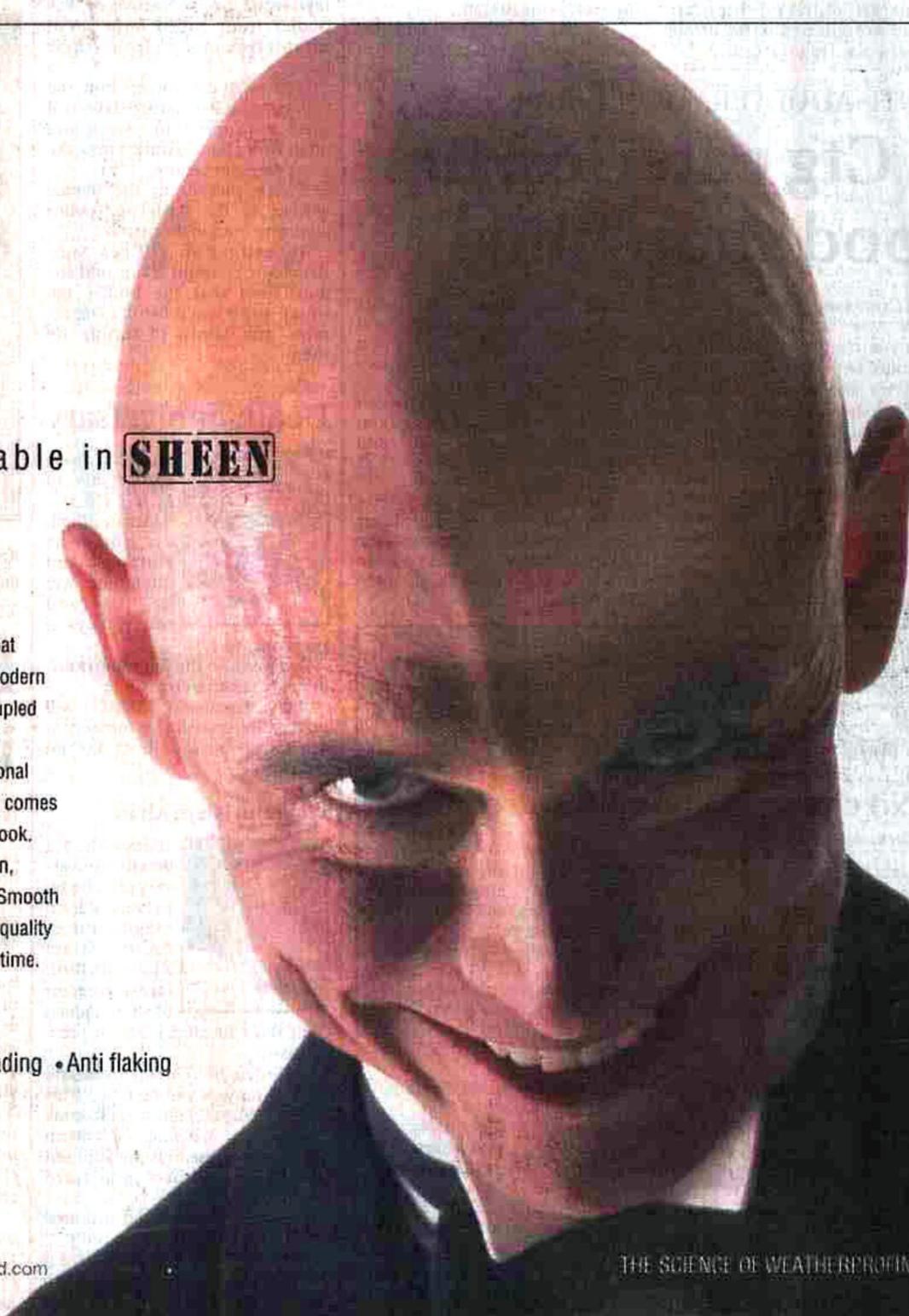
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