

# Regional co-op meet for transport connectivity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the seventh meeting of the Forum for Regional Cooperation among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) began in Dhaka yesterday, speakers at its inaugural session emphasised that transport connectivity among the member countries is crucial for economic exchanges.

They also said when improved transport connectivity will be in place, Chittagong Port will become a commercial hub for the region, as the Bay of Bengal will become more accessible to the BCIM member countries for transporting their exports through the port.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) is organising the two-day meeting of BCIM Forum focusing on further strengthening the regional economic cooperation especially in three major areas -- trade, transport and tourism.

CPD Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan said Bangladesh is a transit point between two major economies of Asia -- China and India, which will become the first and third largest economies in the world by 2020.

"By the middle of 2020, the horizon of economic growth and development will stretch from North America and the West to the Asian region," he said adding that China and India will be the driving force of the transformation of the Asian region, which is now emerging as the growth centre for the economic universe.

So the success of the BCIM Forum is very important for the future of Bangladesh as the country is standing at the crossroads of that transformation, he observed.

"Relationships among the BCIM countries have enormous significance for our regional economic development," he added.

Inaugurating the meet, Finance and Planning Adviser Dr AB Mirza Azizul Islam said it is critically important for the success of a global or regional arrangement that differences on some issues are kept aside in order to promote regional cooperation where there are clear possibilities of gain for all participating countries.

It is also important to reach a consensus on areas which promise gains for all countries participating in the arrangement, he said.

He also suggested avoiding myopic views regarding distribution of gains from regional cooperation among the participating countries.

"Many of us think that if a country is in a better position through participation in a regional cooperation, then other countries should not participate in that cooperation. But, in my judgment there is no intellectual foundation for that view. We must move away from this sort of a myopic view regarding distribution of the gains from a regional cooperation," he said.

The adviser also said there should be closer interactions among governments, civil society organisations, research organisations, and the academics both within a particular country and among the cooperating countries.

CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya also emphasised on transport connectivity among the BCIM member countries and said if it is not possible to develop the transport network, all efforts to strengthen regional economic cooperation will fail.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: SHAFIQ ALAM

The deer at Dhaka Zoo spend most of the time in a water body yesterday due to scorching heat with the summer only days away.

## Indian agencies get info of 'militant attack' on summit

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, New Delhi

Indian intelligence agencies have received information that four Sikh and Islamist militant organisations are planning to attack New Delhi targeting the 14th Saarc summit to be held on April 3 and 4 in the Indian capital, according to an Indian news report.

With the Saarc preparatory meetings already underway, the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## BTRC sues Aktel for illegal VoIP business

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) filed a case with Gulshan Police Station accusing private mobile phone operator Aktel of running illegal voice over internet protocol (VoIP) business and depriving the government of a huge revenue.

The case was filed on Thursday night after Rapid Action Battalion

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



## Mamun placed on 5-day fresh remand in extortion case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Giasuddin Al Mamun, controversial businessman and a close friend of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, was placed on a five-day remand in connection with a Tk 1.32-crore extortion case yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Rafiqul Islam passed the remand order after Dhaka Cantonment police produced Mamun before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka on completion of his five-day remand in an arms case.

Under tight security, police produced Mamun before the court around 3:30pm and sought a seven-day remand in connection with the extortion case filed with Gulshan Police Station on March 27.

In the yesterday's forwarding report of the arms case, the investigation officer (IO) said that he gathered important information from Mamun about the arms and ammunition and it was being verified. So, Mamun should be confined in custody until the investigation of the case is complete, the IO added.

The IO Sub-inspector (SI) Imtiaz AKM Bhuiyan of the extortion case mentioned that Mamun was directly involved in the extortion and he needs to be quizzed to find out vital clues about the case and the whereabouts of his accomplices.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## Iran warns Britain over politicising sailor crisis

### 'Navy men may face trial'

AFP, Tehran/ London

Iran yesterday again warned Britain against politicising the seizure of its 15 navy personnel, saying that could complicate efforts to resolve the escalating crisis.

The warning from Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki came as a senior Iranian diplomat said legal proceedings had begun against the sailors and marines for illegally entering Iranian waters but denied reports of a trial.

"British leaders should avoid media storms and politicisation to prevent a further complication of the affair," Iranian media quoted

Mottaki as telling his Australian counterpart, Alexander Downer, in a telephone conversation.

The government of British Prime Minister Tony Blair has received strong backing from both the United States and the European Union, with Tehran on Saturday slamming the EU's "irrational" support.

"Iran rejects the EU's partial and meddling position in the 15 sailors' detention affair ... and urges European countries to refrain from impulsive and irresponsible comments," a foreign ministry statement said.

It warned EU leaders to avoid

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## 22 Hizbut Tahrir members sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent 22 members of Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh's cultural wing to Dhaka Central Jail after police produced them before the court in connection with violation of the provisions of the Emergency Power Rules.

They were arrested on Friday evening from the third floor of a five-storied building at Aziz Mahalla in Mohammadpur for holding a secret political meeting.

Police and different intelligence agencies are now investigating whether the group of 22 was involved in militant activities.

However, the guardians of the arrestees, who are mostly students of universities and colleges, believe they are innocent and claimed they were holding a meeting to arrange a programme for the Eid-e-Miladunnabi when the law

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Wari-Bateswar reminds Ptolemy's 'Sounagoura'

KAMRUL HASAN KHAN, back from Wari-Bateswar

Greek geographer Ptolemy (circa 90-168 AD) probably referred to Wari and Bateswar, two remote villages in Narsingdi, as Sounagoura in his "Geographia", said experts.

The two villages are emerging as the seat of one of the earliest civilisations in Bangladesh with the unearthing of a 2,500-year old "fort city" featuring traits of commercial activities.

"It is now considered that it is the rich and well-planned urban Wari-Bateswar which Greek geographer Ptolemy mentioned as Sounagoura," said Sufi Mostafizur Rahman, professor of archaeology at Jahangirnagar University (JU).

Prof Sufi said in his book

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

The brick-built structure excavated at Wari-Bateswar in Narsingdi is presumed to be part of a temple 2,000-2,500 years old.

## Bangladeshis among 80 migrants held in Turkey

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish police yesterday detained 83 illegal immigrants planning to cross into Europe from Turkey's northwestern border with Greece, the Anatolia news agency reported.

The would-be immigrants -- Pakistanis, Afghans and Bangladeshis -- were found hidden in a shanty house in the industrial suburb of Ikitelli, in the European quarter of Istanbul.

Police also detained an Afghan national and a Turk suspected of organising the illegal journey for the group.

The illegal immigrants, who were planning to sneak into Greece and then continue onto various other European countries, had paid about 7,000 dollars (5,200 euros) a head to the suspected organizers, Anatolia reported.

Turkey is a major route for human-smuggling from Asia into Europe, and illegal immigrants are detained almost on a daily basis.



PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, left, talks with Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee in New Delhi yesterday ahead of the 14th Saarc Summit that begins on Tuesday.

## EU gives nod to Arab-led ME peace efforts

AFP, Bremen

EU foreign ministers agreed yesterday to lend their full support to a renewed Arab-led Middle East peace initiative and to work with the non-Hamas members of the new Palestinian government, an official said.

"There is full support for the Riyadh consensus," said a spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, referring to the agreement reached by the Arab League in Saudi Arabia this week to revive a five-year-old Middle East peace plan.

"The EU will continue to be extremely proactive to ensure that this window of opportunity is not missed."

The ministers meeting in Bremen, Germany, also supported a call by Solana to organise meetings between the international Quartet on the Middle East -- the EU, UN, US and Russia -- and the Arab Quartet of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, the spokeswoman said.

Ministers voiced optimism at their first get-together since the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## 5 more JMB suspects held in Bagmara

UNB, Rajshahi

Police arrested five more suspected militants of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Bagmara upazila yesterday afternoon.

The arrestees are Akram, Afzal, Amjad of Hamnipur village, Nazrul of Goalpara village, and Mizanur of Manda village in Naogaon district.

Earlier on Friday, two suspected

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## BIRD FLU 1,500 more chicken culled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 1,500 chickens were culled at two farms in Dhaka and Jessore yesterday, central bird flu control room sources said.

With the detection of the viral infection at a Jessore farm, the number of districts that have the poultry disease now rose to six.

The five other districts are Dhaka, Gazipur, Tangail, Jamalpur and Narayanganj.

The highly infectious viral disease was first officially detected at Biman Poultry Complex less than a month ago.

The authorities yesterday culled 1,400 chicken at a farm at Dosair village in Ashulia on the outskirts of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing		
April 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		