

## Saarc Summit starts today with high hopes on trade



ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, *New Delhi*

New declarations on trade and terrorism are expected from the 14th Saarc Summit that starts off in New Delhi today.

Trade concessions for smaller nations by host India and addition of five new observer countries might mean a much-needed shot in the arm for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc). This is the first summit for



PHOTO: PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU OF INDIA

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed calls on Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on the eve of 14th Saarc Summit in New Delhi yesterday.

Bangladesh's caretaker government under Fakhruddin Ahmed, and also for the five new observers—United States, European Union, China, Japan and South Korea.

Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso and South Korean Song Min-soon will make brief presentations during the summit to be attended also by US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher.

Meanwhile, the pre-summit meetings have all but confirmed Iran's status to be announced during the summit in the Indian capital.

The South Asian Development

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## S Asia Media Commission for free info flow to be set up

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, *New Delhi*

South Asian media leaders yesterday decided to establish South Asia Media Commission to facilitate free flow of information among Saarc countries while regional foreign ministers promised to liberate their visa regimes for journalists.

South Asian Free Media Association (Safma) yesterday at its third conference decided to set up the media commission in New Delhi.

The media commission was set up to respond to attacks on journalists, promote free flow of information and harmonise ethical standards for journalists in South Asia.

All the Saarc foreign ministers attended the Safma conference

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## Bangladesh to have own brand of democracy

Army chief says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army Chief Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed yesterday said Bangladesh will have to construct its own brand of democracy recognising its social, historical and cultural conditions with religion being one of the several components of its national identity.

He defined 'own brand of democracy' as a 'balanced government' where power is not tilted towards any family or dynasty. "We have tried both the presidential and

parliamentary forms of government and now the people will judge which is better," he said.

There should be a balance among powers of the government, the president and the prime minister ensuring transparency, accountability and sense of responsibility, he said adding that the previous political systems made way for massive corruption in the society.

Terming the armed forces as the 'silent partner' of the people he also said power should not be concen-

trated in the hands of a dynasty or a party.

He was presenting a keynote paper at a regional conference of International Political Science Association, where he said, "We must build up our vision of freedom, peace, dignity and justice for the people of Bangladesh."

President Iajuddin Ahmed inaugurated the conference at a

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## Aminul, Dulu, Nadim Mostafa sued for patronising JMB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Rajshahi

Two more former BNP lawmakers were sued on Sunday for patronising militants of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Natore and Rajshahi.

Victims of JMB atrocities—Muhidul Islam Khan of Puthia and Ayub Ali Pramanik of Bagmara upazila—filed two cases Sunday against ex-deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu and former lawmaker Nadim Mostafa, among others.

Former post and telecommunications minister Aminul Huq stands

accused in one of the cases. He already faces charges of helping the militants commit brutalities in the northern districts.

Fazlur Rahman, who was kidnapped and left maimed by Bangla Bhai and his men three years ago, filed the case against him and 27 others Friday. It was the first case against any of those ex-BNP ministers and lawmakers alleged to have been the masterminds behind the

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## ACC to file cases against Harris, Mamun, Hazari, Shamim Osman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) will soon file cases against Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, controversial businessman Giasuddin Al-Mamun, and former Awami League lawmakers Joyнал Hazari and Shamim Osman for not submitting their wealth statements within the commission stipulated timeframe in February.

The anti-graft body at a meeting on Thursday gave approval for filing

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## Fuel prices hiked again by 16-21pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday increased the prices of diesel and kerosene by 21 percent and octane and petrol by 16 percent to minimise the staggering loss incurred by costly fuel imports.

From now on, diesel and kerosene will be selling at Tk 40 per litre, which was Tk 33 earlier, while octane will be selling at Tk 67 and petrol at Tk 65 per litre, which were earlier Tk 58 and Tk 56 respectively.

"This is an unpleasant decision, but we had no other option," Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury told a

press briefing at the secretariat, where he announced the raise in fuel prices. Energy Secretary AMM Nasiruddin and the chairman of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) were also present.

"Due to this hike, the transport fare may go up by 7 paise per passenger per kilometre at the most. For goods, the transport cost may rise to a maximum of 23 paise per ton per kilometre," Tapan said adding "for example, a passenger travelling to Chittagong from Dhaka by bus, might have to pay

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SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were up against a Herculean task of avoiding yet another defeat after a 10-wicket demolition by Australia when New Zealand bowled out the Tigers for 174 in 48.3 overs in their second Super 8 match at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua yesterday.

Mohammad Rafique entertained the crowd with some lusty blows that included two sixes off Scott Styris. The left-hander, who was unbeaten

on 30 off 36 balls, shared 34 runs with Syed Rasel for the last wicket to give the total some respectability.

A surprise package in the second round, Bangladesh never looked to pose any serious threat against a team they beat in a practice match ahead of the showpiece event.

They lost wickets at regular intervals despite a sedate yet productive 55-run opening stand between Tamim Iqbal and Javed Omar, who replaced out-of-form opener Shahriar Nafees, after New Zealand captain Stephan Fleming sent Bangladesh into bat.

The rot started when left-handed Tamim (29) was smartly stumped by Brendan McCullum in

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PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh opener Javed Omar drives for four against New Zealand in their World Cup Super 8 match at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in St. John's yesterday.

## Salahuddin, MAH Salim, Mamun sued for extortion, cheating

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three extortion, cheating and forgery cases have been filed against BNP leader and former state minister for communications Salahuddin Ahmed and his wife Hasina Ahmed, former BNP lawmaker MAH Salim and controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun.

Salahuddin Ahmed and his wife Hasina Ahmed deprived the government of a handsome amount of tax showing very nominal prices for their three luxurious cars, Sub-Inspector (SI) Faruq Hossain of Gulshan Police Station said in the case filed against the couple with the police station on Sunday.

Salahuddin and his wife had three luxurious cars -- each worth Tk 50 lakh but to evade tax, they prepared false documents showing

those cars sold, SI Faruq said.

They again showed those vehicles as purchased at Tk 1 lakh each, forging signatures of those who they showed as the buyers and sellers of the cars, the SI said, adding that he found the anomalies while checking the documents of the vehicles.

**CASE AGAINST SALIM**

Major (retd) AKM Masud Parvez, executive director of Channel 1, filed a case against former BNP lawmaker and former chairman of the television channel MAH Salim for cheating him Tk 8 lakh.

The complainant in the case statement mentioned that Salim forged his signature and withdrew the money on February 5 from his account at the Gulshan Branch of

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## BTTB loses revenue as int'l trunk exchange not installed

SHARIER KHAN

When illegal VoIP operations were devouring hundreds of crores of taka of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board's (BTTB) revenue from overseas calls, the telecom ministry in November last year suspended installation of a Tk 7.3 crore International Trunk Exchange (ITX), sources said.

The project would have been completed by now if it was not suspended and the BTTB could have greatly reduced the present overseas call congestion that emerged due to a crackdown on illegal VoIP operation. According to the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) 2003, such suspension is illegal.

"By now, this scheme would have added 10,000 international

circuits with the BTTB's existing 13,000 circuits. If the BTTB had 30,000 international circuits, the country would not even need any legal or illegal VoIP facility for overseas calls," notes a well-paced BTTB source.

Roughly 10,000 international circuits would earn the BTTB an annual revenue of at least Tk 200 crore.

Sources said the telecom ministry through a circular on November 11 last year suspended the project following publication of a news in the daily Observer headlined "Tk 7 cr financial crime involved irregularities in BTTB mobile phone project".

But follow up investigations found nothing wrong in the project. Yet till date the project remains

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## EXTORTION CASE Tarique's petition for stay on proceedings rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the petition seeking stay on the proceedings of the Tk 1-crore extortion case filed against BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman and his close aide Mian Nuruddin Apu.

Judge Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following a criminal revision filed by Tarique's counsels against the earlier rejection order of the lower court.

On March 29, Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rouf Khan of the Speedy Trial Court-2 rejected a petition filed by Tarique's lawyers challenging the legality of the investigation officer (IO) of the case submitting the charge sheet of the case.

Moving for the revision seeking stay on the proceedings of the case, advocate ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul argued that the submission of the charge sheet by the IO was illegal as per provision of the Speedy Trial Act 2000.

The act says that if any person is caught red-handed under the act,

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