

## Hasina to be brought to hospital today for check-up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina would be brought back to Square Hospitals for eye check-up today, a senior prison official yesterday said.

Earlier, the former prime minister had been admitted to the hospital from March 11 to March 30. Sources said she was being brought back there amid widespread criticism of the authorities in the last couple of days following her allegation Sunday that she was forcibly taken back to the sub jail halfway through her treatment.

The jail authorities, however, said they are taking the AL chief back to hospital according to the recommendations of the Square Hospitals.

"As she is required to go through follow-up eye check-up, she would

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## Bigwigs' trials linger for slow investigation

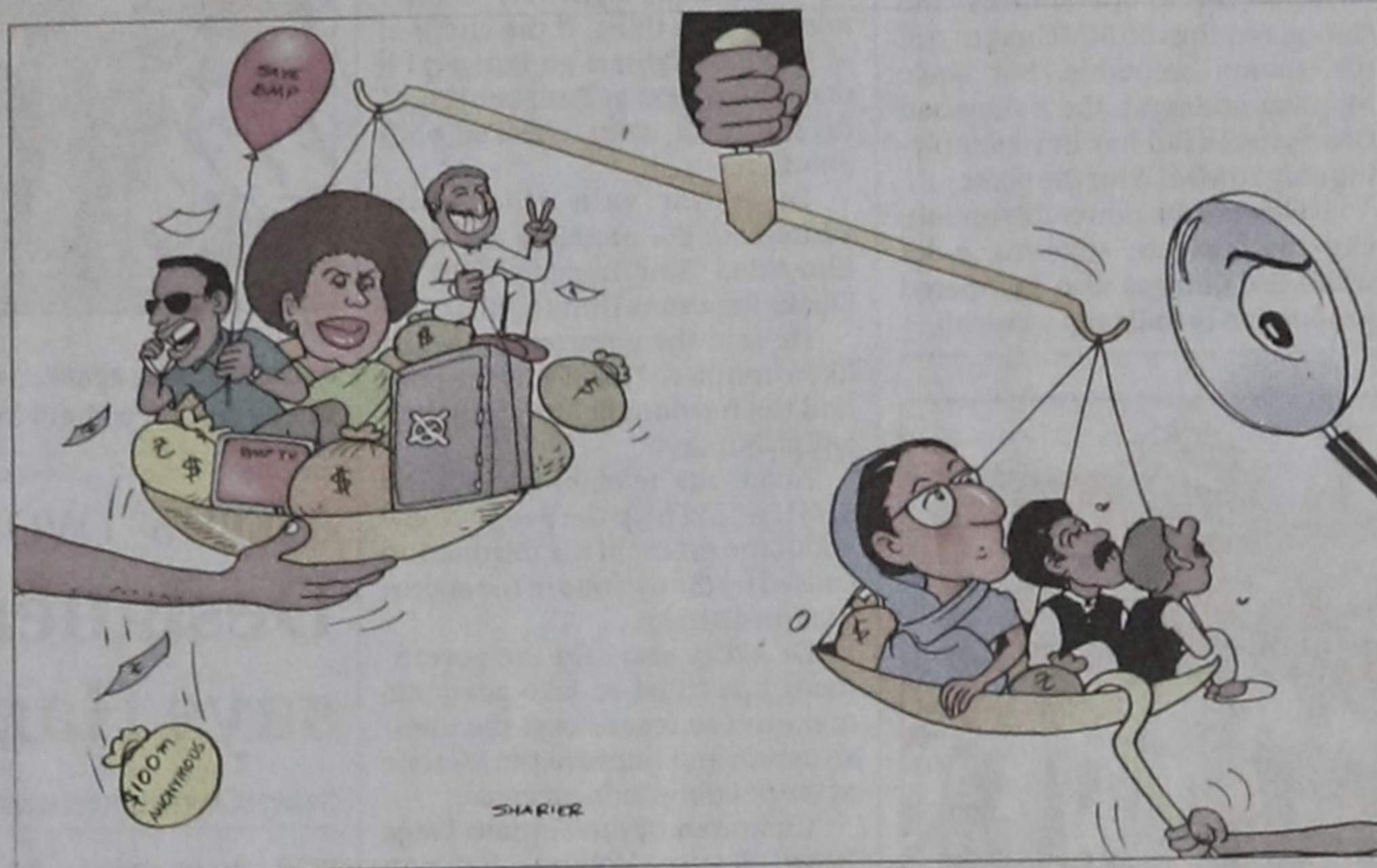
SHAKHAWAT LITON and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

Trials of many corruption and extortion cases filed against detained political bigwigs could not be started in about a year as their investigations have been lingering.

Cases filed against the interned political leaders were brought under the emergency power rules (EPR) for quick adjudication, by curtailing the rights to seek bail, but the snail pace of investigation has been delaying submission of charge sheets, which is a prerequisite for trials.

Many detained political heavies including former prime minister Khaleda Zia, former minister also Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Senior Joint Secretary General of BNP Tarique Rahman, former parliamentary affairs adviser to a prime minister Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Member of the Advisory Council of AL Salman F Rahman, and former BNP minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury have been in custody without

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## Jalil wants 3 more months' parole, govt grants 10 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday extended the parole of ailing Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil by 10 days to continue with treatment abroad, a home ministry release said.

The decision came in response to Jalil's application for a three-month extension.

The AL leader who has long been suffering from various medical conditions is now undergoing treatment at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore for heart and kidney problems.

A home ministry official told The Daily Star, "The government has granted the extension 'on humanitarian grounds and for the sake of his treatment'."

Jalil has been asked to send all

documents regarding his treatment to the home ministry, he added.

On May 28 last year, the joint forces arrested him at his Mercantile Bank office in Motijheel.

He has been ill all along his detention. He was first taken to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital on June 4 last year after complaining of chest pain following a court order for him to be sent to prison.

As he showed no tangible progress after months of treatment at LabAid Hospital, his family applied to the government for sending him abroad for better treatment.

On doctors' recommendations in favour of overseas treatment, the government decided to release Jalil on

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## PURCHASE BODY Ministries can now spend double without approval

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has doubled the ceiling of spending of different ministries and government organs without approval of the advisory committee on purchase.

The committee at a meeting yesterday decided that the ministries, divisions, departments and directorates could now spend up to Tk 50 crore, instead of Tk 25 crore as per a 1994 decision.

"We have doubled the buying capacity as prices of materials have increased in the meantime (since 1994)", Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam told reporters after the meeting.

The committee also decided that ministries and departments could now spend up to Tk 10 crore for appointment of consultants.

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## Mad rush to buy rice at BDR shops

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and WASIM BIN HABIB

The BDR fair price outlets in the capital have been swarming with people from middle to lower-middle class in the last couple of days due to the rising price of rice.

Braving the scorching heat, people ranging from children to elderly were found struggling to stand on their feet for hours in the long queues at the outlets. Some of them were seen engaged in scuffle with others.

In the meantime, price of coarse

rice hiked slightly at wholesale markets yesterday. The wholesale price of coarse rice including Indian Swarna and Ratna rose by Tk 10 per maund, selling at 1,270 to Tk 1,310 yesterday. The price of local varieties of coarse rice also rose by Tk 10 per maund.

At retail markets in the capital, a kg of coarse rice was selling from Tk 34 to Tk 40 per kg while a kg of rice was selling at Tk 25 yesterday at the BDR outlets.

The Daily Star correspondents during a visit to different BDR

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## India bans export of non-Basmati rice

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The Indian government banned export of non-Basmati rice and hiked the minimum export price of basmati rice by \$100, having implications for Bangladesh.

It also extended the ban on export of pulses by a year and reduced customs duty on butter and ghee to 30 percent from 40 percent and maize to zero percent from 15 percent, subject to a limit of five lakh tonnes.

The Indian government also slashed import duties on crude

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## WAR CRIMINALS Iftekhar tells Ban Ki-moon about growing demand for UN role in trial

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and RASHIDUL HASAN

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury has informed UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon of a "popular sentiment" for involving the UN in the process for trying war criminals of Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

Calling on the UN secretary general at the UN Headquarters in New York on Monday, Iftekhar told

him that there is a growing demand for the trial of the war criminals, said a press release of the permanent mission of Bangladesh to the UN.

Following the unprecedented move, war heroes, eminent citizens and members of martyrs' families yesterday told The Daily Star that the government should formally request the UN for its involvement in the trial process.

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## No reason yet to worry about militant threat: Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Director General of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Hasan Mahmud Khandakar said yesterday that there is reason to worry about militant threat in the country as the situation is totally under control of the Rab.

At a views-exchange meeting with the media held at Rab headquarters in Uttara yesterday, the Rab DG said, "We have no such information about militant

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## Dhaka-Kolkata train on track from Apr 14

Indian govt rejects West Bengal's request for delay

SHAMIM ASHRAF

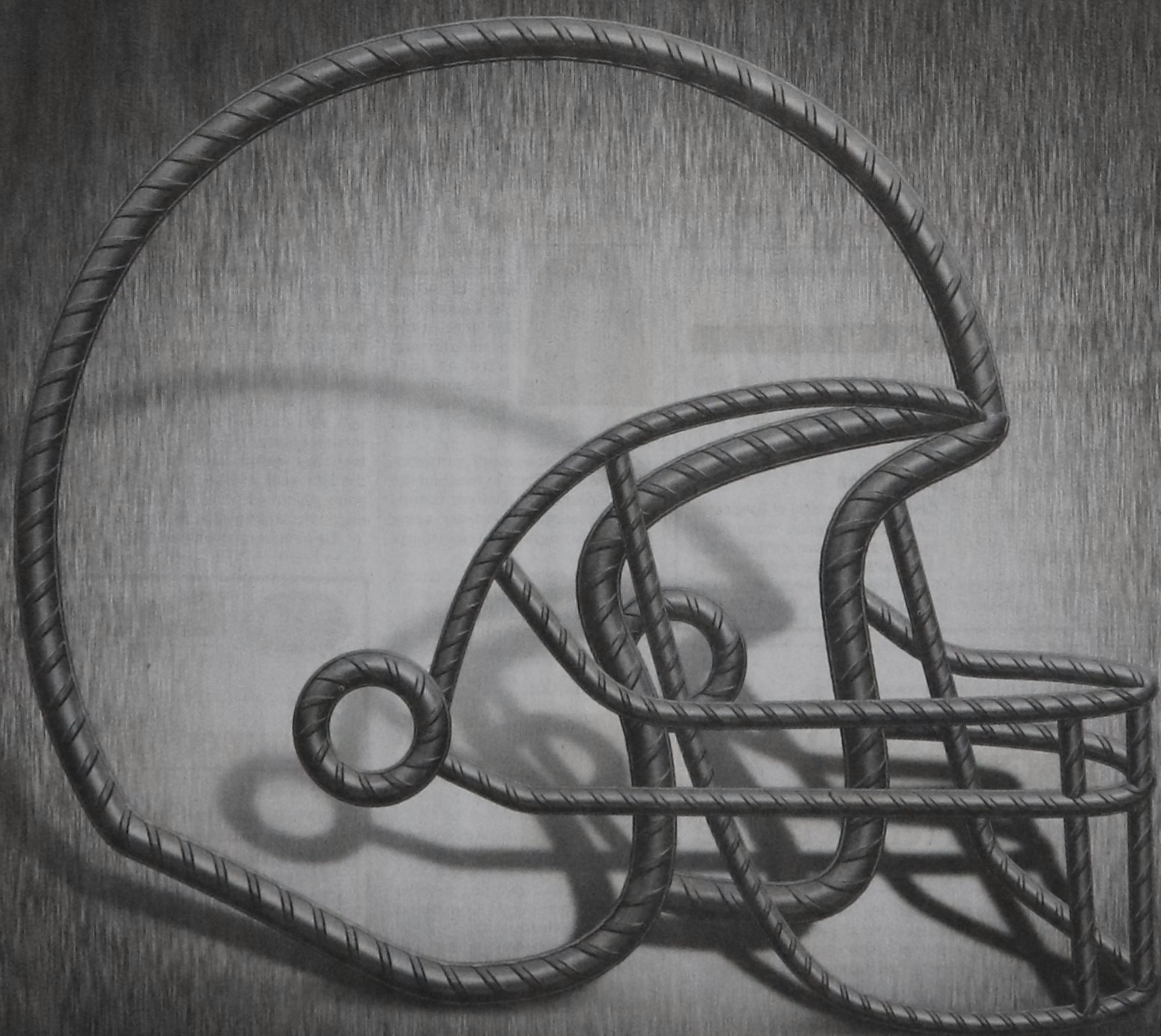
The Indian central government turned down the West Bengal government's request to postpone the launch of Dhaka-Kolkata passenger train service, clearing the way for the launch on Pahela Baishakh, officials here in Bangladesh yesterday said.

Authorities of the two countries are expected to sign a deal on commissioning "Moitree" (friendship)

Express" after completing the two-day bilateral talks between Bangladesh and Indian railway delegations beginning in Dhaka today, an official of the communications ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

The railway officials will also sort out details regarding the cross-border passenger train service apart from discussing a number of "unsettled" issues including hire

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