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2 treaties penned to boost bilateral trade

Connectivity, regional task force, border discussed during visit by Indian FM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India yesterday signed a new bilateral trade agreement while renewing an old one, to bolster trade and investment between the two neighbouring countries by removing some of the barriers.

The two countries also discussed strengthening connectivity, formation of a regional anti-terrorism taskforce, peaceful border management, and finalisation of the demarcation of land and maritime boundaries.

Bangladesh Industries Minister Dilip Barua, and visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee signed the new Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (Bipa), which seeks to promote and protect investments from either country in the territory of the other, with the objective of increasing bilateral investment flow.

The Indian minister arrived in Dhaka on a day long goodwill visit



Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, left, shakes hand with Commerce Minister Faruk Khan after signing the renewal of the bilateral trade agreement.

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Biman, Desa, BTTB fate hangs in balance

JS might not ratify ordinances that made them PLCs; LGC ordinance also not among 53 picked to be made law

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The fate of three public limited companies (PLC) hangs in the balance, as the ordinances promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government that transformed those into companies from government agencies, might not be ratified by the new parliament.

The PLCs in jeopardy are Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa), and Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB).

Recently formed Local Government Commission (LGC) might also not be able to continue to exist to oversee the functions of local governments, as the ordinance establishing it failed to obtain recommendation of the special committee of parliament for ratification as well.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), and Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) might also lose some of their controversial powers, as the two

ordinances that empowered those with the powers might also not be ratified.

The four ordinances on the PLCs and LGC are not among the 53 ordinances picked by the parliamentary special committee for ratification.

In consultation with eminent jurists, the special committee scrutinised the 53 ordinances, and recommended the law ministry to take necessary steps for turning them into bills to be placed in the parliament for making them into permanent laws.

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, Advocate Rahmat Ali, chief of the special committee, said the committee did not pick the ordinances that turned the government agencies into PLCs for ratification, because those were promulgated unconstitutionally.

"Now, if the government thinks, the organisations should be run as public limited companies, then it will have to enact new laws to that effect," Rahmat Ali added.

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Dhaka, Delhi agree to fight terror together

Pranab fails to meet Khaleda for time constraint

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India yesterday agreed to fight militancy and terrorism jointly in a bid to establish peace and stability in South Asian region.

Visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee discussed with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her proposal for setting up an anti-terror taskforce for South Asia to deal with these problems.

The PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said this while briefing journalists after Pranab met Hasina at her official residence Jamuna.

During the 1.15-hour meeting, the prime minister said poverty is the main problem in South Asian region.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Sangsad stuck in seat row

BNP now wants previous seat order restored; speaker says 'no'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition lawmakers yesterday decided to continue the boycott of parliament till the House reverts to the previous seating arrangements.

The same day Speaker Abdul Hamid rejected the call for reversion, which indicates the stand-off over the issue will draw out further.

Opposition Chief Whip Joynal Abedin Faruk said, "We'll consider returning to the House only if the speaker assures us of restoring the seat plans that were in place on the inaugural day of ninth parliament."

He was talking to reporters after a meeting at leader of the opposition's conference room in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan at around 6:45pm.

"We'll keep staying off the proceedings till the speaker makes a specific announcement that he would meet our demand," he said.

Contacted by journalists later, Speaker Hamid said it would not be possible for him to get back to the seat map laid out by his predecessor.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Treasury bench seeks names from BNP for JS bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The treasury bench yesterday sought names from the BNP-led opposition to constitute 48 parliamentary standing committees in the current parliament.

Two separate letters were sent to opposition Chief Whip Joynal Abedin Faruk in this regard and Chief Whip of Parliament Abdus Shahid offered chairmanship of four standing committees to the main opposition BNP.

Out of a total 48 committees, 37 are to be constituted on different ministries and the rest on matters relating to parliament.

"We want to complete the formation of the standing committees in the current session. For this reason, we have sought names of BNP

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: SHAFIQUL ALAM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's motorcade grinds to a halt on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Farmgate yesterday evening for traffic congestion ahead. Security personnel were seen getting off their vehicles to ensure her safety.

ACC has no scope for torture

Brushes aside allegation of some politicians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) says it has no scope to torture an accused during questioning.

"What the commission does is it prepares a case based on information and evidence after scrutinising those through field visit. There is no infrastructure or scope for it to collect information by torturing anybody while questioning," ACC

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

6,000 cases come under scanner

Govt to review cases withdrawn during coalition rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led government has formed a five-member committee headed by the law minister to review around 6,000 cases withdrawn by the immediate past BNP-Jamaat-led government, Home Minister Sahara Khatun told the House yesterday.

According to the home minister's written answer, as many as 5,888 cases were withdrawn on directives of the home ministry during BNP-Jamaat rule and names of 3,010 accused were also withdrawn from 945 other cases.

"Immediate steps will be taken regarding the cases, which were wrongly withdrawn," the minister said, adding, "It's also active consideration of the government to withdraw the cases

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Boy killed in accidental fire by bird hunter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A minor boy was killed and three other children were wounded in gunshot as a bird hunter accidentally pulled the trigger in a beel in Parbatipur upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Tanizul Islam, 8, son of Lal Chand Mia of Kalikapur village of the upazila.

Police said Saidur Rahman, the hunter, accidentally pulled the trigger of his gun while the children were playing under a tree at about 5:30pm, leaving Tanizul dead on the spot.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

5 killed in fight over Padma char

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least five people were killed and 20 others injured in a violent clash between two groups of villagers over capturing char (shoal) land in the Padma river at remote Char Kamalpur village in Ishwardi upazila yesterday.

Police and local sources said the clash erupted between Samad group and Kashem group around 12:00pm and continued for an hour. They attacked each other with guns, sticks, iron rods and other lethal weapons.

Three of the deceased were identified by police as Ayub Hossain alias Ayet Pramanik, 48, son of Sattar Pramanik, Rashid Pramanik, 42, son of Jofur Pramanik of Kamalpur, and Moslem Uddin, 35, son of Yead Ali Malitha of Laxmikunda, and they were the supporters of Samad group.

Local sources said two other dead persons are Shirjan, 45, son of Nabir Uddin, and Amin Uddin, 35, son of Nazir Pramanik, who fought for Kashem group.

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DU student confined by roommate for toll

Freed on assurance of bringing money from parents

RAKIB AHAMMED

Nurul Alam was so happy when his only son Nazrul Islam made it to Dhaka University as Nazrul was on the path to becoming a magistrate, his father's dream.

The dream of this farmer of Cox's Bazar was shattered and he became almost speechless when Nazrul suddenly returned home. Nazrul told his father the whole tale of him being detained by his roommate for toll.

Nazrul, a third semester student of Islamic History, was blindfolded and tied to a chair an entire night in his room, room-232 of Kabi Jasim Uddin Hall of Dhaka University (DU).

His roommate Saiful Islam and a fake DU student Raj confined him to the room on January 18 demanding Tk 1.5 lakh toll from him.

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PHOTO: STAR

The pictures taken yesterday show dead turtles washed ashore on Sonapara and Jahajpura islands near Cox's Bazar.

Sea turtles washed ashore dead

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Hundreds of dead turtles are found being washed ashore along the coastal lines from Cox's Bazar to St Martin's island with bruises all over their bodies.

Over 400 female dead turtles have floated ashore over the last two weeks alone, locals claim.

Experts say that these turtles meet their death as they travel the stretch of nearly 120 kilometres from Sonadia Island in Cox's Bazar to St Martin's island to lay eggs on the shore.

The turtles get entangled in the fine fishing nets used indiscriminately by fishing trawlers. The fishermen, instead of releasing them back to the sea, beat them to death with sticks and dump their bodies in the sea, experts allege.

Their bodies are then washed ashore by the tide. Some fishermen from Sonadia, preferring anonymity, has confirmed this saying it's a hazardous task to release the turtles back into the waters.

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