



COMMITTED TO People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XX No. 11

DHAKA SUNDAY JANUARY 24, 2010

MAGH 11, 1416 BS

SAFAR 7, 1431 HJRI

24 PAGES PLUS STAR CAMPUS PRICE: Tk 10.00

www.thedailystar.net

Duty-free cars for MPs again

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Lawmakers are getting back the privilege of importing duty-free vehicles.

They will however not be allowed to bring in luxury cars as many legislators in the past did so only to sell those for tidy sums, rendering the privilege controversial.

This time MPs will be entitled to cars with engines measuring up to 1800cc, SUVs 3000cc and minibuses 2000cc, officials at Parliament Secretariat said yesterday.

They will receive Tk 40,000 a month to pay for chauffeur's salary, fuel and maintenance.

The decisions were made at a meeting chaired by Speaker Abdul Hamid on Tuesday.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed, establishment and finance secretaries and National Board of

Revenue (NBR) officials were present at the meeting.

"If everything goes as planned, I think they [MPs] will be able to import duty-free cars this year," the speaker told The Daily Star yesterday.

A senior Parliament Secretariat official said, "The decision will soon be communicated to the prime minister. And on her consent, legal aspects regarding the privilege will be finalised."

In the wake of gross abuse of this privilege, the caretaker government in June 2007 had an ordinance repealing the provision that allowed lawmakers to import duty-free vehicles under the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) Order, 1973.

The current parliament however did not ratify the ordinance.

The provision was introduced on May 24, 1987, during HM Ershad's rule and was amended on August 28, 2002, with

MAXIMUM LIMIT

Car **1,800cc**

Jeep **3,000cc**

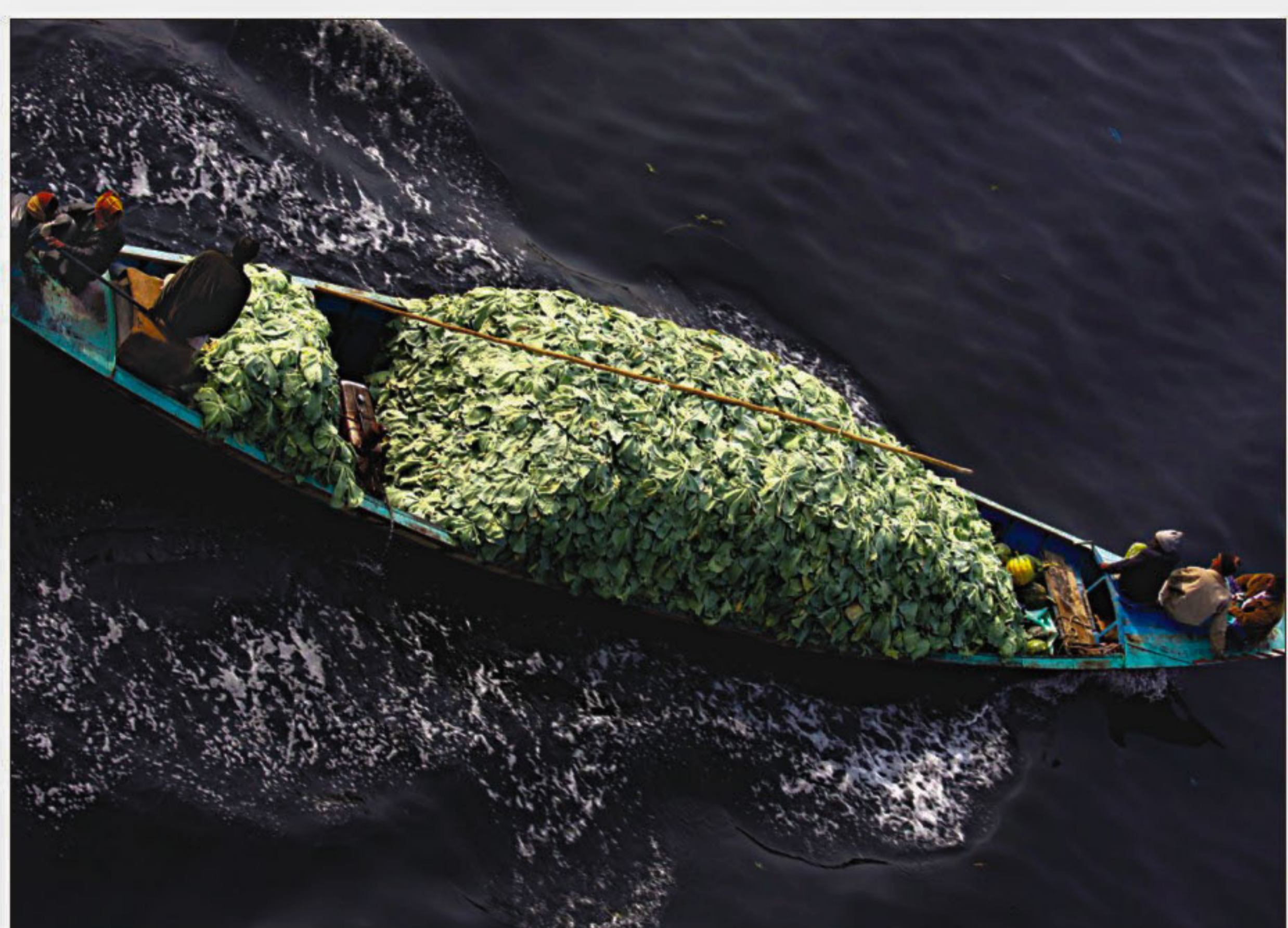
Microbus **2,000cc**

retrospective effect from July 1 that year.

If the privilege is revived, an MP will be able to import one vehicle during his tenure without having to pay customs duty, sales tax, development surcharge and import permit fee.

Earlier in June last year, a Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat Commission meeting presided over by the speaker had

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



THE BLACK RIVER: A photo taken yesterday from the first Buriganga Bridge near Postagola shows a boat rowing across the pitch-black water polluted by industrial waste and sewage of the capital over the years.

PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

DU VIOLENCE JCD sues 35 BCL men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing around 35 leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League, five days after the violence on Dhaka University campus.

JCD law affairs secretary Kamruzzaman filed the case yesterday against 14 BCL men including seven president and general secretaries of different hall units of DU, and 20 others.

Earlier, Shahbagh police filed another case accusing eight JCD leaders and around 300 others in connection with the clash between JCD factions.

The violence that broke out on January 18 left 25 people injured including JCD president, DU proctor and four policemen.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Govt sitting on irrigation tech

Simple technology can cut 25pc cost, save water

PORIMOL PALMA

Leaving a simple technology almost unused, the government has done little to increase irrigation efficiency, which could reduce 25 percent production cost and save underground water from depletion during boro season.

Irrigation scientists say 1,500-2,000 litres of water is enough to produce one kilogramme of rice but farmers use 3,000-4,000 litres, making farming expensive and overusing scarce underground water.

Around 3 lakh shallow tube-wells remain inoperative during March-April due to depletion of underground water, says Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC). This year underground water level dropped even more due to lean monsoon last year, a

BADC official said.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury on various occasions said the government was planning to shift boro rice zone from the northern parts to the southern belt by developing saline-tolerant varieties due to water-level depletion in the north.

Agriculturists say implementing such a plan requires time but now the most important issue is to increase irrigation efficiency, which is 37 percent in Bangladesh and the lowest in the region.

The simple technology--Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD)--experimented and developed by Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is not getting priority.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Proshika head office reopens after 11 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An 11-day standoff ended yesterday at non-government organisation Proshika after employees joined office at Mirpur in a festive mood through embracing each other.

More than 400 employees started entering the NGO's headquarters at around 9:30am, while a team of Proshika management committee Sirajul Islam, Sirajul Haq, Abdur Rob, Mahbul Alam, Shamsul Islam and chief financial officer Altaf Hossain Talukder went inside the office at around 8:00am to scrutinise any loss or missing of any office property.

"We have not yet found any major loss of valuable documents or sabotage," said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Biswa Ijtema ends today

Lakhs to join Akheri Munajat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biswa Ijtema, the largest congregation of Muslims next to hajj, passed its second day yesterday with Islamic scholars from different countries delivering sermons on various aspects of Islam throughout the day.

Several lakh devotees from home and more than 70 countries have gathered at the venue of the three-day Ijtema that ends today, organisers said.

Akheri Munajat (concluding prayers) will mark the end of the congregation held each year on the bank of the Turag river in Tongi.

Moulana Jobayerul Hasan of India is scheduled to lead the Munajat that begins in between 12:00 noon and 12:30 pm.

Meanwhile, five devotees died from Friday midnight till yesterday noon, said Tongi police.

They were identified as Haji Makbul, 65, and M Shamsuddin, 60, of Mymensingh, M Raziuddin Akanda, 62, of Barisal, M Sahar Ali Mollah, 70, of Rajshahi and Nurul Islam, 65, of Cox's Bazar.

The Tablig-e-Jamaat has been organising the Ijtema since

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

BD-INDIA Second Test starts today

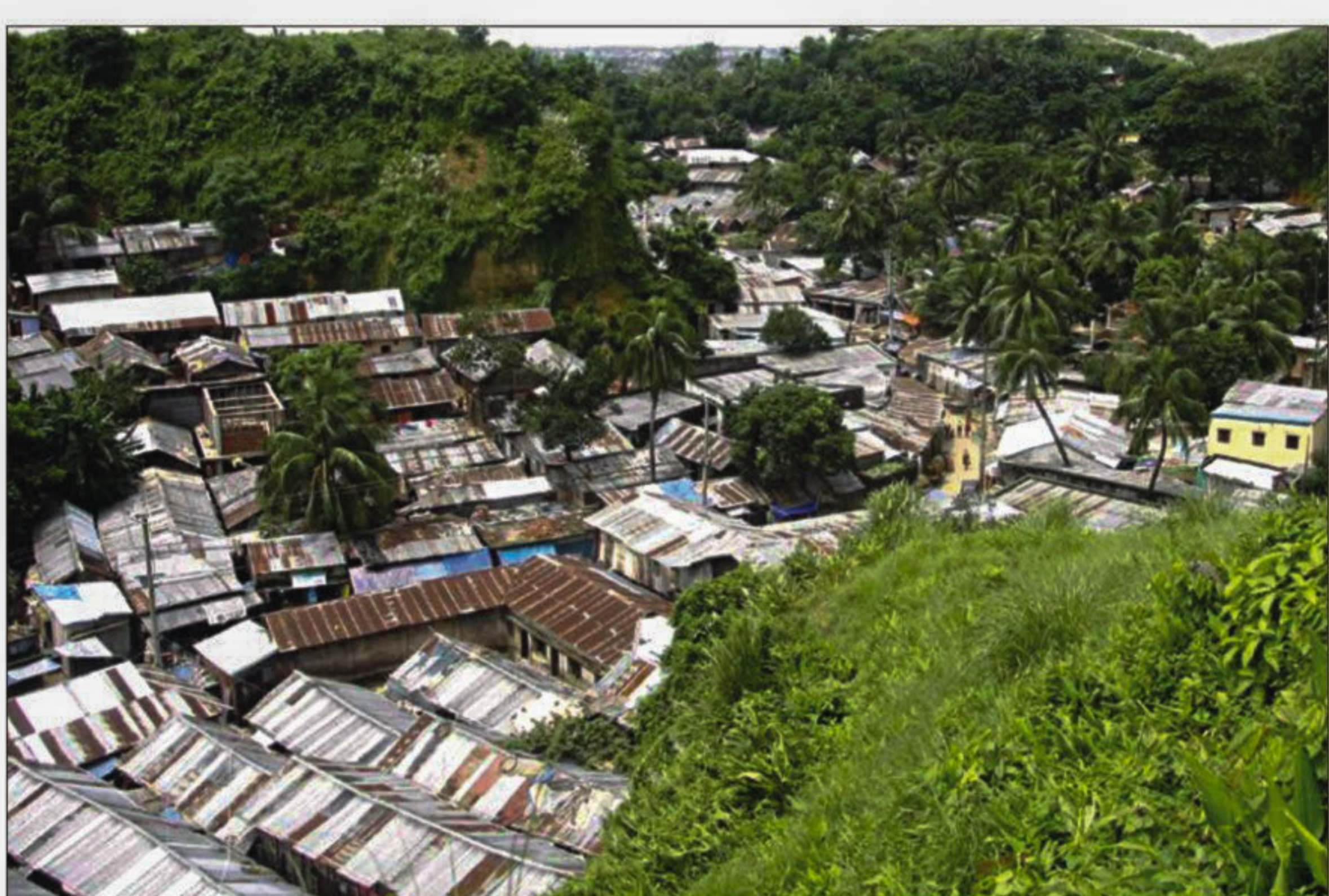
SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh will be looking for a better all-round performance when they get to field for the second and final Test of the Idea Cup against India at the

Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today. Having gone down to the top ranked team in Test cricket by 113 runs in Chittagong, the hosts will be hoping for improvement, specially in the batting which left them down in the first Test.

Bangladesh are expected to make one change from the Chittagong Test, left-hand batsman Shahriar Nafees who struggled in the first Test will most likely make way for another left-hander Zunaed Siddique. Other than that,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



This recent photo shows a view of occupied railway land at Motijhorna of Lalkhan Bazar in the port city. More than 2,000 acres of land of Bangladesh Railway is now occupied across the country.

PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Pressure holds back railway land recovery

Over 2,000 acres still occupied by influential people, organisations

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Bangladesh Railway is facing difficulties recovering more than 2,000 acres of occupied land across the country largely due to pressure from political leaders, influential quarters and non-cooperation of government agencies.

The occupiers are inflicting more than Tk 400 crore annual loss to the ailing state-owned transport agency,

railway sources said.

A top official of Bangladesh Railway requesting anonymity said, "Whenever efforts are made to recover occupied railway land, we face obstructions in many forms. Influential groups often supported by political bigwigs try to create pressure. Sometimes the administration does not pay heed to our request for police and magistrates."

The official, however, would not

elaborate or give names.

Sources say that Bangladesh Railway has about 63,312 acres of land across the country and some political leaders, influential parties and armed hoodlums in the two zones of railway have encroached upon 1,273 acres of land. They have been running unauthorised businesses there either by constructing markets or slums. Some have even set up religious structures.

Sources said former housing minister and BNP leader Mirza Abbas and his family allegedly occupied about four acres of railway land near

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

FIGHTING INT'L TERRORISM Bangladesh, India to form joint committee

Maritime border dispute with Myanmar to be solved, says foreign secretary

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India will form a joint coordination committee, in light of the recently signed three security-related agreements, with representatives of their law enforcement and intelligence agencies to combat international terrorism, organised crimes and cross-border drug trade.

The committee will be constituted under the aegis of the home ministries of the two countries as per the terms of an agreement signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to New Delhi, Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes yesterday said after making the official announcement about the committee.

The foreign secretary categorically said there is nothing in the said three agreements that may affect Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty and security.

"We have not violated any law of the land and both the countries will follow their own laws and rules while cooperating each other in curbing terrorism," he said at a press confer-

ence at the foreign ministry.

Any activity that may hamper the country's sovereignty and security or contradict one country's existing laws and rules will not come under the purview of the agreements, Mijarul added.

He said all the three agreements would be operational after being ratified by the two countries. "The agreements can be scrapped with six months' advance notice by either side," he said. Asked about the allegation of a "secret" agreement signed with India, he said there is no question of signing any such agreement.

The foreign secretary yesterday supplied reporters with the contents of the three agreements.

In reply to a question about allowing India to use the Mongla and Chittagong ports, he said, "We want to make the two ports as a regional hub of connectivity and steps will be taken soon in this regard."

Mijarul informed the press that Bangladesh and Myanmar have reduced differences regarding demarcation of their two countries'

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Bangladesh to head UN disarmament conference

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh assumed the rotational presidency of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament on January 18 and will hold the presidency until February 12.

Bangladesh will preside over the first session of the 65-member conference, which is the world's only multilateral

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

One arrested over Pinky's suicide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna police yesterday arrested the youth whose actions subsequently drove schoolgirl Nashfia Akand Pinky to commit suicide in Shyamoli Tuesday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

INTRACO GROUP PAVILION

Welcome to **INTRACO**™

CNG

FREE Prizes & Special Offer

For more details Contact
Block - J, Plot- 40, Road- 09, Pragati Sarani, Baridhara, Dhaka.
• Panthopath • Savar • Chittagong • Ishardi • Comilla • Bogra • Pabna • Sylhet
01195010500, 01195010600, 01195010601, 01195010602

Dhaka Int. Trade Fair ' 2010