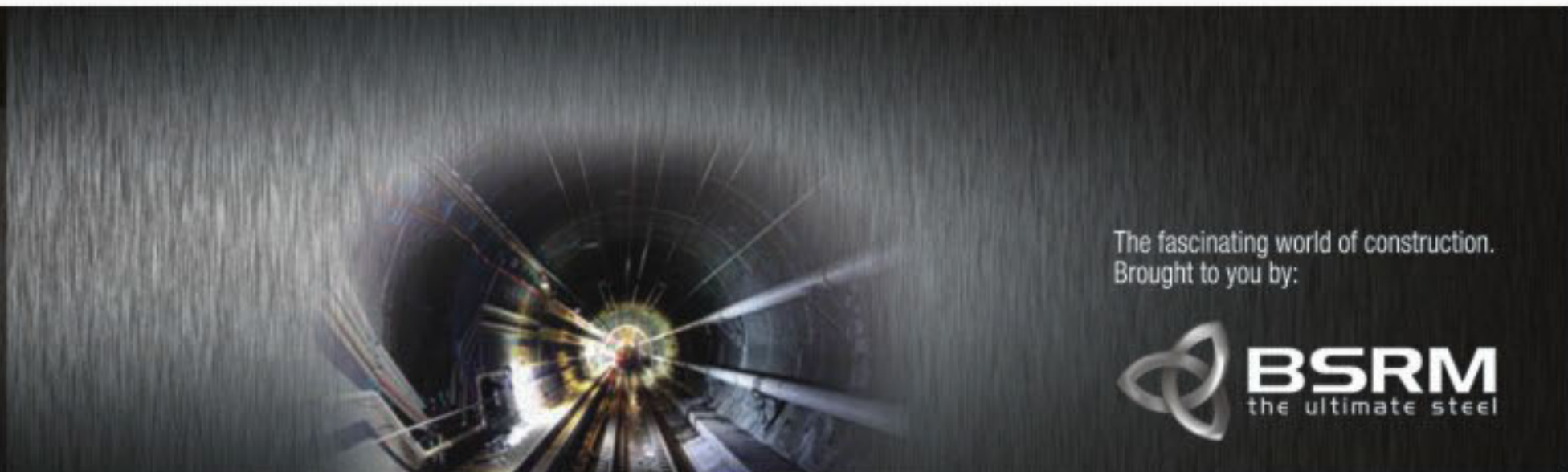


Did you know?

The Channel Tunnel is a 50.5-kilometre (31.4 mi) undersea rail tunnel linking the UK with mainland Europe. At 37.9 kilometers (23.5 mi), it has the longest undersea portion of any tunnel in the world.



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# Health policy to be placed in JS, finally

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The long-awaited National Health Policy 2010 might at last be placed in Parliament next month, said health ministry sources.

Since independence, successive governments took steps to formulate a policy to run the health sector properly and efficiently. But to date, there has not been one.

A draft policy was first drawn up in 1990. It went through reforms under different governments, but has yet to be finalised and put in operation.

"The main objective of a national health policy is to ensure basic healthcare to everyone," said Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, one of the members of the health policy committee of 1990.

"The policy is just an operational plan to explain how the health services would be provided and what would be the expenditure," he added.

Chowdhury lamented that the country

could not have a health policy even in 40 years into independence.

The present government formed a 43-member national committee on July 11 last year to formulate and implement a health policy. Later, a working committee was formed with the core members of the national committee.

On December 5, the working committee met and had the draft vetted.

Insiders say the committee might tweak the draft and firm it up at its next meeting late this month.

After that, the national committee headed by Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque would approve the policy.

Soon after taking charge, the health minister said the policy would be finalised within three months. But the work to that end was hampered by repeated changes in the committee.

The desk concerned of the health ministry sent the draft policy to the health minister in February last year. It was made

available in the ministry's website for public opinions in June that year.

Three divisional workshops were also held in this regard.

On January 13 this year, the primary draft finalisation committee headed by Prof Khondoker Mohammad Shefayetullah, acting director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, incorporated some opinions and recommendations in the proposed policy.

In May, Bangladesh Medical Association was made one of the stakeholders in shaping and implementing the policy following complaints that doctors' professional organisations were not given due importance.

**HISTORY OF THE POLICY**

The first move towards a health policy was made by the Ershad regime in 1990. But the policy that was passed in parliament during the autocratic rule met stiff opposition. Later, caretaker government chief

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

## A crime committed from jail!

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained Jamaat-e-Islami city chief Rafiqul Islam Khan was shown arrested yesterday in connection with torching a bus, a crime that was committed when he was in police custody.

Rafiqul was arrested on August 24 in a case filed in connection with hurting religious sentiments of Muslims. The bus was torched on November 13 in front of Notre Dame College in the city's Motijheel area.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

## Russia-India sign nuke, defence deals

BBC ONLINE

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has signed nuclear and defence agreements worth billions of dollars during a two-day visit to India.

He has met Indian PM Manmohan Singh in Delhi on a trip that saw handshakes on the joint development of a so-called fifth generation stealth fighter jet.

There was also an agreement to supply more Russian nuclear power reactors.

All five permanent UN Security Council members have now made trade-focused visits to India in recent months.

A Cold War ally and for many years the default weapons supplier to India, Russia has faced tough competition from Europe and the US for a slice of Delhi's booming defence market.

Wary of its rising regional rival, China, India is now one of the world's largest buyers of fighter jets, tanks, submarines and other defence equipment.

As Medvedev and Singh met yesterday, nearly a dozen agreements were signed in such areas as energy, technology and chemicals.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to India looks set to seal a variety of deals, notably

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7 PHOTO ON PAGE 6



PHOTO: STAR

A guardian picks up a number during the lottery for admission in class I at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College in the capital yesterday.

## Admission lottery starts for class-I

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first ever lottery for admission in state-run high schools began in the capital yesterday.

The lottery was held for class-I of Group-A, comprised of Govt Laboratory High School, Tejgaon Govt High School and Khilgaon Govt High School.

"I am very happy as the worry about my son's schooling is over for a good long time," said a smiling parent whose child secured a seat.

On the contrary, there were

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

## All crew on hijacked ship safe

Claim owners

STAR REPORT

All the 25 crew and wife of a crew, who remained hostage in the hijacked Bangladeshi ship MV Jahan Moni, were doing well, claim the officials of the operating firm of the

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2

## Afghan police move to free kidnapped Bangladeshis

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The police in northern Afghanistan have launched a drive to rescue the five Bangladeshis who were abducted by local criminals

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

## CLIMATE CHANGE

# Global forums ignore impacts on agriculture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture has not been given enough priority in the global forums on climate change although it is the most vulnerable sector, said environment experts, economists and journalists at a discussion yesterday.

They said intrusion of saline water and irregular cycle of seasons due to global warming would seriously affect farm production putting lives at stake. It is imperative that Bangladesh puts special emphasis on agriculture in climate change negotiations.

The observations came at a workshop on "climate change effects on Bangladesh agriculture and threats to food security" organised by Forum for Information Dissemination on Agriculture (FIDA) at the Jatiya Press Club.

Agronomist Mahabub Hossain said the government does not seem committed enough to address the climate change issues. "The politicians assume power for five years. So they are more for short term plans rather than that of 50 or 100 years," he added.

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## OnlinePoll

In your opinion what is the reason behind the steepest stock fall?

- Investors' bad decision (51.7%)
- SEC's role (26.5%)
- Bangladesh Bank's policy (21.8%)

Total votes: 669

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think Bangladesh Ansar should be given the authority to arrest anyone without warrant as recommended by the force?

Please cast your vote at [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)

## Prayer Timing

December 22

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-25	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-24	5-27
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

**SAFA Awards**

Best Presented Accounts and Corporate Governance Disclosures Awards 2009  
Winner in the Banking Sector (1<sup>st</sup> Position)

Best Presented Accounts Awards 2009  
Overall Winner (1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up)

**Best among the Best**

South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) awarded Prime Bank Limited as the Winner (1<sup>st</sup> Position) in Banking Sector and Overall Winner (1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up) for its Published Accounts and Corporate Governance Disclosure for the Year 2009.

Institute of Chartered Accountants Bangladesh (ICAB) awarded Prime Bank Limited as the Best Bank for the year 2009 for its Published Accounts & Reports and Corporate Governance Disclosure.

In this moment of joy, we remember the sacrifice of our freedom fighters with gratitude for whom we exist.

We also convey gratitude to our valued clients, patrons, shareholders, regulators and all other stakeholders without whose support this prestigious achievement would not have been possible.

**10<sup>th</sup> ICAB National Awards**

Best Published Accounts & Reports 2009  
1<sup>st</sup> Position

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