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2G TELECOM CASE
Indian Supreme Court rejects plea against Chidambaram
PAGE 7

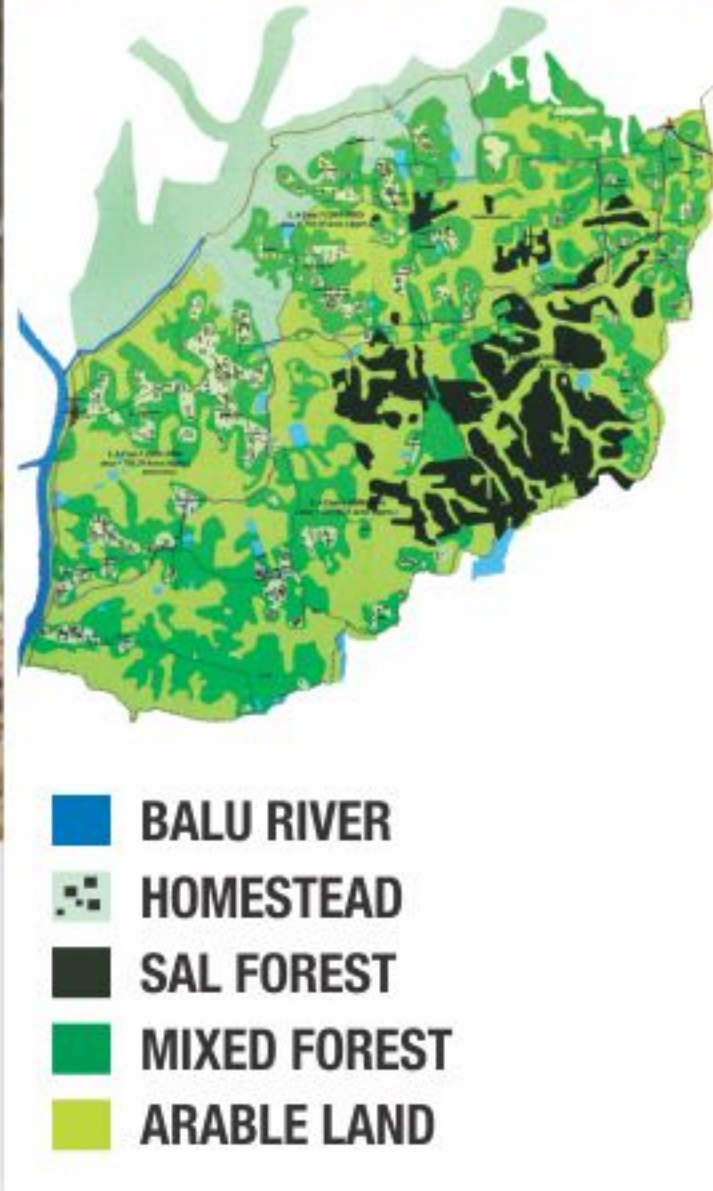
'AMAR JUDDHO'
Syed Badrul Ahsan reviews a book on the war of a heroic woman
PAGE 24

ARMSTRONG TO LOSE TITLES
The 7-time Tour de France winner gives up fight against dope charges
PAGE 16

Rajuk to raze forests for housing

Trees, farmland in 1,600 acres area to vanish for Purbachal project

PINAKI ROY
Around 1,300 acres of forest will be wiped out to make way for the Rajuk's Purbachal housing project in Gazipur. The district administration has already acquired around 1,600 acres of land in five villages under Kaliganj upazila for the scheme that has no environment clearance from the Department of Environment (DoE). Nearly 10 thousand people, mostly farmers and fishermen, live in the area. For years, they have been preserving sal trees on their private land. A DoE report in 2010 said the housing project would ruin the area, which is rich in biodiversity. "Most of the acquired land is covered by sal forest. The tree coverage here is better than that in the Bhawal National Park." In a letter to Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on September 20, 2010, the housing and public works ministry said, "There is no forest or arable land in the acquired 1,589.8925 acres at Barakau and Parabartha mouja." The letter was sent in response to an inquiry by the PMO.
SEE PAGE 19 COL 2



A woman collects dry leaves in Gazipur sal forest in Parabartha village to use them as fuel for cooking. Thousands like her depend on the forest which is now under threat of destruction due to a housing project of Rajuk. Interestingly, a housing and public works ministry letter in 2010 told the PMO that there was no forest there. Inset, the map made by Rajuk consultant Datex shows the land acquired for the scheme.
PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Khaleda likely to visit India, China soon

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN
BNP chief Khaleda Zia is likely to visit India and China soon to discuss bilateral issues and also the next general election of Bangladesh, party insiders have said. Dates of the trips are yet to be finalised but they may happen next month. At the moment, the party is making primary preparations for both the visits. The main opposition party is trying to mobilise support from the international community to compel the government to introduce a nonparty neutral government to oversee the next parliamentary polls, insiders added. BNP sources said they discussed the party chairperson's possible visit to
SEE PAGE 19 COL 3



BANGLADESHI WORKERS UAE slaps visa 'restrictions'

Reasons unknown
PORIMOL PALMA
The United Arab Emirates has imposed restrictions on renewal and issuance of work visas to the Bangladeshis, said recruiting agencies and visa seekers. Bangladesh's Consul General Abu Zafar in Dubai said they had been receiving such reports for two weeks but the UAE authorities were yet to officially inform them about it. "We got some reports from Bangladeshi employers here that the authorities were rejecting visa applications. However, big employers of the Emirates have not made any such complaints yet," he told The Daily Star over the phone on Thursday. "Unless we learn it officially, we cannot say it is a restriction on Bangladeshi workers," he added. However, the reasons behind the reported restrictions could not be known as government offices are yet to fully
SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

MRP for thousands without verification

Over 1.7 lakh applications pending for delay in police report, slow printing
M RAHMAN
With 1.7 lakh applicants waiting for their travel documents for months, the government has decided to issue machine readable passports without police verification if the law enforcers fail to file reports on time. Around 70,000 people have been waiting because police failed to file their verification reports within the stipulated time while the rest one lakh became victims of slow printing of passports by the authorities. The passport seekers had been waiting for several months to around two years for their travel documents, home ministry sources said.
SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

2 killed in New York shooting

Nine injured
AFP, New York
A disgruntled former worker at a Manhattan women's apparel shop shot a former co-worker outside the Empire State Building before being killed by police yesterday. In total, two people were killed and nine had non-life threatening wounds in the horrific, but brief shooting, Police Commissioner Ray Kelly told a news conference. The FBI quickly ruled out terrorism. The shooter was identified as "disgruntled former worker" Jeffrey
SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER Rab to collect DNA samples of suspects

KAILASH SARKAR
The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) will collect DNA samples of the suspects in journalist couple Sagar-Runi murder case for cross-matching after it receives forensic reports from the US. Sagar Sarowar, news editor of Maasranga television, and Meherun Runi, a senior reporter of ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11 at their flat in the capital's West Rajabazar. Their only child Megh was in the house then. In two phases -- on June 12 and July 17, Rab sent some evidence to two US laboratories for forensic test and DNA profiling. Although the tests were yet to complete, the laboratories had so far detected DNA profile of a person from the evidence found on Runi's T-shirt, said Rab sources, adding
SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

KURIL FLYOVER Half of work done in 20 months

Officials still hope to complete it by Dec
HELEMUL ALAM
With almost half the work pending, Rajuk and the construction firm are giving assurance that the Kuril flyover will be completed within the stipulated time, which is December this year. Abdul Baki Mian, director of the Tk 254-crore project, is one of the optimists. He recently said they would be able to open the 3.1-kilometre flyover for the public by the year end. "We understand it will be challenging, but we are determined and working round the clock to meet the deadline," he said. Mahubur Rahman, development member of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), claimed that so far 55 percent work of the flyover had been completed. Asked, when it took 20 months to come this far
SEE PAGE 5 COL 6



The under-construction Kuril flyover evolving to completion. It is expected to significantly ease traffic congestion in the capital. Inset, workers busy installing a part. The photos were taken yesterday.
PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Revoke changes to Grameen Bank ordinance

Moudud asks govt
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
BNP leader Moudud Ahmed yesterday asked the government to immediately return the power to the poor women by withdrawing the Grameen Bank (amendment) Ordinance, issued on Thursday. "The government has announced war against more than eight million rural poor women. Return their power to them, otherwise these women will respond to the government in a befitting manner in the next elections," warned the BNP standing committee member while speaking at a discussion meeting in the capital. On Thursday, President Zillur Rahman promulgated the amended Grameen Bank Ordinance, 1983 giving more power to the Bank's chairman to choose its managing director. Moudud promised that his party would return
SEE PAGE 19 COL 7