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IT'S ISRAEL'S RIGHT!
Netanyahu "is not interested" in what UN says about settlement plan
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TODAY'S TRADE POLICY
Economist Sadiq Ahmed focuses on reforms in income tax regime
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SHORT LIVED STARS
Soloists are twice as likely to die early compared to those in bands
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Connectivity under focus

Dhaka, Bangkok aim to double bilateral trade by 2016

UNB, Dhaka
Bangladesh and Thailand yesterday agreed to strengthen mutual cooperation in some specific areas aiming to double bilateral trade by 2016. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Thai counterpart Yingluck Shinawatra

acknowledged the importance of enhancing connectivity between the two nations through increased regional cooperation and developing roads and shipping infrastructures. The two premiers tasked the Bangladesh-Thailand Joint Commission
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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, right, holds talks with her Thai counterpart Yingluck Shinawatra in Dhaka yesterday. PHOTO: PMO

2 deals penned

BSS, Dhaka
Dhaka and Bangkok yesterday penned two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to expand bilateral relations on agriculture and promote consultation to

strengthen friendly relations between the two countries. The MoUs were signed after bilateral talks between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and visiting Thai Prime Minister
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Bangladesh rated high
Guardian places it among some countries that could overtake West by 2050

STAR REPORT
Bangladesh is among a number of emerging countries that could overtake the west by 2050, as they are growing fast, according to The Guardian newspaper. "As the west remains mired in gloom and even the BRICS start to plateau, attention is turning to this group of countries, many of which not so long ago were rudely dismissed as basket cases," said Larry Elliott, economics editor of the London-based newspaper, in a write-up on Tuesday.
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President > 340 passengers

Biman defers flight from London by a day as Zillur could not fly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
As many as 340 Biman passengers, scheduled to fly today from London to Dhaka, are facing a delay of about 24 hours because their flight has a seat reserved for President Zillur Rahman and he is unable to make it before tomorrow. Now all the passengers will have to fly tomorrow with the president, top Biman officials in Dhaka and London say. The flight has been rescheduled after Bangabhaban officials had informed the Biman office that the president will not come today. The Daily Star could not know why Zillur Rahman
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TOP TERROR BIKASH FREED A 50cr taka question?

Safe passage to India ensured day after controversial release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Hardcore criminal Bikash Kumar Biswas, whose sudden and secret release from jail triggered huge controversy, has been facilitated with safe passage to India, said sources in police and the ruling party. He left the country on December 15, a day after he had been released on bail from Kashimpur jail-2. He was supposed to leave India in a couple of days, said a source having close contact with Bikash. After his release, Bikash went straight to Mawa and headed towards Jessore crossing the river on a speedboat. He was accompanied by two Chhatra League activists. The next day, he was taken to the Jessore border on a motorbike. He



entered India through a snapped barbed-wire fence, said a Chhatra League activist close to one of Bikash's aides. Sources said he had been released under a Tk 50 crore deal. He had also pulled some strings to ensure his release and safe passage. The sources said police and other law enforcement agencies had been informally asked by some government high-ups not to intercept Bikash. Sources in the ruling party said two top figures in the government -- a minister and an influential leader of Awami League -- were his main facilitators. Bikash served 15 years since 1997 in 10
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SEE EDITORIAL

Hold talks, end stalemate

Hasina, Khaleda urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Senior lawyers and civil society personalities yesterday urged the ruling and opposition parties to work out a way to hold the next parliamentary polls through dialogue and protect the country from chaos and confrontation. They said there is no alternative to holding a dialogue between the two top leaders -- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia -- to resolve the political crisis. "The two top leaders have to sit for a dialogue. Such an environment, if need be, has to be created so that they feel compelled to sit together and work out a system to hold the next election," said eminent jurist Rafiq-ul-Haque.
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Change lies on Hasina, Khaleda

Says Tariqul about political vulgarity
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Had the two top leaders -- Hasina and Khaleda -- respected each other, politicians would not have the chance to taint one another, said BNP spokesperson and standing committee member Tariqul Islam yesterday. Referring to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's comment in Jessore on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and terming the statement "a disgrace," he said,
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AL, allies vow to see end of war crimes trial

Hold rallies, processions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ruling Awami League-led 14-party leaders yesterday vowed to complete the ongoing war crimes trial in the face of whatever conspiracies the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami hatch against it at home and abroad. All secular and pro-liberation war forces would remain on the streets until the trial was over and the verdict was executed, they said at a mass rally in front of the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque. After the rally, the ruling party leaders marched in procession to
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Jatiya Sanchalan Parishad, a platform of non-government organisations, march in procession on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday afternoon, demanding completion of war crimes trial. The procession blocked traffic on the busy thoroughfare, triggering severe congestion on other parts of the capital. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Traffic goes haywire

People suffer as rally, procession rule roads

RASHIDUL HASAN
A CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver, Jalil waited exactly an hour at the Farmgate Police Box intersection yesterday before the traffic signal went green and he could drive towards Khilgaon. "Believe it or not, I stopped here at 4:30pm and now fare meter of my CNG [auto-rickshaw] is showing 60 minutes as its waiting period," an annoyed Jalil told The Daily Star as he described the horrific traffic situation in the evening. Like him, all commuters in Dhaka had to remain stuck for hours at different points yesterday because leaders of the ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance occupied the streets to stage protest and place their demands. After talking to the auto-rickshaw driver, this Star correspondent walked towards Khamarbari from the Farmgate Police Box signal to have a firsthand experience of traffic congestion in the area that usually remains free on weekends. It took him 35 minutes to reach Monipuri Para signal -- around a kilometer distance from Farmgate Police Box but the tailback did not end there. Vehicles were seen stuck till Bijoy Sharani intersection [towards Monipuri Para end].
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