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## Dipu granted ad-interim bail, freed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Dipu Chowdhury, main accused in the Taraj Uddin murder case.

Dipu is the son of State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

The Second Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Abdur Razzak set the bail at Tk one lakh with two guarantors. As per the requirements, complainant of the case Nurul Islam and Advocate Abul Kalam Azad signed the bail bond as guarantors.

Dipu's lawyer Advocate Rezaur Rahman submitted the bail petition stating that the accused was falsely

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## Abductors for talks but insist on security

MORSHED ALI KHAN And ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, from Rangamati

After three days, the authorities succeeded in making a contact with the abductors through tribal go-between.

The people, who had travelled into the deep forest, returned to Bethchari at around 9:00pm on Sunday to tell the authorities that they had talked to the abductors but did neither see the spot nor the hostages.

They said abductors would like to sit and talk but they insisted that authorities should ensure their security during the mediation process.

Sources also said that the people, sent into the forests, had walked for about two hours before reaching a village. They said the abductors met the two tribal go-betweens about an hour later.

Meanwhile, security has been stepped up in Rangamati town after an anonymous caller rang up the police in the morning and threatened to bomb residential hotels where hosts of foreign and local journalists are staying to cover the hostage drama.

Plainclothes and armed security men have been posted at every hotel and other important installations.

The hostage drama might take a positive turn soon as the tribal intermediaries yesterday made a second attempt to establish a direct dialogue with the abductors.

Sources said the intermediaries were hopeful that the abductors would sit down with the mediators and chalk out a "way" to release the hostages.

The Chief of Army Staff Lt. General Haroonur Rashid today flew to Bethchari army camp and held a meeting with Minister for CHT Affairs Kalparanjan Chakma.

Talking to the reporters the Chief of Army Staff reiterated the government's stand and said that the security cordon would not be lifted.

The authorities are now using new sources, reportedly relatives of one of the abductors, to reach the abductors.

Foreign experts on hostage crisis were seen today heading for the Bethchari area at around 3.30pm. Sources said the foreign experts would now try to set up a direct dialogue with abductors. They would also like to send fresh supply of ration, particularly re-hydration medicines. But intermediaries quoted abductors saying all the three hostages were in reasonable health.

## Authorities still hopeful of a negotiated end

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Eleven days into the hostage crisis without much of a progress, the authorities are still hopeful of negotiated resolution towards securing release of the three Europeans held hostage by an armed group of tribals in the jungles of Chittagong Hill Tracts since February 16.

"We are hopeful about a negotiated end to the hostage issue," a highly placed source told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had given specific instructions against use of force before she left for Cairo to attend the D-8 summit, the source added.

Asked on the ransom demand the source said during the negotiation it would definitely come up. But

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (L) talks to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak during a meeting in Cairo yesterday.

## Mubarak assures duty-free access of Bangladeshi goods

UNB, Cairo

President Hosni Mubarak yesterday assured necessary steps for duty-free access of Bangladeshi exports, including jute and tea, to the Egyptian market.

The assurance was given during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Presidential Palace in the morning.

Hasina emphasised that "current volume of trade and economic collaboration does not match with full potential." She called for diversification of trade and economic ties.

The two-way trade between Dhaka and Cairo is roughly around 10 million US dollar, with the balance a little inclined towards

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## Bid to manipulate cases? Iqbal will be quizzed, says DC DB

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Police will interrogate Awami League (AL) lawmaker HBM Iqbal over the February 13 incident at Malibagh in the city in which four persons were killed in firing, a top police official said.

However, investigation into the incident is going on very slowly. Sources in the underworld and political quarters have alleged that a section of the police is trying to manipulate the cases filed in this regard.

Police have so far arrested in this connection only one person who is not even an accused in the cases. The actual culprits including those photographed by the press are still at large.

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Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Haroonur Rashid (left) talks to Minister for CHT Affairs Kalparanjan Chakma during a review meeting on the hostage crisis yesterday. While the meeting was on, army personnel cordoned off the Bethchari camp.



## Authorities now moving with 'extra caution'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The authorities have taken a go-slow approach towards resolving the hostage crisis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts after the diplomatic community in the country voiced concern over the possibility of military intervention, sources said.

The extra caution was much too apparent yesterday, as the authorities and security agencies continued their efforts to secure release of the

three European consultants -- Torben Mikkelsen and Nils Hulgard of Denmark, and Tim Selby of Great Britain -- on the eleventh day of the hostage drama.

A joint message from the British and Danish governments has advised the government to restrain the military from taking any action and to keep media interest "to a minimum."

The joint note signed by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and

Danish Foreign Minister Mogens Lyketoft expressed concern over the proposed use of force to secure release of the hostages. The joint note was handed to Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad on February 22.

The heads of British and Danish missions in Dhaka also issued a joint statement expressing similar sentiments.

The two envoys had also tried to get an appointment with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina prior to her

departure for Cairo and were declined, sources said.

However, when contacted, officials of both missions said that they were not aware of any such joint note issued by their governments.

The joint notes expressed concern at what it said the lack of progress towards resolving the crisis.

"We are concerned at the lack of progress. The kidnap has lasted a week and families are anxious and

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## Pustaka misses another deadline

STAR REPORT

Pustaka has missed the February 25 deadline, set after a series of revisions since November 30 last year, for completion of printing and distribution of secondary-level textbooks.

The Beximco concern was scheduled to make the remaining 15 categories of textbooks available in

the market from yesterday. Although Pustaka claims to have done so, sources in the wholesale book market say that these textbooks have not reached the market as yet.

Nearly two months into the current academic session, Pustaka has so far supplied 45 categories to the market.

Meanwhile, the Gantantrik Chhatra Oikya (Democratic

Students Alliance) has called for strike at schools across the country today (Tuesday) in protest at the non-availability of textbooks and printing of textbooks on low-quality papers, and in demand for trial of the NCTB officials and the Beximco concerns responsible for the crisis.

With frustration and anger amongst students and their guard

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## Announcement

Commencing from Wednesday, the 28th of February, we publish on our Focus page selected excerpts from Hamoodur Rahman Commission's Main Report on the 1971 war which has been recently 'declassified' by Pakistan's military ruler Pervez Musharraf.

## INSIDE TODAY

ARTICLE 4

ME peace process in jeopardy  
Column: Spotlight on Middle East  
Muslehuddin Ahmad

FOCUS 5

Neurosurgery in South Asia:  
Bridging the gap

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 27		6.00 pm
Feb 28	6-22 am	

## Prayer Timings

February 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-05	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

## The Don rests

REUTERS, Sydney

Sir Donald Bradman, the greatest batsman in Test cricket history and Australia's most revered sporting figure, has died in Adelaide. He was 92.

The Director of the Bradman Foundation, Richard Mulvaney, said Bradman died peacefully in his sleep on Sunday with his family by his side.

"Sir Donald Bradman died yesterday morning, peacefully at his home, after a short illness with pneumonia," Mulvaney said.

Bradman is survived by his son John and his daughter Shirley. His wife Jessie died of cancer, aged 88, in September 1997.

When news of Bradman's death broke this morning Australian television and radio interrupted their regular programmes to announce his passing.

Australia's cricket-loving Prime Minister John Howard immediately took time out from his visit to New Zealand to pay a tribute to Bradman, saying his death would



be deeply felt by the whole country.

Howard said Bradman was not just a great cricketer but also a man who had brought hope to millions of Australians during the despair of the Great Depression and Second World War.

"He was a dominant Australian personality in a way that I don't think any other person has been in the last 100 years," Howard told reporters.

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## Hailstorm lashes 3 UZs of Sylhet : 2 killed, 50 hurt

UNB, Sylhet

A hailstorm accompanied by heavy rains lashed three upazilas of the Sylhet district in the early hours of yesterday leaving two women dead and over 50 people injured.

The dead were identified as Begum, 43, and Mariam Bibi, 34, of Kanaighat upazila. They were killed in house collapse.

Local people said the storm hit Kanaighat and Goainghat upazilas at about 5:30am. Several hundred thatched houses and standing crops on vast tracts of land were also damaged in the storm.

Local MP Hafiz Ahmed Majumder visited the spot.

A hailstorm also hit Chhattak upazila at about 1am and damaged chemicals and property worth over Tk 5.5 crore of Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mill yesterday.

Mill sources said the storm accompanied by heavy ice balls damaged the asbestos-roofed factory building, pulp-warehouse, chemical godown, office building and staff quarters of the mills.

Over 150 families became home less and were passing their days under open sky.