

## Cell phones

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It was widely alleged that the police leaked information about crack-down on culprits. It has been found that criminals often come to know about decision to arrest them in advance and get enough time to go into hiding.

Sources said information is leaked through some unscrupulous police officers, who maintain close links with the criminals in exchange of money. This is also the main reason behind failure to nab criminals.

In the directive, the home ministry said if any police officer under the rank of the ASP wants to use mobile phone, they have to take special permission from the higher authorities showing logical grounds.

Following widespread use of cell phones by police officers in last five months, the ministry again sent a directive to the police authorities on March 24 to stop use of cell phones by police officers.

It also wanted to know what actions could be taken against the offenders.

It said disobeying the order would be considered as "anti-disciplinary" and "disobedience".

## Mukta

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40-minute drive, the abductors opened her eyes. She found herself at the Shapla Chattar, Motijheel, in the capital. The gang gave her Tk 200 and sent her by rickshaw to the terminal for air-conditioned buses.

Mukta reached Chashara busstand at around 8.15pm and got home at 8.30pm by rickshaw.

Meanwhile, Dipu threatened Mukta's family not to take legal action, sources said.

Mukta was photographed nude and he threatened to publish the photos if any legal action was taken, the sources added.

## Potka fish

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condition. Of them, nine died soon after admission to the hospital.

The condition of those lying in the hospital are stated to be critical.

The bodies were sent to KMCH morgue for autopsy.

# Electioneering

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conduct, without these, a candidate is usually considered nowhere in the electoral race.

The main opposition Awami League has boycotted the ensuing elections in three city corporations. But party leaders, activists and supporters are contesting the polls as independent candidates against nominees of the ruling BNP-led alliance and others in almost all the 120 DCC wards including 30 reserved for women. The overwhelming presence of extravagant ruling alliance candidates is apparently giving the impression that it is an election 'already won' by them. For instance, walls in the city are now full of writings urging people to vote for the ruling alliance candidates, instead of the usual slogans of day-to-day politics.

Throughout the city, election fever has gripped a particular section of the youngsters, most of them unemployed or party activists. In the old part of the city, colourful processions by slogan-chanting youths are now a common sight. Businessmen, residents and passersby look on and watch such processions.

An exceptional procession was brought out by the ward commissioner aspirant from the ruling alliance, MA Samad, in ward-73. He hired an elephant (his election symbol) from a circus and led a procession sitting on the huge animal.

In the race for mayoral post, Sadek Hossain Khoka of the BNP-led alliance seems to dominate the show. His name is seen in thou-

## Acid attack on 2 sisters in Sherpur

UNB, Sherpur

Two sisters sustained serious burn injuries as miscreants threw acid on them at village Mandaliapara in Nalitabari upazila Tuesday night.

Police arrested the main accused, Mahbub, on the following day.

Police and villagers said Mahbub, son of Zahed Ali of the same village, proposed to marry schoolgirl Selina Begum, 15, but her parents turned down the proposal.

Being refused, Mahbub became angry and on the night he along with his accomplices Shamim, Ziaul and Yakub threw acid on Selina and her sister Shahida, 8, while they were asleep.

The victims, daughters of Mobarak Ali, a day-labourer, were admitted to Upazila Health Complex.

## Kuakata

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smell.

The state minister also directed them to shift the inhabitants of Adarsha village, now living on a flood protection embankment near the sea beach, to a safer place so that they do not fall prey to natural disasters.

He also asked them for taking steps to preserve the century-old Buddha temple and Kuakata Well, and developing facilities for the Hindu pilgrims who visit the temple and its adjacent areas during Ras Mela.

## Kamal Majumder

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Six people were shown as prosecution witnesses in the chargesheet.

Kamal was granted ad-interim bail by the High Court on January 31.

The court granted bail till submission of the chargesheet.

Later, two other accused were granted bail by the special court for prevention of women and children repression Dhaka.

# Rajuk wracks residential plots

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money" and said that deals to convert residential plots were completed 'very secretly'.

Residents in Gulshan, some of whom have opted for conversion of their residential plots, said that they had to pay a 'hefty conversion fee' and they did so because the deal promised instant money.

But residents, opposing unplanned commercialisation of residential areas, said that the most powerful 'lobby' active in this regard are the developers, who often "lure or force" landowners promising "totally hassle-free transition and instant profit".

Former acting chairman and currently member (development) of the Rajuk Abdul Awal Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the decision to permit 'non-residential' use of residential plots was taken to meet the growing demand of the residents and plotowners.

He said his office did not convert any road entirely into a commercial area but kept permitting individuals to convert plots into 'non-residential' purpose in exchange for a conver-

sion fee.

"We have not allowed any shopping complexes or offices anywhere, we are only permitting individuals to set up medicine shops, banks and fast food restaurants, which are necessary for the public in the area," Chowdhury said.

When asked how at least eight shopping complexes are now being built on the Gulshan Avenue then, he said that he was not aware of any such construction and assured that he would ask his inspectors to look into the matter.

"In fact, we have tried to stop unofficial conversion of residential plots but failed. The conversion fee was imposed to discourage people from taking up commercial projects," Chowdhury said.

In Uttara, despite its having a large designated commercial area with kitchen markets, shopping malls as per original plan, the Rajuk has recently started permitting commercial structures under the cover of "non-residential use" on all its roads measuring 60 feet or more.

This has resulted in a rush for commercialisation of residential

plots without any planning. The authorities are also apparently unaware as to how flow of traffic and other related problems would be solved once these areas are full of commercial activities.

When the Rajuk declared the Kamal Ataturk Avenue a commercial area a few years ago, many residents living in Banani protested vehemently terming the move a 'deception'. They argued that when they bought the plots they were shown a tranquil residential area, not a bulging commercial one, generating noise and air pollution and constant traffic jam.

Incumbent Rajuk chairman, Iqbaluddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star that over the last 15 days since he took over he had turned down one application for conversion. He said there is a constant pressure on the Rajuk to allow conversion of residential plots for non-residential use because there were precedents.

"Even then I will try to maintain the zoning character of each area," Chowdhury said.

## Juba Dal leader

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able to locate the two at East Razabazar, and accused them of theft. This resulted into a scuffle between him and the two, and at one point Rafiq shot Arman in the leg.

One Nargis of East Razabazar took Arman to the DMCH.

Tejgaon Police denied knowledge of the incident.

## 4 graft cases

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1,27,570 from the public funds for providing televisions and dish antenna to people of his village in 1994.

In the third case, the accused was charged with misusing his official position by flying to his village in a helicopter in 1995, costing the government Tk 16,46,899.

In the fourth case, the accused was charged with misappropriating Tk 56,701 for his wife's treatment in Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre in Singapore in March, 1995.

The court framed charges against Altaf Hossain Chowdhury on January 24, last year.

## Danes

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that this was the first attempt to resort to any corrupt means in any projects in Bangladesh funded by the Danes.

Denmark also terminated all sorts of cooperation with the shipping ministry and withdrew grant worth US\$ 45 million in projects related to inland water transport sector.

Before revealing it to the press, the Danes wrote a letter to the finance and planning minister on February 15 briefing him about the matter. The Danes also met the law and the communication ministers and brought the issue to their notice.

The issue stirred diplomatic storm and shook the six-month old BNP-led coalition government. Prime Minister Khaleida Zia had several meetings with her senior colleagues after the Danes brought the corruption charge.

Despite the fact that the issue has somewhat strained the bilateral relations between the two countries, foreign ministry officials however are hopeful that it would not have any lasting impact.

A high foreign ministry official quoted the Danish envoy as saying that "it would not put the bilateral relations on any negative track".

However, the Danish envoy was unavailable for his comment.

# Political face of BAC

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Mosharraf Hossain in its cabinet although the same in the early 1990s filed corruption cases against both. Mosharraf was also convicted in two cases for a five-year term. And both served the Ershad government.

Although the government is withdrawing cases on an executive order, the ministers of the present government said on many occasions that the cases would be disposed of through the legal process and not be withdrawn.

During the publication of the white paper on the AL's 'corruption', government's spokesman Haris Chowdhury said the cases would follow their own course.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in a letter on April 4 asked the public prosecutor (PP) to take necessary steps about withdrawal of the four cases against Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury.

Yet, on an executive order, the cases against the home minister were withdrawn yesterday.

Recently, two cases against State Minister for Energy Mosharraf Hossain and Information Minister Tariqul Islam have been disposed of through final reports of investigation officers (IO).

The court recently discharged two cases filed against Prime Minister Khaleida Zia and her son Tareq Rahman. Although these two cases were resolved legally, the legal experts believe that the government influenced the disposal.

Currently, the government has initiated the process of withdrawal of a number of cases against BNP ministers and MPs. Moreover, the public prosecutors have shifted away from their earlier position, and the government is following a go-slow policy in this regard because the withdrawal of the cases all together might create a negative impact.

However, the BNP ministers and MPs accused in different cases have become impatient about withdrawal of their cases. Last week, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed accused in four cases met the director-general of BAC in this regard, sources said.

Ironically, both the BNP and the AL have repeatedly made commitments to set up independent anti-corruption commissions since the

## Judicial probe

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former Father of the church John Lilit, of their involvement in the incident.

Another witness, Panna Lal Sarker, said the bomb went off minutes after a youth, who had come to the church during prayers with a gunny bag, left the church leaving behind a bible-sized packet wrapped with a black cloth.

fifth parliament election. Although three governments have come to office ever since, no-one actually lived up to the words.

It is said that since BAC works under the Prime Minister's Office political influence on it is obvious. And in the meantime, real corrupt people get away with their act.

## Air Lanka

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State Guesthouse Meghna before ending his four-day visit to Bangladesh, he said it was part of familiarisation trips to six SAARC countries. Fernando, who was appointed the FM last December, has already been to India and Nepal, and plans to fly to Pakistan next week before visiting the Maldives and Bhutan.

Fernando said he had discussed with the Bangladesh leaders a proposal for Bangladesh to provide training to Sri Lankan troops for UN peacekeeping operations.

He said he had also focused on trade and economic issues, especially on attracting Bangladeshi tourists to Sri Lanka. The Air Lanka, which discontinued its direct flight to Dhaka after an LTTE attack on Colombo international airport, will soon recommence its Dhaka-Colombo flights, he added.

Fernando said a delegation from Sri Lanka will visit Bangladesh to further expand cooperation in pharmaceuticals that has been squeezed by the multinational companies.

He informed that Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe will visit Dhaka next July.

Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Dhaka and Bangladesh foreign ministry officials were present at the press briefing.

## No second shift

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tee for launching a second shift with the existing academic and infrastructure facilities.

The proposal created negative reaction among teachers and students of the university. Some left leaning student bodies also staged demonstrations on the campus protesting it.

Meanwhile, the committee meeting also decided that construction work of 'Bangladesh-Iran Centre for Persian Building' in front of the central library would continue. Modern architectural design of the building would add to beauty of the campus, it felt.

However, a large number of students and teachers are protesting construction of the building, saying it would destroy an attractive open space on the campus and lead to felling of at least 20 old trees.

## Hasina

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for speedy trial of cases involving incidents if violence, she said. "I ask conscious people of the world where my men will go now to escape repression."

Turning to the economic scenario, she said, "Since takeover by the four-party alliance government, all indicators of economy have plummeted."

She said victory of pro-AL lawyers in elections to 56 out of 58 bar associations in the country is a manifestation of peoples' no-confidence in the ruling alliance.

The Pro-AL panel of lawyers swept the Supreme Court Bar Association polls by bagging 11 out of 14 posts.

Bangladesh Bar Council Vice-chairman Amir-ul-Islam and Awami Aijibi Parishad President Shahara Khatoo also spoke on the occasion. Some senior AL leaders including Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Advocate Abdul Hamid were present.

Amir-ul-Islam said "It is a political decision whether Awami League will join parliament session. But I urge Awami League lawmakers to give their views in meetings of parliamentary standing committees on behalf of the people before the government passes any new law".

Criticising the new law for speedy trial of cases, Ozair Farooq said it is not possible to complete investigation in seven days and trial in 30 days.

He expressed lawyers' solidarity with the people in their "fight against repression and terrorism let loose by the ruling alliance".

## Police alter

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cities and the additional IGP heading the special branch of police were among others who attended the crucial meeting.

EC Secretary SM Zakaria briefed the press about the outcome of the meeting.

Due to shortage of magistrates, the EC decided to assign 45 mobile courts each headed by a magistrate to function on the election day in the capital. But the number of such courts in Dhaka may be increased on availability of more magistrates.

If found guilty, the mobile court may sentence an election offender to a maximum one year in jail.

In Rajshahi and Khulna cities, 10 mobile courts each would be working on the polling day. Besides, 2,000 magistrates would be deployed at the polling stations in the three cities.

The meeting also decided that 90 mobile teams of the army, 120 of the BDR, 270 of the police and 80 of the armed police would be deployed in Dhaka from April 22.

Ten army teams backed by the police would be posted in Rajshahi and Khulna each from the same day. The deployment would continue until April 26. Each team would consist of 10 to 12 personnel.

The joint meeting also reviewed the pre-election law and order and election preparations.

## Loan defaulter

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against which the loans were secured.

According to the study, there is no deposit against five loans, which were given rescheduling facility last week.

"So there is no possibility of recovering these loans," said an official seeking anonymity. He also said things would turn out to be more problematic on the down payment issue.

Central bank officials said there were two major irregularities in rescheduling the loan -- the required 10 per cent down payment was not made prior to seeking the rescheduling facility, and the fact that the bank's profitability would be reduced after the interest waiver was ignored.

The sources also said that a letter stating the pressure on the borrower bank in rescheduling loans of Rahman Group has reached the Bangladesh Bank governor through the Prime Minister's Office. But even before the central bank could look into the matter, the Sonali Bank board has approved the rescheduling.

## 2 cops closed

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and ordered sending him to Dhaka Central Jail for custody. The other four were placed on a two-day remand.

But defying the court order, the two sub-inspectors took him to their custody and tortured him to realise Tk one lakh from his uncle Amzad Khan, allegedly demanded by them earlier.

Sources said Akram's family later found him at Uttara thana and not at the jail.

The boy used to stay at his uncle's house.

Family members said that seeing marks of torture in his body, Akram's uncle gave police Tk 60,000. Then he was again produced before the CMM's Court, which sent him to jail custody.

The two police officials had earlier threatened that if Akram's uncle did not pay them Tk one lakh, the boy would be implicated in arms case, members of his family alleged.

The Deputy Commissioner of DMP was asked to investigate the incident and submit a report as early as possible.

# Establish rights of indigenous people

## IIFB urges govts

**REZAUL KARIM, from The Hague**

The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) has asked the governments across the world to establish rights of the indigenous people and respect their knowledge, innovations and practices.

In a statement issued yesterday at the Convention on Biological Diversity here, the IIFB asked the states to consider their issues from a human and not purely commercial perspective.

The IIFB, which unites indigenous peoples from across the world and participating in the two-week convention, made the urgent call to the parties so that they do not adopt guidelines on access to resources within their territories until establishment of appropriate protection mechanisms for their rights.

Florina Lopez, from the Kuna people in Panama, stated that "we are really concerned because our indigenous people of Americas, particularly indigenous women, are suffering because of hydroelectric, mining, oil and biopiracy projects, and the parties want to adopt guidelines on access to our knowledge and resources without our free prior informed consent".

Alfred Ilenre from the Ethnic Minority and Indigenous Rights Organisation of Africa said, "We are worried because of the lack of coherence of the parties when they adopt decisions that do not take into account the rights of the indigenous

people. At the same time, they do not want stop the trade agreements emerging from the World Trade Organisation, although economic globalisation means the death of millions of indigenous people, the disappearance of more than 300 indigenous languages and of the biodiversity on the planet."

The guidelines and recommendations adopted at the Conference of the Parties (COP-6) must be oriented to the recognition of rights of indigenous peoples, the right to full and effective participation and to work towards adoption of protection mechanism of their rights as indigenous peoples and for intellectual property rights, the IIFB stated.

## Local govt

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said. Dr Abdur Razzaq said poverty can be alleviated only through practice of democracy and accountability at the grassroots level. For this, there is no alternative to strengthening local governments, he added.

Participating in the discussion, some of the UP chairmen said responsibilities of parliament members and local governments should be demarcated clearly.

They alleged that members of parliament often intervene and try to get 'share' in development activities.

# Biodiversity strategy

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related issues. Matters relating to plant and animal varieties, biodiversities, geographical indications, service marks, and integrated circuits are being given attention to.

"It will be our government's endeavour to improve both the legislation and enforcement of IPR in keeping with our requirements and our international commitments," he said.

The Least Developed Countries (LDC), especially Bangladesh, is in a disadvantageous position in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the WTO mechanism is not acceptable to the civil society across the globe, said Mahfuz Ullah of the Centre for Sustainable Development, in his speech.

He said all areas of the IPR are important for Bangladesh since it is a country rich in bio-diversity.

Rizwana Hasan of BELA said TRIPS agreement triggered international debates on many issues.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya of the CPD said the IPR regime is unbalanced and inequitable. He alleged that some advanced countries have stolen the intellectual properties of the LDCs, which will hinder their growth in future.

Bhattacharya stressed the need for having national intellectual property rights to protect traditional knowledge. The LDCs like Bangladesh will have to face a suffocating situation as advanced countries are grabbing the patent rights.

He said pharmaceutical products, especially the lifesaving drugs, would be costlier and out of reach of the poor when TRIPS will come into

effect by end-2002.

He underscored the need for modernising the patent right, saying that exports will otherwise suffer.

Eduardo Perez Motta, chairman of TRIPS Council, WTO and Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Mexico in WTO, who attended the session as special guest, discussed various aspects of TRIPS.

Professor Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the CPD, chaired the session attended by politicians, academics, business leaders and civil society activists.

## Visa on arrival

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oriented organisations or associations, the FBCCI or the BGMEA.

Participants coming to Bangladesh to attend at seminar, workshop, convention, symposium organised by the ministries.

Newly introduced on arrival visa system also put forward some conditions to the immigration officers not below the Inspector to strictly follow the rules before issuing landing visa.

The conditions included endorsement of US\$500 in the passport, return air ticket, same port for entry and departure.

"Employment in Bangladesh paid or unpaid prohibited" will have to be sealed in the passport for the foreigners.

The system would not be applicable with the citizens of those countries Bangladesh have made 'No Visa' agreement.

The order was effective from yesterday and earlier rules in this regard will be exempted.

# Laden & co

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"God the Almighty ordered us to terrorise the infidels, and we terrorised the infidels," he said in the tape, which was interspersed with footage of New York's World Trade Centre collapsing and attempts to rescue victims of the grisly attack.

Bin Laden for his part hailed the economic losses suffered by the United States as a result of the "successful and blessed strikes," although he did not specifically claim responsibility for the attacks on New York and Washington.

The footage also showed other al-Qaeda commanders, including bin Laden's right-hand man Ayman al-Zawahiri and Mohammad Atef, alias Abu Hafs al-Masri, who was reported to have been killed by US-led strikes on Afghanistan last November.

In the excerpts of the tape aired by Al-Jazeera on Monday, bin Laden was upstaged by one of the suicide hijackers who crashed their planes in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

"We killed them outside their land and we will kill them on their own turf today," Ahmad al-Haznawi al-Ghamedi, a bearded young Saudi, announced in a strident voice, repeatedly beseeching God to accept him as a "martyr" as he read his "last will."

By sending the tapes to Arab satellite channels, "al-Qaeda sought to remind the world that it is still there," Saudi journalist Jamal Khushoggi, an expert on Islamist groups, told AFP.

"Bin Laden has always been media-conscious, and his organisation had a quasi-information ministry," he said.

Al-Qaeda seems to believe that the fiery anti-US rhetoric of the kind contained in the tapes "is the only

# Royal homecoming Doctors for dough

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Mercedes.