

DEFAMATION CASE  
Star editor, 4  
journalists  
granted bail  
COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam along with four other journalists of the daily yesterday obtained bail in a defamation case filed by former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman on February 6.

The case was filed for running a news item that said the complainant was among the 41 'big fish' who had been hiding since the law enforcers' crackdown began.

Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mojibul Haq granted them bail after they along with their lawyers appeared before it and sought bail.

Four other journalists are news editors Inam Ahmed and Syed Ashfaqul Haque, Chief Reporter Zayadul Ahsan, and City Editor Sharier Khan.

Earlier on February 26, Rezaul Karim Lotus, another chief

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Detained tax  
official, chief  
engr handed  
over to police  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Joint Commissioner of Taxation Harunur Rashid Bhuiyan and two others were handed over to Paltan police yesterday.

In Sylhet, the joint forces

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Prayer Timing		
March 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-14	6-18
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

# EC aims at finishing poll reforms by July

## Says commissioner Sakhawat

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The Election Commission (EC) intends to complete the task of electoral reforms by July, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain said yesterday.

The EC on February 18 started reviewing the existing electoral laws to bring in massive electoral reforms without setting any timeframe to complete the task.

The Awami League and BNP delegations at separate meetings with the EC had however demanded the parliamentary election by June and July respectively.

Talking to journalists at his office, the election commissioner

said, "We are emphasising on electoral reforms. We hope the entire task for the reforms would be completed by July."

"We want to reform the electoral system in such a way so that a free and fair election can be held," he added.

Asked about the preparation of voter list, the election commissioner said the EC is planning for preparing electoral rolls with photographs. He however did not specify any time to begin the task of preparing the list.

Sources close to the EC said the EC is unlikely to begin preparing the voter list before completing electoral reforms. The EC does not

have any tentative timeframe for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary election and it has put emphasis on the reform agenda, added the sources.

About the electoral reforms, the election commissioner said the EC is making it mandatory for political parties to register with the EC. "An unregistered political party will not be allowed to contest parliamentary elections," he added.

A government bureaucrat will be barred from participating in the polls before three years of his or her retirement from the service have elapsed, said Sakhawat.

# 2007 watershed year for Indo-Pak peace

## Predict rival countries as talk ends

**AFP, Islamabad**

Top Indian and Pakistani diplomats said yesterday that 2007 could be a "watershed" year for their peace process, with real hope of resolving their rancorous dispute over Kashmir and other issues.

Indian foreign secretary Shiv Shankar Menon and his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Mohammad Khan wrapped up two days of talks in Islamabad marking the start of the fourth round of the three-year-old negotiations.

"2007 is a critical year and can prove to be a watershed," Khan told

a joint news conference at the Pakistani foreign ministry after the talks between the nuclear-armed rivals.

Pakistan and India had dealt with "issues that have divided us" and that had "made it possible that we move from problems and disputes management to resolution of problems and disputes," Khan said.

The fact that this part of the peace dialogue coincides with the 60th year of India and Pakistan's independence "underscores the need for turning a new page in our relations," he added.

India's Menon said that during

meetings with Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri late Tuesday he found there was "clear political will on both sides to make all-round progress."

"We agreed that in the fourth round we anticipate that considerable progress can be made," he added.

The diplomats said Wednesday's talks centred on the Himalayan territory of Kashmir. Tuesday's session was devoted to a review of the previous round of

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MEGHNAGHAT-3  
Cadogan-Manning informed of govt decision to cancel negotiations  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The power ministry last week formally conveyed to US-Irish joint venture Cadogan-Manning the government decision to cancel the unsolicited negotiations on Meghnaghat-3 power project.

The ministry's Power Cell in a letter on March 8 told the Cadogan-Manning's Scotland office that the government has not accepted its unsolicited proposal.

Cadogan-Manning had never installed any power plant before.

However, the Power Cell had to accept its proposal in 2004 under pressure from the Hawa Bhaban, sources said, adding that using the name of Cadogan-Manning, a leading land developer group connected with the Bhaban had been trying to bag the deal.

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E-immigration to be made mandatory at ZIA soon  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As part of speeding up the immigration procedure and checking travels with forged documents, Immigration Police will make the e-immigration procedure mandatory for all air passengers at the Zia International Airport (ZIA).

While the system introduced last October are optional at the moment, it will soon be made compulsory for the passengers, including transit/transfer passengers, once a new format of computer-friendly Embarkation-Disembarkation (ED) card is introduced in near future, Special Superintendent (Immigration) Shah Alam told The Daily Star.

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Frequent load shedding and erratic power supply have plagued city life. A gas station in the capital displays a notice about suspension of CNG supply due to low voltage yesterday.

# BDR destroys poppy field at frontier village

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Meherpur

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday destroyed a large poppy field at a frontier village in the district and detained a farmer in this connection.

The arrestee, Sirajul Islam, has been cultivating the plant yielding drugs like opium and heroin on his two-bigha land in Baijpur village under Sadar upazila.

He was handed over to the Meherpur Sadar Police Station.

Villagers helped the border security forces to destroy the poppy crops.

Major Ashraf Hossain Choudhury of 32 Mirpur BDR Battalion told The Daily Star on the spot that one Ashraf of neighboring Indian village Beshtuganj under Teetotal thana provided Sirajul with poppy seeds and money to cultivate

it.

Heroin worth about Tk 10 crore could have been produced from this field, he said. Besides, the field might have yielded poppy seeds (postodana) worth about Tk 2 crore, he added.

Sirajul said that he purchased 100 gram poppy seeds for Tk 300 from India and cultivated the plants only for spices, not for drugs.

This is the third case of locating a poppy field in the country, Maj Ashraf said. The poppy field was first discovered in Bangladesh in 1999 at Ali Kadam under Bandarban district and in Daulatpur under Kushtia last month for the second time, he added.

# SQ Chowdhury denied bail in extortion case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A court here yesterday rejected the bail petition of detained BNP leader Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury in an extortion case filed against him by a former UP member.

Magistrate Sheikh Farid of Cognizance Court-2 rejected the bail petition filed by the defence lawyers.

Former UP member Raja Mia of Rangunia filed the case with Rangunia Police Station on February 16 this year accusing SQ Chy and nine others of extorting Tk 1 lakh from him on May 30, 2004.

With this, bail petition in the same case was rejected twice, sources said.



Deer seized from a business establishment in Thakurgaon by Rangpur Rapid Action Battalion yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

ICC  
WORLD CUP 07

# Ponting leads Aussie charge

SPORTS REPORTER

Australia were stopped in their tracks abruptly when rain forced the players and umpires off the field in St Kitts with Ricky Ponting's side on 241-3 in the 41st over in the first match of Group A in the Cricket World Cup yesterday.

Skipper Ponting was not out on 91 off 77 balls while Brad Hodge accompanied him, batting at 23.

Spinner Majid Haq bowled Clarke for 15 after earlier trapping opener Matthew Hayden lbw for 60 at Warner Park.

Adam Gilchrist was first man down in the 17th over, falling lbw to Dougie Brown for 46.

Scotland skipper Craig Wright won the toss and elected to field first in the Group A World Cup match.

Australia started their title defence in a quiet manner with both openers Gilchrist and Hayden showing much caution but with Ponting's arrival, the runs started to flow.

Ponting struck eight fours and four sixes while Hayden hit six boundaries and a single hit over the ropes in his 60. Hayden, who was among the injured in the Australian team, proved his fitness through this

innings.

Away in St Lucia, Kenyan Jimmy Kamande bowled a brilliant spell of off-spin to restrict fellow associate members Canada to 150 for 6 in 43 overs.

Kamande took two for 25 in 10 overs with the wickets of dangerous John Davison and Qaiser Ali in the middle-order.

Geoff Barnett produced an attractive innings of 41 as he took advantage of the fielding restrictions. Ian Bilcliff was out for 34.

Ashif Mulla (11) and Sunil Dhaniram (2) were the batsmen at the crease.

Kenya captain Steve Tikolo was quick to put Canada in when the coin fell in his favour but, while there was early swing, the new-ball bowlers failed to hit consistent areas. Barnett, who plays first-class cricket in New Zealand, and Abdool Samad played watchfully during the early overs; when Thomas Odoyo and Peter Ongondo found a probing line it was tough work for the openers. Barnett didn't employ much foot-work but used his powerful hands to hit through the off side.

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