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Court to hear  
extortion case  
against Tarique,  
Apu today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The hearing on an extortion case filed against BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman and his close aide Mian Nuruddin Apu will be held today.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rouf Khan of the Speedy Trial Court-2 will hear the case filed on March 8 in Tarique's presence.

Gulshan police submitted a charge sheet on March 18 against Tarique and Apu showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses to the CMM's Court.

The court accepted the charge sheet the following day and issued an arrest warrant against Apu and ordered to attach his moveable and immovable properties for not surrendering to the court.

The court also directed the authorities concerned to report on progress in execution of the order [for arrest and property attachment] by today.

The investigation officer of the case said the allegations against the two have been proved primarily and they should be tried under the Speedy Trial (Law and Order Disruption) Act.

The joint forces arrested Tarique from his mother's cantonment residence on March 8.

He is now in a month's detention in the Dhaka Central Jail.

SAARC

**Bush thanks CA**  
for inviting him  
to join summit  
as observer

UNB, Dhaka

US President George W Bush thanked Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, who is also the current chairperson of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), for inviting the United States to join the forthcoming summit of the regional forum as an observer.

In a letter to the chief adviser, President Bush said: "I strongly support regional approaches to promoting economic development and integration."

He added: "I look forward to working with the Saarc in advancing our common goals."

**Sealdah-Joydevpur**  
train service  
delayed for lack  
of infrastructure

UNB, New Delhi

The proposed Sealdah-Joydevpur train service, scheduled to begin on April 14, has been put off for lack of infrastructure.

Indian eastern railway officials said the train service will begin in the next 2-3 months with whatever infrastructure is available after taking some short-term measures.

Gede station on the Indian side is not yet ready to handle heavy passenger traffic that the

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**Govt mulling law**  
to recognise  
national leaders  
Says law adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is taking into consideration formulating a law recognising national leaders including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as father of the nation and late president Ziaur Rahman for his contribution to the country's independence.

"There are differences of opinion and divisions over the [issue of] father of the nation. This should be

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**Sonar Bangla TV**  
asked to stop  
broadcasting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The information ministry yesterday directed Sonar Bangla Television Ltd authorities to stop broadcast in Bangladesh immediately.

According to a ministry handout, the private television channel was operating without permission.

As per Rules of Business-1996, any channel has to take permission from the information ministry before going for broadcast.

# Bird flu continues to spread

**Official preventive strategy yet to be followed in Jamalpur, Tangail**

STAR REPORT

In two poultry farms at Morelganj in Bagherhat yesterday 592 chickens died, which had been bought from Biman Poultry Hatchery in Savar, where the first case of Bird Flu had been detected, sources said.

The district livestock officials sent samples of the chickens to Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI) but a report is yet to arrive.

Livestock department officials are carrying out surveillance in all affected districts but did not take any measure to cull free range chickens in Jamalpur and Tangail within a kilometre radius of the infected farms there, which is supposed to be the official strategy for preventing spread of the virus.

All the 633 poultry farms in the district have been on red alert since

Our correspondent from Khulna reported that 592 chickens of two poultry farms under Morelganj upazila in Bagherhat died so far after being infected with Avian Influenza Virus.

Meanwhile, all poultry farms in Khulna city and the district which received chickens from Biman Poultry Farm in Savar have been kept under close observation by the Rapid Response Team. DLO of Khulna Obaidul Karim said in a news conference yesterday that he had not received any news of Bird Flu in the area till Tuesday.

Reports received from Jamalpur said district livestock officers have yet to take any measure to cull free range chickens within a kilometre radius of the infected farms in the district.

When asked, DLO Nazrul Islam

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Tuesday. Officials of the livestock department have been directed to cull all chickens within one to three kilometres of radius of the infected farms, Dr Rustam Khan said.

Meanwhile,

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Daily Star suspends reporter for 'demanding' money from service holder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star yesterday suspended one of its junior reporters for his alleged involvement in demanding money from a private service holder.

The newspaper has taken the measure to suspend Kausar Islam Ayon, a junior reporter, in pursuance of its long-standing zero tolerance policy against any moral turpitude by any of its staff. He will remain suspended until the matter is resolved in the court.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested Ayon when he went to collect money from Nizam Uddin, who according to Ayon, willingly wanted to provide Tk 50,000 as Ayon helped him to win a government order related to plot.

The government officials demanded Tk 5 lakh in bribe from Nizam for the order.

Nizam said though he did not

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# Poor women suffer as VGD programme yet to start

HASIBUR RAHMAN BIUL,  
back from Gaibandha

Some 750,000 ultra-poor women across the country are suffering as the distribution of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) cards under the renewed programme for the period from January 2007 to December 2009 is yet to start.

Jointly initiated by Bangladesh government and World Food Program (WFP), the last 24-month cycle of the programme covering 750,000 ultra-poor women across the country ended on December 31 last year.

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Nizam said though he did not

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on January 1, 2007.

Despite completion of almost all the arrangements by WFP to start the next 24-month cycle by the first week of January, Bangladesh government is yet to give any satisfactory response, WFP officials recently said.

Ultra-poor women are approaching the field-level government officials and public representatives concerned with VGD project, especially in the Monga-prone districts of greater Rangpur, for the VGD cards.

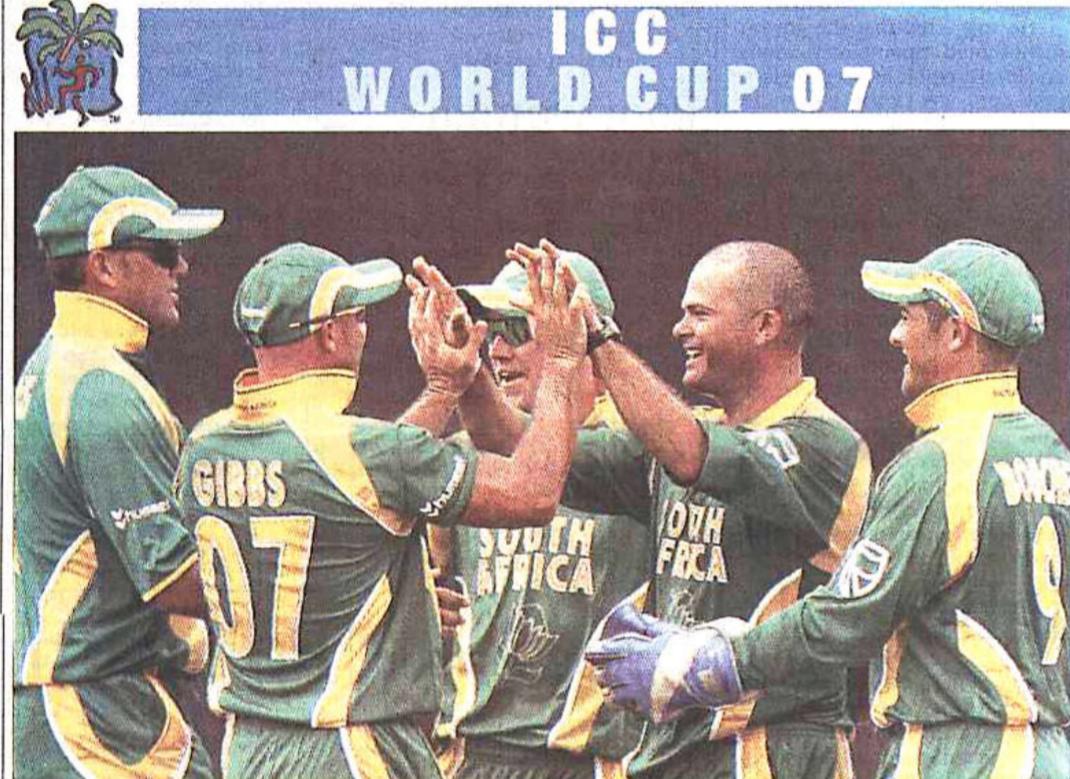
Mustakim Billa Faruque, upazila nirbahi officer of Shaghata upazila in Gaibandha district told a few days ago that he had to face 'pressure' for VGD cards.

Mohammed Mafizul Hoque, Chairman, Padumshahar union parishad under the same upazila, said he feels embarrassed as he has to regularly face groups of hardcore poor women requesting for VGD cards both at home and outside.

Several women said the VGD programme in the previous two years helped them to change their lot.

"Before the VGD cards were given, I could not manage two meals a day for two kids. VGD cards helped me a lot and now we can have three meals a day. Now I have two goats, two hens and a house," said Rokshana, 35, wife of Tia Mia of Shimultair village in Bornoarpura

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South Africa swing bowler Charl Langeveldt (2nd from R) celebrates the wicket of Sri Lanka opener Sanath Jayasuriya with Jacques Kallis (L), Herschelle Gibbs and Mark Boucher during their World Cup Super Eights match at Guyana National stadium in Georgetown yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Australia surge ahead

APP, St John's/georgetown

than four overs to spare.

Only captain and star batsman Brian Lara's 77 kept alive hopes of an upset win although wicketkeeper Dinesh Ramdin weighed in with a gutsy 52.

Lara was one of a trio of batsmen who fell to spinner Brad Hogg (three for 56).

West Indies, beaten for the first time at this tournament, now have less than 24 hours before playing New Zealand on Thursday after rain forced this match into a

reserve day before their innings could start.

The hosts, who saw Matthew Hayden score an Australian World Cup record 158 in a total of 322 for six, collapsed to 20 for three inside 10 overs.

First change McGrath made it 16 for two when, with his second ball, Chris Gayle, who made two off 23 balls, top-edged a pull to Shane Watson at mid-on.

The collapse continued when

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Sri Lanka troops on offensive after air attack

APP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's military said yesterday it had captured a key Tamil Tiger rebel stronghold in the island's embattled east, two days after the guerrillas stunned the capital with their first ever air raid.

Security forces took control of Kokkadichcholai in the district of Batticaloa and seized a large haul of arms, ammunition and land mines from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil

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# Gunmen kill 45 Iraqis to avenge deadly bombings

APP, Mosul

Forty-five Iraqi men were shot dead execution-style in the northern town of Tal Afar in reprisal attacks for two devastating bombings that killed 75 people, a medic said yesterday.

"We received 45 bodies of handcuffed and blindfolded men from al-Wahada neighbourhood overnight. They were killed yesterday just after the bomb," a doctor at Tal Afar hospital told APP on condition of anonymity.

The Iraqi army has slapped a strict curfew on the town, deployed armoured vehicles in downtown Tal Afar and banned even police from moving, an army officer said, also on condition of anonymity.

The bodies were found in the Sunni area of Wahada after a massive suicide truck bombing ripped

through a Shiite district of the town on Tuesday, one of two bombings that left a total of 75 people dead.

Lieutenant Colonel

Mohammed Ahmed Salah, a spokesman for the Iraqi army in Mosul, the capital of Nineveh province that is home to Tal Afar, confirmed that a "reprisal act" had taken place after the bombings.

"A violent incident happened and a reprisal act happened in al-Wahada, which is in the south of the town, just after the bombings," the officer said.

The situation is under control right now and we have started an investigation into the incident."

The violence is the deadliest in the mixed Shiite-Sunni Tal Afar since US President George W. Bush in March 2006 held up the onetime militant stronghold as a model for coalition efforts to create a stable Iraq.

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Suicide attack in Kabul kills four

APP, Kabul

A suicide bomber targeted an intelligence director's vehicle in the Afghan capital Kabul yesterday, killing four civilians and wounding another 12, the intelligence service said.

The Taliban-style bombing, only the second suicide attack this year in the heavily guarded city, took place in central Kabul near many government and business buildings.

Police had cordoned off the area and firefighters were washing blood and pieces of flesh off the

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Prayer Timing

March 29

Fajr 4-45 5-20

Zohr 12-45 1-15

Asr 4-45 5-00

Magrib 6-20 6-25

Esha 7-45 8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

Milk sellers from nearby villages carry milk to markets in the capital. The photo was taken from Rayerbazar yesterday.

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