

Sylhet mayor held on graft charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The police arrested Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Mayor Badruddin Ahmed Kamran at his residence in the city's Chhararpar area early yesterday.

The same day the Sylhet Sadar Cognisance Court sent him to jail when he was produced before it at about 9:00am.

Kamran was held in a graft case filed in 2003. After arrest at around 6:00am, he was taken to the Kotwali Police Station. There, he protested his innocence and told the news-men that the case against him was lodged out of political vengeance by the then BNP government.

"I will face the conspiracy in the court and hope to get back to the people soon," he added.

The police raided houses of 17 other accused in the same case on Thursday night but failed to capture any, an official said.

Earlier on Thursday, the District and Sessions Judge's Court, Sylhet issued a warrant for arrest of the SCC mayor in the case filed for alleged irregularities in leasing out a kitchen market.

Besides, it rejected the bail prayers of the accused and sent the case to the Divisional Special Judge's Court for trial. April 12 was set as the date for charge-framing and the accused to appear before the court.

Kamran is the second elected mayor to be arrested in the ongoing anti-graft drive. On similar charges, Chittagong Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury was detained last month.

The Cognisance Magistrate's Court, Sylhet Sadar, sent the case dossier to the District Judge's Court after the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on February 7 filed a charge sheet against 19 people in the graft case.

The trial scheduled to begin on March 27 was deferred till April 5 due to absence of the district judge.

The charge-sheeted are Mayor

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Arrested Sylhet Mayor Badruddin Ahmed Kamran being taken to police station yesterday, top, and the kitchen market controversially leased out by the mayor.

Asia at risk of floods, drought and disease

AFP, Brussels

Asia faces a heightened risk of flooding, severe water shortages, infectious disease and hunger from global warming this century, the UN's top climate panel said yesterday.

The region is confronted by a 90-percent likelihood that more than a billion of its people will be "adversely affected" by the impacts of global warming by the 2050s, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said.

Its estimates, in a major report unveiled in Brussels, say the magnitude of climate-change effects will vary according to the size of the world's population, energy use and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Nor'wester lashes 2 districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Nor'wester lashed Chandapara village in Kendua upazila, while lightning killed two people at Atpara upazila of Netrakona district early yesterday.

Kendua upazila administration sources said the storm hit the village at around 5:00am and lasted for half an hour, damaging over 100 tin-roofed houses and injuring four people.

The injured were admitted to the upazila health complex. In Atpara upazila two teenagers—Kamal Mia, 17, of village Banijan and Nizamuddin, 12, of village Mongolsiddha—were struck by lightning while they were going to their croplands at around 6:00am.

UNB adds: Nor'wester swept over three villages in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj district at around 4:00am yesterday.

The storm-hit villages are Surjargaon, Roypara, and Khalahati. Locals said at least 20 houses in the three villages were damaged and a large number of trees uprooted by the storm.

Global warming to hit poor countries hard: UN report

Nearly a third of world's species faces threat of extinction

AFP, Brussels

Climate change is set to inflict damage in every continent, hitting poor countries hardest and threatening nearly a third of the world's species with extinction, UN experts warned yesterday.

Global warming will affect much of life on Earth this century, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said in a landmark report whose drafting was marked by an angry row.

Damage to Earth's water systems from greenhouse gases will change rainfall patterns, punch

up the power of storms and boost the risk of drought, flooding and stress on water supplies, the IPCC said.

The consequences will be adverse or in some scenarios even catastrophic, depending chiefly on how much carbon gas is spewed into the atmosphere from burning oil, gas and coal.

"Poor people are the most vulnerable and will be the worst hit by the impacts of climate change. This becomes a global responsibility," the IPCC's chairman, Rajendra Pachauri, declared.

Up to 30 percent of animal and

plant species will be vulnerable to extinction if global temperatures rise by 1.5-2.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 to 4.5 Fahrenheit), the IPCC said.

"It is very likely that all regions will experience either declines in benefits or increases in costs for increases in temperature greater than 2 to 3 degrees (C), or 3.6-5.4 F, over 1990 levels, according to a summary for policymakers agreed by the IPCC.

The summary's draft was fiercely disputed during a week of negotiations, ending with a marathon 24-hour session. Publication was delayed on the final day after sev-

eral countries objected to tough wording, sparking charges of political interference from one delegate.

At US insistence, summary drafters dumped a paragraph that said North America was "expected to experience severe local economic damage and substantial ecosystem, social and cultural disruption," delegates said.

Saudi Arabia and China also insisted on other changes to water down the draft.

"Some of the objections were not scientifically based," said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

EC's reform proposals welcomed, shorter timeframe suggested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Welcoming the Election Commission's (EC) reform proposals political leaders, former election commissioners and eminent citizens yesterday said the proposed timeframe of a year and a half for holding the next election is too long and it is possible to shorten it.

They said bringing electoral reforms and preparing a voter roll should get priority but the proposals should be finalised after consulting all the authorities concerned including political parties.

The political leaders however said the ban on indoor politics should be lifted soon so that the parties may discuss the proposals among themselves for taking decisions about those.

Hailing the proposals, former law minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said many of those are good and acceptable.

A few proposals like registration of political parties are appreciable because the practice will make political parties accountable, making way for their leaders and activists to have more say in the process of nominations, he said.

"The proposal that retired government and NGO officials would not be able to get nominations before three years of their retirements should be made five years as the new comers should first serve the parties before getting nominations," he told The Daily Star adding that the initiative taken by the EC is good.

About the timeframe for complet-

ing the preparation for the election, Moudud, also a standing committee member of BNP, said there are scopes for implementing the proposals in a much shorter time than a year and a half.

"Elections can be held by using a voter list with photographs as it will take much longer to prepare national identity cards," he said adding that everything is a matter of discussion as the EC had already said they will finalise the proposals after having discussions with political parties, civil society leaders and others.

Moudud Ahmed also said his party will send its opinion regarding the matter to the EC when it will be allowed to carry out political activities.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



SA challenge for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will desperately try to bury their wretched start to the Cricket World Cup Super Eights when the competition resumes after a two-day break with the Tigers facing serious title contenders South Africa in Guyana today.

It would be a tough task for Habibul Bashar's men to regain confidence after disappointing performances against reigning champions Australia and New Zealand although they get four

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Biotechnology to revolutionise development, experts say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proper application of biotechnology can help revolutionise development of agriculture, industry and healthcare, and achieve sustainable growth.

This technology can also be used as an effective tool to produce or modify various goods and improve plants and animals.

Speakers expressed this view at a seminar on 'Promotion of Biotechnology in Bangladesh: National and International perspective' that began in the capital yesterday.

They observed that increasing use of biotechnology would help meet the challenges of developing countries like Bangladesh where population is growing but agricultural productivity is not increasing as required and farmland is decreasing.

Scientists and biotechnologists from different countries including US, Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia are taking part in the three-day seminar being held at the ICDDR, B.

Energy, Science and ICT Adviser Tapan Chowdhury, Agriculture Adviser CS Karim, Vice Chancellor of Brac University Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Executive Director of ICDDR, B David A Sack, President of Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS) Shamser Ali, BAS Secretary Naiyum Chowdhury, Pro VC of Dhaka University and AFM Yusuf Haider, among others, spoke at the seminar yesterday.

Speakers stressed government support and funds for biotechnological research which, they said, would greatly contribute to national development.

Inaugurating the seminar, Adviser Tapan Chowdhury said,

"Bangladesh is a land-strapped country, where the population is already one of the densest in the world. Agricultural land is decreasing every year...Application of biotechnology can help us meet these challenges."

He emphasised setting up a biotechnological institute in the country.

Adviser CS Karim assured of government help in biotechnological research in the country.

In this context, he said plans have to be taken to make "our path of development easier so that our future generation can enjoy its fruits."

Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said biopharmaceuticals, mainly vaccines and bio generics, have the potential for a \$2 billion market.

He suggested increased support for development and application of biotechnology.

"We need to produce more graduates and post-graduates in this rapidly advancing field...We also need to think about suitable training that would allow research ideas to take shape and produce marketable products. So, we need biotechnology managers, who would instinctively recognise innovative and saleable research," he said.

"Biotech industry is capital intensive in nature and has historically relied on capital from public and private sources."

Yusuf Haider said, "During the last two centuries, the world changed from an essentially agricultural society to an industrial one. Today we are on the verge of yet another transition from the industrial to the information and biotechnology-based society."

He added, "Biotechnology is an

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

Poorly maintained old manuscripts at Woodburn Public Library in Bogra.

Decaying old scripts

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

A large number of old and valuable books including handwritten scripts are getting damaged in the old building of Woodburn Public Library at Edward Park in Bogra town while the government department concerned seems indifferent to it.

At least 7,000 of some 25 thousand books of the library were damaged during the Liberation War and the post-independence period due to lack of proper maintenance, said Md Shamsul Alam, member secretary, convening committee of the library.

The library authorities proposed to hand over the old and valuable books including the ancient handwritten scripts for preservation and but the government has yet to respond, he said.

Established in 1854 during the British rule, the library

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Huda sent to jail on expiry of remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

BNP leader and detained former communications minister Nazmul Huda was sent to jail yesterday after he was produced in a Dhaka court on expiry of a four-day remand in a money laundering case.

Investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted a report to the court, saying that important information has been extracted from Huda. So, he needs to be confined in jail until completion of the investigation into the case.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mamun Al Rashid ordered to send Huda to jail. The former minister was placed on remand on March 29.

On February 15, Dhanmondi police filed a case against Huda in connection with seizure of a huge

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Former communications minister Nazmul Huda being taken back to jail yesterday after he was produced before court on expiry of four-day remand in a cheating case.

Khulna JP chief freed after interrogation

STAR REPORT

Former Jatiya Party (Ershad) law-maker and president of the party's Khulna city unit Sheikh Abul Hossain was picked up by the joint forces early yesterday and released after questioning.

A union parishad (UP) chairman in Rajbari and one of his associates were also arrested on Thursday night.

Moreover, law enforcers arrested 1,555 people on various charges across the country in the 24 hours preceding 6:00am yesterday.

Our staff correspondent reported from Khulna that Abul was picked up from a restaurant in the city while he was having his breakfast and was taken to the joint forces' camp for questioning about some allegations against him. He

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Embattled Musharraf's bid to win Benazir's support

AFP, Islamabad

Embattled Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is in negotiations to win the support of exiled former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, a minister and government officials said yesterday.

Pakistan this week wound up a special team that had been investigating alleged corruption by Benazir Bhutto, the country's first female premier, during her two terms in power between 1988 and 1996, officials said.

Government officials said the team in the National Accountability Bureau was closed this week in a move to facilitate indirect contacts that had been going on between Musharraf and Bhutto -- who is now in exile in Dubai and London -- for some time. Railways Minister

Sheikh Rashid and Ports and Shipping Minister Babar Ghuri both said on private television channels late Thursday that a deal with Benazir's opposition Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was in the making.

"Serious negotiations are underway between the two sides but it is not necessary that these will succeed," Rashid told AFP on Friday. He declined to elaborate when asked what the two sides were demanding from each other.

Musharraf is currently facing multiple challenges to his eight-year hold on power.

The most serious is a crisis over his removal of the country's chief justice, which has sparked several protests backed by Benazir's party along with other opposition groups.

However Pakistan People's

Party spokesman Farhatullah Babar denied any deal was being worked out with the military regime.

"There is no question," Babar told AFP. "This is a disinformation campaign by the regime to create dissension within the opposition ranks and to confuse the public."

He also dismissed the significance of the government's move to effectively close the cell investigating the charges against Benazir -- the head of which has been transferred and given a new provincial government posting.

"The government still chases Benazir Bhutto and (her husband) Asif Zardari in courts both in the country and abroad," Babar said.

"Our basic demand is free and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

2 top Khulna criminals held in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two criminals, who were sentenced to death in Awami League mayoral candidate SMA Rob and Khulna Chhatra League leader Tutul murder cases, were arrested in Dhaka at midnight on Thursday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-10 raided a house in Uttara and arrested Wasikur Rahman and his younger brother Mushfiqur Rahman. They hail from Mollahat upazila of Bagerhat district.

Besides, the two are also the charge-sheeted accused in Khulna city AL leader Advocate Manzurul Imam, Advocate Bijon Bihari and JP leader Shaikh Abul Kashem murder cases filed with Khulna Police Station.

Confirming the arrest of Wasik and Mushfiq, a source in Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6