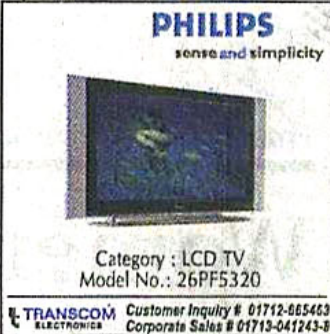




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## Hasina sued for extortion

Westmont Power Company chief alleges he was forced to pay Hasina Tk 3 crore when she was prime minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister and Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina was sued yesterday in connection with an extortion of Tk 3 crore.

Tajul Islam Farook, chairman of Westmont Power Company, filed the case with Tejgaon police station under the non-bailable sections of the penal code.

In the case Tajul brought allegations against Hasina of extortion and abuse of power in 1998, when she was the prime minister.

Hasina, who is now on a visit to the US, recently made some comments there criticising the non-party caretaker government and the Election Commission for 'delaying' the next general election on 'different pretexts'. She is supposed to return home on April 26 or 27.

The case was filed at 4:15pm yesterday, but Tejgaon police officials refused to comment on it. If

the prima facie case is proven to be well-founded through investigation, an arrest warrant will be issued against the former prime minister, according to the law. The case was filed under sections 385, 386, 387 and 109 of the penal code. In accordance with the sections, a person can be sentenced to five years to life in jail if the court finds him or her guilty.

According to the constitution a person is not eligible for contesting in elections, if s/he is convicted of a crime and sentenced to at least two years in prison on charges of moral turpitude, unless five years have passed since his or her release from jail.

Following the launch of the ongoing crackdown on suspected corrupt politicians on February 4 by the caretaker government, speculations have been mounting that there might be a change in the leadership of major political par-



ties. BNP's senior joint secretary general and elder son of immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia, Tarique Rahman, had been arrested on March 7, and later an extortion case was filed against

him. Besides, a number of senior leaders of Awami League and BNP have been arrested since the crackdown began.

**TAJUL & WESTMONT** Tajul is the chairman of Westmont Power Company, Bangladesh which set up and launched a 90mw barge-mounted power plant in 2000. Its parent company is Malaysian.

Westmont's handling of the project, which was one of the three first private barge-mounted power projects in the country, came under questions as the plant had been set up inside Baghabari inland port ignoring Power Development Board's (PDB) recommended location nearby. Besides, PDB had a host of complaints against Westmont which were later resolved.

Security guards and other staff

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Hasina says she will face situation on her return

HASAN AHMED TUSHER

Awami League (AL) will find out the reasons behind the filing of the extortion case against its President Sheikh Hasina in the changed political situation.

"We are trying to find out the reasons behind the filing of the case now as the complainant did not file the case in the last five years when a different government was in power," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star last night. Jalil however refused to comment any further on the issue.

After the news of the filing of the case spread last night, hardly any top leader of AL or its allies in the 14-party coalition made any comment about it and remained mostly tight-lipped.

However, AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah termed the case 'definitely a conspiracy'.

"The filing of the case at this time is very suspicious and the allegation will not be believable to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

## Govt further changes emergency rules

Allows bail in some cases; hearing on bail petitions yet to resume

Court Correspondent

The caretaker government has brought further amendment to the Emergency Powers Rules 2007 to provide for bail in some cases under the penal code.

A gazette notification was issued on Sunday to that effect.

According to the revisions, persons facing trial for offences specified in the rules however will not be entitled to seek bail at any stage—from the first information report to the judgment.

This is the third time changes have been made to the rules framed under the Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007.

Earlier on March 21, the government promulgated an amendment, suspending the rights to petition for bail and seek redress

from any higher court until a case is resolved in a trial court. It caused uproar among the lawyers, litigants and rights activists.

In the section pertaining to bail, the amended ordinance says, "Regardless of whatever is stated in sections 497 and 498 of the Criminal Procedure Code or any other law, an accused under the Emergency Powers Ordinance will not be released on bail during the enquiry, investigation and trial of the case against that person."

The offences under the emergency rules include corruption, smuggling, hoarding, black-marketing, money laundering, illegal possession of firearms, explosive substances, foreign currency, and narcotics, tax evasion and other crimes considered a threat to security of the state, people and the economy.

The second amendment [March 21] had suspended the right to bail also for those accused of offences under the penal code.

Following that, no hearing on bail petitions in cases filed under the Arms Act, Explosives Substances Act, Foreign Exchange Regulation Act and Penal Code has taken place in any court of the country.

The latest changes came in the wake of criticism from different quarters. Now, the ones charged with offences falling outside section 14 of the emergency ordinance may seek bail.

According to the amended rules issued yesterday, the government by April 18 will decide which of the offences under the emergency rules are to be made bailable.

## Pricey fuel hurts Boro farming

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Farmers in 16 northern districts will have to spend an additional amount of about Tk 79 crore to operate their diesel-run irrigation pumps for boro cultivation during April-May due to the latest hike in diesel price.

Sources in the Northern Control Room of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) said at least 11,26,70,000 litres of diesel is needed for smooth running of more than 5,51,000 diesel-run irrigation pumps including 5,40,000 shallow ones during April-May, incurring an extra cost of Tk 78,86,90,000.

The total allocation for boro irrigation for the period of December 2006-May 2007 is currently Tk 137 crore.

April-May is the time when boro

crops need heavy irrigation, but poor farmers of the northern districts are finding it hard to buy diesel for their pumps because of the hiked price of the fuel.

Lack of irrigation will dehydrate the boro crops, the farmers said.

The Northern Control Room sources said irrigation in the region in the next boro season (December 2007-May 2008) will require an additional Tk 290 crore if the hiked up price of diesel remains in effect.

Farmers of Kurigram, one of the most poverty-ridden northern districts, will have to spend an additional amount of Tk 2,08,00,000 to smoothly run their 29,950 diesel-run pumps for irrigating 86,190 hectares of boro land.

Sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said

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## Mamun admits being a party to extortion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Giasuddin Al Mamun, close friend and business partner of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, yesterday confessed his involvement in the extortion of Tk 16 lakh.

Meantime, Mamun was placed on a nine-day remand in connection with two more extortion cases filed with Gulshan and Dhamondi police stations.

Heavily guarded by police, Mamun was taken to the chamber of Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah at around 2:30pm. The magistrate recorded his statement for around two hours. However, details of his statement could not be learnt.

BNP leader and former lawmaker Khairul Kabir Khokon and five others are also accused in the case.

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## EC to talk reforms with civil society this month

Party dialogue to wait until lifting of ban on indoor politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) cannot proceed with its plan for holding dialogues with political parties to seek their opinion on several crucial electoral issues as the government has yet to decide about withdrawal of the embargo on indoor politics.

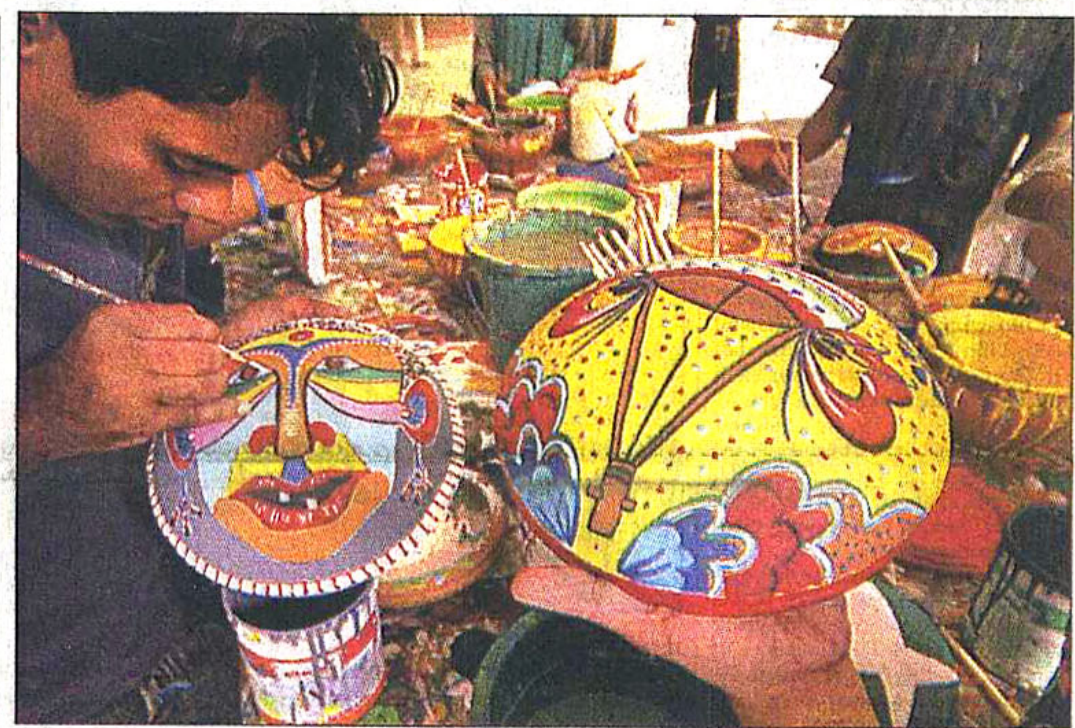
The EC has however planned to start dialogues with the civil society groups at the end of this month for their opinion on the proposed electoral reforms and time limit for simultaneously preparing the voter list with photographs and national identity cards.

"We will sit with the civil society groups in the third or fourth week of this month. We will sit with the political parties as soon as the embargo on indoor politics is withdrawn," Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain told reporters at his office yesterday.

"But the government has not said anything about withdrawal of the embargo on indoor politics. We would wait for the government decision," he added.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda at a meeting with the law adviser on last Wednesday asked the caretaker

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Students of Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University paint on earthen pots to be sold during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations that mark the beginning of the Bengali year.



Rapid Action Battalion personnel arrest two people and seize a huge cache of equipment for running illegal VoIP business at a house in East Bashabo in the capital yesterday.

## VoIP equipment of Nasim's son seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized a huge cache of illegal Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) equipment allegedly owned by Tanvir Shakil Joy, son of AL leader and former home minister Mohammad Nasim, from a house at Bashabo in the capital yesterday.

Two people were also arrested from the spot.

The seized equipment includes 39 Telular Phone Cell SX, 39 Dowtel fixed wireless terminals, 12 Quintum gateways, eight Motorola cellphones, 110 adaptors and 100 electric plugs.

Tipped off, an intelligence

team of Crime Prevention Company-3 raided the third-floor flat of an eight-storey building at West Bashabo under Sabujbagh Police Station and held the caretakers of Mokter Hossain, 40 and Bellal Hossain, 31 and recovered the VoIP equipment.

After interrogation, they confessed that the equipment belongs to Joy and he had appointed them to take care of those.

They stopped their illegal operation and kept the equipment hidden in that flat during the countrywide drive against illegal VoIP business, the arrestees said.

## Dulu sued again over JMB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Detained former deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu has been sued yet again for unleashing the militants of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and his own goons for torturing scores of people to avenge his nephew's murder.

Torture victim Selim Reza of Ramsa Kajipur, also the home village of Dulu, filed the case on Sunday night with Natore Sadar police station also accusing 21 others.

Dulu surrendered to a Dhaka court on February 20 and now facing a total of 16 cases including six for his alleged links with militancy.

Among the other accused, Abdul Quddus Mondol, an alleged militant, and Dulu's associate Ward

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## Trainee BAF pilot dies in plane crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) trainee pilot was killed when his aircraft crashed into a bamboo cluster at Abhoynagar upazila in Jessore yesterday.

Eyewitnesses said flight cadet Faisal Mahmud died on impact as the plane fell to the ground with loud bumps at around 1:30pm at Pathalia village, 35 kilometres off Jessore Air Force Academy.

The air force headquarters formed a three-member high-powered committee to probe the crash. The officials who have visited the scene suspect some kind of mechanical failure might have caused the accident.

With yesterday's, the number of flyers killed in training plane crashes to date stands at 45.

Ayub Ali, a farmer who was



Faisal Mahmud

working in a paddy field near the scene, told journalists that he saw the plane hit the ground barely five feet away from a tin roofed house.

The turboprop, which was of type PT6, smashed into pieces

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



ব্যস্ত শহরে ঠাস বুনাটের ভীড়ে, আজো কিছু মানুষ স্বপ্ন খুঁজে ফেরে

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