

MP influence in upazila to go

Govt decides to empower EC to hold local govt polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday decided to revoke the power of members of parliament (MP) over upazila parishads, and to empower the Election Commission (EC) to hold polls to the parishads, a crucial tier of the local government system.

The council of advisers to caretaker government at a meeting approved a proposal to amend the

current Upazila Parishad Act 1998 repealing a provision that allows local representatives to the parliament to interfere in the activities of upazila parishads.

It also approved a proposal to empower the EC with its lost authority to announce election schedules for upazila parishads once again, shifting the power back to the commission from the central government, sources said.

The council of advisers, which is

the interim cabinet, sent the proposals to the law ministry for vetting. Once the procedures are completed, the president will promulgate an ordinance amending the current Upazila Parishad Act, said Syed Fahim Munaim, press secretary to the chief adviser, during a post meeting news briefing.

"Lawmakers will have no role in upazila parishads once the current

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Power outage puts ZIA in 2hr blackout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Zia International Airport (ZIA) plunged into a chaos last night as an unprecedented 2-hour power outage shut down all airport operations leaving over a thousand passengers stranded, with some of them stuck in flights unable to land on dark runways.

Power went out in Terminal 1 around 9:45pm and emergency power generators failed to operate shrouding in darkness both departure and arrival halls with hundreds of passengers clueless about what to do under the circumstances.

All security gates were shut immediately after the power outage and no one was allowed to

leave the airport until power was restored.

The runways also did not have adequate lighting during the blackout, forcing one flight to circle above the airport for at least 10 minutes, and another three to delay their landings by hours.

Departures of four other flights were delayed by over two hours. The lights on the runways were powered by batteries after half an hour, allowing flights to cautiously depart and land.

Boarding bridges were also not operating, forcing hundreds of passengers on three flights to disembark for about an hour and a half.

"We were kept on the plane for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Why EC won't hold polls in 90 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) in a rule yesterday ordered the Election Commission (EC) to explain within four weeks why it shall not be directed to hold the general election within the next 90 days.

It also asked the commission to show cause why its failure to hold an election within 90 days since dissolution of parliament in October 2006 shall not be declared unlawful.

An HC bench comprising Justice Shah Abu Nayeem

Mominur Rahman and Justice Shahidul Islam issued the rule in response to a writ petition filed and moved by Supreme Court lawyer barrister Masood R Sobhan.

EC, secretary of the EC Secretariat, chief adviser and the law ministry represented by the law secretary have been made respondents to the rule.

The petitioner said the EC could not hold the parliamentary election within the time stipulated by the constitution.

According to article 123 of the constitution, a general election

shall be held within 90 days after parliament is dissolved.

In practice, the EC was recast with the then election commissioners stepping down in the face of controversy and movement by the political parties.

The petition read, "The reconstituted Election Commission has violated the constitution by failing to hold the election within 90 days from taking office."

"It has no legal authority to extend the period beyond 90 days for any reason.....where there is a

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

GP former CEOs sued for VoIP

MD HASAN

Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has filed a case against 10 former and in-service high officials including two former CEOs of Grameenphone on charge of their involvement in illegal international call termination or VoIP.

Grameenphone, AccessTel, a local ISP, and Malaysia-based international call carrier DiGi Telecommunications are also on the accused list.

The telecoms watchdog filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on January 16.

According to the FIR, the accused former officials are Erik Aas and Ola Ree, chief executive officers, Thor Randhaug, technical director, Yogesh Sanjeev Malik,

chief technical officer, and Mehboob Chowdhury, director, sales and marketing.

The sitting accused are Khalid Hasan, director (regulatory and corporate affairs), Md Shafiqul Islam, chief technical officer, Kafil HS Mueed, director (new business), Md Arif Al Islam, director, finance, and Espen Wiig Warendorph, head of revenue assurance.

Earlier in October last year, the BTRC fined the Grameenphone Tk 168 crore for its involvement in VoIP (voice over internet protocol).

"As the case is under investigation, we'll not comment on this. We're fully cooperating with the investigators in this regard," a GP spokesperson told The Daily Star yesterday.

● FULL STORY ON STAR BUSINESS PAGE 8

AL, BNP, JP want unconditional talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL), BNP and Jatiya Party (JP) yesterday demanded that the caretaker government hold an "unconditional" dialogue with the political parties to find out a solution to the existing political crisis in the country.

AL acting President Zillur Rahman dismissed any possibility of sitting in the dialogue with any kind of condition imposed by the government.

"The government will have to hold an unconditional dialogue with the political parties to put an end to the current crisis," Zillur told newsmen at his Gulshan residence yesterday.

BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan told The Daily Star last night that no dialogue will

be logical with conditions imposed on the parties.

The presence of the chiefs of BNP and AL--Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina--is also necessary to make the dialogue meaningful, he told different television channels yesterday.

Nazrul pointed out that the then Pakistan government even withdrew the Agartala conspiracy case against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others and released them to sit in a dialogue to end the political crises of the time.

JP acting Chairman Anisul Islam Mahmud said, "We do not think any dialogue will be successful with conditions imposed." He also dismissed the possibility of participating in the dialogue if war criminals are invited to it.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5



Shop owners of nearby markets at East Aganagar on the Buriganga in Keraniganj have had to depend on these traders for electricity as the area has been without power for the last three days. They said the power supply usually lasts for four to five hours a day.

MURDER CHARGE Probe starts against Nizami, Mojahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

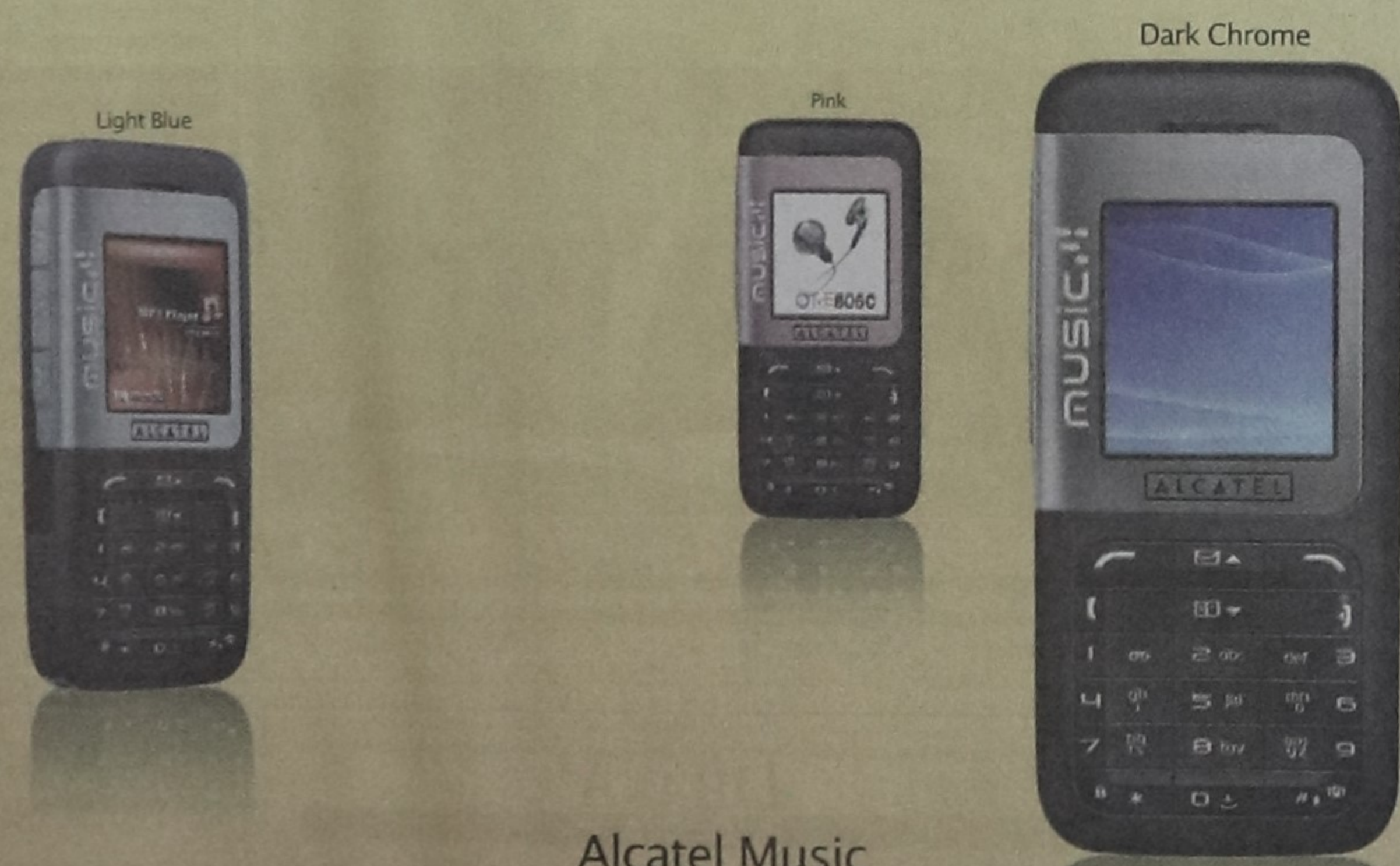
Police have started investigation into the murder case filed against Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and eight others for the massacre of 345 people during the Liberation War.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Sub-inspector (SI) Hamidur Rahman of Pallabi Police Station said that he had already talked with a good number of locals who had confirmed that there were three mass graves in the area as mentioned by the complainant in the case.

Although three one-storey buildings have been constructed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

The latest CDMA handset from Citycell One™



Alcatel Music
Tk. 5,999

Handset only

Available in three colours



MP3 Player
with dedicated key

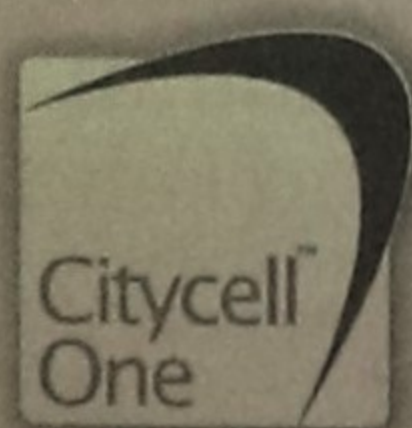


Zoom™
Internet Modem



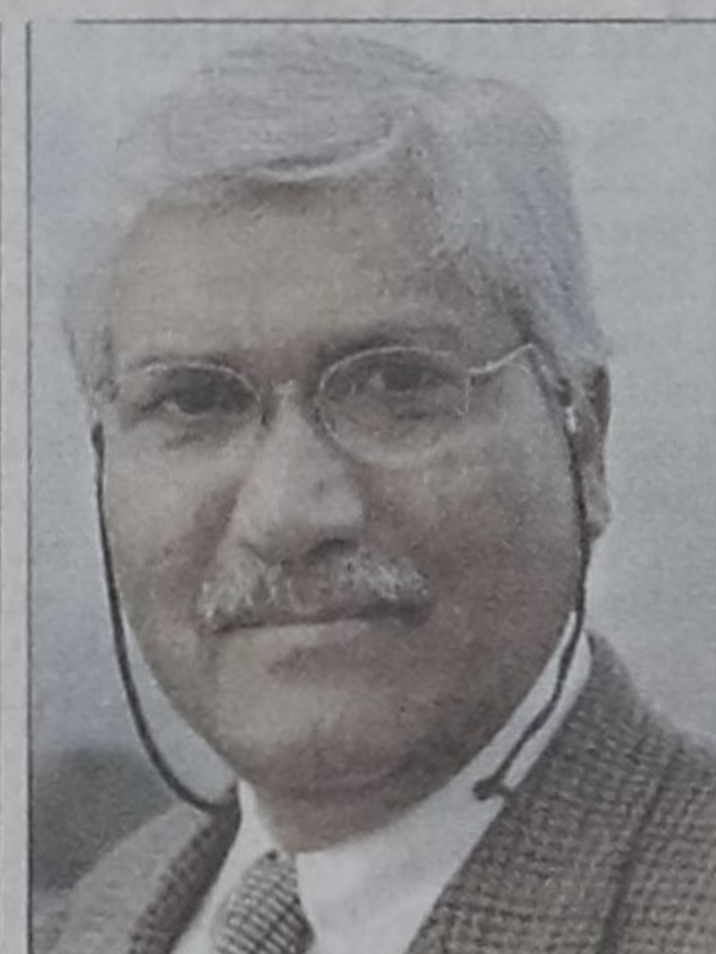
Micro SD Card
Support
up to 1GB

- Citycell One™ Pre-paid RIM connection available at Tk. 200
- RIM based CDMA 1X handsets
- Conditions apply



It's Simple.

Helpline: 121 (from Citycell), 011 99 121 121 (from any phone) | E-mail: customerservice@citycell.com | Website: www.citycell.com



Bangladeshi among winners of the Earth Award 2008

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned environmentalist Dr Atiq Rahman has won this year's Champions of the Earth Award for the Asia Pacific region.

The executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), Dr Atiq has received the award along with six others across the world.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi, Kenya announced the award yesterday on the 10th Special Session of its Governing Council.

The other recipients of Champions of the Earth 2008 are

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

EXTORTION CASE Trial against Hasina restarts January 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trial of the extortion case filed against former premier and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina resumes on Wednesday about two weeks after the High Court stayed proceedings of the case on January 17.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Azizul Haque yesterday fixed January 30-31 for trial in the Tk 2.99 crore extortion case filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury on June 13 last year.

The trial resumes at a time when the complainant on January 24 claimed he didn't file the case against Hasina and the defence is preparing to move with the comment.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Bird flu spreads in 9 more districts

BDR put on alert to check illegal poultry entry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

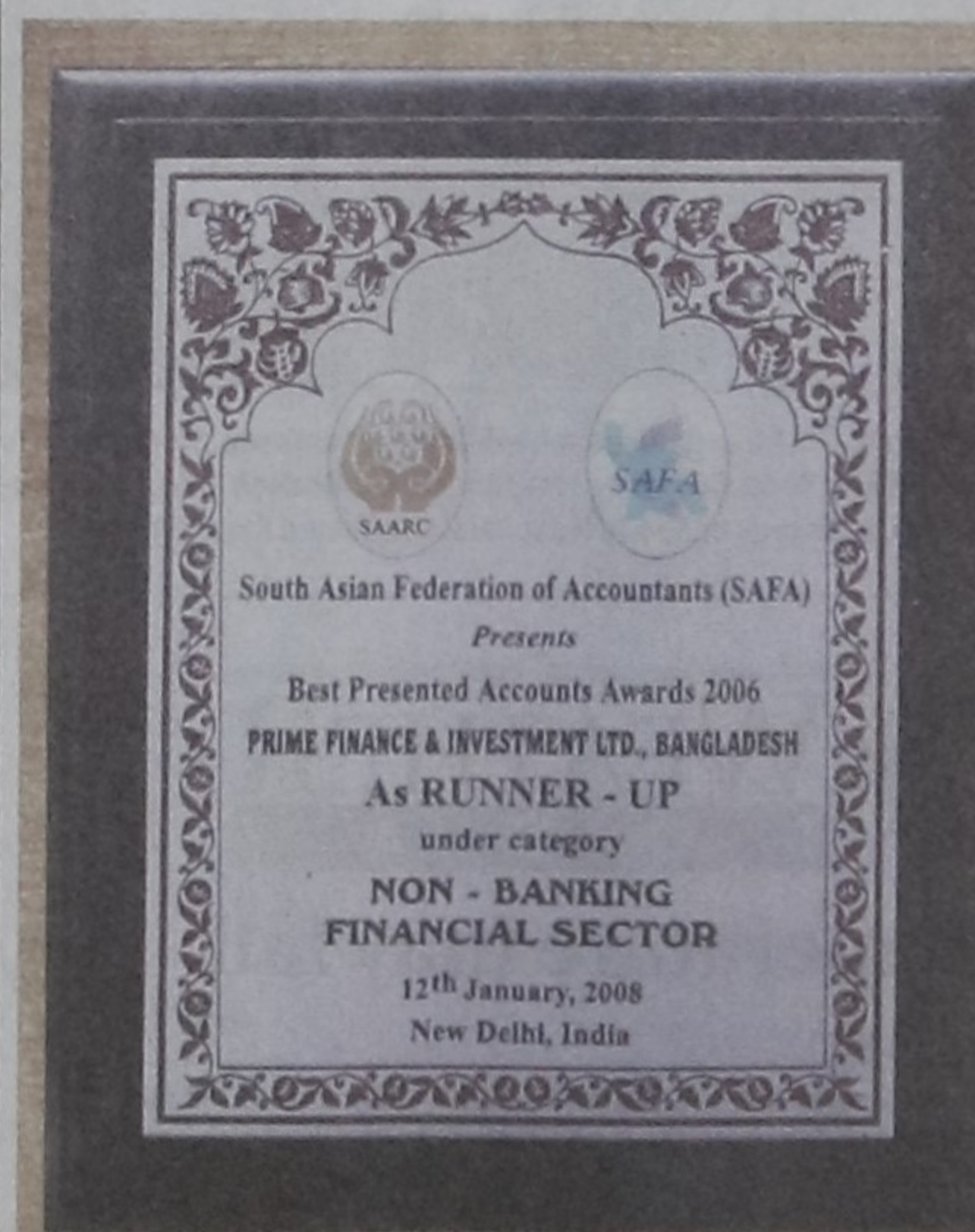
Since the outbreak of bird flu in nine more districts in the country this month, 41,620 poultry were culled so far, while the government beefed up its awareness raising campaign and tightened the bio-security measures in border areas.

At a news briefing in Bangladesh Secretariat in the capital yesterday Special Assistant to Chief Adviser Manik Lal Samaddar, who is in charge of the fisheries and livestock ministry, said there are 11 points in the border areas where disinfectant is being sprayed regularly to contain the spread of the H5N1 virus.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was directed to check illegal entry of poultry and eggs from India as in West Bengal the outbreak is currently at a severe level, he added.

The already infected farms in the country are under continuous monitoring and the city

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Prime Finance wins SAFA Award

Prime Finance & Investment Limited has been adjudged Runner-Up in the SAFA Best Presented Accounts Awards 2006 held in 12 January 2008, New Delhi, India.

The award was presented by the South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) - an apex body of

professional accountancy institutions of the SAARC countries. Prime Finance is the first financial institution in Bangladesh that received this international award in the financial sector category in the competition amongst the SAARC countries. Prime Finance was also placed First in the competition organized by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh held in December, 2007. Such awards reflect the financial soundness, good governance, compliance with the rules & regulations, adherence to accounting practices in accordance with national and international standards.

We dedicate this honor to our shareholders, Directors, clients, regulators, patrons and employees.



Prime Finance & Investment Limited
Working for you...