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## UK foreign secy arrives today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband arrives today on a two-day visit to Bangladesh to discuss democratic future of the country, climate change and militancy among other issues.

Miliband is the highest profile foreign visitor to Bangladesh since this caretaker government took charge.

He will meet Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and Foreign Adviser Iftekar A Chowdhury and visit British-funded projects outside Dhaka.

The British High Commission refused to confirm his arrival but admitted a high-profile two-day visit starts today.

Miliband is currently in Afghanistan in a landmark visit

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## ntv managing director freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Managing Director of private television channel ntv Enayetur Rahman Bappi was released on bail around 10:00am yesterday from Dhaka Central Jail.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG-Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star that Enayetur received bail Wednesday but he could not be released as the related documents reached the jail in the evening.

Police arrested Enayetur on charge of possessing a car imported duty-free by ex-MP Harunur Rashid of Chapainawabganj.

# Ban likely on graffiti, posters on walls

## LGRD ministry drafts ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The LGRD and cooperatives ministry has drafted an ordinance proposing a ban on scrawling graffiti and pasting posters on the walls of houses and establishments in urban areas across the country.

The draft titled 'Wall writing and posters control ordinance 2008' also proposed stringent punishment including fines for violation of the ordinance, sources said.

According to the draft proposals, nobody will be allowed to use walls for writings or pasting posters to campaign for their interests. The law enforcement agencies will be empowered to direct companies or persons who would use the walls for such purposes to

remove those.

Local government institutions however could specify places for pasting posters in their respective areas, if needed.

The city corporations and municipalities in urban areas are now responsible for keeping their areas clean. But in the absence of specific laws, they sometimes face difficulties in taking actions in cases of scrawling graffiti and pasting posters on walls.

Copy of the draft ordinance has been sent to the Election Commission (EC) to examine its provisions in the light of the EC's draft proposals for electoral reforms which include ban on writings and pasting posters on walls during polls, sources said.

The EC proposals, if those are

made laws, will be applicable only during election campaigns. But once the draft ordinance is made law, it will be applicable always.

Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain yesterday said the EC is scheduled to sit on Sunday to discuss the draft ordinance.

The EC in its proposed code of conduct for political parties and candidates seeks severe restrictions on pasting posters and graffiti on walls in city corporations and municipalities for election campaigns.

"Violation of the code of conduct (as proposed) is an offence punishable with imprisonment, fine and cancellation of candidatures," Sohul told The Daily Star.

## Bangladesh should return to democracy soon: US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh should return to democracy as soon as possible, said Geeta Pasi, the US charge d'affaires, yesterday.

The US envoy during a courtesy call on Hassan Arif, the law adviser, also stressed the need for holding free, fair and credible elections to allow people select their leaders.

Emerging from the law adviser's office following the meeting, Pasi told reporters, "It is important in our views that the country should return to democracy as soon as possible."

When asked to comment on the ongoing trial of corruption suspects, the US envoy said, "It is important to follow the due process in all the cases; respect international standard of human rights and the cases must be transparent."

Commenting on the issue, the law adviser later told journalists

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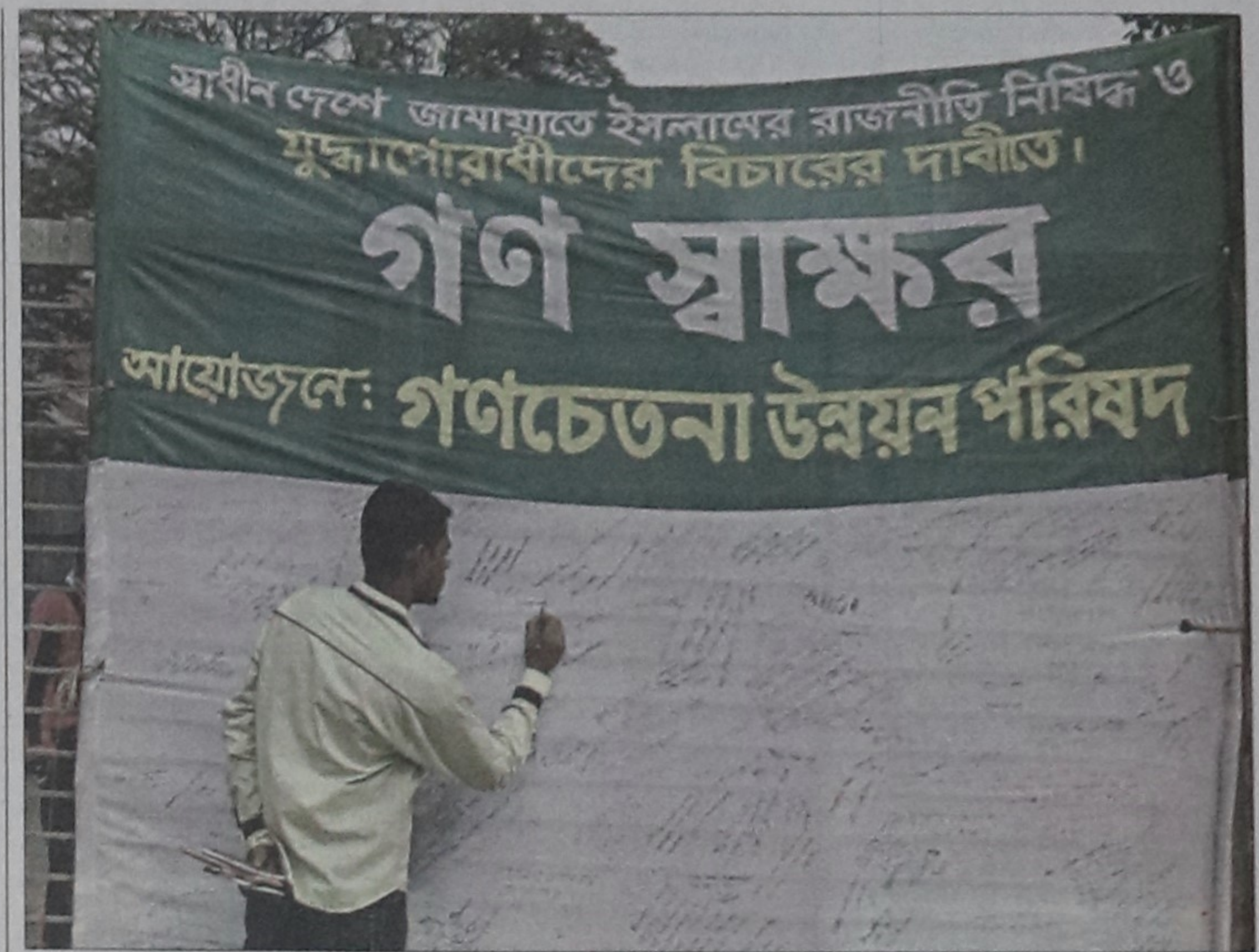


PHOTO: STAR

Gono Chetona Unnayan Parishad sets up a temporary wall to collect people's signatures in favour of its demand to ban Jamaat-e-Islami from politics and bring war criminals to justice.

## Democratic White House hopefuls look to "superdelegates"

AFP, Washington

With no clear winner after months of wooing voters, the tight race for the Democratic White House nomination may leave the choice between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama to "superdelegates," unelected party leaders.

If no candidate has a lock on the 2,025 delegates needed to secure the nomination before the party's August convention, the 796 "superdelegates" would be decisive.

The superdelegates are party leaders and lawmakers, including all Democratic members of Congress and former presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. As former vice president, Al Gore gets a vote too.

Unlike "pledged" delegates chosen through primaries and caucuses, superdelegates are free

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## Harijans asked to unite for basic rights

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Speakers at a national convention yesterday urged the Harijan community to be united and raise their voice for their constitutional rights, which they are denied in the society for a long time.

They also urged the government to take steps including enactment of law so that these people from the lower caste can enjoy their rights like other people in every sphere of social life.

Friends Association for Integrated Regulation (FAIR), a local NGO working with the Harijans, and Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly organised the event at Kushtia Islamia College ground.

At least 200 leaders, heads and representatives of Harijan community from 35 districts took part in the convention. Civil society leaders, government officials, NGO activists, teachers and students, business leaders and journalists

also attended the programme.

Still considered as untouchables, the Harijan people are denied some basic rights like sending their children to schools with the mainstream children and access to all places and to government and non-government jobs, the speakers told the convention.

It seems that the government has completely forgotten or ignored the rights of the outcasts. They are not being involved in the development process, they said.

Dr Rashid Askari, writer, columnist and professor of English at Islamic University, Kushtia, presented the keynote paper at the convention.

Dr Askari said that there are currently some 40 lakh Harijan people in the country. Divided into eight sections, these people are living in unhygienic environment. These people are deprived of

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## Pakistan to hold peace talks with militants

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's government is to hold talks with Taliban militants after a "de facto" ceasefire in a troubled tribal area between rebels and security forces, the interior minister said yesterday.

A Taliban spokesman in South Waziristan tribal district said a day earlier that Baitullah Mehsud, the key suspect in the murder of former premier Benazir Bhutto, had ordered an indefinite truce in the region.

"There is no announced ceasefire, there is a de facto ceasefire between militants and government troops. Both sides are currently holding the fire," Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz told AFP.

Nawaz said a tribal council, or jirga "comprising representatives of the government and tribal elders will be formed to negotiate peace

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# Polls within 2008 as per roadmap

## Reaffirms CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reaffirming the pledge of holding the next general election as per the announced roadmap, the chief election commissioner (CEC) yesterday said, "We must have to do this and it is our promise to the nation."

"Do or die, we must have to hold the election within 2008," CEC ATM Shamsul Huda said while exchanging views with Peshajibi Samannoy Parishad (coalition of professional bodies) at the Election Commission (EC).

"I don't know why people are doubtful about holding the election within 2008," the CEC said. "We are right on schedule and we

know that credibility of the EC fully depends on holding the election within this year."

There are no such obstacles for which the election cannot be held in line with the roadmap, Shamsul Huda told representatives of different professional bodies. "We are already fixing polling centres and training people concerned," he added.

"We are getting tired of questions like whether the election will be held in due time or not... We don't understand why this uncertainty occurred in people's mind," Huda said.

Led by Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, convener of the parishad, a 14-member delegation

met the CEC and two other election commissioners.

The CEC asserted that redrawing boundaries of parliamentary constituencies would be completed by June. "If this task creates any obstacles to holding the election in due time, we will stop this or go for an alternative," he said.

He hoped that the EC's dialogue with political parties would end within this month.

In response to the parishad's suggestion for declaring the polls date, he said they cannot do this until preparation of the voter list is completed.

Huda assured the delegation that transparent ballot boxes

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# 8 Bangladeshis on death row in KSA

## Families appeal for govt action for amnesty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The relatives of eight expatriate Bangladeshis workers sentenced to death by a Saudi court appealed to the government yesterday for taking necessary steps so the Saudi government grants amnesty for the convicts.

They made the request at a press conference at the Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh conference room in the capital.

The eight Bangladeshis workers were awarded capital punishment while three others were sentenced

to 12 years' rigorous imprisonment for killing an Egyptian worker in Riyadh. However, a total of 14 Bangladeshis expatriates were accused in the case.

Six of the expatriates who have been awarded death sentence are Mamun, 25, Shaiful, 23, Masud, 25 of Tangail, Faruk, 28, of Comilla, Matiar, 28 of Faridpur and Sumon of Kishoreganj. The names of the other two could not be known.

They went to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) four to five years back.

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Prayer Timing		
February 8		
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Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



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