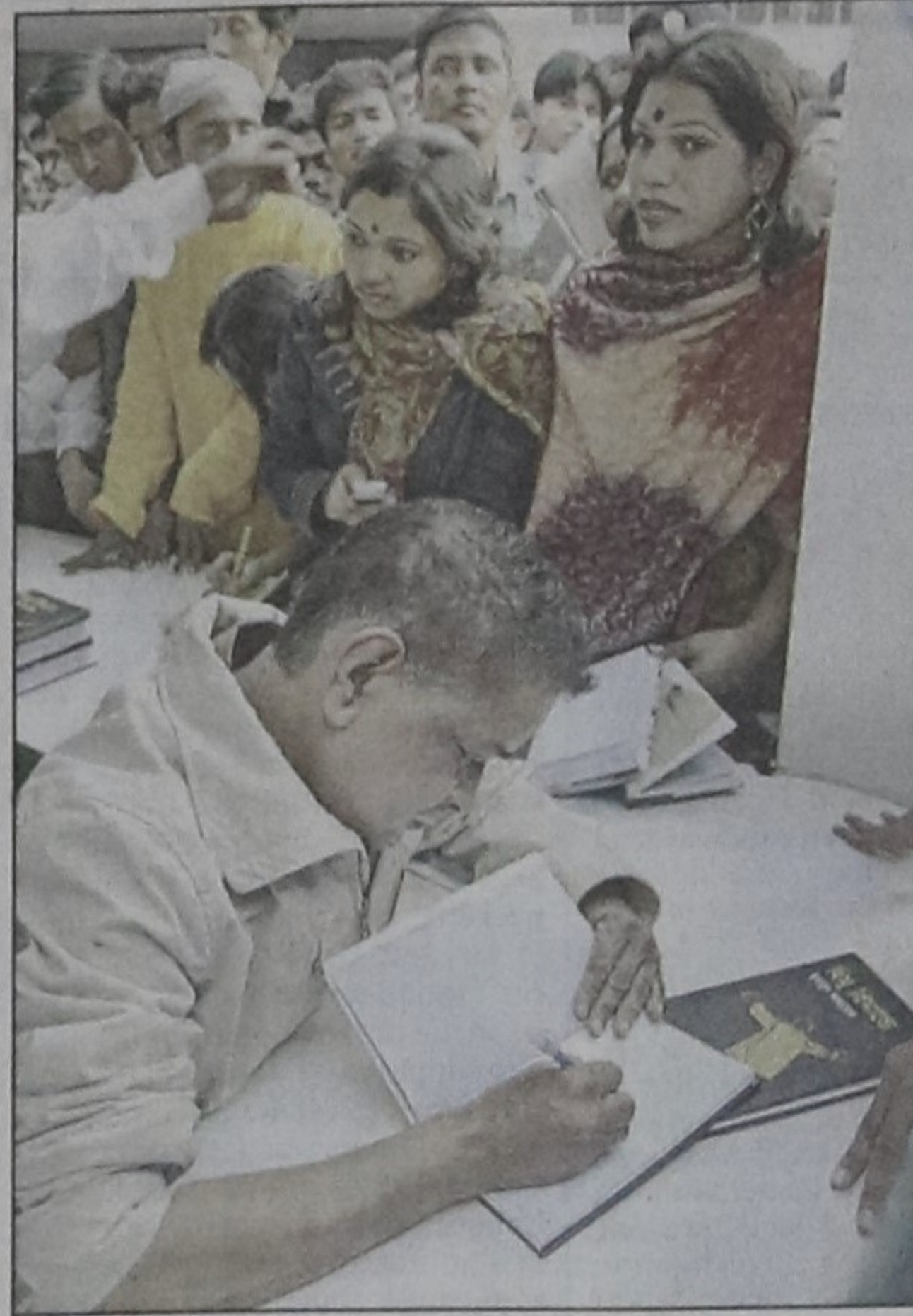


# Business chiefs vow to lead fight against global warming

AFP, Tokyo  
Some of the world's top companies yesterday vowed to step up their efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, saying governments were failing to show sufficient leadership in the fight against global warming.  
The declaration reflects a growing trend by global corporations waging war on climate change by taking steps to reduce or offset the amount of carbon dioxide belched out by their offices and factories.  
A dozen corporations including Sony Corp., Nokia Corp., Nike Inc. and Hewlett-Packard Co. issued an urgent call for firms around the world to reduce the damage they inflict on the planet and to promote a "low-carbon lifestyle".  
"There is no doubt that climate change is one of the most important issues of our time," Sony chief executive Howard Stringer told a meeting hosted by the Japanese electronics giant and the WWF environmental group.  
"Governments are more easily distracted by the crisis of today than the crisis of tomorrow," he said. "We need to act now."

The companies, which describe themselves as "Climate Savers", did not announce any new goals for reducing their carbon dioxide emissions as they have already committed to individual targets.  
Instead they pledged to urge their business partners and other companies to follow their lead, to develop energy efficient products and to encourage their customers to lead an environmentally friendly lifestyle.  
"We are moving into a carbon-constrained world, a low carbon economy -- a new economy," said James Leape, director general of WWF International, which is supporting the initiative.  
"We need champions. There are precious few political leaders in this world yet who are stepping up to the level of action that is required."  
Climate change would wreak havoc in natural systems of all kinds, from coral reefs to mountain forests, and it could cause -- if unchecked -- upheaval in all of our lives, and in the economies on which we depend, said Leape.  
Companies that fail to embrace the green revolution may struggle in the future, business leaders said.

"I don't think... any company is going to be able to survive if it is not working in a sustainable way," said Jaime Santafe, an environment advisor at Swiss-based packaging giant Tetra Pak.  
The captains of industry issued their call as officials from the United Nations and 21 countries held a second day of talks in Tokyo as part of efforts to forge a new deal on fighting global warming by the end of next year.  
The closed-door talks came ahead of negotiations in Bangkok from March 31 to April 4 on reaching a deal to succeed the landmark Kyoto Protocol, whose obligations on slashing gas emissions expire in 2012.  
The world's second biggest economy after the United States, Japan is the home of the Kyoto Protocol, the landmark 1997 treaty that mandated cuts in greenhouse gas emissions heating up the planet.  
But Japan is far behind in meeting its Kyoto commitments. The government has refused to legally bind companies to cap gas emissions, fearing that it could jeopardise the economy's slow recovery from recession in the 1990s.



(Left) Noted writer Humayun Ahmed signs his book for a fan at the Amar Ekushey Book Fair at Bangla Academy in the city while (right) a large number of people wait in long queues to enter the fair venue yesterday, a weekly holiday.



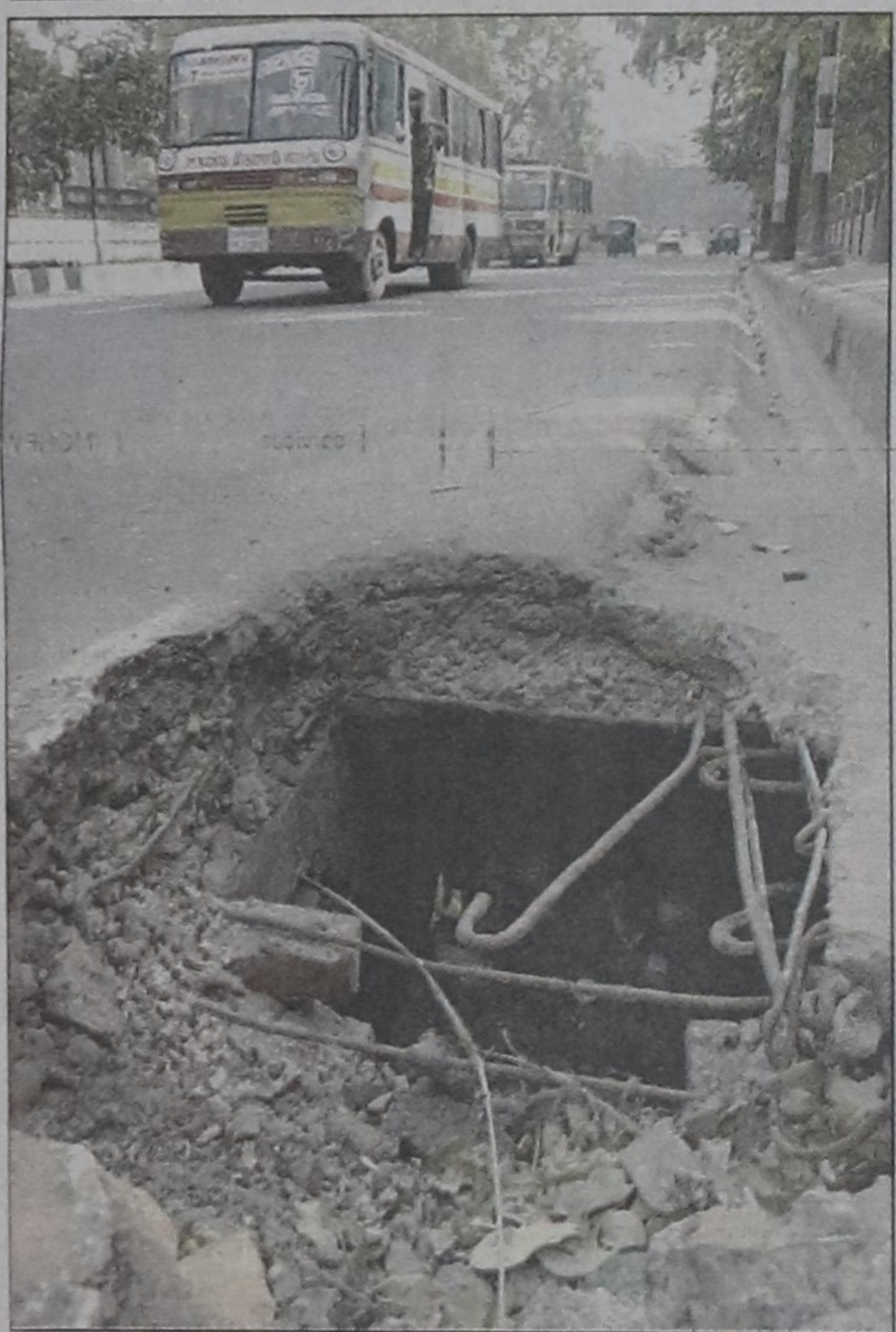
PHOTO: STAR

# Obesity boosts cancer risk

AFP, Paris  
Being obese boosts the risk of half a dozen types of cancer, and the odds strengthen as one's waistline thickens, according to a major review published in The Lancet.  
Doctors at the University of Manchester, northwestern England, trawled through 141 studies that monitored the health of 282,000 people who gained weight.  
Their benchmark of fat was the body mass index (BMI), in which the individual's weight in kilos is divided by the square of the person's height in metres. Individuals with a BMI of 25-29.9 are considered overweight, while those with a BMI of 30 or more are obese.  
The investigators found that every gain of five points in BMI among men raised the risk of gullet cancer by 52 percent, of thyroid cancer by 33 percent and of colon and kidney cancers by 24 percent.  
Among women, a BMI increase of five points hiked the risk of cancer of the uterus lining by 59 percent, of the gallbladder by 59 percent, of the gullet by 51 percent and of the kidney by nine percent.  
Smaller but still significant associations were seen between BMI increase and cancer of the rectum, colon and skin among men, and of the breast, pancreas, thyroid and colon among women. In both sexes, there was an increased risk of leukaemia, non-Hodgkin lymphoma and multiple myeloma.  
Obesity has long been linked to deaths from cardiovascular disease and to diabetes in industrialised countries, a phenomenon that is now extending to cities in developing economies.  
According to some estimates, deaths from obesity in the United States outstripped those from smoking in 2005.  
But only recently has strong evidence emerged of an association between excess body fat and cancer.  
A ground-breaking report

issued last year by the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research found a link with cancers of the throat, colon, rectum, kidney and, among post-menopausal women, the breast.  
In a commentary, also published by The Lancet, Swedish nutritionists Susanna Larsson and Alicja Wolk of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm speculated that excess body fat may cause changes in levels of insulin, sex steroids and other hormones.

This could have an impact on apoptosis, the mechanism by which a flawed cell commits suicide. Cancerous cells are able to bypass apoptosis and proliferate unchecked.  
Localised accumulation of fat cells could also contribute significantly to specific tumours, such as cancers of the liver and throat, suggested Larsson and Wolk.



The road on the east to the Ramna Park in the city lies in a dilapidated condition, posing danger to the commuters as well as pedestrians.

# Astronomers discover solar system like ours

AFP, Chicago  
A host of amateur astronomers have helped researchers discover a distant solar system remarkably similar to our own, according to a study released Thursday by Science magazine.  
Initial observations found two planets orbiting a star some 5,000 light years away which appear to be slightly smaller versions of our own Jupiter and Saturn.  
Just 25 multi-planet solar systems have been mapped so far and this is the first one that really seems to resemble our own, said lead author Scott Gaudi of Ohio State University.  
"It's like a scaled-down version of our solar system," he said in a telephone interview.  
These planets orbit a star which is "smaller, colder and dimmer

than the sun," Gaudi said, adding that the planets are closer to their parent star than Jupiter and Saturn and a bit cooler.  
"We don't know anything about them except their mass," he said.  
One is roughly 70 percent of Jupiter's weight and the other about 90 percent of Saturn's mass. They are more than a thousand times farther away from Earth than the nearest star.  
"We're pretty sure they're (made of) gas like Jupiter and Saturn, but we probably won't be able to find out, since they are so far away."  
The two planets were revealed when the star they orbit passed in front of the orbit of a more distant star. This magnified the light of the more distant star as it was bent by the gravitation fields of the planets.

Gaudi and his team determined the mass of the planets by calculating how the light changed, a technique called gravitational microlensing.  
But since there was just a two-week period from late March through early April of 2006 when this phenomenon could be observed, Gaudi and his team needed all the help they could get in collecting observations.  
They enlisted the help of amateur astronomers in the southern hemisphere and professionals from 11 observatories in countries around the world, including Chile,

Tasmania, New Zealand, the Canary Islands, Israel and the United States.  
"It's more of a coordination effort than a technology effort," Gaudi said. "We use whatever we can get our hands on."  
Many of the amateurs used small telescopes "that could fit on a desktop," Gaudi explained.  
"What's more important for us (than size) is location," he said. "To see the center of the galaxy, you have to be in the southern hemisphere."  
Jennie McCormick of Auckland, New Zealand, who

helped collect the data, was happy to be of use.  
"As an amateur astronomer working with a small telescope from her backyard at the bottom of the world, how does one truly describe being involved in such an exciting and important discovery as this? Fantastic!" McCormick wrote in an email.  
"The thrill of the chase is better still, and working with the guys is a dream come true."  
As for life on these planets? There's "almost certainly no life on them -- they're too far from their parent star," Gaudi said.

# US to shoot down satellite

AFP, Washington  
President George W Bush has directed a US warship to shoot down an out-of-commission spy satellite before it crashes to Earth, senior US officials said Thursday.  
"The president directed the Department of Defense to carry out the intercept" after concluding that it would help prevent loss of life from the uncontrolled descent, said Deputy National Security Adviser James Jeffrey.  
Jeffrey and other senior officials said the risk posed by an estimated 1,000 pounds of hydrazine, a toxic propellant, aboard the schoolbus-sized satellite was a key factor in the decision.  
They denied that it was driven by the desire to protect the highly classified satellite's secrets, or that the shoot-down was intended to demonstrate a US anti-satellite defense capability.  
China drew worldwide protests after it shot down a weather satellite in low Earth orbit January 2007.  
The United States has never shot down a spacecraft in space before, but its missile defense system is designed to intercept incoming warheads in space.  
"Our objective here was to reduce the risk. Could we reduce the risk to space platforms, to airborne platforms, and to terrestrial platforms -- the earth, cities, people, etcetera?" said General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.  
A US Aegis warship will fire a single modified SM-3 missile at the spy satellite in hopes of scoring a

direct hit on a tank carrying the hydrazine, Cartwright, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.  
He said the plan is to hit the satellite at a point in its orbit where any debris will quickly fall out of orbit and re-enter the atmosphere over the ocean.  
"And that's our objective: get rid of the hydrazine and have this fall in the ocean," Cartwright said.  
The soonest that the intercept will take place is in three or four days, but the window will remain open for seven or eight days, Cartwright said.  
Three Aegis warships will be on station with two back-up missiles in case there is a problem with the launch of the first missile.  
"We will have radars and space sensors pointed at the area so that we have some sense of whether we were successful or not," he said.  
"In the case that we're not successful with the first shot, we'll reassess," he said.  
But as the satellite moves across the Earth, the chances increase that an intercept will bring debris down over land, Cartwright said, adding "we're not going to shoot if that's the case."  
"What we're looking for is to catch it here very close to the earth's surface. What we're shooting for, nominally, is about 130 miles up," he said.  
He said about half the debris will come down in the first two revolutions if the intercept is successful, but it could take longer than a month for some of the smaller debris to come down.



Winners of an art competition titled 'The Bangladesh of my dream' pose for photograph with the guests at the prize giving ceremony at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. Pratyasha 2021 Forum and Hunger Free World jointly organised the event.



PHOTO: STAR

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A presentation and individual counselling sessions will be held by the University's International Officer for Bangladesh at  
**Venue:** Falcon Education and Consultancy Services (Official representative)  
Dhanmondi Plaza, Road no: 6 (Mirpur Road), 18/A DRA  
Dhaka- 1205, Bangladesh  
**Date :** February 18, 2008  
**Time :** 11 a.m - 5 p.m

For more information please contact:  
Phone: +88 02 8650862, 8627900, 01712736505  
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