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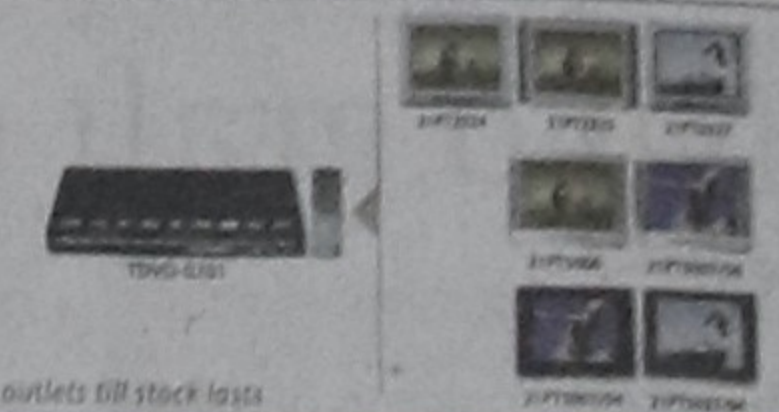
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**Govt to procure 50,000 MT wheat from local market**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday set the target of purchasing 50,000 metric tons of wheat from the local market at Tk26 per kilogram.

The food and disaster management ministry will make the procurement from April 1 through June.

The decision was taken at an inter-ministerial meeting on food situation in the country at the food and disaster management ministry, an official told reporters, adding that the administration managed to buy only 124 tonnes of wheat in last fiscal year against the target of 50,000 tonnes.

The food ministry, however, can revise the procurement targets and

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**Erratum**

The photograph in the photo feature on the first sighting of Albino Duck in the country published in The Daily Star on February 7 was mistakenly attributed to the newspaper. The photo was actually taken by Abdul Hakim Rahul. We regret the error.

**EC to announce UZ poll timeframe soon**

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) will soon announce a specific timeframe for holding the much debated upazila elections.

Currently controversies over holding the upazila elections are raging, as the caretaker government wants the upazila polls prior to holding of the stalled ninth parliamentary election while most of the political parties want the general election first.

In its electoral roadmap announced on July 15 last year, the EC tentatively scheduled November and December of this year as the timeframe for holding the long over due upazila elections while parliamentary poll is scheduled to be held by the year end.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday however clearly stated that the EC's main task is to hold the parliamentary election, while it also took up the responsibility of holding local government elections as an additional task.

In the wake of the on going

controversies over upazila elections, a very important tier of the local government system, the EC decided in principle to come up with a specific timeframe for holding the polls upon being authorised by the government to do so, sources in the commission said.

"After the upazila parishad act is amended, we will decide when the upazila elections will be held, considering the overall situation," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhat Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday.

LGRD ministry sources said President Iajuddin Ahmed is expected to promulgate an ordinance amending the Upazila Parishad Act 1998 within the next couple of days, through which the EC will be re-empowered to decide the timeframe for upazila elections.

CEC Huda meanwhile said they did not mention any specific date or month on the electoral roadmap for holding the local government elections.

"Our main task is to hold the

parliamentary election. We've taken up the responsibility of holding the local government elections as an additional task," CEC Huda told reporters.

"So, it doesn't matter if the elections to those institutions are delayed by a month or two," CEC Huda told the reporters, replying to a query on whether the EC will be able to hold polls to four city corporations and seven municipalities in April, according to its earlier announcement.

On announcing the tentative schedule for polls to city corporations and municipalities, the CEC reiterated that the commission will not announce any specific date for the elections to those two types of local governments until the laws regarding those government institutions are promulgated.

"As far as I know, the ministry concerned wants to have the local government elections under the new law, which will bring many changes. So, I can't tell anything until the ordinance is promulgated."

The CEC earlier announced that

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**Govt gives nod to sector commanders' convention**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday gave permission for the Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF) to hold national convention at Bangladesh China Friendship Convention Centre tomorrow.

The SCF planned the convention in order to mobilise public support for trial of the war criminals in the country.

"Finally we got the permission

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**Annisul Huq elected FBCCI president**

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Annisul Huq was elected president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) yesterday as MA Rouf Chowdhury proposed Annisul's name instead of vying for the top post.

Prior to the FBCCI polls, Rouf had declared his candidature for the top post of the apex trade body.

FULL STORY ON STAR BUSINESS B1

**Better social safety net needed to offset price hike: WB MD**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting World Bank (WB) Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala yesterday said Bangladesh should adapt to a long-term reality of high food and oil prices by setting up better safety nets, which the lending agency is helping to design.

"The challenge is to adjust to the reality of higher prices by securing the basis for a strong macroeconomic performance while protecting efficiently the most vulnerable," said Ngozi, rounding up a four-day trip at a news briefing.

She also suggested that Bangladesh could switch to potato as their staple food as the recent 'bumper yield of potato' could substitute for the current staple rice, for those who would no longer be able to afford rice in case

of a greater shortage. During her trip, she met the energy, finance and communications advisers, and the business community, and made 5 visits to different projects and cyclone-hit areas.

"The WB MD however stressed, 'I saw no evidence of a famine here, but there is an issue about the availability of food.' She also said Bangladesh should import more food in the short run, for which she and WB Vice-president Praful C Patel will urge India to understand Bangladesh's rice shortage, in a bid to help resolve the stalled import of 5,00,000 tons of rice.

"We will do our bit, but I cannot make any promise. That is why I won't go into specifics. I just hope our voice is heard," she said.

But, she also added, the countries that are putting caps or bans on food exports, 'are allowing the food crisis in the world market to worsen'. India has put a global ban on rice export.

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**Writer Arthur C Clarke dies**

AP, Colombo

Arthur C Clarke, a visionary science fiction writer who won worldwide acclaim with more than 100 books on space, science and the future, died yesterday in his adopted home of Sri Lanka, an aide said. He was 90. Clarke, who had battled debilitating post-polio syndrome since the 1960s and sometimes used a wheelchair, died at 1:30 a.m. after suffering breathing problems, aide Rohan De Silva said.

Co-author with Stanley Kubrick of Kubrick's film "2001: A Space Odyssey," Clarke was regarded as far more than a science fiction writer.

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Two Rab personnel hold the 1,000-year-old artefact at the Rab-1 office in the capital yesterday. The law enforcers found the statue on the side of Road-91 in Gulshan-2 over a week ago.

**1,000-yr-old statue handed over to archaeology dept**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab yesterday handed over a 1,000-year-old statue, depicting two Hindu goddesses, to the officials of the Department of Archaeology.

The members of Rab-1 found the artefact abandoned on a pavement near a plot on Road-91 in the capital's Gulshan-2 on March 12.

The 18-inch tall black statue weighs about 26 kilograms.

"We sent the statue to the Department of Archaeology for conducting necessary tests a day after recovering it," said Major Saiful of Rab-1.

He said after examining the artefact, the Department of Archaeology said the statue is of either 10th or 11th century.

Artefact smugglers might have abandoned the statue on the pavement fearing arrest, said the Rab official adding that an investigation is already underway.

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**Ex-MP Zafarullah sued for not reporting wealth**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case against Awami League presidium member Kazi Zafarullah for not submitting his wealth statement to the commission in due time.

The commission has given

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**Jamaat retains poll symbol**

UNB, Dhaka

Jamaat-e-Islami retains its election symbol--the scales--as the Supreme Court yesterday refused to grant leave to appeal against the High Court judgment on the election-symbol issue.

A three-member Appellate Division bench of the Supreme Court chaired by Justice M Fazlul

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**Tigers look to wrap up series**

SPORTS REPORTER

A seventh one-day series victory would be on Bangladesh cricket team's mind when they face Ireland in the second one-day international at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today.

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Prayer Timing		
March 20		
Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	4-55	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

**TAX EVASION CASE SC clears way for trial of Tuku**

*Proceedings of 2 graft cases against Manju, wife stayed*

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed operation of the High Court judgment that declared illegal the tax-evasion case against jailed former state minister for power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku, clearing the way for his trial.

The case is now pending with the special court trying high-profile corruption suspects.

The Appellate Division passed the order while granting leave to appeal

petition filed by the government and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) against the December 5, 2007 High Court judgment.

In the case filed by the NBR, he has been accused of evading over Tk3.80 crore in income tax.

Tuku, who was arrested in February last year, is now serving a nine-year sentence in a corruption case following his conviction by a special court on November 15, the same year.

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**Zardari may surprise all with PM choice**

THE DAWN, Islamabad

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Zardari is reported to have selected the party's candidate for the post of prime minister but he will make it public after the announcement of the election schedule.

Several senior PPP leaders told Dawn it would be wrong to say that the co-chairman was undecided about the candidate. They said the party was deliberately delaying the announcement for political reasons.

They said the candidate had been chosen but it was yet to be decided how to announce the decision.

The sources said Zardari had selected a person for the post and only a few of his close associates were aware of it.

Meanwhile, after nomination of

Fahmida Mirza as the candidate for the post of speaker of the National Assembly, there is a perception that the party's nominee for the prime minister's post would be from Punjab.

Several PPP leaders were of the view that the main contenders were Makhdoom Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani and Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi of Multan.

Most of the party's MNAs believe that Makhdoom Amin Fahim is out of the race, especially after his criticism of the decision-making process.

The sources said the chances of Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar, the only leader besides Fahim to present himself before the media as a strong candidate for the post, had also diminished.

When contacted, PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar said the

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