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**Geeta Pasi talks future of democracy with Sircar**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Chargé d'Affaires Geeta Pasi and Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad barrister Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday discussed different issues including restoration of democracy, proposed dialogue between the government and the political parties and the holding of general elections.

The US envoy and the speaker also talked about effective function of the parliament after the general elections and the renovation of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We have discussed about the importance of restoration of democracy, importance of dialogue with the political parties who

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**105 killed as fighting rages thru' Iraq cities**

**Gunmen blow up oil export pipeline near Basra**

AFP, Baghdad

At least 105 people have been killed in Iraq since fierce clashes between Shia militants and security forces broke out three days ago, according to an AFP tally based on reports by security officials.

Hundreds of people have been wounded in the battles. Fighting has raged in four cities since Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Tuesday ordered the security forces to raid strongholds of Shia militiamen loyal to radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in the southern port city of Basra.

At least 23 people have been

killed in Basra, which was yesterday rocked for a third straight day by fighting, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross and Iraqi security officials.

Fighting spread to the central city of Kut, where 44 people -- 40 gunmen and four policemen -- died, according to local police chief Abdul Hanin al-Amara.

Another 30 people were killed in clashes between Shia gunmen and Iraqi and US forces in Sadr City, the Baghdad stronghold of the Mahdi Army militia, Iraqi security officials said.

Eight people have been killed in

the province of Babel, south of the capital, Iraqi and US officials said.

In Baghdad, meanwhile, Sadr's followers staged noisy protests against the crackdown in Basra, demanding the resignation of Maliki, who is overseeing the military operations.

The police chief of Kut, Abdul Hanin al-Amara, told AFP that among those killed during a military assault that began around midnight were four policemen and 40 Shia militiamen.

"The security forces launched an operation at around midnight (2100 GMT Wednesday) to take

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**5 VIP PRISONERS Suspension of division cut to one-week**

KAILASH SARKAR

The jail authorities yesterday reduced the three-month suspension of division to five VIP prisoners to just one week -- two days after imposing the punishment for violating the jail codes.

The restrictions on meeting visitors and other punitive measures taken against them will remain, sources said.

Inspector General (Prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hassan yesterday told The Daily Star, "The jail authorities reconsidered their decision as such type of punitive measures against VIP prisoners were taken for the first time in the country."

An inmate with division is entitled to a small cot, newspapers and

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**CHT accord is to uphold hill people's rights**

**It was signed in full accordance with country's sovereignty, says CA**

UNB, Rangamati

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace accord of 1997 was signed in full accordance with the country's sovereignty and integrity.

He said the peace accord was for upholding the political, social, cultural, educational and economic rights of the peoples living in the hilly region.

In conformity with the agreement, some government steps have already been taken and the process is on, he told community leaders of the region at a meeting in Rangamati.

Mentioning a handful of the government steps taken in last 10 years, he said as per the agreement, 65,000 repatriated families were rehabilitated under the agreed 20-point package facilities and other financial facilities.

The chief adviser said the CHT regional council, hill district councils and the land commission have been formed through formulating appropriate laws. Of them, the regional council and the three hill district councils are carrying on with their activities, and the district councils are "gradually turning into central points of development of the hill districts".

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**Islamic scholars to review nat'l women policy**

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday formed a high-powered committee comprising country's eminent Islamic scholars for an urgent review of the National Women Development Policy 2008.

An official announcement said the decision was taken in a meeting between Religious Affairs Adviser AF Hasan Ariff and ulama at the Islamic Foundation.

Home Affairs Adviser MA Matin, Communications Adviser Major General (ret'd) Golam Quader, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal, Home Secretary Abdul Karim and DG of Islamic Foundation Fazlur Rahman, among others, attended the meeting.

Acting Khatib of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque Mufti Mohammad Nuruddin has been

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People overwhelmed by the high prices of essentials stand in long queues in a field at Nawabganj in Old Dhaka yesterday to buy rice from a BDR fair price shop.

**ACC okays charge sheet against Tarique, wife**

**Sues ex-AL lawmaker Rahmatullah**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday approved submitting charge sheet against BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, his wife Dr Zubaida Rahman and mother-in-law Iqbalmand Banu in a case filed for amassing illegal wealth and hiding wealth information.

Following investigation, the watchdog decided to charge him with concealing wealth worth Tk 2,16,48,087 in his statement to the ACC and amassing assets of Tk 2,74,93,087 beyond known sources of his income.

Meantime, the ACC yesterday filed a case with Ramna Police Station against former Awami League lawmaker AKM Rahmatullah, his wife Hamida Rahmatullah and their son Safayet Ullah on charges of amassing Tk 5.08 crore wealth beyond known sources of income and concealing information about assets worth over Tk 1.56 crore.

In the first information report, Tarique was accused of illegally making a fortune of 4.82 crore and concealing Tk 4.23 crore property to the watchdog.

The ACC move comes in the wake of widespread criticism over the slow progress of the case as no decision about it was taken six months into its filing on September 26 last year.

Dr Zubaida and her mother Iqbalmand are accused of abetting Tarique in concealing information on wealth.

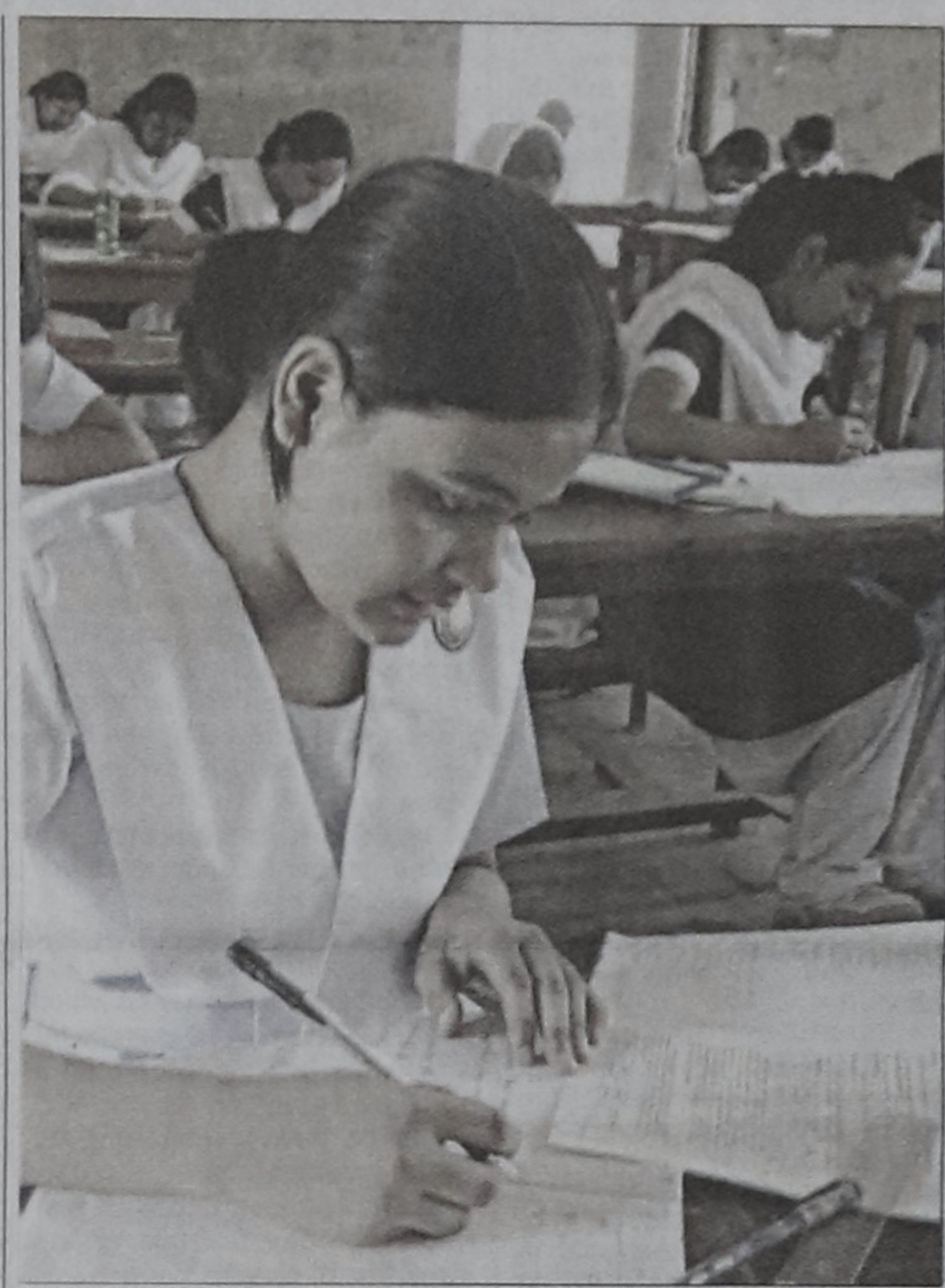
ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal informed reporters about the anti-graft body's approving the charge sheet.

He said if necessary the commission would press supplementary charge sheets in the case or file new cases against Tarique as reporters questioned him about the amount of money the BNP leader is charged with earning illegally when there are even bigger corruption allegations against him.

It has taken two months for the ACC to give the nod to submit the charge sheet after the investigation officer reported his findings in January.

Tarique handed in his wealth report to the anti-graft body on June 10 through the jail authorities, showing that he, his wife and their daughters had a property of Tk 1.37 crore.

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SSC exams began yesterday under seven education boards across the country. The photo was taken from Motijheel Govt High School in Dhaka.

**SSC EXAMS 2 teachers, 117 students expelled on first day**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two teachers and 117 students were expelled across the country yesterday, the first day of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Dakhil and SSC vocational examinations, for resorting to unfair means.

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**ACC allowed to freeze bank accounts of ex-MP Salim**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday allowed the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to freeze the bank accounts of detained former BNP lawmaker MAH Salim and his family members in connection with a case filed against them for amassing wealth through illegal means.

Meantime, the same court

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**Missing youth's skeleton found after 53 days**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the skeleton of a youth, missing for about two months, from Basabo in the city's Sabujbagh area.

Police said they retrieved the skeleton of Babul alias Pichchi

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Prayer Timing		
March 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

**QAEDA TARGETS IN PAKISTAN US steps up efforts for unilateral strikes**

AFP, Islamabad

The United States is escalating unilateral strikes against al-Qaeda militants in Pakistan's tribal areas amid fears that the new government here will curtail such attacks, a report said yesterday.

The Washington Post quoted US officials as saying that the US administration wants to do as much damage as it can to al-Qaeda because it is worried that President Pervez Musharraf will have reduced powers in coming months.

Musharraf's allies lost elections last month, and new prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told US

President George W Bush this week that a broader approach to the "war on terror" is necessary, including political solutions.

The Post report said that in the past three months US Predator drones hit at least three sites used by al-Qaeda militants in tribal regions near the Afghan border, killing about 45 Arab, Afghan and other foreign fighters.

The strikes followed a "tact understanding" with Musharraf and army chief General Ashfaq Kayani that permits US strikes on foreign rebels in Pakistan, but not against Pakistani Taliban, the Post

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