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## WB to lend \$50m for Sidr-hit people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) yesterday signed a credit agreement worth \$50 million with the government to help restore assets and livelihoods for families affected by Cyclone Sidr.

The fund is being disbursed as part of the Social Investment Programme Project (SIPP) of the WB's International Development Association (IDA), which provides loans under concessionary terms.

The pilot project starts this week in four coastal upazilas, but will eventually cover 14 most affected upazilas, says a press release.

After the devastating Cyclone Sidr, the World Bank offered \$250 million short-and medium-term funds to post-Sidr recovery efforts and to strengthen disaster management.

Already \$100million was provided in budget support in the last financial year, with another \$100 million on its way for delivery this fiscal year.

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## Middlemen behind Middle East woes

*They mint money off visa trade; deny workers right pay to woo employers*

PORIMOL PALMA

A clique of unscrupulous middlemen between employers and workers has developed in overseas job markets over the years and is mainly responsible for numerous forms of abuse of Bangladeshi expatriates in the Middle East.

In the '80s when Bangladesh officially began sending workers to the Middle Eastern countries, the employers used to bear all necessary costs. But with the expansion of labour market, a section of Bangladeshi migrants emerged and got involved in trade of work visas, experts say.

At one stage, these brokers started competing with themselves to collect visas by offering higher

payment and low-salaried workers to the employers. Some employers also became partners of the illegal trade, which is now contributing to the increase of workers' cost for overseas jobs and decrease in salaries.

According to industry insiders, monthly salary of low-skilled workers in Saudi Arabia is only 300 to 400 Saudi riyals (SR), which was average SR 1,000 earlier, and 20 to 25 dinar (KD) in Kuwait.

However, the workers have to spend on an average Tk 2-3 lakh and most of this money is gobbled up by the middlemen.

"These days selling visas by the Kuwaiti individuals and companies for a minimum of KD 300 to KD 700 has become a profitable

business. So, in order to sell more visas, there is a tendency among the Kuwaiti employers to bring more workers than requirement," said a former official of Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait.

A handful of Bangladeshis who became millionaire staying in Kuwait for 20 to 25 years invest huge amount of money in the form of advance booking with some big companies to supply manpower from Bangladesh, he said.

Whenever workers are needed, these companies secure work visas from their government and ask these brokers to get people from Bangladesh. The illegal traders then sell visas to recruiting agencies or middlemen in Bangladesh

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## UK minister for local govt in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British Minister for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a two-day trip.

She was received at Zia International Airport by Home Advisor Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin.

While talking to reporters at the airport, the advisor said that the government might lift the state of emergency before the national elections.

Matin said, "We have already relaxed a few restrictions. If deemed necessary, the government will reconsider lifting the emergency."

However Matin warned against a return to a pre-1/11 situation, which he termed as anarchic.

"No one, including you and me, want to go back to that anarchic situation," he said, adding that the emergency was declared to end that 'anarchy'.

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This estate mansion of 1918 belonging to famous musician Satya Saha at Fatehabad in Chittagong has been selected for demolition by the Chittagong City Corporation due to its vulnerability to earthquakes. His descendants demand its restoration.

## Stolen child rescued from Patuakhali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Patuakhali police rescued the 10-month-old baby girl Jannatul Naim Tinni from Taltola slum in Patuakhali town in the early hours of yesterday after a domestic help stolen her from their Hatipool residence in the city on Tuesday.

Sadar police in cooperation with locals rescued Tinni at around 2:00am from the slum on College Road in the town and arrested the domestic help Laila Akhter Mala, 13.

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## 25 killed in Lanka as Saarc Summit nears

AP, Colombo

The Sri Lankan army launched a wave of attacks against Tamil Tiger separatists in the north, sparking battles that killed 24 rebels and one soldier, the military said yesterday.

The new fighting came as officials from eight South Asian nations gathered in Colombo for a regional conference that is to culminate in a top-level summit this weekend.

The Tamil Tigers offered a ceasefire beginning last Saturday because of the conference, but the government rejected it as a ploy by the rebels to gain time to regroup

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Prayer Timing		
August 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



Mannan of Magura bursts into tears at Zia International Airport yesterday as he was deported from Kuwait empty-handed. He had borrowed money to go to Kuwait. Story on page 1.

## Iran again rejects nuclear deadline

*EU takes tough line on sanctions*

AFP, Tehran/Brussels

Iran yesterday rejected any deadline to give a final response to a package drawn up by world powers seeking to end the nuclear crisis and said there should be more negotiations to reach a deal.

"The language of deadline-setting is not understandable to us. We gave them our response within

a month as we said we would, now they have to reply to us," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said, according to the state news agency IRNA.

Mottaki said Iran and the major powers had agreed at a July 19 meeting in Geneva to find common ground on both sides' proposals aimed at resolving the standoff over Tehran's nuclear drive, and

denied any ultimatum was set.

"Both sides said that in future meetings they should work on the commonalities of both frameworks in a constructive way to reach an agreement that satisfies both sides, otherwise Iran's constructive activities will take their natural course," he was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency.

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## Shamim Iskander Petition for quashing graft case rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday threw out a petition for quashing a case filed against detained former Biman flight engineer Shamim Iskander for hiding information about his wealth from the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Hearing the defence and prosecution arguments, Additional

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## HC bench drops Nizami petition challenging Gatco graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday dropped a writ petition filed by Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and former industries minister Motiur Rahman Nizami from the docket on request of Nizami's counsels. The writ petition was filed challenging the legality of the Gatco

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## MI-29 CASE Court order on charge framing Aug 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will pass its order on August 12 on whether to frame charges in the MI-29 warplane purchase graft case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six others.

Judge Golam Mortuza Majumder of the Special Judge's Court, Dhaka Division, fixed the date on completion of hearing on charge framing in the case yesterday.

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## Poll campaigns get momentum as elections near

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The Election Commission (EC) and the candidates running in the mayoral and councillor races of the four city corporations and nine municipalities are making last minute preparations for elections.

The electoral campaigns end 32 hours before the polling starts at 8:00am August 4 and any sort of campaign activity after then would be considered violation of the electoral code of conduct.

Several EC teams are monitoring

ing to see whether there are any violations of the code of conduct. The EC has threatened to take legal actions, even after polls, against candidates who violate the rules.

The EC has completed its training programmes for candidates and election officials in the areas to ensure that the polls are held in a free and fair manner.

Deployment of law enforcers including Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel, policemen and Ansars starts today. They would set

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## ACC presses charges against Sylhet mayor, wife for illegal wealth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday submitted charge sheets against Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran and his wife Asma Kamran in connection with concealing information about their wealth worth over Tk 7.21 lakh from the commission and amassing over Tk 2.22 crore illegally.

The ACC yesterday approved three charge sheets to be submitted against six people including

former housing and public works minister engineer Mosharraf Hossain in connection with money embezzlement, misuse of power, concealing information from the commission and illegally amassing wealth.

The ACC also approved filing nine cases against 14 people including former lawmaker and whip Shahidul Haque Jamal and former Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) chairman Taimur Alam Khondaker in

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## Obaidul Quader falls sick at case hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) leader Obaidul Quader fell sick after he was produced in a Dhaka court for hearing in a bribery case yesterday.

The former state minister was brought to the Special Court-10 on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises from the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital. He was sent back to the hospital on court order.

Judge M Sirajul Islam of the Special Court-7, who held charge of the Special Court-10 as the judge concerned was not present, set

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## Ex-whip Ashraf gets HC bail

*Graft case proceedings against Abbas stayed*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted ad interim bail for six months to former BNP whip Ashraf Hossain in a bribery case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) had filed the case against him for bribery in getting work order for construction of Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover in the city.

Upon a petition filed by Ashraf, a division bench of the HC comprising Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader and Justice Md Emdadul

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## Know Bangladesh Better

Read Star Insight, a fortnightly publication of The Daily Star. It's coming out twice a month every alternate Saturday along with our regular issue.

The current issue (August 02, 2008) covers stories from Moulvibazar, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Bogra & Pabna. Coming out Tomorrow. Ask your hawker for your copy

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**Star Insight**

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## PAYMENT DISPUTE WITH CHEVRON Petrobangla to fight thru' WB arbitrators

UNB, Dhaka

Petrobangla has finally decided to contest the case filed by Chevron with the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Dispute (ICSID), an autonomous arbitration institute of the World Bank, to settle the dispute over payment of a gas-business charge.

The state-run petroleum corporation has also decided to withdraw its case filed with the local court against Chevron.

The issue of 4 percent payback on account of wheeling charge is a longstanding issue between the two sides in the gas-exploration business, as the company declines to pay the charge for pipeline use.

Initially, both the parties tried to resolve the issue through negotiation, but now they agreed to go for international arbitration.

Chevron claimed that the 4 percent wheeling charge is applicable only if it uses Petrobangla's pipeline to supply gas to other parties. But Chevron has been supplying gas from three gas fields-

-Jalalabad, Moulvibazar and Bibiyana- only to Petrobangla.

When contacted, Chevron in a written statement said, "In instituting the case, Chevron is in full compliance with the Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), the Gas Purchase and Sales Contracts (GPSAs) and all applicable laws governing its operations in Bangladesh.

The PSCs, which are based on Petrobangla's own Model PSC, provide for ICSID arbitration, and both the parties are signatories to the ICSID Convention."

But Petrobangla, which has been deducting the amount from its payment to Chevron against its gas purchase, earlier had filed a counter-case terming the US company's claim invalid. Both the cases are pending.

In such a situation, suddenly Petrobangla decided to withdraw the case pending with the local court and go for arbitration.

According to official sources, the ICSID has fixed August 5 for

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# প্রতিবাদ

প্রস্তাবিত "বেসরকারী প্লট ও ফ্ল্যাট ক্রয়-বিক্রয় ব্যবস্থাপনা অধ্যাদেশ ২০০৮" জনগণের মৌলিক অধিকার পরিপন্থী এবং আবাসন শিল্পের বিকাশের জন্য বড় অন্তরায়। এই অধ্যাদেশ প্রণয়ন হলে দেশের সর্ববৃহৎ আবাসন শিল্পে ব্যাপক ধ্বংস নামবে, এর সাথে সংশ্লিষ্ট শিল্পগুলো স্থবির হয়ে যাবে এবং গ্রাহকের ভোগান্তি চরমে পৌঁছাবে।

আমরা এই প্রস্তাবিত অধ্যাদেশ-এর তীব্র প্রতিবাদ জানাই।

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