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Poachers are killing sharks indiscriminately in Patuakhali coastal region for their high demand abroad. Another picture, inset, shows shark meat being dried in the sun.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

ACC spends Tk 7.74cr on hiring lawyers

Dealing with 500 graft cases since Jan 2008

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday said it has spent over Tk 7.74 crore since January 2008 on hiring lawyers in 500 corruption cases.

ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal disclosed it at a routine press briefing at the ACC headquarters.

The revelation about the commission's expenditure on hiring lawyers came after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 17 said 'rationality and righteousness' of the spending of huge amounts of money for hiring lawyers by the ACC will have to be investigated.

In 2007-08 fiscal year, the ACC spent Tk 5,11,59,866 for hiring 51 lawyers on regular payroll.

The lawyers include four senior prosecutors, 10 advisory counsel, 22 public prosecutors (PP), one assistant PP and seven lawyers for dealing with writ petitions.

In the first month of this year, the ACC reduced the number of lawyers on regular payroll to eight keeping open the option for appointing lawyers for a particular case if necessary.

"The commission decided to reduce the number of lawyers this year as many of the corruption cases were stayed by the higher court and the number of special courts got reduced," said Hanif Iqbal.

The number of special courts was reduced to five from ten in Dhaka after bulk of the corruption cases were stayed by higher court because of some weakness in the ACC act, 2004.

Verdicts have been delivered in over 150 out of 500 corruption cases involving the commission.

This year the ACC has so far filed 14 first information reports, submitted 47 charge sheets to the courts and spent Tk 2,62,81,700 for hiring lawyers.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Steps taken to ensure power for irrigation

Minister tells House amid lawmakers' discontent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state minister for power yesterday informed the House that the government has taken measures to ensure uninterrupted power supply for irrigating farm land, but a number of treasury bench lawmakers described how irrigation is being badly hampered due to acute shortage of power.

Replying to lawmakers' demands for uninterrupted supply of power for irrigation, Shamsul Haque Tuku also said the government has formed committees at each division to ensure this. And the committees are now monitoring the power supply situation.

Ruling Awami League (AL) lawmaker Iqbalur Rahim however described acute shortage of power in Dinajpur. People of the district are now facing an acute crisis of power, he said.

"According to the government directive, power supply for irrigation is supposed to be

uninterrupted from 11:00 pm to 5:00 am. I have monitored the situation. Farmers are getting electricity only for two hours in between 11:00pm to 5:00am," Rahim said on a call attention notice on the crisis.

Another AL lawmaker, Shahiduzzaman Sarkar of Naogaon, demanded that shopping malls in the cities including Dhaka must be shut down after 8:30 pm to save power to supply it for irrigation.

"Farmers of my constituency are not getting even one fourth of the electricity required. Irrigation is being seriously hampered due to acute crisis of power," Shahiduzzaman said on a call attention notice.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafizuddin Ahmed of Thakurgaon said people of his constituency are demonstrating against shortage of power as the government a few days ago shut down a 10 MW power plant using diesel.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Anti-terror, RPO ordinances get cabinet nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The special cabinet yesterday gave final approval to the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2008 with provisions for death sentence as maximum penalty or life imprisonment for offences like financing and patronising terrorist activities and murder.

The ordinance, promulgated by the immediate-past caretaker government, empowers Bangladesh Bank to freeze account of a suspected terrorist and give directives to the banks concerned to take measures against monetary transactions for financing terrorist activities.

The cabinet also approved in principle the Representation of People Order (RPO) Ordinance, 2008, suggesting reconsideration of the 'no vote' provision.

"If any person is found guilty of carrying out terrorist activities, he or she will be awarded death sentence or life imprisonment or maximum 20 years and minimum three years' rigorous imprisonment," reads the latest anti-terrorism law. Besides, there is a provision for fining the offender.

If anyone commits murder inflicting grievous injury keeping

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

8 JMB men charged with Prof Yunus murder at RU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court yesterday framed charges against eight operatives of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in the long anticipated Rajshahi University (RU) teacher Muhammad Yunus murder case.

The second court of Additional District Judge Lutfa Begum framed charges in the murder case in presence of all the eight accused in dock.

The accused include Shafiqullah Tarek (a follower of militant kingpin Asadullah Al Galib) and Shahidullah Mahbub (husband of the executed JMB leader Siddiquil

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Gang kills man, loots truckload of rods in N'ganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of criminals hacked a man to death while looting a truckload of iron rods at Rasulbagh under Fatulla in Narayanganj early yesterday.

Fatulla police recovered the looted goods in the afternoon and arrested four people in this connection at Shyampur Balurmath in the capital.

The truck could not be recovered yet. The dead was identified as Al-Amin, 40, an employee of Chakdah Steel and Re-rolling Mill at Rasulbagh under Fatulla Police Station.

Police said at around 1:30am a gang of 14-18 muggers intercepted the truck by putting another truck across the Dhaka-Narayanganj road.

The hijackers then took truck driver, helper and an employee of the mill to a nearby brickfield at Fatulla and hacked Al-Amin to death. Sub-inspector of Fatulla Police Station Badrul Alam said the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Mob clashes with BDR over smuggled goods: 40 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least 40 people, including five journalists, were injured when Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel charged truncheon following a feud over BDR refusing to disclose seizure list of smuggled goods at Shantahar in Bogra.

Witnesses said a group of BDR members led by Nayek Subedar Atiar Rahman raided Khulna-bound Rocket Mail and seized some smuggled goods when it paused at Shantahar Rail Station around 12:30pm.

When journalists asked for the seizure list, the BDR members refused to make it public and soon both sides locked into a row.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

MUMBAI ATTACK

India gets crucial FBI evidence on Pakistani link

IANS, Washington

A team of Mumbai police is headed home armed with crucial evidence provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) indicating that the Nov 26 Mumbai terror attacks were planned in Pakistan.

A three-member Mumbai police team headed by deputy inspector general of police Deven Bharti left for Mumbai on Wednesday with details of how the Mumbai attackers kept in touch with their Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) masters in Karachi.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

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Anti-polybag drive begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Taskforce on polythene bags launched fresh drives across the country yesterday to check environmental pollution.

On the first day of the drives initiated by the Department of Environment (DoE), a mobile court seized 25 sacks of polybags and fined 25 shopkeepers Tk 14,000 at Hazrat Shah Ali market in the capital's Mirpur.

The court filed 25 cases against the shop owners on charge of violating the Environment Conservation Act 1995.

Mostafizur Rahman, state minister for environment and forests, took part in the drive and urged the shopkeepers not to use polybags for selling goods.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

অমর একুশে

New writers unhappy over sales

AMENA KHATUN

A good number of new books arrived at the Ekushey Bô Mela this year but dismal pictures of sales of these books left new writers down.

Around 300 out of 1,705 new books arrived till yesterday evening at the fair on its

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Prayer Timing		
February 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation



Spectators look on as this huge Koral fish weighing 388kg, caught from the Bay near Kutubdia, is brought to Kazir Dewri kitchen market in Chittagong for sale.

PHOTO: STAR

UN asks Lanka not to kill civilians

LTTE says 100 more killed in airstrikes

AP, AFP, Colombo

The United Nations' top humanitarian official urged the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger rebels yesterday to do everything possible to avoid civilian casualties amid accusations that 100 more civilians were killed in Lankan airstrikes.

John Holmes also was expected to discuss the conditions of more than 30,000 displaced ethnic Tamils currently in government-run camps south of the war zone and the plans for tens of thousands of others expected to join them in coming weeks.

The UN also launched an appeal on Thursday to raise 155 million dollars to fund aid projects in the regions of Sri Lanka devastated by the fighting.

Government forces have captured the main

strongholds of the Tamil Tiger rebels in the north in recent months and cornered them into a small sliver of land on the island's northeastern coast along with tens of thousands of civilians.

"We are concerned about reports of heavy casualties to the civilian population" trapped in the area, Holmes told reporters after meeting with Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama. He called on both sides to avoid civilian casualties and appealed to the rebels to allow civilians to flee if they wish.

Human rights groups have accused the government of indiscriminate shelling in the war zone and have also accused the Tamil Tigers of using the civilian population as human shields and of shooting at many who have tried to flee.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Kyrgyzstan MPs approve closure of US air base

AFP, Bishkek

The Kyrgyz parliament voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to close a US military base on its territory that serves as a key supply route for coalition forces in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The vote to close the US air base at Manas easily passed through parliament, with 78 out of a total 81 lawmakers present voting for the closure. One MP voted against and two abstained.

Ruling Ak Zhol party MP Zayinidin Kurmanov said after the vote that the legislation must now be signed by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, whose announcement last month of the base's closure shocked Washington.

"After that Bishkek should send a note by the ministry of foreign affairs to the American side and within the next 180 days the United States must remove its base from the territory of Kyrgyzstan," the lawmaker said.

Despite its importance, the vote proceeded with little fanfare with lawmakers then moving on to their next deliberations.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7