



**Today's Spelling Bee words from**  
Dear Teachers  
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## CUT IN ADP

Govt may slash development spending for shrinking foreign aid

PAGE B1

## PRISONER TRANSFER

The Afghan Taliban deny that Mullah Omar wrote to the White House

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# Neutrality is the key

CEC Shamsul Huda says as he leaves office after 5 yrs; reiterates JS polls can be fair, credible under strong EC



L-R: Muhammed Sohul Hussein, ATM Shamsul Huda and Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain at their farewell organised by the EC Secretariat yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Outgoing Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday urged the staff of the Election Commission Secretariat to maintain neutrality "at any cost" and serve people with diligence in order to uphold popular confidence in the EC.

He also reiterated that a free and fair parliamentary election could be held under a political government.

"It is very much possible to hold a free and fair parliamentary election under a political government if the Election Commission is given some authority," Huda said while speaking to the EC Secretariat staff.

"Nothing is impossible in this world. But it may not be possible in the current situation."

He was speaking at a function organised by the EC

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## For Huda, a call of duty

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Appointment as CEC was for ATM Shamsul Huda a "noble call of duty, not a job".

And he proved true to his calling by accomplishing a number of challenging tasks over the past five years. Under his leadership the Election Commission (EC) has scaled new heights, through setting new standards. It has

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## Names for next EC to be finalised tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The search committee formed to recommend names for the appointment of chief election commissioner and election commissioners will finalise the list tomorrow, the last date for sending it to President Zillur Rahman.

The committee will select two names for each of the posts -- one CEC and a maximum of four ECs -- following a vote by its members. In case of a tie, the committee chief will cast the deciding vote.

Based on the recommendations, the president will form the new election commission as per Article 118 (1) of the constitution.

"We have short-listed the names received from the political parties and will finalise it on Monday," Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan told reporters on Thursday.

The chief election

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## Vitamin-A rich rice gets nod

Govt allows trial production in Bangladesh

REAZ AHMAD

The government has allowed import of vitamin A-enriched transgenic rice seeds for research and trial production.

The state-run Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) late last month got the approval for procuring seeds of the transgenic rice, popularly known as "Golden Rice", for its first-ever trial production in the country.

Something is described as transgenic when genes from a different species transferred to a plant or animal using genetic engineering technique to increase its vigour.

Contacted yesterday, sources at the BRRI, and agriculture and environment ministries said the government

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PHOTO COURTESY: GOLDEN RICE PROJECT  
Golden Rice is seen next to regular rice. The golden one contains beta carotene, a source of vitamin-A.



## 'Urdu is Islamic'

Jinnah at DU

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder and governor general of Pakistan, addressed a special convocation of Dhaka University at Curzon Hall on March 24, 1948. It should have been a happy occasion. Instead, owing largely to Jinnah's imperious manner of defending the cause of Urdu before the audience, the convocation turned into

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## Miladunnabi today

UNB, Dhaka

Eid-e-Miladunnabi, the day of birth and demise of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), will be observed across the country today.

On this day (the 12th of Rabiul Awal of the Hijri calendar) in 570 AD, Muhammad was born in Makkah of Saudi Arabia with divine blessings and messages of peace for humankind.

He passed away on the same day in 632 AD.

The day is a public holiday.

The government as well as religious and socio-cultural organisations will hold various programmes, including discussions,

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# A silent transformation

Several hundred 'plunderers' of fast-depleting Madhupur Sal forest turn protectors

INAM AHMED

Sirajuddin can easily pass for an ordinary semi-rural person. Thick moustache on a dark bony face. A crumpled white shirt. A blue muffler wrapped around his neck. Two-day old stubble.

The only difference is that he is a member of the local government. More importantly, he was earlier a thief. He used to slip into the Madhupur forest and cut away trees. For this offence he faces ten cases filed by the forest department.

Yet he decided to give up the vice when the forest department approached him with an innovative programme.

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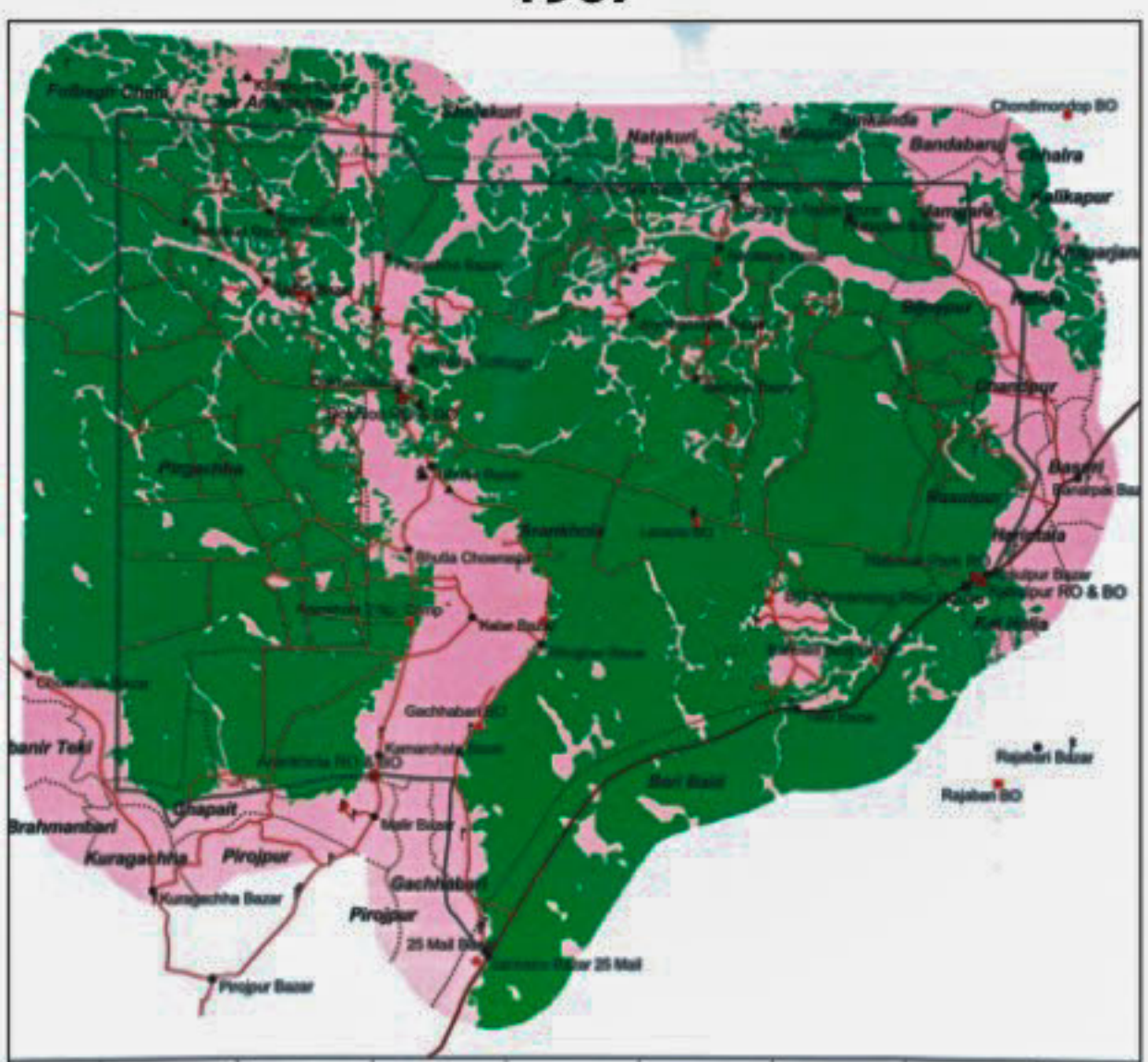
PHOTO COURTESY: FOREST DEPT

Once illegal loggers, they now patrol the Madhupur forest to check tree felling by thieves.

## Forest cover of Madhupur National Park shown in green

1967

2007



COURTESY: FOREST DEPT

# Syrian army massacres 'hundreds' in Homs

Russia, China veto UN resolution on Assad's exit

REUTERS, BEIRUT

The bloodiest 24-hour in the 10-month-long rebellion left more than 200 civilians dead in government shelling in the Syrian city of Homs, according to the Syrian opposition.

The government denied that its forces had shelled the city and called the reports a fabrication.

Meanwhile, Russia and China yesterday blocked a United Nations Security Council resolution backing an Arab League plan that may have hastened the departure of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The two veto-wielding nations acted in New York after President Obama issued an impassioned statement urging the United Nations to stop the Syrian "killing machine".

The UN decision comes after killings in Homs.

Russia and China expressed concerns that the Security Council measure was a one-sided plan that would have condemned violence by the government but not by armed rebels seeking to oust Assad. Both expressed reservations that the blueprint could lead to international

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## PLOT TO OVERTHROW GOVT

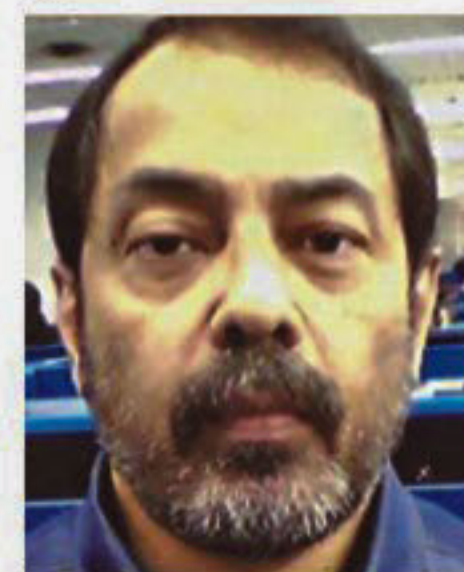
# Ishraq was to head 'new regime'

2 retired army officials tell court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two retired army officials, arrested in connection with plotting to overthrow the government, told a Dhaka court how they had planned to have an army brigade surround Dhaka Cantonment, Bangabhaban and the Gonobhaban, and force the president to dismiss the government and announce a new one.

Ishraq Ahmed, a Bangladeshi businessman who instigated the plot, was to be made the new ruler of the country,



Ishraq Ahmed

according to the plot, which had detailed a new state system and a blueprint on how that system would be implemented.

This was reported in the Bangla daily Prothom Alo Saturday.

Lt Col (retd) Ehsan Yusuf and Major (retd) Zakir revealed these details in their confessional statements following their arrest in December.

Another alleged plotter, a serving major

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## Shun path of destruction

PM asks Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged opposition leader Khaleda Zia to give up "destructive" thoughts and refrain from doing anything in the name of movement that might jeopardise the country's democratic process.

"Don't hope that if a caretaker government takes over the reins of power again, it will put you [Khaleda] in power. Rather you should remember that you were imprisoned by the last caretaker regime led by your people Iajuddin Ahmed, Fakhruddin Ahmed and Moeen U Ahmed," she told at a reunion of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the pro-Awami League student body.

The premier was the chief guest at the event hosted at the city's Bangabandhu

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## Obituary



Begum Rahima Islam, the wife of former Industry Minister and Member of Parliament Late Shamsul Islam Khan, died on 3 February 2012 at 5-55AM in Square Hospital in the Capital (Innalillahi ----- Raziun). She had old age complexity and lung problem. Her Quilkhani shall be held on 5 February 2012 Sunday after Asr prayer at her Dhanmondi residence. On behalf of the family, her son former Member of Parliament Engr. Moinul Islam Khan (Shanto), two daughters Nayar Sultana (Swapna) and Samia Choudhury (Lubna), grand sons and daughters have requested all her relatives and well-wishers to kindly attend the Quilkhani and pray for the departed soul of the deceased.

## HOLIDAY

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on account of Eid-e-Miladunnabi. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow. So, our February, 2012 issue of Forum will come out on Wednesday instead of tomorrow.