

## Hasina terms it fixed election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League is not interested in the April 25 election of Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna city corporations, party chief Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

Asked about the Election Commission's announcement of schedules for the long overdue election of three city corporations, she told newsmen at the AL central office, "We are not interested in polls, results of which are pre-fixed."

Without referring to the ruling alliance, the Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad asked the newsmen, "Have they already decided their candidates for the posts of mayor?"

## 3 city corpns go to polls Apr 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The long overdue elections to Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna city corporations will take place on April 25, the Election Commission (EC) announced yesterday.

The EC at a meeting yesterday fixed dates for filing of nomination papers on March 20, scrutiny of nomination papers on March 21 and withdrawal of candidatures on March 30.

The polls will be held for three posts of mayor and 231 posts of ward commissioner, including 50 reserved posts for women ward commissioners, in the three metropolitan cities.

The tenure of the city corporations expired in 1999.

There are some 28,90,972 voters in 90 wards of Dhaka, 2,10,440 in 30 wards of Rajshahi and 3,81,594 in 31 wards of Khulna.

The number of reserved posts for women ward commissioners is 30 in Dhaka and ten in Rajshahi and Khulna each, where direct elections will take place for the first time.

The EC geared up for the elections to the city corporations, as disputes over delimitation of the three cities were settled by the High Court last month.

Legal complexities arose after the areas of the city corporations were expanded during the period between 1994 and 2000. Several ward commissioners filed cases

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## Rules are for the breaking!

Most high-rise commercial buildings flout construction code

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In all necessary documents, such as project proposal, building plan, approval of plan and environmental clearance, all high-rise commercial or semi-commercial buildings in the city have adequate parking facilities. In reality, however, as a Daily Star investigation has found out, most of these buildings, located at prime intersections or on busy thoroughfares in the capital, have grossly inadequate or no parking facilities at all.

Rajuk officials openly admit that more than 90 per cent of all commercial buildings in the city have been or are being built in violation of the Building Construction Rules, 1996. Law requires that for every 200 square metres of construction of commercial structure, 23 square metres of parking space must be preserved within the premises of the building.

The rules are even more stringent for shopping complexes. Every shopping complex must have a drive-in facility for people to get in and out of vehicles without hindering others' right of way. A developer is required to leave at least 20 feet of space for the drive-in bay at each shopping centre, the 1996 rules clearly point out.

Series of pictures on back page

When a prospective developer applies to the Rajuk for approval of a high-rise project in the city, the company's papers conveniently covers all aspects of legal requirements. When the members of the Building Construction or BC Committee approves a building plan, everything is according to legal requirements in most cases.

A Rajuk source said corrupt officials contribute in several ways to deviations that take place after a plan is approved. For instance, in hun-

dreds of cases, plans that were handed over to the developer did not match the ones approved by the BC Committee, he explained.

The source revealed that the BC committee had approved the plan for Marium Tower-2, a nine-storey building, at Gulshan. However, the Authorised Section of the Rajuk tampered with the approved height of the building and issued the developer an approval for 14 storeys. The matter was later leaked out but the culprits within the Rajuk were never brought to book.

Deviations also take place as soon as the prospective developer leaves the Rajuk building. In many cases architects and engineers, who design the buildings, actively take part in preparing 'a second plan with deviations', because they claim, they have to satisfy their 'clients' who

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## Bill passed Jail terms for acid abuse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed a bill providing for strict measures including jail terms for abuse of acid in the country.

The jail terms vary from one to 15 years depending on the nature of crime, said the bill titled, "Acid Control Act, 2002".

It also provides for the formation of a national council to control production, import, transportation, stocking and selling of acid. The proposed 15-member council to be headed by the home minister would dictate and implement policies for controlling abuse of acid, and treatment and rehabilitation of the victims of acid attacks.

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## Reshuffle in top posts of CID and SB

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday made a major reshuffle in top posts of CID, SB and some posts of SPs of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Additional Inspector General of Police Masudul Haq who was earlier posted at the Special Branch was transferred to the police headquarters. Anwarul Iqbal, additional IGP in charge of CID, replaced him as SB chief.

AIG (headquarters) Mrs Yasmin Gafur has been posted at Gazipur as police super and DC (north) of DMP Dr M Sadiqur Rahman as special police super of SB, Dhaka.

DC (west) of DMP Abu Bakr

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## INSIDE TODAY

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Extending on war on terror: Prudent or paranoid?

Column: Perspectives

M Abdul Hafiz

## Sun Rises Sun Sets

Mar 13 6-07 pm

Mar 14 6-09 am

## Prayer Timings

Mar 13

Azan Jamaat

Fajr 5-15 5-50

Zohr 12-45 1-15

Asr 4-45 5-00

Maghrib 6-10 6-15

Esha 7-30 8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Fixed duty on mobile sets

## Industry, users in a fix

ABU SAEED KHAN

The new fixed duty on cell phone sets and the increased charge for subscriber identity module (SIM) card replacement have ruffled the industry, which views the government move as anti-market and regressive.

And the existing and future cell phone users are the ultimate victims as they now have to cough up higher amounts to go mobile.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) Saturday making it mandatory for a subscriber to pay Tk 4,000 to the government for a reconnection if his cellular phone handset is lost or stolen. This is in addition to the cost of a new handset and all other charges payable to the mobile operator.

Previously, a cell phone user paid only Tk 500 and 15 per cent VAT to get a replacement for a damaged SIM card. But under the new SRO, a subscriber now has to pay an additional Tk 4,000 for such a replacement, bringing his total payment to Tk 4,575.

M Mueyed Chowdhury, former NBR chairman, has criticised the new order. "There is no logic to punish a cell phone user who has already lost his handset or damaged the SIM card," he said. Such steps would

hinder the growth of the cell phone market, he added. "It is a violation of the telecom law, skirting the accountability process," said Barrister Omar Sadat, giving legal interpretation of the move.

He said Article 48 of the law mandates an operator to obtain the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's (TRC) approval prior to changing any tariff including reconnection charges. And as such, a cell phone company just cannot take the extra money for SIM card replacement.

A TRC commissioner told The Daily Star that the commission cannot intervene in this regard unless it receives written complaints.

Meanwhile, the imposition of Tk 4,000 fixed duty on each cell phone handset irrespective of their import values has created deep resentment in the industry.

Low-priced handsets in the range of US\$50 to US\$90 have been the worst victims of the new duty structure as their prices will increase between Tk 1100 to Tk 2400 a piece. Sources said 95 per cent of the cell phone subscribers use such low-end sets.

"We will abide by the government's decision," said

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## Sramik Dal's protest and our reply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal has strongly condemned the March 9 attack at the First Labour Court in Chittagong and demanded legal action against those involved with the incident through investigation.

But it claimed non-involvement with the attack saying, "we want to categorically mention that neither the central, city, regional nor any unit's any leader-worker of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal involved with the attack."

It also contradicted with newspaper reports that implicated Sramik Dal with the attack and urged the press to investigate into the incident to unveil the real instigators of the incident.

In a joint statement on March 10,

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## Israeli troops kill 29 more Palestinians

REUTERS, Ramallah

Israeli forces killed 29 Palestinians in a fierce new military offensive yesterday and launched the biggest tank raid in 17 months of conflict on the eve of a US envoy's truce mission.

Israel lifted the travel ban on Yasser Arafat but rounded up more than 1000 Palestinians for interrogation.

Gunmen killed six Israelis in a shooting attack in northern Israel near the border with Lebanon as tit-for-tat violence reached a new level of ferocity and US envoy Anthony Zinni's already slim chances of success receded further.

The attack on a bus and cars in the Galilee region raised the spectre of a new front opening in the conflict. The identity of the attackers could not be immediately confirmed.

Witnesses said 150 tanks thrust overnight into Ramallah, the West

## Paris meet to take stock of law and order

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) begins a three-day meeting in Paris today with a critical look at the country's law and order, quality of governance and 'much needed reforms' in viral areas.

In a memorandum prepared for the meet, the government has estimated an aid requirement of over US\$ 2 billion from the donors for the next fiscal year.

This time the main focus of the BDF meet in the French capital, known as Aid Club Meeting, will however be on deteriorating law and order.

The donors identified 'poor law and order as a significant problem' and said in a document it "creates a general sense of insecurity in the

mind of the public, deters entrepreneurs from expanding or opening businesses, and increases the cost of doing business in Bangladesh."

Human rights situation and corruption will also feature prominently at the Paris meet, according to the donors' document prepared for it.

Due to the donors' interest, these issues were included in the agenda of the meet.

Bangladesh's "economy has consequently been deprived of some 2-3 percentage points of additional economic growth due to perpetuating and deep rooted problems in governance, infrastructure services and the financial sector" says a background paper prepared by the World Bank in cooperation

with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the meeting.

"Due attention would have to be paid to the quality of growth, which in an era of globalisation, implies that good governance and anti-corruption measures will have to be of high priority-- not to be postponed for later stages of reform if development is to succeed," the document mentioned.

A10-member Bangladesh delegation led by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman left Dhaka Monday night for Paris. The members of the delegation are Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrar

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## Biggest ever tank raid: Over 1000 rounded up

Bank headquarters of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, and nearby refugee camps in the largest show of force since a Palestinian uprising erupted in September 2000.

In Ramallah's main square, angry Palestinians strung up the corpse of an alleged collaborator with the Israelis. The young man, and blood staining his face and bare chest, dangled upside down by his

feet from a metal pylon.

Heavy shooting broke out in some parts of the city of more than 200,000, and Israeli helicopter gunships opened fire on the al-Am'ari refugee camp on the city's outskirts.

Israeli troops killed at least 25 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and four in the West Bank. Two gunmen killed in the Galilee attack and an

Israeli shot dead in the West Bank took to 38 the total killed on both sides in less than 24 hours.

The army said its assaults were intended to root out militants, but Palestinians accused Israel of trying to reoccupy the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip and sabotage Zinni's visit, which is expected to start on

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## 2 Proshika staff arrested

Anti-state activities alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two employees of Proshika, a non-government organisation (NGO), have been arrested on charge of 'anti-state activities', police said.

Dhanmondi police arrested Mohammad Omar Tarek Chowdhury, Director, Policy Communication Department and Mohammad Azharul Haq, an office assistant of the NGO, from Zigatola in the city Monday night. They were arrested under Section 54 of CrPC. A case was filed with the thana.

Police produced them before the CMM's court, Dhaka with a prayer for ten-day remand. The court rejected the prayer and send them to the Central Jail.

In their forwarding report to the court, police said they recovered from them receipts of some 'documents' on recent attacks and repression on some members of minority community, sent to India. They also recovered some other 'documents' on alleged minority repression in the country, the report said.

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## Bill on Bangabandhu's portrait AL walks out of JS standing body meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid uproar over a bill seeking repeal of Preservation and Display of Portrait of Father of the Nation Act 2001, lawmakers of the main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday walked out of a meeting of the Standing Committee on the Private Member's Bills and Resolution.

Although the Awami League has been abstaining from attending the parliament since its maiden session, it participated in parliamentary committee meetings.

However, the meeting with Committee Member Abu Yusuf Md Khalilur Rahman in the chair recommended placing of the bill --the Preservation and Display of Portrait of Father of the Nation (Repeal) Bill 2002 -- with minor changes before the house for its passage.

Awami League members Shawkot Ali and AKM Jahangir also gave a note of dissent on placing of the bill.

Parliament secretariat sources said the bill is likely to be placed before the

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## 8-kg bomb found in train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A cartoon containing a bomb was recovered from a compartment of Kapatakkho Express train on Monday night.

The train arrived at Khulna railway station at 10-05 PM from Rajshahi.

Sources said a group of street urchins found the bomb after the passengers got down from the train.

Being informed, officers of GRP thana rushed there and informed KMP officials of the matter.

Explosives experts of the Army were also informed. They did not come to Khulna till 6-30 pm yesterday to make the bomb inactive which weighs about 8 kilogram.



PHOTO: QIAMRUL AHASAN

An explosive expert of KMP examining the bomb inside a compartment of an Inter-city train at Khulna railway station yesterday (left). A bottle containing two litres of petrol and a battery are seen with the bomb.