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PHOTO: STAR/TRANSCOM

EC targets next
March to hold
polls in 4 city
corporations

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) targets end of March 2008 to hold elections to Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet city corporations.

With this end in view, the EC plans to talk with the government in January on the issue of creating appropriate atmosphere for holding the local-body elections.

"The scrutiny and correction of the voter list of city corporations

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18 Bangladeshi
hajj pilgrims die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 18 Bangladeshi pilgrims have died while performing hajj this year.

Bangladesh Hajj Mission in Saudi Arabia said of the deceased, 12 died of heart failure, two due to old age complications and one in road accident.

However, the Hajj office in Dhaka could not confirm the reason for death of three others.

"Of them, four went to perform Hajj under government management while the rest went there under the management of private agencies," Religious Affairs Secretary Md Ataur Rahman told

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Matin wants
TIB to make
'constructive
criticism'

UNB, Patuakhali

Communications Adviser MA Matin yesterday suggested that Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) should offer constructive criticism rather than only complaining.

He made the comment at a view-exchange meeting on post-cyclone situation in Patuakhali, a day after the Bangladesh chapter of the corruption watchdog came up with allegations of mishandling of relief work in the Sidr-affected

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Cattle price dips for lack of buyers

SHARIFUL ISLAM and
SHAIHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of cattle were found comparatively lower yesterday in cattle markets in the capital as the supply of sacrificial animals was much higher than their demand.

Although more prospective buyers turned out yesterday afternoon at 10 temporary cattle markets leased out by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), sales did not pickup as expected by the traders.

Later at night, sales were escalating and the traders expected the trend to gain momentum and continue throughout today, the day before the second largest religious festival of Muslims.

The DCC temporary markets

were heavily crowded with sacrificial animals yesterday afternoon and a large number of animals were seen stabled way outside the approved area of the markets.

Many areas of the capital yesterday experienced severe traffic congestions as a huge number of trucks loaded with sacrificial animals were seen parked or stranded in the surrounding areas of the markets. Unauthorised and haphazard cattle markets set up at various other locations in the city also added fuel to the problem.

Animal traders yesterday claimed that they were selling the animals at lower prices compared to the prices the animals were sold last year. Almost half the people commented on the animal prices

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TK 3CR EXTORTION
Hasina's trial
resumes Dec 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed December 26 for resumption of trial of detained former prime minister and Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina and two others in the Tk 2.99 crore extortion case.

Judge M Azizul Haque of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court fixed the date on receipt of the Supreme Court (SC) order vacating the High Court's (HC) stay on all proceedings of the case in the judge's court.

The trial court on December 12

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VIOLATING EPR
Trial of another
case against
DU teachers,
students begins

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of the second case that was filed against four Dhaka University teachers and 15 students for purportedly breaking the emergency power rules began at a Dhaka court yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Habibur Rahman Siddiqui recorded the statement of the complainant, Sub-Inspector Rezaul Karim, who in his account

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Eid holidays of
DCC cleaning
staffs cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has cancelled Eid holidays of the conservancy and other departments concerned to carry out cleanliness drive during the religious festival.

It has also deployed about 5,000 sweepers, cleaners, labourers and other workers to remove garbage of the sacrificial animals and clean the cattle markets.

The DCC has allocated about Tk 7.74 lakh in this regard, sources added.

To carry out the cleaning and sweeping smoothly, the DCC

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Shakira grieves with Sidr-hit children

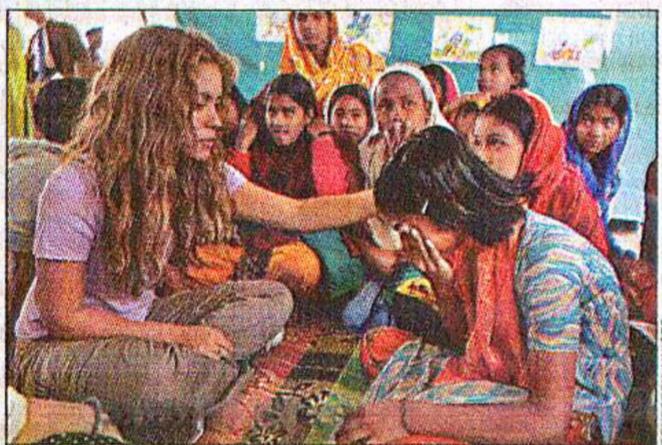
ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

It is hard to imagine celebrities being emotional. Let alone global mega pop stars. But, when Colombian singer and songwriter Shakira sat in a Dhaka hotel visibly shaken from her visit to Sidr-hit areas, it is easy to understand why she was chosen as a Unicef goodwill ambassador.

Speaking to The Daily Star after returning from the daylong tour, Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll passionately recalled her experience in the cyclone-hit areas, often pausing to sigh and reflect between sentences.

"She sang to me a song of grief. It was a beautiful song in Bengali... It said, 'Mother, wherever you are, write to me'. I will never forget her voice," Shakira recalled the moments she spent with Nipa, an 11-year-old girl left orphan by Sidr, in Patuakhali.

But, like so much of what she stands for, Shakira also found hope. "Amid all this calamity



Renowned singer Shakira comforts 11-year-old Sidr-orphan Nipa hearing the child's ordeal during her Monday's visit to cyclone-hit areas in Patuakhali.

sadness and grief, I saw kids playing, singing and smiling in this semi-destroyed school. It was like an oasis... of relief," she said, speaking about Child Friendly Spaces, an institution where children traumatised by

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the deadly cyclone's devastation spend their days playing and learning.

"This made me think more than ever that the world should focus on providing these safe

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Royal Bengal Tiger beaten to death after the fierce animal pounced on villagers injuring several in Dakop upazila in

Khulna on Tuesday.

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Khulna mayor
charged with
extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The charge sheet of an extortion case against Khulna City Corporation (KCC) mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman and seven others was submitted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court yesterday.

The other accused are KCC

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Prayer Timing

December 20

Azan Jamaat

Fajr 5:25 6:00

Zohr 12:45 1:15

Asr 3:45 4:00

Magrib 5:24 5:27

Isha 7:00 7:30

Islamic Foundation

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JMB MEN'S JAILBREAK BID

Comilla prison high-ups

ignored warnings

KAILASH SARKAR

Repeated violation of Jail Directorate's orders and ignoring of its warnings led to the prison-breaking attempt at Comilla Jail by five members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) on November 25.

According to sources, the Jail Directorate had issued warning letters on August 22 and on March 25 this year to the authorities of all central and district jails, asking them to take cautionary measures to tighten security at their jails.

In the August 22 letter, Additional Inspector General (IG-Prisons) Colonel Md Ashraful Islam Khan made it mandatory to strengthen jail security.

But these high officials have still remained untouched while punitive measures have been taken against five security guards of the jail, they said.

Five JMB members, including the son of executed JMB chief

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