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## 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) will be completed by February 15," the EC said.

## 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.

## 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 areas.

# Cattle price dips for lack of buyers

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN 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 pick up 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 hazardous 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

said the prices were higher this year while the other half said the opposite.

Many animal traders claimed that even though they did not have to make payments to extortionists this year, the cost of transporting the animals to the markets did not get cheaper due to the rise in truck rental fare. Oil price increase and unavailability of trucks have led to the truck rental hike, they added.

Kutubuddin, a cattle trader from Roumari in Kurigram, said this year he had to pay Tk 26,000 in truck fare to get to Dhaka from Kurigram, as opposed to Tk 16,000 last year.

Making trips to different cattle markets yesterday, it was found

## 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

## 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

## 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



Bricklayers using age-old blocks dug out from an archaeological site in Chhoto Tengra in Bogra Sadar upazila yesterday. Several houses have allegedly been built with the bricks sold locally at Tk 50 per thousand.

# Pak train crash kills at least 56

AFP, Karachi, BBC online

A Pakistan train packed with holiday travellers slipped off the rails overnight and crashed, killing at least 56 people and leaving more than 100 injured, officials said yesterday.

Pakistan Railways ruled out sabotage and said a piece of track appeared to have broken in the extreme cold, sending the 17-carriage train hurtling over an embankment outside Mehrabpur. Several carriages were crushed or torn to shreds.

"We hope there are no bodies left inside," said Brigadier Mazhar Jamil, who led the army rescue team that worked through the night and morning, treating the wounded and picking through the wreckage for the dead.

"We cut the coaches open and looked in every nook and corner," he said. "The rescue operation is over."

The Karachi Express was en route to Lahore, filled with hundreds of people getting ready to celebrate the Muslim holiday of Eid ul-Azha, when the train derailed outside Mehrabpur, 200 kilometres

(125 miles) northeast of Karachi. The carriages then slid down an embankment four metres high. Some simply tipped over but others were ripped open.

The operations manager of the state-run rail company, Asad Saeed, told AFP that 45 bodies had been counted and that more than 100 people had been injured. An incomplete military toll said there were at least 38 dead.

Jamil, the brigadier, said countless lives were saved by local residents who fought off the cold and hauled the wounded away in the darkness before rescue teams arrived, taking them to hospital on rickshaws, scooters and donkey carts.

For many survivors, there was tragic news.

Rescue teams found a badly injured four-year-old girl, weeping in pain amid the debris. Her parents were missing and presumed dead, said Abdul Hameed of the Edhi Welfare Trust, a major national aid group.

"We have tried to find her relatives," Hameed told AFP. "But

## RMG workers vandalise factory for salary, bonus

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Garment workers in Gazipur's Degerchala area yesterday went on the rampage for salary, Eid bonus, overtime bill and allegations of underpayment.

About 600 workers of AMC Sweaters turned violent when they discovered yesterday morning that the authorities had locked the factory and left the place without paying their salary and other dues.

They vandalised several floors of the seven-storey building. Police dispersed the rowdy employees as the demonstration spilled onto the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway in the noon.

Employees at Trendy Sweaters became violent at the time of receiving half-monthly salary for December when they alleged that the authorities were underpaying them. Workers of La Belle Apparels soon followed suit.

## Correction

In our report headlined "1,500 years old antics found in Bogra" published yesterday, the word "antique" was mistakenly spelt "antic". We regret the oversight.



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

## 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 here yesterday.

The other accused are KCC

## 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.

Sources in the committee tasked with investigating the incident said they found negligence and even involvement of Comilla Jail officials in the incident.

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

Shaekh Abdur Rahman, unlocked their cells and attempted to escape from Comilla Jail 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 Ashrafur Islam Khan made it mandatory to strengthen jail security.

Referring to the deterioration of overall law and order in the country, he gave a total of 11 directives for immediate implementation.

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