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## SSC, Dakhil exams begin Thursday

BSS, Dhaka

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Dakhil and SSC Vocational examinations under the country's nine education boards begin on Thursday.

A total of 7,47,545 examinees, including 3,63,775 females, will sit for the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations under the seven education boards.

Of them, 2,19,758 will appear from Dhaka Board, 2,08,646 from Rajshahi Board, 76,990 from Comilla Board, 1,06,139 from Jessore Board, 55,088 from Chittagong Board, 49,116 from Barisal Board and 31,808 from Sylhet Board.

Besides, 1,83,381 candidates will sit for the Dakhil examinations under Madrasa Education Board while 82,375 for the SSC Vocational examinations under Technical Education Board.

As many as 1,837 centres have been set up across the country for holding the examinations. Officials at the Ministry of Education said a total of 10,13,301 students will appear in the SSC, Dakhil and Vocational examinations this year.

## Saifur calls for restoring democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

M Saifur Rahman, the standing committee-appointed acting chairman of BNP, yesterday said it would be better for the country if power is handed over to elected representatives by holding national elections as soon as possible.

"Those, who don't have any link with people, cannot ensure welfare of people. That's why it is necessary to restore democratic process for saving people from ongoing crises like price hike of essentials," Saifur said while speaking at a discussion at a community centre at Gulshan in the city.

The Saifur-led faction of BNP organised the discussion on the

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## ADP cut okayed

Power, farm sectors get major slash

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Amid a slow rate of Annual Development Programme (ADP) implementation, the National Economic Council (NEC) yesterday approved the revised ADP budget of Tk 22,500 crore for the current fiscal year.

Thirty-five percent of the revised ADP budget is locally funded while the rest is funded by foreign resources.

The original ADP for the fiscal year 2008 was Tk 26,500 crore. The government cut funds mainly from power, health, education, agriculture and transport sectors, constituting 66 percent of the total reduction.

Planning ministry officials said contributions of domestic resources in the ADP were higher in the last few years' budgets but this

year it came down to as low as 35 percent.

"The contributions of domestic funds in the ADP were between 50 and 53 percent in the last few years and in the original ADP of the current fiscal year, local resources shared 51 percent of the funding," said a planning ministry official.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, who chaired yesterday's NEC meeting, said, "Overall contribution of local resources in the budget is not low if we combine contributions in revenue and development budgets."

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed was scheduled to chair the meeting but he delegated the authority to the finance adviser on account of his illness.

The finance adviser said even though it is a big reduction, it would not affect the country's economy.

He said the average spending of the ADP in the last few years' budgets show that real implementation is not more than 17-18 percent.

Allocations from local resources in the revised ADP have been slashed by 41 percent or Tk 5,552 crore, bringing the revised allocation down to Tk 7,973 crore from the original Tk 13,525 crore.

But, allocations from foreign resources were increased by 15 percent or Tk 1,552 crore, pushing those up to Tk 14,527 crore in total from the original amount of Tk 12,975 crore.

Describing the increase of foreign resources in the ADP, an official of the planning ministry said a handsome amount of foreign aid has been received this year as budgetary support following floods and cyclone Sidr.

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PHOTO: STAR

This manhole in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh in the capital has been without a lid for five days, putting vehicles at risk of accidents.

PRICE HIKE  
Cops foil lefts' token hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday foiled a token hunger strike programme organised by the Democratic Left Alliance (DLA) and snatched banners and placards carried by its members.

Activists claimed that the police, at one stage of the intervention, baton charged the procession as they were leaving the venue of the programme -- a charge denied by the police.

DLA, an alliance of 11 left leaning parties including Bangladesh Workers Party, Bangladesh Somajtantrik Dal and Jatiya Ganofront had earlier called for the three-hour long token hunger strike, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at Paltan to protest price hike of essentials.

Accordingly, around 100 leaders and activists of the alliance

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## Two cops held for snatching expat's money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two policemen were arrested on Sunday night for snatching 86,000 Saudi riyal (about Tk 16 lakh) from a Bangladeshi expatriate.

The arrestees are Sub-inspector (SI) Mohammad Selim Mollah of Paltan Police Station and SI Amiruzzaman of Pallabi Police Station in the capital.

They were suspended yesterday as their involvement in the crime was proved in primary investigation.

The two were produced before a Dhaka court yesterday, which placed the two on a five-day remand for interrogation.

Although the Detective Branch (DB) of Police managed to seize the mobile phone of victim Ripon Mia from one of the arrestees, they could not recover the looted money.

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## Gilani elected as Pakistan PM

Sacked judges released; court clears Zardari of judge murder charge

AFP, AP Islamabad/Karachi

Pakistan's parliament Monday elected a staunch aide of slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto as the country's new prime minister, setting up a showdown with US ally President Pervez Musharraf.

Yousuf Raza Gilani, a former parliament speaker who spent five years in jail under Musharraf's regime, won the position as expected with a big majority from Bhutto's party and its allies in the incoming coalition government.

AP reported from Islamabad in early morning that Pakistan's state-run news agency was quoting a senior Islamabad administrator as saying that all judges detained under the government of President Pervez Musharraf were already free.

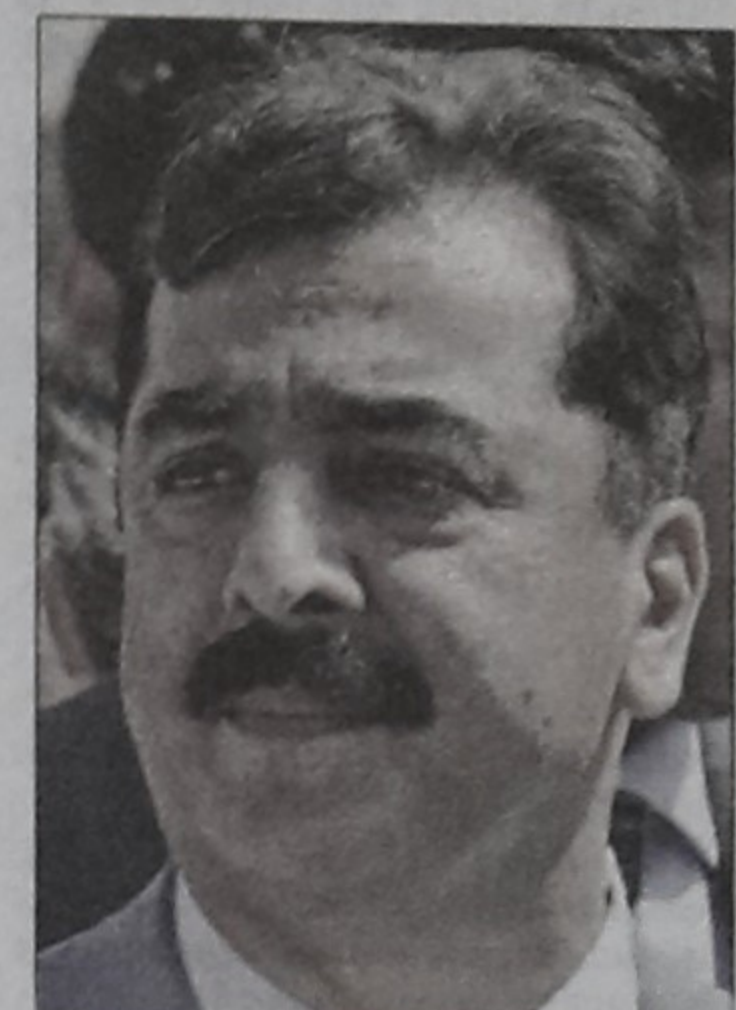
His announcement came after newly elected Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told parliament he wanted the judges released immediately.

The report quoted deputy Islamabad commissioner Amir Ahmed Ali as saying "the order of the prime minister has been implemented and all deposed judges are free to move."

President Pervez Musharraf fired 60 judges in November under a state of emergency.

MPs chanted "Long Live Bhutto!" and "Go, Musharraf, Go!" as the election result was announced. Benazir Bhutto's

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Yousuf Raza Gilani

EC TALKS INVITE  
HC verdict on Khaleda's writ petition Apr 10

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday fixed April 10 for pronouncing its judgment on the writ petition of detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia challenging validity of the Election Commission invitation to her party's reformists for dialogue on electoral reforms.

A division bench comprising Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamnoon Rahman passed the order following hearings on extensive submissions from both sides.

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## Top al-Qaeda leader calls for strikes against US, Israel

AFP, Washington

The second-ranking leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, called for new strikes against Jewish and American interests in a new radio address monitored here.

"Muslims, today is your day. Strike the interests of the Jews, the Americans, and all of those who participated in the attack on the Muslims," Zawahiri said in an audio speech issued by al-Qaeda's

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## Dhaka wants donor status at UNHCR

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh will seek donor status at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which would enable Bangladesh to be part of the decision-making process regarding refugee issues across the globe.

The decision to seek donor status has already been made in principle during a recent inter-ministerial meeting at the foreign ministry with officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, home and food and disaster management participating.

"We have forwarded the proposal to the finance ministry because there is an issue of financial involvement," a foreign minis-

try official told The Daily Star yesterday.

The decision to seek donor status was made following a proposal from Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to United Nations in Geneva Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya.

"We can participate in all the UNHCR meetings, which its donors attend, and make our contribution to decisions," the official said, adding, "We are interested to get donor status because there are around 25,000 Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh for over the last one decade."

Asked about the amount of money Bangladesh needs to donate to UNHCR to enjoy the

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## Democracy comes to kingdom of Bhutan

AFP, Thimphu

Bhutan brought down the curtain on a century of absolute monarchy yesterday, as the king's subjects went to the polls to elect the remote Himalayan nation's first democratic government.

The landmark vote was proposed by Bhutan's royal family to peacefully transform the small Buddhist kingdom, wedged in the mountains between massive neighbours India and China, into a constitutional monarchy.

But the country's young Oxford-educated sovereign, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, is expected to retain strong influence over the running of the country -- which has long boasted that its goal

is "Gross National Happiness".

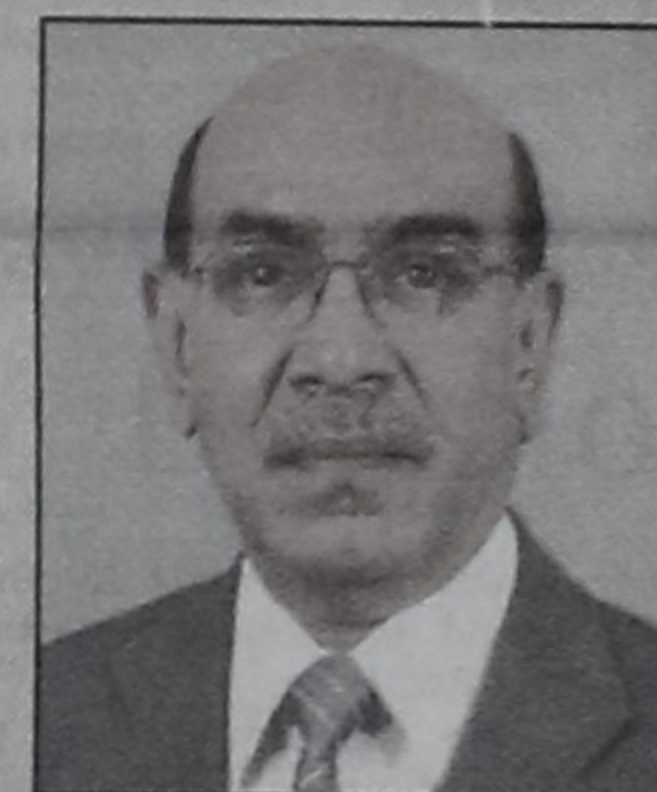
Despite the election excitement, many people here view the concept of democracy with some alarm, and the king made a last-minute pitch to his people at the weekend to try to get them to take part.

His appeal seemed to have worked, as an election commission official reported more than 60 percent turnout by early afternoon in the capital Thimphu, where long queues were seen at polling stations before voting closed.

"This is the first time I'm voting," said Lhamchum, a smiling 68-year-old housewife who turned up with nine family members to cast their ballots.

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WE MOURN



We are deeply shocked and grieved at the sad demise of Mr. Mainul Islam (Swapan), Sponsor Director, Dhaka Bank Limited due to cardio respiratory failure in Apollo Hospitals, Dhaka on March 24, 2008 at 6:15 AM (Innallilaha we Innallilaha Rajeun). He was 58.

His Namaj-e-Janaja will be held on Tuesday March 25, 2008 at Azad Mosque, Gulshan, Dhaka after Johr Prayer.

His Qul Khwani will be held on Wednesday March 26, 2008 at Azad Mosque, Gulshan, Dhaka after Asr Prayer. He will be buried at Manehor, Araihaazar.

On behalf of Dhaka Bank Limited we express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and to pray the Almighty Allah to grant eternal peace to the departed soul.

DHAKA BANK LIMITED  
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**Prayer Timing**  
March 25

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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