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### Sharif's party quits Pak cabinet

AFP, PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan faced a new political crisis yesterday after former premier Nawaz Sharif pulled his party's ministers out of the country's six-week-old coalition government, officials said.

The nine ministers from Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) stepped down after the coalition failed to meet a Monday deadline on how and when to reinstate judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf last year.

The eventual reinstatement of the judges is likely to cause a major headache for embattled former army chief Musharraf, a key US ally, who considers them hostile to his rule.

The ministers had submitted their resignations to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, PML-N spokesman Siddiqul Farooq said, insisting they would only return if the Pakistan People's Party took

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## 60 dead as bombs rip through Jaipur

AP, New Delhi

Seven bombs ripped through centuries-old Indian city Jaipur yesterday, leaving at least 60 people dead in a jewelry market, on the steps of a Hindu monkey god temple and in other ordinarily packed areas of the popular tourist destination.

The blasts all struck within the old walls of the city known for its pink-hued palaces, and suspicion quickly fell on Islamic militant groups blamed for a string of attacks on India in recent years.

"Obviously, it's a terrorist plot," said AS Gill, the police chief of Rajasthan, the state where Jaipur is located.

"The way it has been done, the attempt was to cause the maximum damage to human life," he said, adding an eighth bomb was

found and defused by police. Another senior Rajasthan police officer, AK Jain, said 60 people were killed and 150 wounded in the bombings.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, as is the case with most bombings in India. But within hours of the blasts, authorities were suggesting that blame would eventually fall on Pakistan and the Islamic militant groups New Delhi accuses it of backing.

"One can't rule out the involvement of a foreign power," said India's junior home minister, Sriprakash Jaiswal, using language commonly understood to refer to neighboring Pakistan.

Jaiswal refused to say if he was indeed talking about Pakistan - "that's the subject of investigation," was all he would say. But Indian authorities have blamed

Pakistan-based Islamic militant groups for a spate of bombings that have killed nearly 400 people in this predominantly Hindu country of 1.1 billion people since 2005.

Pakistan denies any role in the bombings.

The attacks have run the gamut from the July 2006 train bombings that left nearly 200 people dead in Mumbai, India's financial center, to small blasts like the one that struck a Muslim shrine in Rajasthan last year, killing two people.

Jaiswal suggested Tuesday's bombings were connected to those previous explosions, saying "the blasts are part of a big conspiracy."

Each new bombing has brought fears of a fresh outbreak of the violence between Hindus and Muslims, that has sporadically bled

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### JUDICIAL MAGISTRATES Govt asked to provide staffs, transports by May 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday directed the government to comply with its earlier order for providing staffs and transports for judicial magistrates as part of completing separation of the judiciary from the executive by May 27.

The seven-member SC full bench headed by Chief Justice Md Ruhul Amin passed the order after hearing Masdar Hosain Case popularly known as judiciary separation case.

The court fixed May 28 for further orders in the case.

Earlier, the apex court had at least four times asked the government through the attorney general (AG) to recruit staffs and provide transports for judicial magistrates.

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People stand with pitchers in a line before a tanker at Halishahar in Chittagong city yesterday as the army starts to distribute drinking water there.

### EC sends poll reform proposals to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday sent the much talked about finalised electoral reform proposals to the government for making them into laws.

In the proposals, the EC seeks to make it mandatory for parliamentary political parties to be registered with the commission for contesting in general elections.

It also suggests stipulated internal reforms for the parties to be eligible for registration, in a bid to ensure financial transparency and democracy within the organisations.

EC Secretary Humayun Kabir confirmed The Daily Star yesterday afternoon that the electoral reform proposals were sent to the law ministry that will place them before the council of advisers to the military backed caretaker

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### SC lawyers now divided on work abstention programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) lawyers are divided into two groups on the issue of two-hour work abstention programme in the Appellate Division announced for tomorrow.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) on May 11 decided to stay away from moving cases in the Appellate Division for two hours from 9:00am to protest against a few recent judgments.

A group of lawyers led by Bangladesh Bar Council (BBC) Vice-chairman advocate Khondker Mahub Hossain at a press conference yesterday said they would not join the protest programme announced by "a section of lawyers" under the banner of SCBA.

Meanwhile, SCBA President barrister Shafique Ahmed told newsmen at his office the

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### NIKO GRAFT CASE Khaleda, five others have to appear in court May 20

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed the jail authorities to turn in detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia and five other people to court on May 20 in connection with Niko graft case.

This is the first time the court has asked the authorities to produce the BNP chairperson before it. She and 10 other people are accused of abuse of power and graft in awarding a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko.

Meantime, two more accused in the case were sent to jail yesterday after they surrendered to the court, seeking bail. They are Meer Moynul Haque, former senior general

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Bundles of bamboo being towed into Dhaka from Sylhet by a boat on the river Meghna. The photo was taken from the Bhairab Bridge.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

### Shibir cadre Nasir gets 17yrs in arms case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A court here yesterday sentenced notorious Islami Chhatra Shibir cadre Mohammad Nasir alias Shibir Nasir to 17 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) in an arms case filed in 1992.

Chittagong Second Additional Metro Sessions Judge Ekramul Haque Chowdhury handed down the verdict in the morning.

The court also gave the same punishment to Md Oli Ullah, close accomplice of Nasir and other accused in the case.

This is the first case out of 35 criminal cases against Nasir in which he is convicted.

Nasir appeared quite calm at the courtroom when the judgement was being pronounced, sources said. He refused to talk to reporters later when he was being taken away.

Once the top criminal in the



Mohammad Nasir

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) list, Nasir has been behind bars since March 1998, sources said.

Police arrested Nasir with a Pakistan-made revolver and six bullets on July 11, 1992 during a

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### He controls Ctg underworld from jail since 1998

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Although Nasir remained in prison since 1998, the infamous Shibir cadre kept a strong grip on the Chittagong underworld through regular contacts with his accomplices by mobile phones and other means in connivance with some corrupt jail staff and police.

He appeared so influential that in prison, he even enjoyed more privileges than a VIP inmate, sources said adding that Nasir never found it difficult to get hold of mobile phones inside jail whenever he wished.

An accused in 35 criminal cases, Nasir has been kept in both Chittagong and Comilla jails during his past 10-year-long prison life.

While he had been in Comilla jail for few years, he was to be

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## Rescue workers dig through flattened school, homes

### Death toll tops 12,000 in China quake

AP, Dujiangyan

The toll of the dead and missing soared as rescue workers dug through flattened schools and homes yesterday in a desperate attempt to find survivors of China's worst earthquake in three decades.

The official Xinhua News Agency said the death toll exceeded 12,000 in Sichuan province alone, and 18,645 were still buried in debris in the city of Mianyang, near the epicentre of Monday's massive, 7.9-magnitude quake.

The Sichuan Daily newspaper reported on its Website that more than 26,000 people were injured in Mianyang.

The numbers of casualties was expected to rise due to the remoteness of the areas affected by the quake and difficulty in finding buried victims.

There was little prospect that many survivors would be found under the rubble. Only 58 people were extricated from demolished buildings across the quake area so far, China Seismological Bureau spokesman Zhang Hongwei told Xinhua. In one county, 80 percent of the buildings were destroyed.

Rain was impeding efforts and a group of paratroopers called off a rescue mission to the epicentre due to heavy storms, Xinhua reported.

More than two dozen British and American tourists who were thought to be panda-watching in the area also remained missing.

Officials urged the public not to abandon hope. "Survivors can hold on for some time. Now it's not time to give up," Wang Zhenyao, disaster relief division director at the Ministry of Civil Affairs, told reporters in

Beijing. Premier Wen Jiabao, who rushed to the area to oversee rescue efforts, said a push was on to clear roads and restore electricity as soon as possible. His visit to the disaster scene was prominently featured on state TV, a gesture meant to reassure people that the ruling party was doing all it could.

"We will save the people," Wen said through a bullhorn to survivors as he toured the disaster scene, in footage shown on CCTV. "As long as the people are there, factories can be built into even better ones, and so can the towns and counties."

State media said rescue workers had reached the epicentre in Wenchuan county where the number of casualties was still unknown. The quake was centered

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## Bar on party factions to do indoor politics

SHAKHAWAT LITON

A part or faction of a political party from now on cannot formally do indoor politics like a fully-fledged party as the caretaker government on Monday cancelled its earlier notification that had given factions full party status.

The new meaning of a political party came up when the home ministry issued a fresh circular after the caretaker government lifted restrictions on indoor politics on Monday.

On September 9 last year, the government relaxed the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) allowing limited-scale indoor politics only in the capital.

"To meet the objective of this circular, part of any political party will also be included as political party," said a gazette notification of

the home ministry issued on September 9. This allowed a part of a political party to hold indoor meetings to work for bringing reforms in the party.

Sources in the home ministry said the explanation was excluded this time because the government high-ups did not instruct them to include it.

"In fact, the explanation was dropped carefully as the political parties seem to be united," a source in the ministry said, adding that now a part or faction of a political party cannot enjoy the benefits a party has been enjoying since the EPR was relaxed.

Interestingly, since September 9 the country has witnessed splitting of or processes to split major political parties.

The BNP was formally divided following the October 29 meeting

of the BNP Standing Committee that appointed pro-reform leaders M Saifur Rahman and Major (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed as acting chairman and acting secretary general of the party.

The Awami League also faced a lot of difficulties to remain united as several groups emerged in the party under some senior leaders in the name of reforms.

The September 9 explanation of the meaning of a political party also contradicted the constitution in this regard.

According to article 152(1) of the constitution, a political party includes a group or combination of persons who operate within or outside parliament under a distinctive name and who hold themselves out for the purpose of propagating a political opinion or

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### Rice, edible oil prices increase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The wholesale and retail prices of different varieties of rice increased in the capital yesterday while edible oil prices saw a hike during the last two days.

Crowd at the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) fair price outlets in the city is increasing day by day. The number of buyers was falling. People started gathering at the BDR fair price outlets yesterday dawn to buy rice at Tk 25 per kg.

The BDR at 75 outlets in the city is selling rice putting people in two queues, instead of four, since last week. It is selling 3kg of rice to each person instead of the 5kg it used to sell.

Col Mujibul Haque of BDR told The Daily Star that he instructed BDR personnel at the outlets to increase the number of queues if necessary.

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### UK hails CA's address

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Kingdom (UK) yesterday welcomed the chief adviser's address to the nation and termed it a positive statement.

"We think it's a positive statement as it shows the intent and sincerity of the government to hold the election in December," said outgoing British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury after inaugurating the voter-registration electronic billboard at Shahbagh road crossing in the city.

"You have now the election date, you also have progress towards lifting of the emergency and the ban on indoor politics across the country," he said.

The British envoy said, "We are very much hopeful that everybody will take part in making this national project a success."

Praising the voter-registration electronic billboard, the envoy said the billboard, first ever in Bangladesh, will help people see progress of voter registration.

The billboard will display information on voter registration, progress of voter registration across the country and other related

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A broken manhole on a street in Bijoy Nagar in the capital puts vehicles and people at risk. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

### Prayer Timing

May 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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