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**Prince Aga Khan due today**

UNB, Dhaka

Prince Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, arrives Dhaka today on a four-day state visit.

Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed will receive him at Zia International airport.

Prince Aga Khan's visit marks the golden jubilee of his Imam. He

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**2 lakh transparent ballot boxes to arrive from Canada by Sept**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will receive around two lakh transparent ballot boxes from Canadian government free of cost by the end of September for the upcoming parliamentary election.

"The transparent ballot boxes are now being manufactured for us. We will get those before October," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain told reporters at his office yesterday.

In response to the demand by the major political parties, the EC has decided to introduce transparent ballot boxes, instead of using traditional boxes made of steel, in the next election scheduled on the third week of December.

The election commissioner said the EC plans to hold the polls to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) at the end of August or early September while elections to other four city corporations and some municipalities will take place in mid-July.

"The elections to city corporations will be a test case for us to identify potential difficulties in holding the parliamentary election in a free and fair manner," he added.

Asked whether the transparent ballot boxes would be used in the DCC polls, he said the EC might use those if the boxes are available by that time.

Sakhawat said the EC would announce schedule for the polls to city corporations of Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and Barisal and seven municipalities on third week of July. "Final voter list for the city corporations and municipalities are now complete," he said.

The progress in the preparations for the general election is satisfactory, the election commissioner said adding "We hope the final voter list will be ready by the

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**Buddha Purnima today**

BSS, Dhaka

Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community, will be celebrated across the country today with due religious fervour.

The occasion marks three most important events in the life of Lord Buddha -- his advent, enlightenment and nirvana, about 2,500 years back.

On this day in 563 BC, Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautam in Kapilabostu at the foothill of the Himalayas. He attained supreme enlightenment at the age of 35 and finally departed into 'nirvana' at the age of 80 in 483 BC.

The Buddhist community will celebrate the occasion in all monasteries and Buddhist religious organisations through a daylong programme.

The programme includes hoisting the national flag and the

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**Search for China quake survivors bleak**

AP, Beichuan

The search for survivors in the rubble of China's powerful earthquake grew bleak Sunday, with rescuers in some areas no longer listening for trapped victims.

There were a few tales of rescues even six days after the magnitude 7.9 quake in central China. But the focus of efforts in the disaster zone appeared to shift to clearing corpses from shattered buildings as the number of confirmed dead rose to 32,477.

Another 220,109 people suffered injuries, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. The government has said it expects the final death toll will surpass 50,000.

People ran into the streets as a strong aftershock measured by the US Geological Survey at magnitude 5.7 shook the area early Sunday for 45 seconds.

Few hopeful relatives were seen in Beichuan, near the quake's epicentre, where several dozen corpses in blue body bags lay in a street, with soldiers regularly finding more dead in the wreckage. Rescue workers in the city sprinkled lime on the bodies and sprayed disinfectant nearby.

Wu Hai, a rescue team leader who came from neighbouring Yunnan province, said bodies were in the middle stages of decomposition and "many of the limbs are broken off."

"There are definitely many more here. Locals here said several thousands have been buried here," he said.

A Malaysian rescue team in the town of Muyu, farther north, sifted slowly and methodically through the wreckage, using giant cutters to split steel girders. However, they had apparently abandoned earlier efforts to tap on the debris in hopes that survivors would hear and respond.

Dozens of students were buried in new graves dotting a green hillside overlooking the rubble, the small mounds of dirt failing to block the pungent smell of decay wafting from the ground. Most graves were unmarked, though several had wooden markers with names scribbled on them.

Zhou Benben, 36, said he raced to the town's middle school after the earthquake and found it had

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Women wait for the supply of gas to reach a useable level, to light their stoves. This picture was taken from a communal kitchen at a slum in the Mohammadpur embankment area yesterday.

**Arrest of JU students sparks violence**

UNB, Savar

Students of Jahangirnagar University went on the rampage Saturday night following the arrests of three university students on 'mugging' charges.

They set up roadblocks on Dhaka-Aricha Highway for five hours from 9:00pm Saturday and damaged over 50 vehicles in protest of the arrests.

The proctor of the university, Sayed Kamrul Ahsan, resigned early yesterday as he failed to get the students released from Rab custody.

Campus sources said plainclothes Rab picked up the three students from Dairy Farm Gate of the university suspecting their involvement in a mugging incident in the area at about 8:30pm Saturday.

Violence sparked off as the news spread across the campus. Several hundred students took to the streets and put barricades on Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

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**Decision to join dialogue in consultation with Hasina**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior Awami League (AL) leaders yesterday said they would make decision on holding dialogue with the caretaker government in consultation with party President Sheikh Hasina on her release.

Neither the election nor dialogue would be acceptable without participation of the former premier, they said at a discussion organised by AL at Diploma

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**WOMEN DEV POLICY Scrap review body, its recommendations**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Samajik Protirodh Committee, an alliance of 46 women, human rights and social organisations yesterday demanded that the caretaker government immediately cancel the 'so-called review committee' formed for the National Women Development Policy (NWDP) 2008 and reject all its recommendations.

The platform placed a five-point demand in this regard at a discussion meeting at the Dhaka Engineering Institution in the city attended by several hundred rights activists.

The demands include the disclosure of all government pledges for establishing equality for women at all levels of the society, disclosure of the government's position on NWDP 2008 through a press note, allocation of a separate

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**HIDING WEALTH INFO Charges framed against Tariqul, family**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Jessore court yesterday framed charges against former BNP minister Tariqul Islam and four of his family members in a case filed for hiding information about wealth to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The special-court judge set May 25 to record the statements of the prosecution witnesses.

Meantime, police Saturday pressed charges against detained Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman and 16 other people in an extortion case.

The ACC's Jessore office Deputy Director Manzur Morshed filed the case against Tariqul, his wife Prof Nargis Begum, their two sons

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Supporters of BNP leader Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan clashed with lawyers on the premises of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court after Bhuiyan was sent to jail yesterday.

**Khaleda files petition for quashing Niko graft case**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia yesterday filed a petition with the High Court (HC) for quashing the proceedings against her in the Niko graft case filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

The HC bench comprising Justice Sharifuddin Chaklader and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad may hear the petition tomorrow.

On December 9 last year, the ACC filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station against the BNP chairperson and several others on charge of abusing power in awarding a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko.

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**Banks to cut interest rates**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Owners of private commercial banks yesterday agreed to set the highest interest rate for productive sectors at 14 percent, which is lower by 0.75 percentage points from the offer the banks had placed before Bangladesh Bank in March.

The new rate will be implemented from the next fiscal year starting from July.

Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB), a platform of bank owners, approved the rate cut at a meeting with leaders of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), and Bangladesh Knitwear

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**Prayer Timing**

May 19

	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