

# Gaza raids help boost Hamas popularity at Abbas's expense

AFP, Ramallah

Hamas's star is rising among Palestinians as each new Israeli bomb falls on Gaza, while Western-backed president Mahmud Abbas is becoming increasingly isolated, analysts say.

The moderate Abbas, who lost control of Gaza when the Islamists seized it last year from forces loyal to him, has even been accused by Hamas and others of seeking to retake power in the enclave with Israeli complicity.

Abbas has repeatedly called for an immediate halt to the Israeli offensive in Gaza, but his pleas have been eclipsed by the gory images of casualties and of protests across the Arab world broadcast on Arab television, particularly Al-Jazeera.

At the same time, Hamas is using its own Al-Aqsa television and Internet site to mount a propaganda campaign against Abbas, regularly showing footage of him with Israeli leaders.

Mushir al-Masri, leader of the Hamas group in the Palestinian parliament, has even gone so far as to claim that Abbas "knew the exact date of the surprise Israeli operation in Gaza."

Increasingly, the Palestinian man in the street is viewing Hamas as the cutting edge of resistance against Israel, while

Abbas and certain Arab governments, particularly that of Egypt, are seen as having given in to the Jewish state.

Abbas, who has been engaged in peace talks with Israel since November 2007, finds himself in a no-win situation, analysts say. It is politically difficult for him to continue advocating a deal with the very people whose bombs are killing and wounding hundreds of Palestinians.

"President Abbas is in a less-than-ideal position," says Samir Awa, chairman of the political science department at the West Bank's Bir Zeit University.

"Israel has not left him any room for manoeuvre. He cannot continue defending the idea of negotiations when they are not bringing any results."

Those talks, meant to lead to the creation of a Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel, have made virtually no progress. They have been undermined by continuing Jewish settlement in the West Bank, violence in and around Gaza, squabbling between Hamas and Abbas's secular Fatah faction and repeated upheavals in the Israeli government.

"Israel has announced that it is engaged in a war without quarter in Gaza, which has left Abbas, in his capacity as president of all the Palestinian people, with no other choice than to proclaim his

support for Gaza," added Awad.

George Giacaman, director of Ramallah's Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, said the war over Gaza will be crucial in determining whether Abbas's Palestinian Authority stands or falls.

"The aggression against Gaza is lifting Hamas's popularity" while the "weakening of Abbas is the fault of Israel and the United States, who are responsible for the absence of progress in the peace talks."

"The future of the Palestinian Authority is in the hands of the United States and Israel. If the Palestinian people do not see significant progress in the negotiations, the Authority will be weakened even more and risks not being able to recover," Giacaman said.

Those who stand up to Israel have traditionally been the darlings of Palestinian public opinion, and "what is happening now strengthens Hamas's popularity because the Palestinian and Arab man in the street see it as a victim of the injustice and daily death being inflicted on it."

Samih Shabib, political columnist at Al-Ayyam daily newspaper in Ramallah, said: "As things are going now Abu Mazen (Abbas) will be extremely weakened, especially when Hamas announces the end of his mandate on January 9."



Palestinian demonstrators shout slogans in the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday during a protest against the Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip. Amid mushrooming protests around the globe, diplomats scrambled to find a way to halt one of Israel's deadliest-ever offensives on Gaza that has so far killed at least 390 Palestinians.

## India approves new law to combat terrorism

AP, New Delhi

India's president signed an anti-terror bill into law yesterday to boost police powers in the wake of a bloody attack on the country's financial capital, officials said.

President Pratibha Patil approved the bill along with another one that will create an FBI-style national investigation agency, said Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram, the country's top law enforcement official.

Parliament passed the bills following the Nov. 26-29 attack on Mumbai by suspected Islamic terrorists that killed 164 people. Human rights groups have criticized the legislation, saying it violates international rights treaties.

The new anti-terror law doubles the number of days police can detain terror suspects before filing charges from 90 days to 180, and boosts police powers to conduct searches.

## Bombs kills 6 in Iraq

AFP, Mosul

Six people were killed and more than 50 wounded yesterday in bombings in northern Iraq, where US and Iraqi forces have been struggling to root out insurgents, police said.

In the largest attack, a car bomb ripped through a crowded market area in the town of Sinjar, northwest of Mosul and near the Syrian border, killing four people and wounding 42. Sinjar police lieutenant colonel Fathi Jabbari told AFP.

No further details were immediately available.

Earlier yesterday, a bomb exploded in a Mosul street as an Iraqi police patrol cruised past, injuring several people, local policeman Ahmed Abdul Karim told AFP.

As people rushed to help the wounded a second bomb detonated, killing two people, he added. No police were injured in the attacks.

## Bomb blast at Basque TV building after ETA alert

AFP, Madrid

A car bomb exploded outside the headquarters of the Basque broadcasting network in the city of Bilbao yesterday, minutes after the area was evacuated following a warning call in the name of the separatist group ETA, police said.

There appeared to be no casualties in the blast, which took place at 11:05 am (1005 GMT), a police spokesman said.

Spanish television showed a huge column of white smoke arising from the Basque Radio and Television (EITB) headquarters in Bilbao, in Spain's northern Basque Country.

The building is adjacent to another housing office media groups in the Basque economic capital.

The EITB headquarters and the surrounding area were evacuated just minutes before the blast after a person claiming to represent ETA called the local fire service warning of an imminent explosion at the site.

## Pakistan kills 3 militants near Afghan border

AFP, AP, Peshawar

Pakistani security forces arrested 28 rebels and killed three civilians as troops backed by helicopter gunships continued a major operation against militants for a second day yesterday, a senior official said.

Supplies to Nato and US forces in Afghanistan via the historic Khyber Pass remained suspended because of the operation, local administration chief Tariq Hayat told a news conference.

Fazal Mahmood said the road through the famed Khyber Pass remained closed, but he hoped it would reopen soon. The U.S. military has praised the campaign and said the temporary closure of the road was not a problem.

## Troops kill 11 militants in Afghanistan

AP, Kabul

US-led coalition forces killed 11 militants during an operation just outside the Afghan capital, the coalition said yesterday.

The operation took place Tuesday about 60 kilometres northeast of Kabul in Surobi district, it said.

The coalition said its forces targeted a commander wanted for trafficking weapons and fighters throughout the region. They killed two militants with gunfire and nine others with airstrikes during the operation, it said.

The coalition does not identify the units involved in its operations. French soldiers are known to operate in the Surobi region, as are US Special Forces on occasion.

Afghanistan's security situation has been deteriorating. The number of roadside bombings and kidnappings doubled in 2008 from the previous year, the U.S. ambassador said Tuesday.

The number of roadside bombings rose from roughly 1,000 in 2007 to 2,000 in 2008, while the number of kidnappings jumped from about 150 to 300, Ambassador William Wood said.

## Somalian troops kill 9 civilians in Mogadishu

AFP, Mogadishu

Nine civilians were killed when Somali government forces fired mortar shells at a busy market area during fighting with Islamist insurgents in Mogadishu, witnesses told AFP yesterday.

The mortar shells started raining (down on) as people were going about their daily occupations after fighting broke out in the K4 area," said Mohamed Subow, a local resident.

"The mortar fired from that area struck Bakara market neighbourhood. At least nine people died, some of them in hospital," he said.

The incident took place on Tuesday.

## Sri Lankan rebels open to peace talks

AP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger separatists are open to restarting peace talks with the government, despite the continuing military offensive aimed at crushing the group, a senior rebel official said.

Rebel political chief Balasingham Nadesan told The Associated Press the rebels did not believe they were facing imminent defeat.

"We have made several strategic withdrawals in order to save the lives of our people and maintain the strength of our forces. When the time and place is conducive, we will regain the land we have lost," he said in an e-mail sent to AP late Tuesday.

The two sides have been fighting for more than 25 years over the rebels' demands for an independent state for minority Tamils in the north and east of this Indian Ocean island nation.

A new military push deep into the rebel heartland in recent months has forced the Tamil Tigers to retreat from vast swathes of land they once controlled, and the government has said it expects to finish off the group in the coming months.

The two sides agreed to a truce in 2002 and held internationally brokered peace talks aimed at resolving the bloody conflict. The talks stalled, however, and violence erupted again three years ago. The government officially pulled out of the cease-fire in January.

Nadesan said the rebels had not abandoned hopes for peace talks.

"We have always been ready for peace talks, but the Sri Lankan government has been always insisting on a military solution," he said.

The government said it would only consider new peace moves if the rebels

agreed to disarm.

"For three decades we were trying to convince (rebel leader Velupillai) Prabhakaran and his terror group to come to some sort of reasonable arrangement, but they failed," Cabinet minister Keheliya Rambukwella said.

If the group refuses to lay down its weapons, "we will not move an inch from our position," he said.

The rebels have been fighting since 1983 to create an independent homeland for the minority Tamils, who have suffered decades of marginalization by successive governments controlled by the Sinhalese majority. The conflict has killed more than 70,000 people.

Fighting across the north continued Wednesday, and the rebel-linked TamilNet Web site reported that air force jets bombed a village about 8 a.m., killing four civilians and wounding 13 others.

## China milk scandal dairy boss goes on trial

AP, Beijing

A former dairy boss who could face the death penalty in China's tainted milk scandal testified yesterday that she began investigating product quality issues in May but did not notify authorities until August, a state news agency said.

Tian Wenhua, former board chairwoman and general manager of Sanlu Group Co., pleaded guilty to charges of producing and selling fake or substandard products, the Xinhua News Agency said. Three other executives faced similar charges after being linked to infant formula contaminated with the industrial chemical melamine.

They could be executed if convicted, the China Daily newspaper reported. Melamine, commonly used to make plastics and fertilizer, has been blamed for the

deaths of at least six children and sickening nearly 300,000 others.

Authorities say milk suppliers mixed the nitrogen-rich powder into raw milk to fool quality tests for protein. When ingested in large amounts, melamine can cause kidney stones and kidney failure.

The high-profile defendants and the release of details in a 1.1 billion yuan (\$160 million) compensation plan signal that authorities hope to end what was widely seen as a national disgrace, highlighting widespread food safety problems and corporate and official malfeasance.

In a move underscoring public concerns, China's top product quality watchdog said it was testing tableware made of melamine after reports that the products could be toxic when heated, Xinhua said late Tuesday. The utensils were sold in domestic supermar-

kets and wholesale markets, the report said, citing the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine.

In the trials that began yesterday, Tian and her colleagues appeared before a three-judge panel after being escorted into the courtroom by police. Defendant Wang Yuliang, a former deputy general manager at Sanlu, used a wheelchair because he lost use of his legs during a suicide attempt, Xinhua said.

Tian told the court she learned of consumer complaints about problematic milk in mid-May, and led a team set up to handle the case, Xinhua said. But she also said she did not submit a written report on the situation to the government in Shijiazhuang, the northern Chinese city where Sanlu is based, until Aug. 2.

## Arab states cancel New Year festivities

AFP, Cairo

Several Arab states have cancelled planned New Year celebrations in solidarity with Palestinians in the Islamist-run Gaza Strip who suffered a fifth straight day of Israeli bombardment yesterday.

Egypt, Jordan and Dubai have all cancelled festivities including concerts by renowned Arab singers.

As the Arab League met in the Egyptian capital, the cultural message was clear.

Egypt's state-owned Al-Ahram daily reported that official events planned for New Year's Eve had been shelved.

"In solidarity with the painful events in the Palestinian territories and the massacres which Gazans are faced with... the ministries of culture and information have decided to cancel New Year's festivities," it said.

In the Gulf tourism hub of Dubai, the emirate's ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed al-Maktoum decreed that several planned concerts should not go ahead.

He gave the order "as a sign of solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people and because of the death and destruction perpetrated on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli war machine," his office said.

In Jordan several five-star hotels and restaurants in the capital Amman and other cities including the ancient Nabataean city of Petra and the Red Sea port of Aqaba, cancelled New Year celebrations.

"The decision to cancel the celebrations has been taken in solidarity with our people in Gaza," Michel Nazzari, head of the Jordanian Hotel Association, said in a statement.

## Thousands hail Indian Kashmir's new leader

AFP, Srinagar

A young, pro-India Muslim politician, set to become the new chief minister of Indian Kashmir, was hailed by thousands of supporters on his arrival here yesterday from national capital New Delhi.

Omar Abdullah, the 38-year-old leader of the National Conference, was backed by India's ruling Congress party for the top job, after staggered state polls in the troubled Muslim-majority region produced a fractured verdict.

Supporters travelling in cars, buses, trucks and on motorcycles followed Abdullah's bullet-proof automobile as it left the fortified airport in Srinagar, the summer capital of the insurgency-hit region.

Carrying party flags, the supporters danced and shouted pro-Abdullah slogans, witnesses said.

Abdullah later addressed them inside a cricket stadium. "I will work to end your problems, be it power, roads or jobs," said Abdullah.

The National Conference won 28 of the state assembly's 87 seats, while the Congress party bagged 17.



Supporters of the National Conference (NC), the oldest political party in Kashmir, chant slogans to respond to a point raised by unseen party president and chief minister designate Omar Abdullah during a public speech in Srinagar yesterday. Omar arrived to a warm reception in Srinagar by his supporters after holding discussions with the Congress leadership in New Delhi towards cobbling a coalition to rule the restive state for the next six years.

## US Democrats may bar Senate appointment to Obama's vacated seat

AFP, Chicago

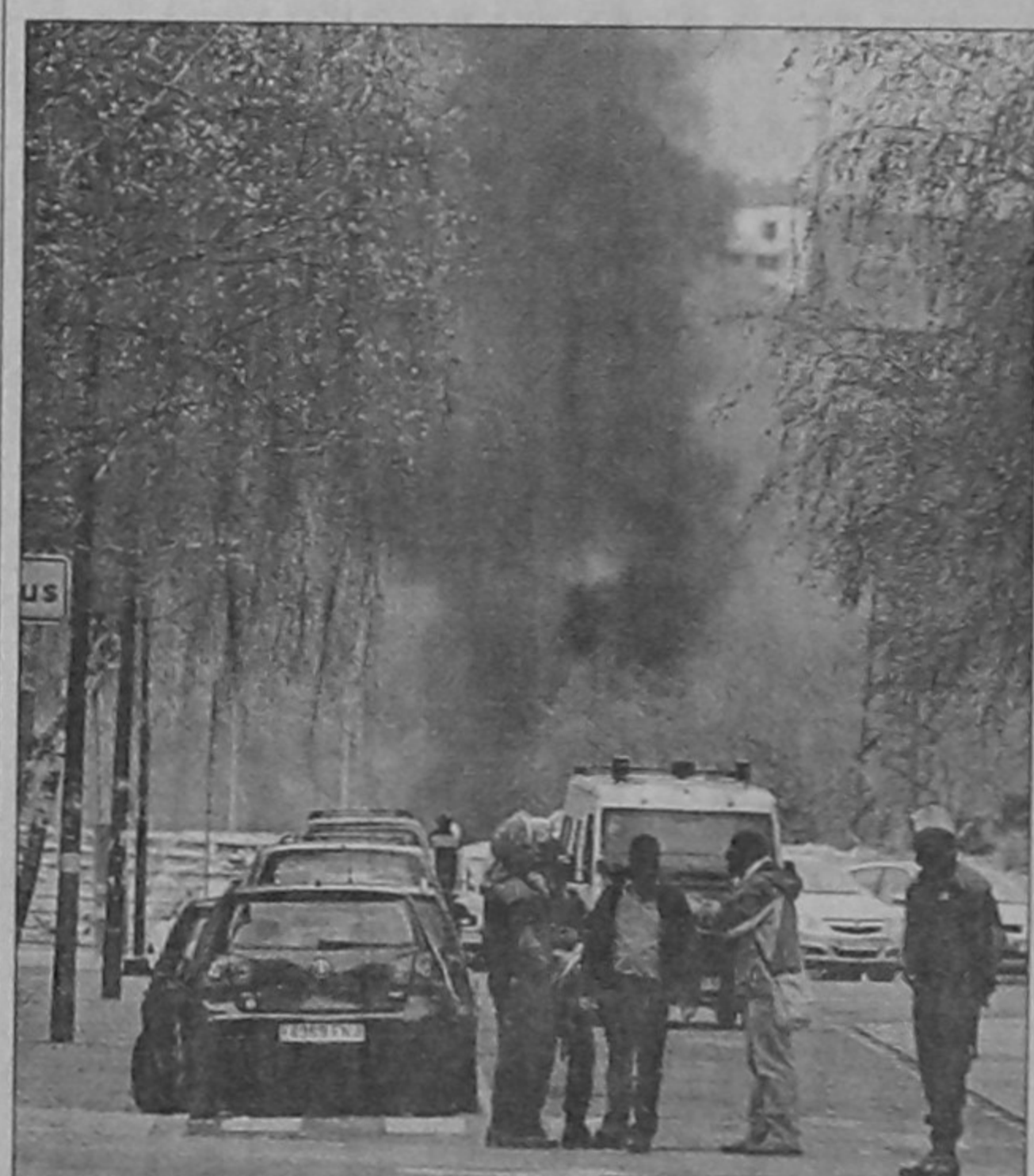
Democrats were under pressure yesterday to bar an African-American statesman from the US Senate after the corruption-tainted Illinois governor's defiant appointment to fill the seat vacated by president-elect Barack Obama. Senate Democrats vowed not to seat former Illinois attorney general Roland Burris, saying he would "serve under a shadow and be plagued by questions of impropriety" in the wake of federal corruption charges stating that Governor Rod Blagojevich tried to sell the seat to the highest bidder.

Obama said that while Burris is "a good man and a fine public servant," the president-elect supports the decision not to seat anyone appointed by Blagojevich.

Obama called the governor's move "extremely disappointing," and said the "best resolution would be for the governor to resign his office and allow a lawful and appropriate process of succession to take place."

"While Governor Blagojevich is entitled to his day in court, the people of Illinois are entitled to a functioning government and major decisions free of taint and controversy," Obama said in a statement.

But Illinois congressman and civil rights leader Bobby Rush used racially tinged language in urging Senate Democrats to reconsider, saying they should "not hang and lynch the appointee as you try to castigate the appointer."



Basque autonomous police inspect the area after a car bomb exploded in the Basque autonomous television building yesterday in the northern Basque city of Bilbao. The Spanish Government blamed armed Basque separatist group ETA.

**ঢাকা ইলেকট্রিক সাপ্লাই কোম্পানী লিঃ (ডেসকো)**

বাড়ী নং- ৩, রোড নং- ২৪, ব্লক- কে. বনানী, ঢাকা।

**নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

ঢাকা ইলেকট্রিক সাপ্লাই কোম্পানী লিঃ (ডেসকো) এর নিম্ন বর্ণিত স্তানা পদে লোক নিয়োগের নিমিত্ত আগ্রহী বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রমিক নং	পদের নাম	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা	বয়স (বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখে)
০১	পরিদর্শক	(ক) ডিপ্লোমা ইন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং (সিভিল)। (খ) সকল পরীক্ষায় কমপক্ষে ২য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী থাকতে হবে। (গ) পূর্ত নির্মাণ কাজ পরিদর্শন/তদারকির ক্ষেত্রে কমপক্ষে ১০ (দশ) বৎসর বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। তন্মধ্যে ন্যূনতম ৩ (তিন) বৎসর ৩৩/১১কেডি বা উচ্চ ক্ষমতার বৈদ্যুতিক উপকেন্দ্রের ভারী যন্ত্রপাতির ফাউন্ডেশন সহ অন্যান্য পূর্ত কাজের পরিদর্শন/তদারকির অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।	সর্বোচ্চ ৩৫ বৎসর

বর্ণিত পদে আবেদন করতে ইচ্ছুক প্রার্থীদেরকে নিজের নাম, পিতা ও মাতার নাম, স্থায়ী ঠিকানা, বর্তমান ঠিকানা, লক্ষ্য তারিখ, জাতীয়তা, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতার উল্লেখ পূর্বক সাদা কাগজে আবেদন করতে হবে। আবেদন পত্রের সাথে সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতার সনদ পত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি, ইউসিপি/সৌরসঙ্গর চেয়ারম্যান অথবা সিটি কর্পোরেশনের কমিশনার এর নিকট হতে ন্যায়িক সনদ পত্র/জাতীয় পরিচয় পত্রের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি, সন্য তোলা ২ (দুই) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ছবি সংযুক্ত করে নিম্ন স্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তরে পৌঁছেতে হবে। চান্দুরীতে নিয়োজিত প্রার্থীদেরকে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। বিদ্যুৎ বিতরণী সংস্থায় কর্মরত উপস্থিত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন আবেদনকারীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়স সীমা শিথিলযোগ্য। নিযুক্তি তারিখের পরে প্রাপ্ত আবেদন পত্র বাতিল বলে বিবেচিত হবে। কোন কারণ দর্শানো ছাড়াই যে কোন আবেদন পত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার অধিকার ডেসকো কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক সংরক্ষিত। যে কোন ধরনের তদবির প্রার্থীর অযোগ্যতা বলে গণ্য করা হবে। কেবল মাত্র বাছাইকৃত প্রার্থীদের নির্বাচনী পরীক্ষা গ্রহণ করা হবে। আবেদন পত্র জমা প্রদানের শেষ তারিখ ১৫/০১/২০০৯ ইং।

তারিখ: ডিসেম্বর ৩১, ২০০৮ ইং।  
স্মারক নং- ডেসকো/প্রশাসন-২২(এ)/২০০৮/৭৪৪৮

এম এম হাবিবুর রহমান  
উপ-সহকারী ম্যানেজার (প্রশাসন)