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Graft cases must be disposed of

Shujan opposes dropping of charges against MPs-elect

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities must complete the trial of the cases the new members of parliament are facing, instead of withdrawing the charges, to end the practice of impunity, Shushashoner Jannoy Nagorik (Shujan) said yesterday.

"The cases must be settled in the court. We do not want them to be withdrawn," Shujan Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

Around 2,300 cases against politicians and others were withdrawn during the tenure of the last BNP-led alliance government, he noted.

In an analysis of the December 29

parliamentary polls, Shujan said at least 37 percent MPs-elect of the Awami League (AL), 59 percent of the BNP and 37 percent of the Jatiya Party (JP) currently face various charges.

Shujan presented the analysis prepared on the basis of information that poll candidates had submitted to the Election Commission (EC) through affidavits.

According to the analysis, 24 of at least 54 candidates accused of corruption have been elected in the just-concluded polls, and of them 17 belong to the AL, six to the BNP and one to the JP.

"In this election we have observed once again that victory of a party or an alliance reflects people's protest against

the previous party in power. The trend is gradually increasing," Prof Muzaffer said.

Shujan Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumder said most of the MPs-elect appear to be cleaner this time, but more enquiries about their backgrounds may give a different picture. There are a lot of inconsistencies in the information they provided to the EC, he added.

"There is the big question if we want to see MPs accused of serious allegations in the cabinet," Dr Badiul said and suggested that the status of those who concealed information about their wealth should be cancelled.

He said 44 percent of the newly elected MPs have at least 10 million taka and this

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UN hails election

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations (UN) yesterday welcomed the successful December 29 parliamentary elections in Bangladesh, the first ever polls held in seven years in the South-East Asian nation, which has been beset by political violence and polarization in recent times.

"The United Nations congratulates the people of Bangladesh, whose interest in strengthening democracy in the country was reflected by the high voter turnout," according to the Office for the Secretary General's spokesperson.

The world body also acknowledged the key role played by the Election Commission in administering the polls in a transparent manner, which has been

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The month-long International Trade Fair 2009 was inaugurated yesterday at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital.

RAMNA BLAST Case shifted to sessions judge's court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The case relating to the Ramna Batamul bomb blast filed under the Explosive Substances Act was transferred to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka yesterday.

After scrutinizing the case docket and other relevant documents, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) AKM Enamul Haque ordered the authorities concerned to send the case to the Sessions Judge's Court.

Meantime, the murder case is now pending with the CMM's Court of Dhaka.

The bloodbath that took place during Pehela Baishakh celebrations on April 14, 2001 left 10 people dead and scores injured.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Inspector Abu Hena Mohammad Yusuf, also the investigation officer

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As the national elections have ended, rag pickers collect posters used for campaigning in Fuller Road area in the capital yesterday to sell those for recycling.

PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

Serial blasts kill 5 in Assam

AFP, Guwahati

At least five people were killed yesterday in separate bombings in the Indian city of Guwahati, police said, blaming a dominant insurgent group active in the northeast of the country.

Two of the bombs went off in crowded marketplaces while the third explosion was reported beside a road in Guwahati, the largest city in the troubled state of Assam, officials said.

Guwahati police chief G.P. Singh said the blasts were from improvised explosive devices probably planted by the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa) ethnic guerrilla force.

"No one has claimed the blasts but we suspect the Ulfa seems to be behind these attacks," Singh told reporters.

Police officials said the two bombs to hit markets were packed with steel balls and attached to bicycles, while the third was placed in a roadside rubbish bin. At least 50 people were injured.

Assam state police chief GM Srivastava also blamed the dominant guerrilla group and said four women were among those injured.

"The blasts have been triggered very definitely by Ulfa militants," he said, adding that a hunt was on for the bombers who fled after planting the explosives.

Police said the serial blasts took place as Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram was on an official visit to Guwahati to review security in India's restive northeast.

"One of the bombs went off near the route the home minister was scheduled to take," a senior security official said.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has scheduled a stop-over in Guwahati Friday before flying to the nearby city of

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Tac chief's remark on ACC probe unfortunate

Says Col Hanif

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday termed Truth and Accountable Commission (Tac) Chairman Justice Habibur Rahman Khan's recent comment on investigation and enquiry of ACC cases unfortunate and motivated.

The Tac chairman in his last briefing on December 31, as the five-month tenure of the commission is going to expire tomorrow, observed that half the 263 cases forwarded by ACC lacked clarity.

"It would not be an exaggeration in saying that the Truth Commission chief's remark about ACC's work is the result of personal assumption. It is not logical to make such a comment without taking any deposition or conducting investigation into

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Parliament, mosque in Gaza bombed

Tel Aviv demands monitors for any truce

AP, AFP, Gaza City

Israel demanded international monitors as a term of any truce with Gaza militants, as its warplanes bombed the parliament building in Gaza City yesterday and its ships attacked coastline positions of the territory's Islamic Hamas rulers.

Mosques and Muslim prayer halls have not escaped the relentless bombardment of Hamas targets in Gaza by Israel, which claims the Islamic militants misuse some of the holy sites as weapons depots and command centres.

Israeli bombs have damaged at least five mosques and two prayer halls during the five-day air campaign against Hamas facilities, according to a count by The Associated Press in Gaza.

Israel historically has struck mosques when it deems them legitimate targets, although it is wary of the potential outrage from the Muslim world and sensitive to its own painful history of the desecration of synagogues.

An international agreement to set up such a force would give Israel a way to end its devastating, six-day offensive against Hamas, even as thousands of Israeli ground troops massed along the border in anticipation of a possible land invasion. So far, the campaign to crush rocket fire on southern Israel has been conducted largely from the air, and a poll on Thursday showed most Israelis aren't teager to see a ground push.

Military spokeswoman Maj. Avital Leibovich said preparations for a ground operation were complete.

"The infantry, the artillery and other forces are ready. They're around the Gaza Strip, waiting for any calls to go inside," Leibovich said.

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50pc dropout in primary schools

AL faces stiff task to reach literacy goal by 2014

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost 50 percent of the students admitted to class one in primary schools across the country drop out before completing class five at present.

This situation will be one of the greatest challenges that would need to be tackled by the Awami League government in order reach its cent percent literacy goal by the year 2014.

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday made the comment while inaugurating the distribution of primary school textbooks for 2009.

National Curriculum and Textbooks Board (NCTB) organised the programme at the auditorium of Dhaka Teachers Training Colleges in the capital city.

"At present, around 44 lakh students get admitted to class one every year, but only 22 lakh students that actually complete the primary level of education. The next government will have to reduce the drop out rate," he said.

"We have identified five key points to tackle this and improve the quality of education; education materials especially standard textbooks, trained teachers, accountability of educational institutions, improved examination system, additional books and extra-curricular activities," the education adviser said.

Awami League in its election manifesto pledged to reach cent percent literacy in the country by 2014.

This year, NCTB is providing free of cost 5.27

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Thai nightclub fire kills 61 revellers

AP, Bangkok

A fire raged through a two-story nightclub packed with hundreds of well-heeled New Year's revellers early yesterday, killing at least 61 people as they stampeded to escape the raging flames.

More than 200 were injured, including 35 foreigners.

The cause of the fire in a Bangkok entertainment district was under investigation but several witnesses said a fireworks display during the New Year's countdown ignited the blaze.

A number of foreigners were among the casualties at the Santika Club, which attracted an affluent crowd of young Thais as well as expatriates and tourists.

Hospital rosters showed 13 foreigners were treated for injuries and one man, a Singaporean national, had died. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia said three of its nationals were also among the hospitalized.

"Everybody was pushing against each other trying to get out to the front door as quickly as possible. I saw people, particularly young girls, being pushed away and crushed underneath as others were stomping on them trying to get out," said Sompong Tritaweelap, who lives in an apartment behind the nightclub.

Victims died from burns, smoke inhalation and injuries

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50 hurt in post-polls violence

Cops ready to tackle, says IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 50 people were injured in post-election clashes between the Awami League (AL) and the BNP supporters at different parts of the country during the last 24 hours.

Thirty people were injured in Pabna, 10 in Magura, five in Patuakhali, 11 in Kishoreganj and one in Khagrachhari.

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ACC's chief prosecutor Mukul quits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) Chief Special Public Prosecutor (CSPP) ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul yesterday resigned on "personal" grounds.

Mukul told The Daily Star that he submitted his resignation letter to the ACC chairman at noon.

"I have moved the corruption cases on behalf of the

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GRENAD Haul Ctg JMB men remanded

UNB, Ctg

Two militants of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), arrested with 28 improvised grenades here Tuesday evening, were placed on a seven-day remand yesterday.

Police produced the militants in the court amid tight security and sought 10 days' remand. But Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Hannan granted seven days' remand for the accused.

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)

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In an initiative by The Daily Star, Bangladesh Wildlife Trust, and Bangladesh Forest Department, this Large Indian Civet was released in the Bhawal National Park in the night of December 31, 2008. The Civet was rescued from Ramna Park that morning. Dhaka University professor of zoology Anwarul Islam led the rescue team. Hossain Mohammad Nishat, assistant conservator of forest (wildlife circle), accompanied the team.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Prayer Timing

January 2

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation