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# EC gears up for election series

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) plans to hold the long over due Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) polls in March this year, launching a series of local government elections across the country.

Following the DCC polls, the EC plans to hold elections to over 300 municipalities, and then the long over due polls to over 4,500 union parishes.

According to the EC's projection, 2009 will also be a year of ballots, the process of which has already begun with the scheduling of upazila parishad elections for January 22.

Talking to reporters in his office yesterday, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain said the commission is now busy preparing for the

long over due polls to 481 upazila parishes.

He said the voter list for DCC area will start getting updated by the end of this month for the election in March.

The last DCC election was held in early 2002 and the current city administration's five-year tenure expired long ago, but new polls to the city corporation could not be held on time due to an absence of a correct voter list, and the existence of a state of emergency -- allowing the incumbent mayor and councillors to continue in the offices.

Similarly, the tenure of over 4,500 union parishes also expired between January and March last year, and according to the electoral law, elections to those were supposed to be held within 180 days of the tenure expiry.

About the union parishad polls, Election Commissioner Sakhawat said those will be held some time this year over a period of four to five months.

Elections to around 300 municipalities might also be held before the union parishad polls.

In August last year, the EC held elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities under a state of emergency.

**BY-ELECTIONS**

Sakhawat also said by-elections in six parliamentary constituencies will be held in February.

According to a provision in the country's constitution, a by-election to a vacated parliamentary seat must be held within 90 days of the vacation.

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POWER PLANT CASE  
Hasina acquitted as police give final report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday acquitted Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina of the charges laid against her in the barge-mounted power plant case filed by Tajul Islam Farook, chairman of Westmont Power Co (Bangladesh) Ltd.

The court of Metropolitan Magistrate Tania Kamal delivered the order after Officer-in-Charge of Tejgaon Police Station Lutfor Rahman submitted the final report of the case before the Chief

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**2ND TEST**  
**Mashrafe goes to the rescue**

BISHWAJIT ROY in Chittagong

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza stood up with the bat to salvage Bangladesh's pride as the home team avoided follow-on against Sri Lanka on the second day of the second and final Test at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

The Bangladeshi vice-captain took charge to smash his third half-century when

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**No war criminals in our party**  
*Claims SQ Chy*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP lawmaker-elect Salauddin Quader Chowdhury yesterday claimed that there are no war criminals in his party.

"If the new government finds any war criminals among us it can try them...we have no objection to the trial of war criminals," said Salauddin, also parliamentary

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**Chitra bridge named after SM Sultan**

UNB, Dhaka

The bridge over the River Chitra in Narail district has been named after eminent artist SM Sultan.

Besides, the bypass road over the old railway line near Habiganj town has been named after freedom fighter Manik Chowdhury.

Two notifications to this effect were issued yesterday by the Roads and Railway Divisions of the communications ministry.



PHOTO: COURTESY AWAMI LEAGUE

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina makes a courtesy call on her party's presidential nominee Zillur Rahman at his Gulshan residence yesterday.

## Development goes slow in first 3 months

**20pc of revenue budget spent**

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

In the first three months of the current fiscal year the government has spent more than 20 percent of the total revenue budget for the year but its performance in development expenditure is very poor.

According to the finance ministry's monthly fiscal position report, during the three months the development expenditure was only 5.4 percent of the budget. According to a report of the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Department of the planning ministry, it was 18 percent during July-November.

Zaid Bakht, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said there is nothing to worry about revenue expenditure's being higher than development expen-

iture.

The new government will have to immediately take steps to trim the size of development budget to prevent misuse and wastage of resources and increase its implementation, he said.

According to the BIDS report, the revenue expenditure in this fiscal year's budget has been set at Tk 69,081 crore and the government has spent Tk 12,913 crore in three months, which is 21.9 percent of the budget. Of this, expense on interest payment was 29.3 percent and the second highest expenditure--pay and allowance--25.3 percent.

The government had to borrow excessively--more than Tk 10,000 crore--from banking system last year while the budgetary target was Tk 7,253 crore.

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## Dec 29 election fair, flawless

*Says 8-nation observer group*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 10-member foreign delegation that carried out a short-term observation of the December 29 parliamentary elections in a preliminary statement yesterday said it did not find any irregularities that might impact the legitimacy of the process or the result.

The delegation comprised of individuals from government and civil society organisations, from Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea, noted that the voting process appeared to be organised and calm, and election officials seemed to be generally familiar with the election laws and procedures, a press release said.

They urged the new government and all political stakeholders to work together to effectively meet the nation's challenges.

Under the auspices of Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) and at the invitation of Bangladesh Election

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**NOAKHALI-1**  
**SC validates AL nominee's candidature**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chamber judge of the Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court (HC) order for the Election Commission (EC) to accept the nomination of Awami League candidate HM Ibrahim for contesting parliamentary polls to Noakhali-1 constituency slated for January 12.

The election to the constituency was suspended following the death of Gonotantri Party leader and Awami League-led grand alliance candidate Nurul Islam.

Chamber Judge Justice Md Tafazzal Islam passed the

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### Rizvi sued for defamation

COURT CORRESPONDENT

An Awami League (AL) leader yesterday filed a defamation case against BNP Office Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi for making defamatory statements against him.

Zahidul Islam Tipu, general secretary of Motijheel thana AL, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

In his complaint, Tipu mentioned that during a press briefing at BNP's Gulshan office on January 1, Rizvi said: a group of miscreants led by Tipu and Bishu forcefully occupied fish and meat shops at Motijheel Colony in the city and attacked the local BNP activists.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Abdul Majid recorded statement of the complainant and directed officer-in-charge (OC) of Motijheel Police

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PHOTO: STAR

Authorities of Kutubbagh Darbar Sharif have occupied a section of Anwara Udyan, the lone park in the city's Farmgate area, since December 20 for its yearly Islamic conference on January 14-15.

**RAMNA BLASTS**  
**Court decision on charge sheet Jan 11**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will decide on January 11 whether the charge sheet of the case relating to the Ramna Batamul bomb blast filed under the Explosive Substances Act will be accepted or not.

After scrutinizing the case docket and other relevant documents, Judge ANM Basir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday set the date for passing order on the acceptance of the charge sheet.

The court also directed the jail authorities to produce Harkatul Jihad (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and five others on the scheduled date

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**TOXIC MILK**  
**Govt submits test reports**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has submitted laboratory test reports done in a European country on different brands of powdered milk available on the domestic market to the office of Supreme Court (SC).

The government got the tests done as per a SC order after getting toxic melamine in some brands of powdered milk and subsequent filing of a writ petition to the court in this regard.

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**Indian minister to take Mumbai evidence to US**  
**Senior US diplomat to visit Pakistan**

APP, New Delhi/ Islamabad

Indian Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram said he would travel to Washington this week with evidence linking Pakistan to the deadly Mumbai attacks in which 163 people were killed, reports said yesterday.

Chidambaram told newspapers in New Delhi he would take "overwhelming" and "unanswerable" proof to the United States for discussions with officials there.

"The evidence leads to the conclusion that the plot was hatched in Pakistan and as the operation in Mumbai was on, it was masterminded and controlled from Pakistan," the Indian Express quoted Chidambaram as saying.

He said the "detailed dossier" included telephone transcripts, communication intercepts and interrogation reports.

The minister also challenged Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari's claim that the 10 Mumbai gunmen were "stateless actors."

**7 killed in Pak suicide blast**

APP, Peshawar

Five policemen and two civilians were killed yesterday in a suspected suicide blast in the northwestern Pakistani town of Dera Ismail Khan, a local government official said.

The explosion, which also wounded 28 people, took place on a busy road in the centre of town, district coordination officer Syed Mohsin Shah told APP.

Police said they believed it could have been a suicide blast, and that the police were the intended target. Bomb disposal experts were combing the scene for evidence.

Shah said the police had come to the scene to investigate a tiny explosion, when their vehicle was hit in a second blast.

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This fishing cat cub was captured inside an under-construction house at Hallishahar, Chittagong. Locals speculate that the cub hitched a ride on a truck carrying construction materials from Sylhet. As of 10:00pm yesterday they were waiting for zoo officials to pick up the wild animal.

PHOTO: STAR

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Prayer Timing		
January 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation