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## BNP to boycott cabinet's oath as Jamaat not invited

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) might boycott the new government cabinet's induction ceremony today in Bangabhaban as its key ally in four-party alliance Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami was not invited, although two of its members-elect of the parliament were.  
Some BNP insiders said another reason for the party's possible absence in the ceremony today is that its presence there might be regarded as its acceptance of archival Awami League's (AL) landslide victory in the recent election.  
A close aide to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, however, told The Daily Star last night that the BNP chief might send a representative to the ceremony at the last moment.  
Several BNP members-elect of the parliament (MPS-elect) also said last night that

# AL to take reins with pledge for change

### President administers today oath to Hasina as PM, council of ministers

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The new government led by the Awami League (AL) begins a tightrope walk this evening amid high expectations of people, ending around two-year long eventful rule of the caretaker government.  
President Iajuddin Ahmed appoints and administers oath today to AL chief Sheikh Hasina as the next prime minister and her colleagues in the new council of ministers, who will have to deliver on their electoral pledges that increased people's hope for changes.  
The president also congratulated Hasina over telephone for being elected as the leader of the majority party in parliament.  
On the desire of the new premier, he will also appoint and administer oath to



Sheikh Hasina Fakhruddin Ahmed

other ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers.  
After swearing in as the prime minister for the second term since she has been leading the country's one of the oldest political parties, Hasina will distribute portfolios among her council of ministers.  
Political analysts believe that as mass people extended their support to the AL-

led grand alliance in the December 29 parliamentary election keeping confidence in its electoral pledges, they will definitely scrutinise every step the new government takes.  
With the wholehearted support of people and the armed forces, the caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed started its journey on January 12, 2007, but people's expectations and confidence in it reduced largely as it could not deliver accordingly.  
Commoners suffered a lot mainly because of skyrocketing prices of essentials despite some sincere efforts of the caretaker government to arrest the menace.  
The government, however, became successful at the end of its tenure in achieving its prime goal to ensure holding

## No confusion over high turnout

SHAKHAWAT LITON and SHARIFUL ISLAM

To many the result of a comparison between voter turnouts in 1991 and 2008 elections might come as a surprise, especially when only 55.45 percent of voters voted in 1991 compared to a high 87 percent this time around.  
But a clearer picture emerges as one looks at the number of fake and duplicate voters, successful elimination of which helped to boost the percentage of turnout in 2008.  
When in 1991 the voter list was packed with over one crore fake or duplicate voters and in 2001 with

over 60 lakh of them, even high turnouts looked small proportionally, because a very large part of the fake votes could not even be cast.  
But this time, the turnout soared as the current Election Commission (EC) clipped around 1.23 crore fake and duplicate voters from the 2006 roll, resulting in a higher proportion of votes being cast.  
Even if one calculates the voter turnouts in previous elections after eliminating the fake voters, the percentages still increase significantly.  
Voter turnouts were high in previous elections

## CA happy at smooth power handover

UNB, Dhaka  
Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday expressed his pleasure to see that the state power is being handed over smoothly to an elected government.  
"I feel happy to see that the power is being transferred to an elected government. It will be a great achievement for the countrymen," he told reporters after paying a farewell call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban.  
The head of the outgoing caretaker government expressed the feelings of fulfillment of national tasks a day before a new cabinet, led by Awami League chief and leader of the AL parliamentary party Sheikh Hasina, is going to be sworn in.  
Replying to a question, the CA said he will stay in Dhaka and pass his time writing from his repository of experience after handing over power.

## 4 criminals arrested in Kolkata

3 of them convicted of Ahsanullah Master killing  
STAR REPORT  
Indian police arrested four Bangladeshi criminals, three of them convicted of murdering former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, in Gariahat of Kolkata Sunday evening.  
The other criminal has been convicted of murdering a former Titumir College students' council vice-president and sentenced to life-term imprisonment.  
Murderers of the AL lawmaker are Nazrul Islam Dipu, Wahidul Nazim Tipu and Sahayet Hossain Manju. Dipu has been sentenced to death while the other two were sentenced to life-term imprisonments in the Ahsanullah Master murder case.



An Israeli mobile artillery unit fires a smoke shell on Gaza Strip yesterday as Israeli troops tighten military grip on Gaza. Top, smoke billows from a building hit by a missile from an Israeli aircraft in Gaza Strip. The Israeli offensive in Gaza that started on December 27 last year has claimed lives of over 550 Palestinians, including 90 children, and wounded 2,700 people so far. One Israeli soldier was reported dead and 55 others injured since Saturday.

## 2 political activists killed in city, Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Unidentified gunmen shot dead a Swachhchasebak Dal leader at Bijoy Nagar in the capital while another gang of miscreants stabbed a Jubo League activist to death in Bogra yesterday.  
The deceased, Nazrul Islam, 35, president of Swachhchasebak Dal's ward-56 unit, was also the general secretary of Bijoy Nagar Bahumukhi Babosayee Samobay Samiti.  
Police and family members of the deceased suspected the murder had been committed due to feuds over the control of a political office or some business shops.  
During the gun attack, one of the associates of Nazrul, Mahjuddin, also received bullet injury as the motorbike-riding

## Stern action for post-poll violence

AL warns its leaders, activists  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Awami League (AL) yesterday warned its leaders and activists of stern actions for any involvement in post-election violence.  
"If we find involvement of any party activists or leaders in post-polls violence, we shall take organisational action against the person and also request the law enforcement agencies to take necessary steps as per existing laws," AL spokesperson Syed Ashraful Islam said at a press conference at the AL president's political office in the capital's Dhanmondi.  
The role of opposition in the parliament is a must to strengthen democracy and make the House effective, he said urging the BNP-led four-party coalition to accept 'people's verdict' in the December 29 election.  
He also asked the party activists to stay calm and show restraint.

## Hasina slates Israeli attack

UNB, Dhaka  
Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has condemned the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza and expressed her profound shock at the deaths of innocent civilians in the attacks.  
Hasina expressed her condemnation when the envoys of seven Arab countries—Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait, Libya and Qatar—called on her at Sudha Sadan yesterday.  
Briefing reporters, former ambassador Mohammad Jamir said the Awami League chief and the envoys hoped that the "brotherly" relationship

## No let-up in Gaza offensives

50 more killed as Israel continues to pound Hamas targets  
AFP, AP, Gaza City  
Israeli troops battled Hamas fighters in Gaza's main city for the first time yesterday while the government fended off worldwide calls for a ceasefire. Fifty died in a day of clashes.  
Amid raging combat in Gaza City, and as the Palestinian death toll rose over 550 including 90 children, French and Russian presidents Nicolas Sarkozy and Dmitry Medvedev both demanded a halt to the conflict. But Israeli ministers said the offensive would go on.  
Large explosions and heavy gunfire rocked the Shejaiya neighbourhood of eastern Gaza City as night fell. Israeli military sources confirmed there were heavy clashes.  
Flares lit up the skies over the blacked-out neighbourhood. Assault helicopters were also seen.  
Hamas said its fighters had unleashed missiles against seven tanks in the district. Its Islamic Jihad allies said several of its members were killed in the fighting.  
At least 12 children were among 50 new bodies taken to Gaza hospitals after air missile

## AL cabinet may start with 35

HASAN JAHID TUSHER  
The cabinet of the Awami League-led grand alliance government may be medium in size with around 35 members initially and is expected to be dominated by young lawmakers.  
AL advisory council member HT Imam yesterday confirmed speculations that there will be technocrats among the cabinet members who will be given charge of 46 ministries and divisions.  
The last couple of days saw widespread conjectures about who are going to be sworn in as the members of the AL-led government's council of ministers today.  
However, AL chief Sheikh Hasina, who is going to be sworn in as the prime minister, her sister Sheikh Rehana and veteran party leader and the would-be president of the country, Zillur Rahman, were the only persons who knew about the new cabinet until late last night.

## 2,000 illegal mobile SIM cards seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) with the help of law enforcers yesterday seized 2,000 illegal SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) cards of mobile phones at a stall in Dhaka International Trade Fair.  
In a statement the BTRC said an unlicensed call centre named "Awal Call Centre" distributed leaflets among visitors to sell World SIM, an unauthorised roaming SIM.  
The BTRC said such brands of SIM cards are not recognised in Bangladesh and they are mainly used for generating international calls through

## New power policy to buck up local investors

Entrepreneurs to get tax exemption, joint venture scope with public bodies  
SHARIEF KHAN  
The caretaker government last month approved a policy welcoming greater participation of local private entrepreneurs in the power sector and their wider involvement in selling electricity to large consumers.  
The Policy Guidelines for Enhancement of Private Participation in the Power Sector, 2008 welcomes foreign private investors as before. But for the first time, it opens up for local investors the same financial incentives offered to foreign investors spelled out in the articles 5 and 6 in the Private Sector Power Generation Policy, 1996.  
These incentives include exemption of corporate income tax for 15 years, 12 years duty-free spare parts import worth maximum 10 percent of the original value of the plant, freedom for investors to buy insurance of their choice, tax exemption on royalties, technical know-how, tax exemption on interest on foreign loans, capital gains from transfer of shares, among others.  
Joining partnership with public sector power entities will be exclusive to Bangladeshi private sector.  
The commercial power plants will get preference in developing coalmines and

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