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## PM wants ACC reconstituted

She tells JS it's for running ACC 'without political interference'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) would be reconstituted, and accountability and transparency of its activities ensured.

"Steps will be taken for smooth functioning of the ACC without political interference," Hasina assured the House during question-answer session.

The government will do everything required to free the society of corruption, she said.

Replying to lawmakers' queries, the PM also unveiled her government's plans to build digital Bangladesh by 2021 by implementing a large number of measures on information technology (IT), which would also generate employment and help fight corruption.

IT education at secondary education level will be made compulsory by 2013 and at primary level by 2021, Hasina said.

As the lawmakers criticised activities of the ACC during the immediate past caretaker

government's tenure, the PM said, "Transparency and accountability of the Anti-Corruption Commission's activities would be ensured by reconstituting it. Steps will also be taken so that officials of the commission cannot be involved in corruption."

Hasina, also chief of the Awami League that leads the ruling grand alliance with over 260 seats in the House, said initially people had welcomed the ACC's activities.

Echoing lawmakers' sentiment, she said, "But its (ACC) objectives were questioned when it started working to suppress politics and politicians instead of curbing corruption. People not involved in corruption were harassed by it and forced to give deposition against others," the PM said amid thumping of desks by treasury bench members.

"There are many stories that people were detained and later released after taking money from them," she said.

On anti-corruption drives at the initial stage of the caretaker government's tenure, she

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## Reconstitution no easy task

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) can be reconstituted only if its chairman and commissioners resign or are found guilty of gross misconduct or physically or mentally incapable of performing duties.

"There are two ways of removing the chairman and commissioners of the commission. The procedures for their removal is cited in section 10 of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act," senior lawyer and counsel for the ACC Anisul Haque told The Daily Star last night.

The commission is constituted for a four-year term.

Section 10 of the ACC act mentions that the chairman and the commissioners can step down tendering resignation to the president. The other way of reconstituting the ACC is to remove the chairman and commissioners following article 96 of the constitution, which lays down

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## Sheraton's star at risk

Govt refuses to renovate the oldest 5-star hotel; ranking may go down

SAYEDA AKTER

Reluctant to renovate the country's first five-star hotel, Bangladesh Services Ltd (BSL) is pushing Dhaka Sheraton into a franchise arrangement away from the existing management contract system, which is likely to downgrade the hotel's status to a three-star one.

Now instead of having a world-class company like Sheraton to run the business, the hotel may be operated by a local entrepreneur under a franchise from a second-grade international hotel operator.

Situated in a prime location, close to the downtown business district and the Prime Minister's Office, Sheraton last year earned revenues of around \$13 million, up from \$11.27 million in 2007.

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PHOTO: STAR

Back view of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, the oldest 5-star hotel in the capital.

## Govt borrowing from banks shoots up

Tk 2,758cr more taken in first 6 months

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has borrowed from the banking system 64 per cent or Tk 2,758 crore more than the target set by Bangladesh Bank (BB) for the first six months of the current fiscal year, and this may hinder credit flow to private sector, a BB report said.

It also said the global financial crisis might have an adverse impact on foreign direct investment (FDI), portfolio investment, remittance and foreign loans/grants.

"If the trend continues, it will be difficult to maintain Bangladesh Bank's monetary programmes including loan flow to the private

sector," said the central bank report on macro-economic situation placed at the fiscal coordination council meeting on Tuesday.

The government took loan of Tk 7,058 crore from the banking system during July-December period of 2008 while the BB-estimated amount for the first half of fiscal '09 was Tk 4,300 crore.

The report also said due to heavy borrowing by the government, the banks are facing liquidity crisis. To avert this situation, the central bank is providing Tk 3,500 crore 'repo' assistance to the banks every day. "Continuation of this situation for long is not wanted."

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## EC withholds results of 33 more upazilas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has cleared elections results of 427 upazila parishads for publishing in official gazettes and kept results of 33 upazilas withheld for scrutiny to see whether there are any anomalies.

On approval of the EC, its secretariat yesterday started sending the result sheets to government press for publishing in official gazettes, said EC Secretariat officials.

Besides, the EC is likely to clear election results of eight

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## MPs won't give up on duty-free cars

Ordinance banning the privilege would not be made law

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Lawmakers of the ninth parliament might get back the controversial privilege of importing duty-free cars as the ordinance promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government scrapping the opportunity is unlikely to be ratified.

The ordinance was not among the 44 short listed ones that are to be tabled soon in parliament as bills for ratification.

Talking to a number of members of the

special committee that recommended the short list, it was learnt that the fate of the ordinance is almost decided although the committee did not discuss it formally.

The common sentiment of the committee members is against ratifying it to make into a law. They argued that the caretaker government does not have the jurisdiction to promulgate an ordinance to curtail lawmakers' facilities.

"Only parliament has the constitutional

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## Star-Aktel initiative for school-goers launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday inaugurated "English in Schools" (EIS), a joint initiative by The Daily Star and Aktel to promote English language learning at secondary schools across the country.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed

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PHOTO: STAR

School textbooks are being brought to shops; inset, people gather at a shop at Banglabazar to buy textbooks which they allege are sold at higher prices.

## Improve law and order

Home minister asks city cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday asked the officers-in-charge (OCs) of the city's police stations to make an all-out effort to improve the law and order situation in the capital by making the ongoing special anti-crime drive a success.

The instruction came from Home Minister Sahara Khatun

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## Extra-judicial killing to be stopped: FM

Govt to show zero tolerance, she says

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni has said that the government would show "zero tolerance" to extra-judicial killing or torture and death in custody.

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## Illegal VoIP trade back

Captures 40pc of int'l call

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The illegal business of voice over internet protocol (VoIP) based call termination made a rather robust comeback since the assumption of state power by the newly elected Awami League-led alliance government.

The reinvigoration of the illegal telecom business based on the illegal technology has been eroding the market of new legal telecom gateway businesses.

Industry insiders said VoIP based call termination businesses already captured 40 percent of the market of all incoming and outgoing international calls, and the illegal entrepreneurs are already boasting their invincibility to regulators.

"They are even swaggering, saying we can't do anything to them under the regime of a partisan government," said a high official of Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

The official, who is also involved in an anti-VoIP drive of the commission, said unscrupulous VoIP traders, who were laying low during the two-year of the immediate past caretaker government's regime, are back with renewed insolence.

International call termination through illegal channels was one of the much talked about issues over the last two years, as the telecom regulator was carrying out a massive drive against the illegal technology users.

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## Same syllabus for all types of primary edn mulld

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government considers same syllabus for all categories of primary schools across the country to minimise social divides created by different education systems, the education minister said yesterday.

"The lessons may be taught in English in English medium schools. But the syllabus will be

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## Irregularities in jails to be probed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken initiatives to investigate alleged irregularities by jail high-ups in the last three years.

The home ministry on February 3 formed a four-member committee to probe

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## MUNSHIGANJ 2 killed in AL-BNP gunfight

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Two people were killed and 15 others injured, five of them with bullet, in a fierce clash between Awami League (AL) and BNP supporters at Jajira in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shahjahan Khan, 40, and his father-in-law Almas Bapari, 60.

Police said the clash ensued at about 6:00am between two rival groups -- one led by AL supporter Amir Hossain Gazi and another by BNP supporter Shahjahan Khan -- over establishing supremacy in the area.

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## BNP still waits for speaker offer

Demands SSF protection for Khaleda to continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP-led opposition in the parliament decided to wait till Monday for the speaker's decision on their demand for three more seats in the front row of the House, while a delegation of BNP yesterday met the speaker demanding reinstatement of SSF security for the opposition leader.

The opposition said they are ready to talk to the speaker, if he comes up with a proposal for resolving the ongoing row over seating arrangement in the House, for which the opposition lawmakers boycotted the parliament the last six days.

"We will be back in the House instantly, if the speaker comes up with a specific proposal regarding our demand for three more seats in the front row," BNP vice-chairman also a lawmaker, MK Anwar, told reporters after a meeting of BNP members of the parliament, which had been adjourned till 4:30pm Monday.

Earlier, a team of BNP lawmakers led by Salauddin Quader

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## Talks a must in signing any treaty for public interest

Says BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP has accused the government of making haste to sign international treaties while decisions on such issues should be taken after considering public opinions and consulting with political parties and experts.

"We are not dead against treaties. But the country's interest has to be ensured first and the decisions have to be taken after proper discussion," BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said at a briefing during a meeting of the party's

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## Let world know what Bangladesh needs

Danish minister tells The Daily Star to get truly a global deal to fight climate change

PINAKI ROY

Visiting Danish Minister for Climate and Energy Connie Hedegaard yesterday said climate change is not a "distant future" and Bangladesh should speak up clearly and loudly to get a truly global deal in Copenhagen in December this year to face the challenge together.

"I think it will be very useful during the negotiations if the situation of countries like Bangladesh could be known by more coun-



Connie Hedegaard

tries, by more politicians. So, I think, it is very crucial to speak up to convey the messages," she said.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Hedegaard said she has learnt during her visit to Bangladesh that things are not here in the way they used to be.

"If it is so, then you cannot use the knowledge that you inherited from your mother and your father," she said. "And that is a real challenge."

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## RAMNA BLASTS Warrant issued to arrest Taj, 7 Huji men

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against detained former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu's brother Maulana Mohammad Tajuddin and seven Harkatul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI) men in connection with the Ramna Batamul blast case.

The seven HuJI men are Maulana Abdul Hannan Sabbir, Maulana Shawkat Osman alias Sheikh Farid, Hafez Jahangir Alam Badar, Maulana Abu Bakar alias Selim Hawlader, Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, Maulana Yahya and Mufti Abdul Hye.

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