

**Did you know?** The Incheon Bridge is a newly-constructed bridge in South Korea. The 21.38 km (13.3 mi) long highway project consisted of government-built sections at three ends and a 12.34 km (7.7 mi) section in the middle build the bridge section is 18,384 m (60,315 ft) long.

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# Slaves of balloon

Children work 14 hours a day only for Tk 300 a week  
EMRAN HOSSAIN

At first glance it might appear that it snowed here moments ago. Everything around Allahr Dan Balloon factory in South Keraniganj in the capital is snow-white. But the white blanket hanging in the air and covering everything is not snow but powder being used to unwind balloons after production.

Covered in the white blanket, ten-year-old Ayub keeps unwinding balloons at the factory as powder settles down in several layers on his body, covering his eyes, eyelashes, hair, nostrils and every open limb.

He often flutters his eyelashes to get rid of the powder that stings inside but to no avail.

In a last effort, Ayub rubs his hands, already whitened by the powder, against his eyes. Although he finds no help, he continues rubbing until tears come rolling and his eyes look strangely reddish against the all-white background.



# JS session resumes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

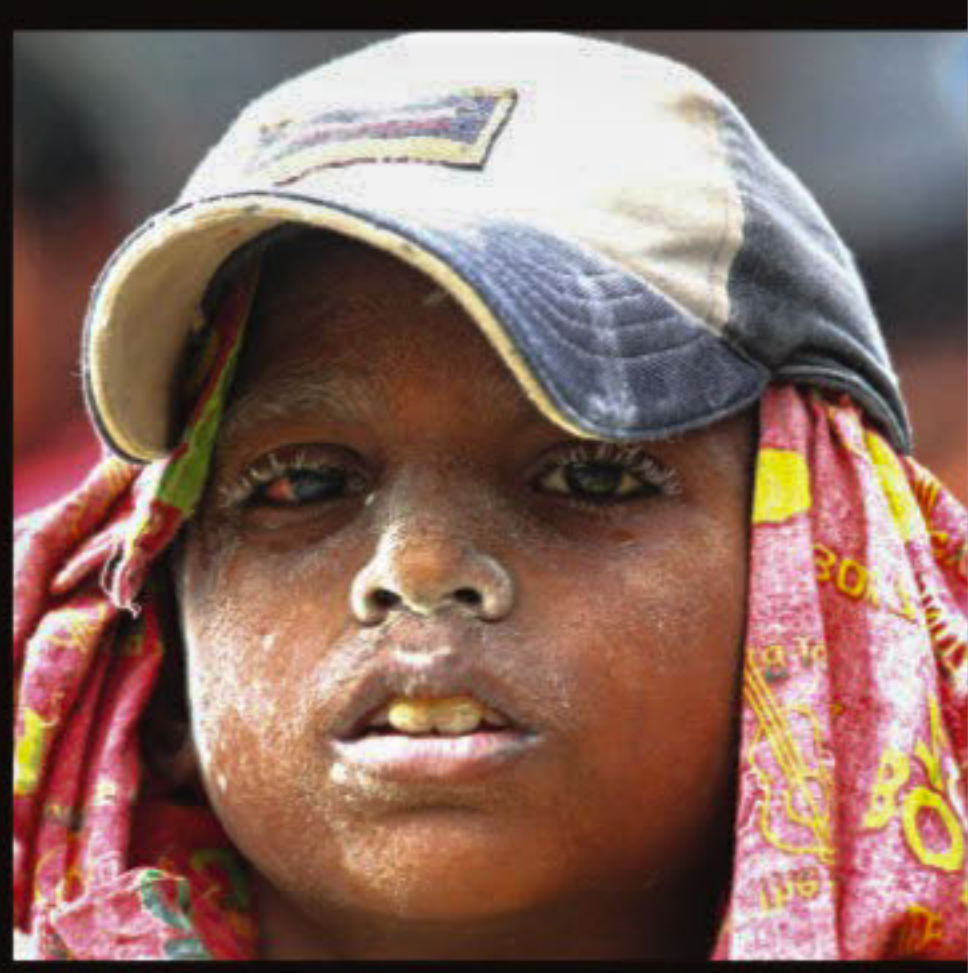
The parliament resumes sitting today after a nine-day recess with the passing of six bills in this session as the only major scheduled job of the House remaining.

The bills, which are likely to be passed next week, would increase the salaries and allowances of the president, the prime minister, ministers, the speaker and the deputy speaker, lawmakers and judges of the Supreme Court.

The parliamentary standing committee on law justice and parliamentary affairs is scheduled to place its observations

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Ten-year-old Ayub works at a balloon factory in South Kamrangirchar in the capital, right. His eyes are bloodshot, bottom right, due to the powder used in manufacturing balloons. Another child, top right, coughs testifying to the health hazards they face. Ayub and a boy, top, make balloons with dye all over their bodies.



# Dockworkers stage sit-in at Ctg port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The dockworkers yesterday staged a sit-in for one and a half hours here demanding prime minister's intervention for reinstatement of jobs of the workers as per the minutes of a inter-ministerial meeting.

The Chittagong Dock Bandar Sramik Karmachari Federation enforced the programme outside Bandar Bhaban, the office of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA).

The dockworkers and employees also submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through CPA

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

# MRP launched, issuance not before May

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government today launches the machine-readable passport and visa project only from its Agargaon office while the Department of Immigration and Passport is still ill-equipped and capable of producing only a limited number of passports.

Meanwhile, the department has to issue emergency handwritten passports, as it will not be able to provide machine-readable passports (MRP) before the first week of May.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has kept a provision for emergency handwritten passport with one year's validity in case of failure to provide MRP.

Although the initial plan was to launch the project from 10 regional passport offices simultaneously, more time will be required for preparing the other nine offices. Meanwhile, no one knows when the rest 24 offices would be ready.

People residing in Dhaka, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Narsingdi, Gazipur and Narayanganj districts can apply for MRP from today at Agargaon passport office while people of other districts have to wait for the time being.

"We are starting the project primarily in Dhaka office and hoping to prepare nine more offices by April," MRP project

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6

# Upgraded Drug Admin yet to hire manpower

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Over two months have passed since the Directorate of Drug Administration (DA) was upgraded to a directorate general, but the institution is yet to recruit its requisite manpower except the helmsman.

The DA was upgraded to its present status on January 17 with greater decision-making power and accountability in monitoring the country's drug market worth Tk 6,000 crore.

About 150 posts were created to run the new directorate general smoothly. But nobody was appointed to fill them.

With the new ones and 69 posts under previous organogram, a total of 219 posts in the directorate have been lying vacant, said authorities. No employee got any promotion either.

Soon after getting the prime minister's go-ahead, the director of the then drug administration had said it would soon start recruiting its staff.

"Bureaucratic bottleneck slowed down the recruitment process. It won't be completed even after six months," said a DA high official preferring anonymity.

He said they are unable to send new budget to the health ministry, as no staff has been recruited yet.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6

# Photo show on 'crossfire' finally opens to public

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The photography exhibition titled "Crossfire" by noted photojournalist Shahidul Alam was finally opened for public at Drik Gallery yesterday, eight days after police obstructed visitors from entering the gallery.

Shahidul Alam, also managing director of Drik, said yesterday the government lawyers confirmed that the police deployed in front of his gallery were withdrawn and there would be no further obstruction.

The deadline of the exhibition opened for public around 5:00pm was extended to April 14.

The schedule was extended as the previous deadline

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# EC to lessen penalties

Aims to let executive magistrates hold trials of poll offences during local govt elections

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission has moved to lessen the penalties for some electoral offences during polls to local government bodies so that executive magistrates can hold their trials.

The EC has recently asked the home ministry to include the newly enacted laws of local government bodies--upazila parishad, city corporation, municipality and union parishad--in the schedule of the Mobile Court Act 2009.

Following the inclusion, executive magistrates running mobile courts will be able to try a few electoral offences for which the offender will not be sentenced to imprisonment for more than two years, EC officials said.

The commission believes deployment of executive magistrates will be more effective, the EC officials added.

It has already changed the draft rules for conducting the city corporation polls, lowering penalties for some offences from highest seven years in prison to maximum two years and minimum six

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# Jamaat targets water, power crises

Declares agitation programme across country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday announced it will embark on agitating the people against the ongoing utility crisis in the country, while the government is preparing to indict many leaders of the party for crimes against humanity.

Many leaders of the Islamist party are widely accused of committing crimes against humanity as collaborators of the invading Pakistani army during the country's liberation war in 1971.

Jamaat's Secretary General also Spokesperson Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed at a media briefing in the party's headquarter at Moghbazar on

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

# Cox's Bazar girls' madrasa attacked

60 hurt in clashes

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 60 people including 14 policemen, 12 teachers and girl students were injured as several hundred people attacked a girls' madrasa in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Adarsha Mohila Kamil Madrasa located to the south of Central Bus Terminal in Cox's Bazar came under attack around 2pm.

The attackers broke all the boundary walls of madrasa. They hurled brickbats and vandalised the main building and the teachers' hostel.

They also set the female dormitory and computer lab on fire.

The incident happened as the madrasa was allegedly built on the land of a graveyard.

Police and witnesses said the attackers looted 24 sacks of rice and five sacks of potato.

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A few hundred people attack the Cox's Bazar Adarsha Mohila Kamil Madrasa near Central Bus Terminal and torch its kitchen. They also set ablaze the dormitory for orphan students and the madrasa's computer lab yesterday.

**OnlinePoll** ✓

Do you think the government's decision to keep ACs switched off from 6:00pm to 11:00pm in all households, public and private offices and shopping malls in Dhaka until further notice is practical?

No (48.6%)  
 Yes (44.8%)  
 No Comments (6.6%)

**Total votes: 922**

**TODAY'S POLL**

Do you think National Board of Revenue and other authorities should scrutinise income and expenditure of every citizen in a bid to reduce corruption?

Please cast your vote at [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)

**Prayer Timing**

April 1

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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