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Rao may face no-confidence vote

Congress routed in state elections

NEW DELHI, Dec 10: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's Congress Party suffered a cruel setback today in state polls, stirring questions about the pace of economic reforms and his grip on power ahead of a 1996 general elections, reports Reuters.

Congress, which had controlled all four states holding polls, lost its hold on three of them and was neck and neck with the Opposition in the fourth.

The party, which has ruled India for all but three years since independence in 1947, was crushed in Rao's home state of Andhra Pradesh and in neighbouring Karnataka, by far the largest electoral prizes.

The prime minister's party had held overwhelming majorities in both southern states since the last elections in 1989.

The state elections have no direct impact on wafer-thin Congress parliamentary majority in the capital New Delhi.

But the losses were significant because the south has provided Rao with his power base since he took office in 1991 and launched a far-reaching economic liberalisation programme.

"This is the first time that the Congress is out of power in both the north and the south of the country," the Asian Age newspaper said.

Rao's economic reforms have opened up India's markets, delighting foreign investors but bringing increased competition and hardship to many industries.

"Anti-Congress wave sweeps the south," Congress mauls in south. "Congress smashed," "Panic in Congress camp" were headlines in major daily newspapers.

"While there does not seem to be any immediate threat to the Prime Minister... it is almost certain that the coming months will see an erosion of his authority," the Economic Times said.

"Our performance is simply shattering," Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on television. "We did not expect this kind of results."

In Andhra Pradesh, Congress was routed by the regional Telegu Desam Party (TDP). The Congress, which had held a 182-seat majority since the last polls in 1989, had clinched only 14 seats to

PM delays Morocco trip by a day

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has rescheduled her visit to the Moroccan city of Casablanca and will now leave Dhaka tomorrow instead of today, official and Biman sources said.

Biman sources said the flight was delayed by a day because of a shortage of aircraft. Had the flight been not delayed Biman would have faced major dislocation in its international schedule.

The delay will, however, not affect the official ceremony of the Prime Minister who will attend the two-day seventh summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) which begins Tuesday.

Flight 005 Delta will carry 171 passengers, including 30 of the Prime Minister's entourage. There are 13 passengers for Dubai and 128 for London in the Dhaka-Dubai-London-Casablanca flight.

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Major diplomatic changes in offing

By M Anwarul Haq

Major changes in diplomatic assignments are in the offing.

According to sources in the Foreign Ministry, many senior ambassadors and high commissioners in the country's 45 missions abroad are likely to be transferred or given new assignments pending procedural formalities.

Foreign Secretary Mufleh R Osmany is being considered for appointment as Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada. The important position in Ottawa has been lying vacant for nearly a year since the return of Mohammad Mohsin, who has retired.

M R Osmany, Foreign Secretary for nearly a year now, had served for long years as the country's representative in Geneva and as ambassador to former East Germany and, later, to Iraq during the Gulf war.

Farooq Sobhan, High Commissioner to New Delhi since May, 1992, is expected to replace Osmany at headquarters.

A former Additional Foreign Secretary, Farooq Sobhan earlier served as ambassador to China and high commissioner in Malaysia.

Younger brother of economist Prof Rehman Sobhan, Farooq Sobhan was also the Deputy Permanent Representative in New York.

CM Shafi Sami, ambassador to Saudi Arabia since last January, is likely to go to New Delhi.

According to sources, a political appointee is expected to replace Sami in Riyadh.

Syed Moazzem Ali, Director General (DG), International Organisations (IO) at the ministry, is tipped to become the ambassador to Iran.

See Page 12 Col 6

British Foreign Secretary Hurd due next month

By Staff Correspondent

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd is expected to pay an official visit to Bangladesh in the first week of next month, it was learnt from diplomatic sources yesterday.

During his trip, lasting two to three days, Hurd will have talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Mostafizur Rahman. He will also call on the President and the Prime Minister and meet several other ministers.

Sources said, during the British Foreign Secretary's visit the entire gamut of bilateral relations is likely to be reviewed. Hurd is also likely to visit a number of British-aided projects in the country.

In recent years Britain has increased its technical and financial assistance to Bangladesh and Dhaka is one of the largest recipients of British ODA aid.

One killed, 12 hurt in city fire

By DMCH Correspondent

One person was killed and 12 others were seriously injured in a fire at the waiting lounge of an inter-district bus service at Fakirerpool in the city early yesterday morning.

Witnesses said the fire originated from a short circuit, at the waiting lounge of Saudia coach service around 4 am just after a bus arrived from Chittagong.

The fire continued for about an hour until the fire service personnel brought it under control.

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Rabin, Arafat, Peres receive Nobel Peace Prize

OSLO, Dec 10: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO leader Yasser Arafat received the Nobel Peace Prize today for their historic Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, reports Reuters.

Francis Sejersted, chairman of the Norwegian Nobel committee, bestowed the Nobel gold medals and diplomas on Rabin, Peres and Arafat, former guerrilla leader and arch enemy of Israel, in a solemn ceremony in Oslo city hall.

They share the seven-million Swedish kronor (930,000-dollar) award for their September 1993 accord, which was negotiated secretly in Norway and opened the way



Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (L), Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres (R) and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (C) chat during a photo session for the press Friday before attending dinner together in Oslo's Grand Hotel.

No individual can be totally neutral: CEC

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf yesterday said only the electoral process can be made neutral but absolute neutrality of an individual handling it is not possible, reports UNB.

"An individual is to handle the process only to make the process neutral. But 100 per cent neutrality of an individual is impossible," he said at a seminar on human rights at the National Museum auditorium.

"If I do not cast vote, then I ignore my civic right, and if I vote, I have to vote for a certain party. That means I lose my neutrality," the CEC argued underpinning his remarks.

Justice Rouf said the Election Commission had arranged 27 elections in last 23 years. But "now we are apprehensive of our electoral process."

The Chief Election Commissioner's comment came in the midst of a political deadlock in the country because of the Opposition boycott of Parliament and agitation for neutral conduct of general elections under a caretaker government.

He questioned whether those vocal and active for establishment of democracy are at 'democratic stage' in their spheres.

The Bangladesh Human Rights Commission (BHRC) organised the seminar on 46th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

ILO Director Warner K. Blenk, Osman Gani Khan, MP.

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OIC FMs search ways to protect Bosnian Muslims

CASABLANCA, Dec 10: Foreign ministers from Islamic states meet here today to search for ways to protect Muslims in Bosnia and stop religious violence from tearing apart their own countries.

The ministers, meeting ahead of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit starting here on Tuesday, are to be asked to review an unprecedented plan to stop the export of fundamentalist violence.

"I hope this plan is adopted" at the summit, OIC Secretary General Hamid Algabid told AFP.

It calls for the 51 OIC members to refuse to finance or support "terrorist acts" and to make sure their territory is not used by violent groups to plan or carry out attacks.

The draft calls on them "not to host, train, arm, finance or provide facilities" for violent groups, according to a copy of the document.

Militants must be "pursued" by the authorities where they live and "extradited" to their own country or to the one where they committed the crime.

Saudi Arabia, which is faced with growing opposition from Islamic fundamentalists, has said it would support the plan if it is adopted at the OIC.

The plan has been developed by Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey, who have all seen a sharp increase in the threat from fundamentalism since the last OIC summit was held in Senegal in December 1991.

It was not immediately clear what stand Iran and Sudan would take on the proposal. They have been accused of backing militant movements in Algeria and Egypt.

The proposal, however, distinguished between "terrorist groups" and peoples who had the right to struggle for their liberation.

OIC members will also be asked to back a call for an international conference on terrorism to be sponsored by the United Nations.

On an issue that has troubled its relations with the West, the organisation is trying to adopt a plan to prevent rebel Bosnian Serb forces from conquering the whole of Bosnia Herzegovina.

It is offering to provide Muslim troops to replace UN peacekeepers from Western nations, should they withdraw from the war-torn former Yugoslav republic.

Muslim countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Jordan already contribute forces.

Under proposals to be debated by the ministers and submitted to the summit, the United Nations will be urged to broaden UN "safe areas" in Bosnia — areas under international protection.

Repeating the OIC's long-held stance that the UN arms embargo against Bosnia should be lifted, the proposals stress the need for the government in Sarajevo to have the means to defend itself.

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic is to participate as an observer at the OIC summit, which will be attended by other heads of government and heads of state.

The OIC is also expected to vote on proposals concerning Jerusalem, Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the civil war in Afghanistan.

'Many Bangladeshi women in Pak jails'

A massive development programme has been undertaken in Pakistan to bring about economic and social emancipation of women, reports UNB.

The Social Welfare Adviser to the Chief Minister of Sindh said in the city yesterday during an informal get-together with the members of the media.

She informed that a number of Bangladeshi women were now being detained in different jails in Pakistan as illegal immigrants.

Adviser Raheela Tiwana, now in the city for the SAARC meeting on women development which opened here in the morning, said Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had taken personal interest in the programme, particularly covering economic and social sectors.

Tiwana, leading a Pakistan delegation to the meeting, said the scheme, formulated in keeping with the spirit of the SAARC action programme on women development, includes separate banks, courts, jails and police stations for women.

A separate ministry has been set up to conduct all the activities of the projects, she added.

Govt-Shantibahini talks postponed

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 10: The peace talks scheduled to be held between the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and the parliamentary sub-committee on December 12 at Dudukchhari village in Khagrachhari hill district, has been reportedly postponed, according to highly placed sources.

A fresh date for holding the talks will be fixed shortly, sources informed.

The postponement came in the wake of recent developments in the country's political arena and government's preoccupation with other problems, sources said.

Sources said the postponement was already communicated to PCJSS through the liaison committee.

Leader deserts

UNB adds: Meanwhile, a top-ranking leader of the student front of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity, the political wing of the Shantibahini, has severed his association with the insurgents.

Organising secretary Nihar

New DG of Ansars takes over

By Staff Correspondent

Brigadier Kabir Talukder yesterday took over as new Director General of Ansars.

Brigadier Talukder replaced Major General Syed Badruzzaman, who was retired Friday, reportedly for his failure to deal with the Ansars revolt recently.

Brig Intiaz Ahmed, Deputy Director General of Ansars, was also retired Friday.

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AIDS in Bangladesh-II

Questions aplenty about 'invisible scourge'

By Masud Hasan Khan

A lively journalists' training workshop on AIDS in Dhaka last year suddenly became silent when a guest speaker described himself as an AIDS patient and said that his days were numbered.

The identity of the patient was kept secret for his privacy and he was brought to the workshop only to hammer home the message that an AIDS victim was a decent human being like others and that he was among many who suffered the most dreaded disease on earth.

The media in Bangladesh apparently for its inexperience in AIDS reporting went for "open and shut stories", often injuring the privacy of the patients or endangering their position in the society, sources concerned pointed out. Again, the society itself does not know how to react to AIDS, to

a patient or to the threat of an epidemic, they added.

Besides this, serious social questions have begun to emerge recently regarding the "invisible scourge".

Would our social practices succumb to the AIDS threat? Is our sexual behaviour changing? Is the husbands' faithfulness to their wives or the wives' to their husbands on the wane? Is it the right time to introduce sex education in the country?

Besides, there are commercial sex workers. Is the number of brothel goers increasing? Are the prostitutes fanning out all over the country because of social stigma and spreading HIV?

Senior Health Ministry officials and NGOs involved in AIDS treatment suggested that the people have not taken AIDS seriously because they do not know what are the implications of the disease at an epidemic stage.

They pointed out that the people do not want to admit their diseases publicly fearing that they might be socially ostracised. Sex-related illness was still a social and moral taboo, commented health workers.

According to a government estimate, there are 50 thousand prostitutes at 18-brothels in Bangladesh.

Women activists, however, put the figure at almost double of that. They say that a large number of the commercial sex workers were floating having no permanent address.

The presence of legal and illegal brothels in a way testify the extent of extra-marital sexual activities.

It is however, possible to contract HIV from a single infected sexual partner.

A client of a prostitute or anyone having sexual encounters with more than one partners are in greater risk of contracting HIV than one with a single partner, unless condom is used, experts say. This is why prostitutes and frequently travelling people like truck drivers and sailors were in the high risk zone, they added.

Use of condoms among the clients of the prostitutes is very low. Health Ministry officials said, adding the national rate of condom use was only 3.8 per cent.

Workers of the NGOs, Voluntary Health Services Society (VHSS) said that the prostitutes tried to persuade their clients to use condoms with little success.

"There is no way that I can force my clients to use condoms," said Anjumam of

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Taslima Nasreen case Hearing deferred until Jan 3

By Court Correspondent

The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka yesterday deferred the hearing of the case against controversial writer Taslima Nasreen, facing a blasphemy charge, until January 3 next year.

The deferral came following a petition from Taslima's counsel seeking adjournment of the

See Page 12 Col 4

Sanskritik Jote's victory festival begins

By Staff Correspondent

The Sammilito Sanskritik Jote, an alliance of the country's leading cultural groups, began a week-long festival at Rayerbazar in the city on the occasion of the Victory Day.

Widow of martyred intellectual Dr Mortuza, Saïda Mortuza declared the festival open at 3

See Page 12 Col 1

Rajuk Commercial Plot Auction Notice

Most suitable Commercial-Cum-Residential Plot No-101, Sector-7 and Plot No-34 (Corner Plot) Road No-2, Sector-3 (having road facilities on two sides at Dhaka-Mymensingh Road of Uttara Model Town Dhaka measuring more or less 525.09 Sqr metre (8 Katha) and 706.31 Sqr metre (10 Katha 9 Chattak) respectively will be allotted for 99 years lease on open auction.

Applications on prescribed form with terms and conditions to be obtained from Sonali Bank, Rajuk Bhaban Branch, Dhaka on payment of Taka 200/- (Taka two hundred) only in cash for each set (non-refundable) and will be received by the Deputy Director (Estates) from the intending bidders up to 2.00 PM on 18-12-94 for Plot No-101 of Sector-7 and up to 2.00 PM on 20-12-94 for Plot No-34 of Sector-3.

The auction will be held on 19-12-94 for Plot No-101 and on 21-12-94 for Plot No-34 in the conference room of 3rd floor of the Rajuk Bhaban, Dhaka at 10 AM.

Chairman
 Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha
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