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Judgement in Bangabandhu Murder Case tomorrow

The countdown to the verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case began as Judge Kazi Golam Rasul will pronounce his judgement tomorrow, reports UNB.

The nation is anxiously waiting to hear the verdict of the trial, held after 21 years of the assassination of Father of the Nation and most of members of his family on August 15, 1975.

The trial of the case began on March 12, 1997 at a makeshift court in the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge beside the Dhaka Central Jail.

The judge will deliver his verdict after 148 days' of hearing of the case.

If found guilty, the accused might face death penalty on charges of murder, conspiracy, concealing evidence and common intention under Sections 302, 34, 120 (b) and 201 of the Penal Code.

Chronology
 August 15, 1975: Bangabandhu was assassinated along with most of his family members. Total killed: 32. Only two daughters of Bangabandhu — Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana — survived as they were in abroad.

June 12, 1996: Awami League wins majority in general elections.

June 23, 1996: AL formed government with Sheikh Hasina as Prime Minister.

August 12, 1996: Col (ret'd) Syed Farooq Rahman and Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan were arrested.

October 2, 1996: After 21 years of assassination of Bangabandhu, a case was filed with Dhanmondi thana. Plaintiff Mohit Islam, a resident personal assistant of Bangabandhu, said the case could not be filed earlier due to adverse situation.

October 3, 1996: Investigation into the case began. ASP Abdul Kahhar Akand of Criminal Investigation Department

Delhi for power project with Bangladesh

NEW DELHI, Nov 6: Power Minister Kumaramangalam said here today that the Indian government had plans for electricity generation linking India and Bangladesh, reports BSS.

While announcing the policy on hydro power development in India he said discussion between the two countries were continuing for having transmission lines over their political borders strengthening sub-transmission and distribution system.

There would be two sub-stations in Assam and two within Bangladesh, as has been proposed, he added.

Kumaramangalam said that the Indian government had proposed to take initiatives to establish a SAARC power grid for partnership with SAARC countries.

He said India and Pakistan are currently having talks over the issue with New Delhi intending to buy electricity from Pakistan.

The minister expressed optimism in this regard but said a clear picture is likely to emerge by November 14.

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Trade unionism contaminates civil service

By Shehab Ahmed

Government employees and officials, in violation of service rules, have organised themselves in more than 50 associations or groups, which are virtually functioning as trade unions and pressure groups.

Inside the Secretariat, there are more than a dozen organisations of employees and officials; some of them have fought among themselves for dominance and clashed with police agitating for various issues including pay.

Rules say they cannot be organised in trade unions but are allowed to have service associations for welfare.

But instances are there that they are operating more like trade unions or pressure groups than welfare associations, sometimes creating obstacles to smooth functioning of the administration, particularly in-

side the Secretariat complex.

During a number of occasions, when there were the clashes between rival groups of employees or agitation demanding better pay, the working atmosphere became the casualty.

Late last year, presence of riot police inside the Secretariat looked like a permanent feature.

Although one of their leaders says protecting the rights is also part of welfare.

A recent tussle on promotions of 321 junior or mid-ranking civil servants had resulted in postponement of the process until December.

It followed protest and lobbying from Civil Service Coordination Committee, which groups 26 out of 29 cadres of

Bangladesh Civil Service, opposing the elite Bangladesh Administrative Services Association (BASA).

The co-ordination committee encompasses engineers, physicians, agriculturists, customs, taxation, livestock, education and other services.

Their leaders say they were not treated fairly when the decisions on the promotions were taken. They charged merits were not counted in filling the upper echelons of administration.

The BASA leaders who are going to face new elections on December 11-12 have also been under pressure from their members to clear their way for promotions.

On the issue of promotions, a group of BASA members formed

recognised employees association's office under lock and key.

Even police are not out of the fray. They have at least one group beside the police service association. Recently one group called Bangladesh police officers association has appeared.

The BASA was earlier known as BCS (Administration) Association. When it changed its nomenclature a few years ago, the police welfare association also changed its name.

Asked to provide the lists of how many organisations operate legally and beyond rules, the establishment ministry officials declined to provide any details.

The Daily Star could obtain a list that shows that the National Pay Commission formed in 1996 had held discussions with as many as 40 service organisations and representing

Mid-term polls demanded 7-party announces programmes today

BNP led seven-party alliance yesterday demanded of the government to resign immediately and hold mid-term polls amidst its failure, reports UNB.

A resolution of the meeting of the alliance also rejected the intention of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to hold early general elections in the year 2000.

The Prime Minister reportedly asked his party MPs during Awami League Parliamentary Party meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad on Thursday to take preparation for elections in the year 2000.

The meeting was held at the 29 Mintoo Road with BNP leader Shamsul Islam MP in the chair.

Identical programmes of the seven political parties will be announced today, the meeting said.

BNP leader Sadeq Hossain Khoka, Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Muhammad Quamruzzaman and ATM Azharul Islam, JP leaders, Mainuddin Bhuiyan, Shamim Al Mamun and Shah Shaheed Sarwar, JAGPA leaders, Dr AKA Aziz, Anisur Rahman and Shahjahan Sardar, PNP leaders Shawkat Hossain Nilu and Mostafizur Rahman, DL leader Miraj Abbasi and NDA leader Adv Abu Baker Siddique attended the meeting.

Criticising alleged armed

BNP observes Nat'l Revolution and Solidarity Day today

BNP and some other political parties will observe 'National Revolution and Solidarity Day' today marking the 'seep-people uprising', which according to them had foiled the conspiracy against independence and sovereignty on November 7, 1975.

Today is the 23rd anniversary of the day.

Till 1996, this day was officially observed as 'National Revolution and Solidarity Day.' It remained a public holiday.

The Awami League government after it assumed office following the last general elections annulled the public holiday. It has seriously opposed the significance of November 7 as upheld by BNP. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is on record to have termed the day as 'freedom fighters-soldiers killing day.'

Following the August 15 killing of President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members, and assumption of power by Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed assisted by a few mid-ranking army officers, the entire chain of command of the army was broken and in chaos.

While Chief of General Staff (CGS) Brig Khaled Mosharraf was in the process of removing

Govt may go for early polls in 2000: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister and Awami League Sheikh Hasina has told her party lawmakers that government might think of early general elections by 2000.

The last elections were held on June 12, 1996 and the tenure of the present parliament expires in June, 2001.

Hasina raised the issue of 30 reserved seats for women in the Jatiya Sangsad at a meeting of Awami League's Parliamentary Party (ALPP) on Thursday.

The provision for reserved seats was made for 10 years by the fourth parliament in 1990.

Meeting sources told The Daily Star that Sheikh Hasina had just hinted at a possibility of early polls without specifying.

"After expiry of the time-limit for reserved seats by early 2000, parliament can extend it with support from two-third of the lawmakers. But if the main opposition party opposes it, early elections would be required," said a ruling party MP.

Another AL legislator clarified that none should take it as 'mid-term elections' because the prime minister did not mean it.

Danish co may get 2 deep sea blocks

The government's negotiation with Danish oil company Maersk Olie for deep sea blocks is nearing completion, sources said.

It is likely that Maersk will be given two blocks -- 19 and 20. Earlier, the government had offered it one block.

Sources said that both the sides more or less agreed on various tax issues and two blocks for Maersk.

The Danish company is known as a leading deep sea oil and gas explorer. It contends that a venture in two deep sea blocks was more cost effective for Bangladesh than a venture in only one block.

Meanwhile, talks on five 'awarded' blocks are being delayed for various reasons.

"Petrobangla has formed a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) negotiation committee to sit with the companies which have been given Letter of Intent (LoI) for five blocks," said one source.

The companies waiting for finalising negotiations with the government are Enron-Okland (blocks 3 and 6), Shell-Cairn (Block 5), Triton-Unocal (Block 7) and Pangaia (Block 8). Besides, Tullow Oil, Chevron-Texaco and Mobil-Petronas are

VGF: Expanded programme by tomorrow

By Reaz Ahmad

The government is working out a plan to extend the VGF (vulnerable group feeding) programme following donors' suggestion to increase the number of VGF cardholders and quantity of food.

A relief ministry official said a detailed plan regarding expansion of the programme will be worked out by the Prime Minister's Office by tomorrow and 'will act accordingly'. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had already announced at a public rally in the city on Tuesday that two lakh additional VGF cards would be issued.

However, WFP (World Food Programme) sources, that provide food aid for the purpose, told The Daily Star that the government had already been informed that the number of VGF cards could be raised to 55 lakh. "Besides, we suggested that at least 25 lakh of the cardholders, obviously the worst-hit ones, could be even given double the quantity of food-grains they get now, that is 32 kg a month," said a WFP official in Dhaka.

So far, VGF cards were distributed among some 40 lakh flood-hit families, covering two crore people or one-sixth of the country's population. Each cardholder is entitled to get eight kg of rice and eight kg wheat per month.

A donors' representative in Dhaka said the government is cautious that its food reserve is not depleted. "That we understand well. But, sooner or later as food aid shipment comes by, the government's stock will be replenished."

An ERD (Economic Relations Division) official, however, explained that the government has to strike a balance between its stock position and shipment schedules. "Government can't let its wheat reserve to dry up while shipment of food aid depends on different variables."

Arrested BTW officials placed on remand

Five BTW officials, arrested on Thursday in connection with the killing of four of their senior colleagues on November 7, 1975, were taken on a 4-day police remand yesterday, reports UNB.

The CID investigators produced them before the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and sought five-day remand to interrogate them about the gruesome killing.

The arrested are: BTW Producer Lutfar Rahman Talukder, Assistant Directors Abul Kashem Baghi, Abdul Awal Sharker and Controller of Transmission Anul Kabir, and former BTW official Aynuzzaman.

The killing took place in the early morning of November 7, 1975, behind the BTW Bhaban when it was under the siege of the army.

The victims of the incident were — Administrative Officer AFM Siddique, Chief Accountant Akmal Hossain, Director (Programme) Monirul Alam and Assistant Photographer Firoz Qayyum Chowdhury.

Police yesterday interrogated them several times in various ways, said an investigation official. They were looked exhausted, CID sources said, adding that they have given some sensational information regarding the murder.

"We are verifying their statements and information with their previous statements," CID investigators said.

Seminar told Software industry to earn forex, create jobs

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday said the country has great potential to earn foreign exchange and solve the unemployment problem by developing an export-oriented software industry.

Youths can easily seize the opportunity of having lucrative jobs abroad to fill up the shortage of more than 1.5 million IT professionals by the year 2000, they said.

The seminar on "Career Options in Information Technology" was held at the CIRDAP auditorium yesterday.

Jointly organised by Rotary Club of Dhaka Mid City and Rotaract Club of Dhaka Mid City, the seminar was sponsored by a leading computer education organisation, APTeCH.

The seminar was addressed by, among others, Executive Director of Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) Prof M Sobhan, Rezwan Bin Faruque of Axiom Technologies Ltd and Country Operations Manager of APTeCH Tarun Mitra, Rotn Salah Uddin Mahmud Khasru and Rotaract Zakaria Ul Alam.

Prof Sobhan said the country's main resource is manpower but it is not being used properly.

Emphasising the need for IT manpower of international



Shops have been set up illegally on public land and part of the road near Meillat office in the city's Fakirerpool area. Illegal structures are also being built on the land still vacant. — Star photo

Demolition of illegal structures DCC to resume drive after 'political heat' subsides

By Morshed Ali Khan

But as soon as the DCC demolition team withdrew from the streets, most of the illegal occupants returned to their spots and rebuilt their structures. Within the last six months hundreds of shops, clubs, party and trade union offices and other structures have been illegally set up in the city.

This year the DCC demolition team is much stronger than last year's. Eighteen metropolitan magistrates have been assigned to the DCC court, bringing the number to 21. Moreover, in a letter on October 7, the government gave metropolitan magistracy power to all the 10 zonal officers of the DCC. Now the total number of metropolitan magistrates under DCC is 31.

A DCC official, requesting anonymity, said a strong team DCC team did not mean that ac-

Four Indian states go to polls on Nov 25 First major test for BJP govt

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Nov 6: The assembly elections in four Indian states — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Mizoram — scheduled for November 25 are the first major test of popularity for Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government since it assumed office more than seven months ago.

The outcome of the elections would also constitute a commentary on the leadership of Congress President Sonia Gandhi who took up the job of leading India's oldest political party early this year.

If BJP fails to retain power in Rajasthan and Delhi, where it has to cope with anti-incumbency factor, and regain control of Madhya Pradesh where Congress is in power, the Vajpayee government will come under considerable pressure.

On the other hand, victory for Congress in Madhya Pradesh, even if by a reduced majority, and in Rajasthan and Delhi would give strength to anti-BJP forces' call for an alternative government led by Sonia Gandhi's party in the event of Vajpayee administration's fail. It will also give a big boost to Congress' revival bid after losing in 1996 and 1998 general elections.

The top BJP leadership has left nothing to chance and pressed all its heavyweights including Vajpayee, Home Minister L K Advani and party president Kushabhau Thakre, into electioneering in the four states.

As the BJP leadership firmed up its election strategy, it found itself in the midst of a fire-fighting operation, especially in Delhi where it looks up to 46-year-old lady politician Sushma Swaraj to take the challenge of steering the party back to power.

Within hours of Mrs Swaraj's swearing in as Chief Minister of Delhi's BJP-led government, BJP central leaders announced their decision to project her as candidate for the same post if BJP returns to power in the coming elections.

The BJP leadership, according to political observers, has taken a "calculated risk" by inducting Sushma Swaraj as Delhi Chief Minister in place of Jat leader Sahib Singh Verma as it may have repercussions not only among Jat voters in Delhi but also in neighbouring Rajasthan.

The strongest reaction to Verma's removal came from none other than an ally of BJP-Indian National Lok Dal headed by Om Prakash Chautala, son of well-known Jat leader and former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal.

Chautala's party had threatened to withdraw support to Vajpayee ministry in protest against Verma's removal while another senior Jat leader Ajit Singh, a former Federal Minister, also flayed the action.

The BJP is particularly worried about the possible impact of the change of guard in Delhi state on Rajasthan's Jat voters. The party was jolted recently by desertion of some Jat leaders from its ranks who switched over to Congress.

To stave off possible adverse fallout of Verma's removal, BJP quickly announced that he would be inducted in the Vajpayee cabinet.

Rajasthan is expected to witness what promises to be one of the most closely-contested assembly elections in the state. In the previous poll in 1993, the BJP fell short of majority with 95 seats in the 200-member state assembly but succeeded in cobbling the required strength by roping in most of the 21 independent MLAs legislators.

The main opposition Congress was highly encouraged by the outcome of this year's parliamentary elections in the state where the party won 18 of the 25 Lok Sabha seats. One Lok Sabha seat constituency consists of an average seven assembly constituencies. But statistics may not always be the right indicator as local issues play a

No headway in talks on Siachen dispute

NEW DELHI, Nov 6: India and Pakistan today failed to make any headway in their talks on the Siachen issue but agreed to continue discussions during the next round of the dialogue process, reports BSS.

In a joint statement issued at the end of the talks, the two sides reiterated their respective positions on the issue. The discussions were held in a frank and cordial atmosphere, the statement added.

Indian Defence Secretary Ajit Kumar and his Pakistani counterpart Lt Gen (ret'd) Chowdhury Iftikhar Ali Khan led their respective sides at the talks.

During the talks, the Pakistani delegation turned down New Delhi's suggestion to effect a ceasefire and instead pleaded for implementing the June 1989 agreement on redeployment of forces in the area.

Emerging from the meeting, the Pakistan defence secretary said, "It is a very difficult and complex situation. It will take time."

Later, briefing newsmen the Indian defence secretary said that the Indian approach has