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PHILIPS

BJP worried but rules out mid-term polls

BANGALORE, Jan 2: India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said today it was worried about its poor performance in provincial polls but ruled out early national elections, reports Reuters.

"Our organisation is very worried about our shortcomings," K L Sharma, the party's senior vice-president, told reporters at a two-day meeting of the BJP's national executive in the southern Indian city on Bangalore.

"We will work to overcome these ... but our government is stable and we don't foresee any possibility of a mid-term poll."

The normal term of parliament in India is five years and the next national elections are due in 2003.

The right-wing BJP, head of a 13-party federal coalition, started its meeting by examining its losses in the provincial elections, Sharma said.

The BJP suffered defeats in three states in November, failing to retain power in Rajasthan and Delhi and unable

to win control of the central state of Madhya Pradesh from the Opposition Congress Party.

Sharma said the party had identified the reasons for its poor performance and reports were being presented at the national executive meeting — the first since the setbacks.

"Passivity of party workers, passivity of pro-BJP voters, poor election management by the party, and issues such as increase in the price of basic commodities influenced the voters away from us," Sharma said.

He said the meeting was serious about addressing indiscipline in the party. "The party will take stern measures to tackle situations where members are placing themselves above the party," he said but refused to give any more details.

Congress victories in all three states raised questions about the longevity of the federal government.

In his opening remarks, BJP president Khushabhau Thakre played down the effects of the provincial electoral setbacks and told party members to 'learn lessons' from them.

"Results of one round of elections cannot be a final judgement," he said.

Senior BJP leaders told Reuters the party would have a chance to put the defeats behind it in elections in the southern states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Goa this year.

"Over the next two days, we will learn from our defeat and move forward, firm in our resolve to win the next round of elections," Thakre said.

Khaleda leaves for KSA Jan 7

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will visit Saudi Arabia this month for medical check-up, reports UNB.

She will leave Dhaka for Saudi on January 7, a party source said. Begum Zia will be a royal guest of the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, a meeting of BNP's National Standing Committee will be held at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition at 29, Minto Road at 6 pm today.

Party Chief Begum Khaleda Zia will preside over the meeting, said a press release yesterday.

Ershad

From Page 1

Ershad said about the MPs who had met Manju so far. Reports say at least a dozen MPs had already assured the minister of their support. JP has 33 MPs.

Manju will need at least 10 MPs to form a parliamentary group of his own. Sources close to him said that he was expecting at least 18 MPs in his fold.

The sources said Ershad has become jittery at the prospect of such desertion and publicly warned them, something he has done out of frustration, fearing loss of control on them.

But Manju remained quiet yesterday, restraining himself from any headlong attack on Ershad.

There is no scope for any "compromise," he told the BBC last night.

"Our efforts are directed at a democratic, constitutional and stable political system. However small our efforts could be, it would continue against any attempt to create anarchy in the country," he said.

On his support among JP MPs, Manju said that it would be tested in parliament when it goes to session. He wished Ershad well and said he is not seeking any revenge.

"With due respect to him I could say that BNP chairperson would never trust him and take him into confidence," Manju said about his former leader's tilt towards the BNP-led opposition.

He sent the resignation letter to party chief Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saying he was unable to perform his duties due to illness.

2 killed in Pabna incidents

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Jan 2: Two persons were killed in two violent incidents in the district yesterday.

Police said, Sajidur Rahman, 10, of Ramchandrapur was stabbed to death near the town's Ananta Cinema Hall at around 11 pm. The incident followed a brawl over purchasing night show tickets. Two others were injured during the incident.

Police arrested one Sohel, 18, in connection with the murder.

Meanwhile, in an armed clash at a remote village, one person was killed and 18 others injured.

The incident occurred over a land dispute. Police said, one Swapna and his associates were attacked by Rashid and his men, on the land at village Sreerampur. During the clash Swapna was seriously injured. He later died at Natore General Hospital. Eighteen others of both the sides were injured.

Jhalakati AL chief resigns

JHALAKATI, Jan 2: District unit president of ruling Awami League advocate Shahjahan Ashraf resigned today from his post, reports UNB.

He sent the resignation letter to party chief Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saying he was unable to perform his duties due to illness.

AL for new allies

From Page 1

In a major shift in his political stance, Ershad no longer wants to remain a dead horse and intends to play opposition. Before sacking Manju he had also charged him with making the JP a virtual 'B-team' of Awami League.

Manju is now learnt to be trying to gain support from JP lawmakers, specially those who did not like Ershad's decision of sacking him days after merger of the Zafar - Moazzem faction with the mainstream JP.

It is learnt that besides meeting Sheikh Hasina over the last few days, Manju had also talks with some senior leaders of AL and JSD. JSD (Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal) is another partner in Hasina's 'consensus' government. JSD leader ASM Rob is a minister in Hasina's Cabinet.

A minister and senior AL leader foresees a split in the JP Parliamentary Party provided

that the party succeeds in his frantic bid to gain support of at least 16 lawmakers of the party out of 33.

Asked whether AL was helping Manju in his efforts to gain support by offering one or two more ministerial jobs his men in the JP, the said, "This is a matter which only the Prime Minister can say".

Addressing his party's founding anniversary function on the first day of the year, Ershad warned of "consequences" the party MPs who have been meeting Manju for the last few days.

Interestingly, despite all these visible rivalries among the key players, a senior JP man who is known to be closely close to Ershad and Manju said, "Verbal pronouncement of 'Talak' does to mean end of a relationship".

"This is the beginning of new political polarization. Wait and see, many things will come up... Many interesting developments will take place", he said.

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Another world

For the less fortunate, the purpose is well served by these clothes, old but good enough to fight the winter chill. Near the Buckland Bundh in Old City, this wholesale market for old warm clothes is having brisk business for obvious reasons.

—Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Sohel murder: Liton placed on remand

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court yesterday granted a five-day police remand for interrogating Mohammad Haroon-or-Rashid alias Liton, one of the accused in film actor Sohel Chowdhury murder case, reports BSS.

The detective branch (DB) of police arrested Liton from a petrol pump in the Asad Gate area on Friday following a conditional statement of Adnan, another accused in the case.

Court sources said, the DB police produced Liton before the court and prayed for 10-day remand. The magistrate granted five-day remand after hearing both the sides.

The number of the arrested accused in the Sohel Chowdhury murder case has risen to three. Earlier, police arrested Adnan and Selim Khan from the city for their alleged involvement in the killing.

Sohel Chowdhury was shot dead by some assailants in front of Club Tramps at Banani on December 18 last year.

Deadly virus from China finds way into Calcutta

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: A deadly virus, which killed more than 12,000 people in China in 1982, has been traced in some patients in the eastern Indian city of Calcutta, AFP quoting a newspaper reported today.

Scientists at the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases said they stumbled upon the Boto Virus, during a routine examination of patients in a city hospital, the Asian Age daily said.

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Projonmo '71 to split

From Page 1
tee of the organisation was formed when it was floated on October 29, 1991. The tenure of the committee expired after two years but no new committee was formed.

The group led by Sajidur Rahman at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday announced a 25-member central committee with Anwarul Kabir Milu and Hidayet Hossain as president and general secretary.

Under this circumstances, the committee declared yesterday as "illegal" and majority members of the Projonmo '71 can not accept it, he said in the statement.

The statement was also signed by former vice-president Rabul Aftab, joint secretaries Ashif Munir and Salma Nargis, publication secretary Farzana Nipa and publicity secretary Babul Chowdhury.

Sajidur Rahman claimed at the press conference that formation of a new committee became urgent as some office-bearers of the former committee, including general secretary Tawhid Reza Nur had made the organisation inactive by not doing any organisational activities. Sajidur also alleged that leaders of the other group had met the Prime Minister without taking any opinion from the then president and majority of the office-bearers of the organisation.

Nur, leader of the other group in a statement yesterday alleged that the new committee was formed secretly, ignoring the opinion of the majority and violating the constitution of the organisation. The statement was signed by six office-bearers of the former committee.

Nur alleged that leaders of the other group remained inactive due to differences on principles and had been using the organisation's demand immediate trial of all war criminals in a special tribunal.

Truckers in Dhaka dist go on strike from today

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Truck Drivers and Workers Federation (BTDWF) has called an indefinite truck strike in greater Dhaka district from today demanding effective measures to stop toll extortions at Aricha ghat and arrest of miscreants disturbing smooth functioning of the organisation.

The dead was reiterated as Modris Ali. He died on his way to hospital.

Police said the two groups clashed during an arbitration at noon.

We were compelled to call the strike during the month of holy Ramadan, as there was no response from the authorities concerned. Earlier, we put forward our demands to the authorities including the district administration of Manikganj, BTDWF leaders said in a statement yesterday.

The body was sent to Sunamganj General Hospital for autopsy today.

BNP: Voters' ID cards

From Page 1

About the subject discussed with FEMA leaders, he said BNP chairperson wants to promote an institution outside the government for impartial monitoring of elections so that the people can know the real picture of voting.

BNP will extend all out cooperation in establishing such election monitoring process in the country and their cooperation would also go to FEMA.

Replies to a query, Huda said that contents of the FEMA report on Pabna-2 by-election were fruitful and she assured of keeping close contact with them for developing the election monitoring system.

A senior police official seeking anonymity said, "Police are now suffering from a sort of phobia after the Rubel incident in Dhaka. Besides, political pressure is causing difficulties in taking the criminals on remand for interrogation about possession of illegal arms. Consequently, the illegal arms are yet to be recovered."

On the other hand, no crackdown was launched so far by police outside the city areas, particularly in Raiganj and Fazlpur, known as the strongholds of terrorists where they keep illegal arms in their hideouts.

organisation for petty personal interest.

Nur claimed that they organised Mukti Juddha Mela and Bijoy Mela, observed the death anniversary of Jahanara Imam, donated money to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund and met the Prime Minister after two years but no new committee was formed.

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One killed, 22 hurt as villagers clash in Sylhet