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Speculations rife over early resignation of govt Polls to power New Year politics

By Nazmul Ashraf

The year that has just begun is set to witness a series of major events in the country's political arena.
Apart from change in power, politics in 2001 is also expected to heat up with scheduled and unscheduled events taking place before and after the next general elections.
As of now, prediction of an early election is rife in the political circle although the Awami League government is yet to spell out exactly when it plans to hand over power to a caretaker administration. Scheduled to resign in July this year, the ruling party has already given indications that it might step down earlier. Speculations over the election schedule are likely to intensify as days go by.
One thing is almost certain though; the party in power would only earlier resigna-

tion as and when it deems convenient. Execution of the verdict in the Bangabandhu murder case, the state of opposition politics and fulfillment of some major election pledges are a few key issues that will dictate the Awami League's decision to go for early elections.
With the election drawing near, political parties across the divide are conserving energy to fight the battle of ballots. The first quarter of the New Year is likely to see a renewed political campaign by both sides.
The ruling party will soon undertake massive preparations for Independence Day celebrations while the combined opposition parties are going to kick off a 15-day political programme across the country from mid-January.
The confrontational blend of politics is

feared throughout year, peaking in the months leading to and immediately after the elections.
The AL government may come up with its election plans after the Independence Day provided that execution of verdict in the Bangabandhu murder case is at hand. The final judgement in the sensational case is expected soon.
Once the incumbent government steps down, a caretaker administration will take over to hold the election within a 90-day deadline. Being the election year, 2001 is likely to witness many other events of political significance revolving round the change in power.
The long-planned resignation of opposition lawmakers, dissolution of the current parliament.

Dhaka again seeks text of Hamoodur Rahman report

The government has again sought the full text of the judicial probe report given by the Justice Hamoodur Rahman commission about Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war, reports UNB.
"We may give our reaction after receiving the full report," Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad told reporters at a regular press briefing at the Foreign Office yesterday.
Part of the Hamoodur Rahman commission report was recently leaked to the press from the wraps of Pakistani administration about three decades after the war.
In reply to a question, Azad however said present relationship between Dhaka and Islamabad is there where it should be. "The relation is good, we want to keep it good," he said, adding that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government believes in peace, democracy and development.



Members of some 400 landless families at work on the paddy field reclaimed from the Bramnir Beel in Pachgachi Union under Pirganj Thana. --Star photo

Bamnir Beel reels under pressure of the landless

Half of the age-old wetland already reclaimed for cultivation

By Morshed Ali Khan, back from Rangpur

Rich in bio-diversity, the age-old Bamnir Beel at Pachgachi Union under Pirganj Thana is threatened by around 400 landless families, who have already converted about half of this khas wetland into cultivable land for their own survival.
What still remains of Bamnir Beel is about 100 acres of water body, home to thousands of rare species of aquatic plants, fishes, birds, insects and other animals.
Such is the pressure of population, especially that of the landless, that the whole of Bamnir Beel could be reclaimed for cultivation in near future, fear environmentalists.
At present, the landless peasants are in possession of 68 acres of the wetland under a lease procured from the Deputy Commissioner's office in 1986. Experts at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) warn that permanent conversion of the wetland will destroy the ecosystem of the entire area.
However, an environmentally and economically sustainable plan can easily be chalked out to preserve the wetland in its present character. Shubhashish Priya Barua, an assistant programme officer of IUCN in Dhaka, said.
If there is no wetland, the peasants will be dependent solely on agricultural outputs for living.

he explained. "The land will eventually lose fertility and because of their dependency on a single produce. Eventually, the farmers will be unable to get good prices for their harvest."
"During the dry season one third of the beel could be cultivated and the remaining should be left as it is. This would help the fishes and plants to survive for the rainy season."
"If the wetland dries up naturally during the dry season, the brood fishes would survive for regeneration during the rainy season. If the water is drained out artificially, the sanctuary for brood fishes will be disturbed and chances of survival would be very slim."
"These wetlands provide the villagers with so much protein and the plants could be used in various medicinal purposes. In fact, preserving such wetlands could be much more profitable than converting them into arable land."
"The wetland is a natural sanctuary for migratory birds, if you convert it you will be losing the winged guests forever."
"The beel is blessed with the total range of local fishes here and if we can protect them for regeneration, we won't have to depend on alien species which deplete natural fish feeds very quickly and

Rectified spirit flows over the official limit

By Shaikh Nazrul Islam

With the help of some corrupt officials at the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), factory owners and traders are marketing double the official limit of rectified spirit, widely consumed as intoxicants. Its demand as alcohol heavily outweighs its use in preparation of homeopathic medicine, say sources.
There are three authorised manufacturers in the country while the some 6,000 traders possess DNC permits to deal in rectified spirit. The permits allow each retailer a monthly allocation of no more than nine litres. So, the official demand is some 55,000 litres every month.
However, the total supply from these three factories has reached more than 100,000 litres. The surplus, according to sources, is traded in the black market.
The illegal practice also means additional profit for manufacturers as demand in the black market is constantly on the rise. Some unscrupulous businessmen also mix cheap but poisonous methanol with rectified spirit to make more profit, which resulted in a large number of deaths in recent months.
For their part in the business the DNC officials are handsomely compensated by owners of the three licensed manufacturing plants in Natore, Rangpur and Panchagarh.
The DNC involvement goes deeper than that. Under its patronage, an unauthorised

factory at Laxmipur in Gazipur operates in full swing and regularly supplies rectified spirit to the market.
Some DNC officials also collect money from as many as 50 hotels that trade in foreign liquor in the city's Kotwali area, sources said.
Local liquors are sold at specific joints, called adda. Ripon Choudhury's Adda near Salimullah Medical College, Nayabazar Meat Shop Adda, Heroini Adda on the first floor of the Nayabazar market, Kaptan Bazaar Adda, Hokkas Adda at Dhalpur in Demra, etc are some major liquor joints. There are also adda shops at Karwan Bazaar and Begunbari.
Some guesthouses at Gulshan trade in liquors as well, with relevant DNC officials receiving regular payment to turn a blind eye to the illegal acts.
Prisoner dies at Pabna hospital
PABNA, Jan 2: A prisoner of Pabna district jail died at General Hospital here early today, reports UNB.
Mohammad Selim, 50, was admitted to the hospital after he fell sick.
Jail Super claimed Selim died of a heart attack. But his relatives alleged that Selim died due to negligence of the jail authorities.
Selim was sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment on charge of counterfeiting local currency.



Three young men were arrested from Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday with forged credit cards. --Star photo

3 arrested for using fake credit cards

By Staff Correspondent

Three youths including a Bangladeshi British national were arrested with three fake credit cards from Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday morning.
The Detective Branch of police arrested Mohammad Ibne Razzak, Suhel Ahmed and Mohammad Pappu Gani from Sonargaon Hotel. The arrested are from Sylhet and involved in possessing counterfeit credit cards, police said.
"We were informed of Razzak's arrival here with huge counterfeit credit cards," an official of the Standard Chartered Grindlays Bank said. Home Ministry was informed of the matter, he added.
The DB police was assigned to investigate the matter. Later, DB police led by Assistant Commissioner Akram raided Sonargaon Hotel and arrested the three.
"Razzak along with his wife, two children and two middle aged women arrived in the city on December 25," DB police said.
DB also takes initiatives to repatriate Razzak's wife, children and the two women to Britain.
They first stayed at Sheraton Hotel and went to Sylhet. On return from Sylhet they were staying at Hotel Sonargaon. Razzak used the

Rokeya Padak handed over

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called upon all women to come forward and join the ongoing development efforts of the government to make the movement for women's progress a success, reports UNB.
"We are working hard for ensuring the real progress of women through women empowerment and poverty alleviation," she said urging the women folk to take their own initiative for improving their socio-economic condition.
Distributing 'Begum Rokeya Padak 2000' at the Osmani Memorial Hall yesterday morning, the Prime Minister said Begum Rokeya showed the way of women's emancipation and now the women should follow the path for their freedom.
She handed over the prestigious Rokeya Padak 2000 to Hena Das and Dr Maliha Khatun in recognition of their outstanding contributions for the progress of women and for women education.
State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Prof Zinatunnesa Talukder, Women and Children Affairs Secretary K M Ehsanul Huq and Director General of Women Affairs Directorate Rejina Akhter Khanam also spoke at the function.

Commissioner gunned down in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, Jan 2: A ward commissioner of the pourashava was shot dead while two of his associates were injured when miscreants fired on them here early today, reports UNB.
Police said Manik Mia, 38, Commissioner of Ward No 1, might have been killed in a sequel to previous enmity.
"Unidentified armed terrorists numbering 7-8 fired on Manik and his companions Wadud and Suruj Mia when they were returning home after enjoying a jatra," police said.
They were rushed to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as their condition deteriorated.
Manik died there at about 11:00 am, DMCH sources said.
A case was filed in this connection.

২০০০ সালে ব্যাংকের উল্লেখযোগ্য সাফল্যের জন্য
আমাদের সকল গ্রাহক, পৃষ্ঠপোষক ও শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের
জানাই আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা ও নববর্ষের শুভেচ্ছা

মার্কেটাইল ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
একবিংশ শতাব্দীর ব্যাংক

বাংলা একাডেমী ঢাকা-১০০০
অমর একুশে গ্রন্থমেলা ২০০১

আয়োজনে : বাংলা একাডেমী, ঢাকা
সহযোগিতায় : বাংলাদেশ পুস্তক প্রকাশক ও বিক্রেতা সমিতি এবং
বাংলাদেশ সৃজনশীল প্রকাশক পরিষদ, ঢাকা
স্থান : বাংলা একাডেমী প্রাঙ্গণ
সময় : ১ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০০১ থেকে ২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০০১

অমর একুশে গ্রন্থমেলা ২০০১-এ অংশগ্রহণ করতে আগ্রহী পুস্তক প্রকাশনা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে প্রকাশিত পুস্তকসহ বাংলা একাডেমী কর্তৃক সরবরাহকৃত তথ্য ফরম পূরণ করে একাডেমীতে জমা দেয়ার পর স্টল বরাদ্দের আবেদনপত্র সরবরাহ করা হবে। কেবল পুস্তক প্রকাশনা প্রতিষ্ঠান বইয়ের স্টলের জন্য আবেদন করতে পারবেন। অন্য কোনো প্রকার স্টলের জন্য আবেদন করা যাবে না। তথ্য ফরম ০৩ জানুয়ারি ২০০১ বুধবার থেকে ১১ জানুয়ারি ২০০১ বৃহস্পতিবার পর্যন্ত (ছুটির দিনসহ) সদস্য-সচিব, অমর একুশে গ্রন্থমেলা পরিচালনা কমিটি (ছুটির দিনসহ) বাংলা একাডেমী, ঢাকা থেকে সংগ্রহ করা ও জমা দেয়া যাবে। স্টল বরাদ্দের নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র ১৪ জানুয়ারি ২০০১ রবিবার থেকে ২১ জানুয়ারি ২০০১ রবিবার বিকেল ৩টা পর্যন্ত (ছুটির দিনসহ) কোষাধ্যক্ষ, বাংলা একাডেমী, ঢাকা থেকে ৪০০.০০ (চারশত) টাকা মূল্যে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। আবেদনপত্র ১৪ জানুয়ারি ২০০১ রবিবার থেকে ২১ জানুয়ারি ২০০১ রবিবার (ছুটির দিনসহ) বিকাল ৫টা পর্যন্ত জমা নেয়া হবে। অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান গ্রন্থমেলা পরিচালনা কমিটি কর্তৃক প্রণীত নীতিমালা ও নিয়মাবলি যেনে চলতে বাধ্য থাকবেন।

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Power grid collapse plunges north India into darkness

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: Tens of millions of people across seven Indian states, including the capital New Delhi, were without power today after an electricity grid breakdown, reports Reuters.
The shutdown hit train services in northern India and hospitals switched to emergency generators as engineers of the state-run Power Grid Corporation struggled to fix the fault in the northern transmission system.
"Power supply in all the seven north Indian states to which northern power grid caters, has been affected," a senior official of the Power Minister told Reuters.
Water supply and telephone services were also affected in several states, officials said. Power officials said they hoped to have power restored by this evening.

restore the entire grid which has collapsed, and work is going on at a war footing at the Northern Regional Load Dispatch Centre, UNB quoted Power Secretary A.K. Basu as saying.
Officials said the fault began at Panki power station in the most populous Uttar Pradesh state at 4.30 a.m. (2300 GMT).
A Northern Railway spokesman said 36 trains were stranded at various points in the northern region blocking up the tracks.
She said that 60 per cent of goods trains and 36 per cent of passenger trains were run on electricity.
"We are trying to run as many diesel-based trains to mitigate inconvenience to passengers," she said.



Woolen woes... with bone-chilling winter a distant possibility, this trader must be ruing his decision to cram his shop in the city with wool of different colours and shades. --Star photo

Housewife shot dead in N'ganj

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 2: Armed bandits shot dead a housewife and looted valuables worth over Tk 5 lakh from a house at village Hatab in Ruppaganj upazila on Monday night, reports UNB.
Police said the robbers who stormed into the house at the dead of night opened fire on the victim, Shahana Begum Munnil, 38, wife of Mahub Alam, as she tried to resist them.
The robbers held all the family members hostage at gunpoint and looted gold ornaments, TV, and other valuables before fleeing.
The victim's body was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital for autopsy. A case was filed.

Truck kills two on Buriganga Bridge

By Staff Correspondent
Two people were killed and two others seriously injured when a truck hit them on Buriganga Bridge in the city yesterday afternoon.
The dead were identified as Abul Kalam, 45, Kabir Ahmed, 35, while the injured were Rahmatullah, 52 and Abul Hashem.
The incident took place when a goods loaded truck ramped them on the Buriganga Bridge at about 12 noon yesterday while the victims were standing near the toll house.
The four were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctors declared Kalam and Kabir dead at about 1.30 pm.

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