

## Left-leaning parties outline a series of programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Left leaning 11-party alliance yesterday announced a series of programmes including a foot march towards Dhaka, a national grand rally in the city and sit-in strikes at all district headquarters in February and March.

The programmes that also include protest processions throughout the country tomorrow were announced at a hartal-hour rally of the alliance held at Mukangan in the city yesterday afternoon. The rally was followed by a procession by central leaders of the alliance.

Co-ordinator of the 11-party alliance, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, announced the programmes that

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## Electric vehicles set to hit the road by month-end

Battery-run engines to have zero emission, no noise

MONJUR MAHMUD

In a bid to minimise environmental and noise pollution in the capital, a local company will launch electric vehicles, the first of its kind in the country, by the end of this month.

"We have already imported some vehicles for trial and are going to launch these vehicles in the city by this month. Now we look forward to go-ahead from the authority concerned," said Niaz Rahim, director of Rahimafrooz (Bangladesh) Limited.

These electric vehicles would be popular if the government cuts duty on these items to promote environment-friendly transports in the

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A battery-driven three-wheeler tempo.

## Intellectuals rally round battered UNB correspondent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine leading intellectuals in a statement yesterday called upon all concerned to take immediate steps to save the life of Tipu Sultan, Feni Correspondent of the UNB.

They urged the government, especially the Information Ministry, Jatiya Press Club, journalists unions, non-government organisations and philanthropists to come forward for his treatment.

Tipu was beaten and badly injured by terrorists at Feni recently and is now under treatment at the National Orthopaedic Hospital (Pangu Hospital) in the city.

The intellectuals expressed grave concern over the critical condition of the journalist and cond

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## Fabulous fern to fight arsenic

AFP, Paris

Scientists have come across a fern that sucks up arsenic, holding out the prospect of a fast, cheap and safe way of cleaning up contaminated mines and industrial sites.

The plant could also be a potential boon for helping Bangladesh, which is facing a health crisis caused

by arsenic in its drinking water, they hope.

The remarkable plant, called brake fern, is native to Africa, Asia and Australia, and is now widely naturalised in warm parts of the Americas.

A team led by University of Florida soil expert Lena Ma analysed fern found at an abandoned wood-

preservation site in central Florida where there were high concentrations of arsenic compounds.

Brake ferns growing in uncontaminated soil at the site were found to have arsenic levels ranging from 11.8 to 64.0 parts per million.

But those growing in contaminated soil were found to have an

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Sniffer dog at poetry festival

Amidst bomb scares police carry out a search for explosives on the dais erected in front of Dhaka University library.

## Jatiya Sangsad roundup

### Lawmakers create record in truancy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Parliament created a record in truancy during the New Year session of the Jatiya Sangsad that concluded on Wednesday.

There was lack of quorum on all but one of the 14 working days of the 21st session of the Seventh Jatiya Sangsad. The only fortunate day for the House was its closing day.

Quorum requires presence of at least 60 members out of 330. The House witnessed quorum crisis even on the opening day when President Shahabuddin Ahmed delivered his annual address.

The number of MPs including ministers rose on the last day, presumably because Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina delivered a 90-minute speech, touching upon various issues of political significance.

About 130 members were present during the PM's address and around 100 of them remained in the House all the time on that day. But on most of 13 other days the number ranged from 35 to 45.

Late start of proceedings obviously due to lack of quorum was an everyday affair except on the opening day. But barely an hour after the resumption, the House fell short of quorum.

Absence of ministers concerned and MPs often caused dislocation in scheduled businesses, forcing the Chair to either postpone those or make alternative arrangements.

Attendance of the Speaker, the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip

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## NBR likely to send another letter to finance ministry

STAR REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is likely to send another letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeking its permission to probe the allegations of corruption regarding sale of cars imported through diplomatic channel.

According to sources, Finance Minister S A M S Kibria called NBR Chairman Zakir Ahmed Khan to his office yesterday and asked him to pursue the matter seriously.

However, when contacted over telephone last night, the NBR Chairman denied having any discussion with the Finance Minister in this regard. He said, "I met the Finance Minister in a meeting yesterday. But we did not discuss anything in this regard."

When asked whether he would send another letter to the foreign ministry, Khan said the Director

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## New PP appointed for Jalal Murder Case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Law Ministry has appointed new Public Prosecutors to conduct the Jalal Murder Case, removing the Public Prosecutor Mohammad Kamrul Islam following a High Court directive on Sunday.

In a letter to the District Magistrate of Dhaka Mohammad Abdur Razzak, on January 31, Solicitor of the Law Ministry said the government has appointed Shah Alam and Abdur Rashid Miah (Badsha) as additional PP and APP respectively at the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in place of Kamrul Islam.

Kamrul Islam had endorsed a report by the police to inform the court that the complainant, the son of Jalal, was not traceable. He had also told Jalal's wife that he did not have time to run the case as he was busy in other cases.

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Work is on in full swing to meet deadline hours before today's inauguration of the Ekushey Book Fair at the Bangla Academy.

## Wahid in dire straits

Suspected role in million dollar scam may lead to impeachment

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia's parliament today overwhelmingly accepted a damaging report that could lead to moves to impeach President Abdurrahman Wahid, as thousands of rival demonstrators faced off outside.

An overwhelming eight out of the 10 lower house factions, including the military and police, accepted the results of a parliamentary probe which found Wahid "could be suspected of playing a role" in two financial scandals involving a total of almost six million dollars.

The president's sole supporters were his own National Awakening Party and the small Christian-based Love for the Nation.

Wahid's party slammed the report, insisting it was only loosely based on fact and subject to "distortion and interpretation."

But as night fell and the thou-

sands of pro- and anti-Wahid protesters outside parliament and the presidential palace dispersed peacefully, it was unclear whether parliament would censure Wahid.

A censure motion against the country's first democratically-elected president, would be the first step towards possible impeachment proceedings in four months time.

Among the first to move against Wahid were the country's three largest political parties, including the Indonesian Democracy Party of Struggle (PDIP) led by Wahid's own Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri, the Golkar Party and the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP).

The MPs in the 500-seat house voted 393 to four, amid an angry walkout by more than 50 Wahid supporters, to accept the motion.

Later they were huddled in lob

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## Ekushey Book Fair opens today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The month-long 'Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2001,' arranged for commemorating the martyrs of the historic Language Movement, begins on the Bangla Academy premises today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the fair in the afternoon.

Bangla Academy has taken up elaborate programme on the occasion.

Meanwhile, a two-day National Poetry Festival began yesterday on Dhaka University Central Library premises.

Poet Shamsur Rahman inaugurated the festival organised by Jatiya Kabita Parishad.

Chaired by Poet Belal Chowdhury, the inaugural function was addressed, among others, by Robiul Hussain, Muhammad Samad and Samudra Gupta