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BUILDING COLLAPSE Probe points at Rangs construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The method of demolition of Rangs Bhaban was correct, said the Ministry of Housing and Public Works yesterday quoting the report submitted by the committee probing the December 8 collapse of the building.

In support of its claim, the ministry in a statement quoted portions of the probe report where it stated that 'Concrete Shear Failure' was the cause of the collapse that was triggered by 'vibration' caused by 'hammering'. Besides, the strength of the concrete of the collapsed

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BREAKING EPR DU teacher tells court of colleagues' involvement

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka University teacher of the pro-BNP White Panel yesterday gave statement against four senior colleagues and 15 students in connection with two cases filed for breaching the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) in August last year.

The teacher accused Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain and Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-ar-Rashid of making provocative speeches.

But he did not say anything against Duta President Sadrul Amin and applied physics department Chairman Prof Neem

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Great expectations date with disappointments

ZAYADUL HANAN and SHAKHAWAT LITON

People's hopes for the best and confidence in the caretaker government seem to be reducing while the country's economy is experiencing recession.

The state of emergency, which was indispensable at the beginning of the year to avoid the political turmoil over the January 22 parliamentary polls, gave birth to the current caretaker government, raising people's hopes for changes.

With the wholehearted support of people as well as the armed

forces, the interim regime started its journey on very high expectations on January 12, a day after the declaration of the state of emergency, vowing to bring changes to reform a free and fair parliamentary election to install a pro-people elected government.

But, at the last quarter of the just concluded year, the escalation of public frustration over the performance of the interim administration overshadowed some of its significant achievements like separation of the judiciary, launching crackdown on 'corrupt political bigwigs', reconstitution of

some crucial institutions.

However, its role in handling the corruption drive, much hyped reforms in political parties, university teachers' detention has triggered questions in public minds whether the interim regime can finish all its tasks before holding the stalled parliamentary polls within the stipulated time.

Moreover, its failure, despite some sincere efforts, to arrest skyrocketing prices of essentials made commoners annoyed though the year was without traditional negative political culture

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GREETINGS



The Daily Star

Wishes its valued readers, patrons, well-wishers and advertisers a happy New Year.

Hasina falls sick in courtroom

Proceedings of Tk 3cr extortion case adjourned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former premier Sheikh Hasina fell sick during a hearing at the special courtroom on charge framing against her in a Tk 3 crore extortion case yesterday.

Later, the Metropolitan Session's Judge's Court adjourned the proceedings till today as the defence could not complete examining the evidence produced by the prosecution.

Hasina and Sheikh Fazlul Karim

Selim, her cousin and co-accused in the case filed by Azam J Chowdhury, were in the court since it sat at 9:30am.

At around 11:30am, the former premier's counsel said Hasina, also president of Awami League (AL), was feeling ill and should be allowed to go back to the sub jail for rest.

As Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque asked for opinion on the issue, the prosecution lawyers said

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Hasina shown held in Niko graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former premier and Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina was shown arrested yesterday in Niko graft case filed against her on charge of causing a huge loss to the state through awarding gas exploration deals to Canadian company Niko by abusing power while in office.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani passed the order following a petition by the investigation officer (IO) of the case, ACC Deputy Director MM Sabbir Hasan.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)

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They took artefacts for precious stones

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arrested Abbas Ali, alleged ringleader of 'Abbas-Nasir' smuggling gang of Zia International Airport (ZIA), became a millionaire stealing goods from the cargo area of the airport while his cohort Nasir

Uddin provided information about goods kept at ZIA.

Nasir, who joined ZIA as a janitor, lost his job due to his involvement in a theft case. He has also become a millionaire by providing information to the gang about

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Nasir Uddin



Abbas Ali

Rice prices hit record high

STAR REPORT

The price of per kilogram coarse rice hit the all-time high Tk 30 yesterday as prices of rice shot up by Tk 2 per kg in the capital and elsewhere in the country in the last 48 hours.

Such price hikes were the result of India's decision to increase the minimum rate of rice exported to Bangladesh from \$425 to \$500 per tonne.

The import of rice through Benapole land port began yesterday at an increased rate of \$505 per tonne, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Traders are apprehending further price hike, as the BDR shops in the capital are facing a huge customers' rush in the last couple of days.

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Essentials prices won't go down soon

Says BB governor

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank (BB) Governor Salehuddin Ahmed hardly sees any possibility of reducing the prices of essentials in the near future, but said the rate of inflation will get stabilised to some extent next year while it will decline on long-term expectation.

He observed that the Aman harvest have had no impact on the prices, but was expecting the impact after the next Boro harvest.

"We'll have to increase domestic production as well to ensure enough supply of commodities," the governor said, adding that the central bank has been encouraging commercial banks to support food imports to ensure adequate supply.

The governor was talking to

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Pak vote faces four weeks' delay

Benazir's party rejects any deferral

AFF, Islamabad

Pakistan's elections will be delayed by at least four weeks due to mass unrest after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, a cabinet official told AFP yesterday.

Other government and election officials confirmed that the January 8 polls would be postponed.

Benazir's party rejected any delay and insisted the government should stick to the schedule, but a spokesman for Nawaz Sharif, another major opposition leader, said a short postponement "would be acceptable."

"We are ready for elections and do not want any delay. We demand immediate elections -- and on January 8," senior party official Shah Mahmood Qureshi told AFP.

"The government should stick to the schedule. If the government delays the election, we will call a central executive committee meeting to decide our future course of action," said Qureshi, a committee member.

The vote is under scrutiny around the world as President Pervez Musharraf pledges to complete the Islamic nation's transition to civilian-led democracy after eight years of his military rule.

Benazir's murder during a campaign rally last Thursday however changed the atmosphere, unleashing a wave of deadly violence.

"Certainly it will be pushed back for at least four weeks if not more," the cabinet official said.

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