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TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

**3 local firms win gateway bids for int'l calls**  
STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Three local companies have won bids to set up gateways to handle international phone calls to and from Bangladesh, ending the monopoly of state-run BITB.

Novotel Limited, Mir Telecom and Bangla Trac Communications Ltd were declared winners yesterday after a marathon 26-hour auction that began at 10 in the morning on Monday at Radisson Water Garden hotel.

In the auction, 31 qualified firms vied to set up the three international exchanges to share 65 percent of revenue from overseas incoming and outgoing calls. The companies will give the government 51.75 percent of the revenue.

The remaining 15 percent and 20 percent of the total revenue will be shared by interconnection exchange and end users, local phone operators, respectively.

The auction for interconnection exchange licence is scheduled to be held today.

FULL STORY STAR BUSINESS PAGE 8

**BIRD FLU Poultry farm owners get Tk 1.4cr as compensation**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has given out Tk 1.4 crore to the owners of bird-flu affected poultry farms as compensation for culling chickens in the last eight months.

Avian Influenza Preparedness and Response Project sources said since July 2007 to February 17 this year, they have disbursed the money in 32 districts.

They, however, could not tell the total number of poultry farmers they had compensated.

"When the district committee sends us a report of chicken culling, we forward a government order against that letter to provide money," Dr Md Ebrahim Hossain.

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**Two including Rab official die as bus hits van in Ashulia**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons including a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) official were killed and four others injured when a passenger bus hit a Rab pick-up van at Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital last night.

The deceased were identified as

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Prayer Timing		
February 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

**FLAWED RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR MALAYSIA Workers at risk of losing legal status**

PORIMOL PALMA

Majority of around three lakh Bangladeshis now working in Malaysia are being exploited by their employers and under imminent risk of losing their legal work status due to flawed and illegal recruitment process, said experts.

Unpaid, underpaid, abused and cheated, around 500 such workers

already returned home from the Southeast Asian country and thousands more are likely to follow unless the Bangladesh government takes a proactive effort soon to iron out the issues with its Malaysian counterpart in the greater interest of the country, added the experts.

The experts cautioned that if the Malaysian employers continue the practice of exploitation and abuse,

a large number of Bangladeshi workers might resort to leaving their legal jobs and seeking jobs elsewhere in the country, leading to crackdown and deportation by the Malaysian authorities.

Since the workers are being scapegoated for the flawed recruitment mechanism -- set by the two countries -- that leaves room for

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Law enforcers using sniffer dogs conduct a search at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday to ensure security for people paying homage to the Language Movement martyrs tomorrow.

**DIALOGUE EC shouldn't waste time over BNP issue: AL**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday called upon the Election Commission (EC) to take an immediate decision over holding dialogue with BNP, urging it not to waste time over the matter.

"We want a quick resolution of the issue," AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed said adding that the EC and BNP could not come to a decision about it yet and if this state continues, it will create uncertainty in the people's minds over the elections.

He was briefing the reporters after a meeting with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu). It was chaired by AL President Zillur

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**AMAR EKUSHEY Route plan for Shaheed Minar announced**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Strict security measures in the Central Shaheed Minar and adjoining areas have been taken by law enforcers for peaceful observance of Shaheed Day and International Mother Language Day on February 21.

Over 3,500 police and a large number of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel will be deployed at the Shaheed Minar and Azimpur graveyard to maintain law and order.

Check posts, observation posts and control rooms will be set up

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**Fidel Castro quits Cuban presidency**

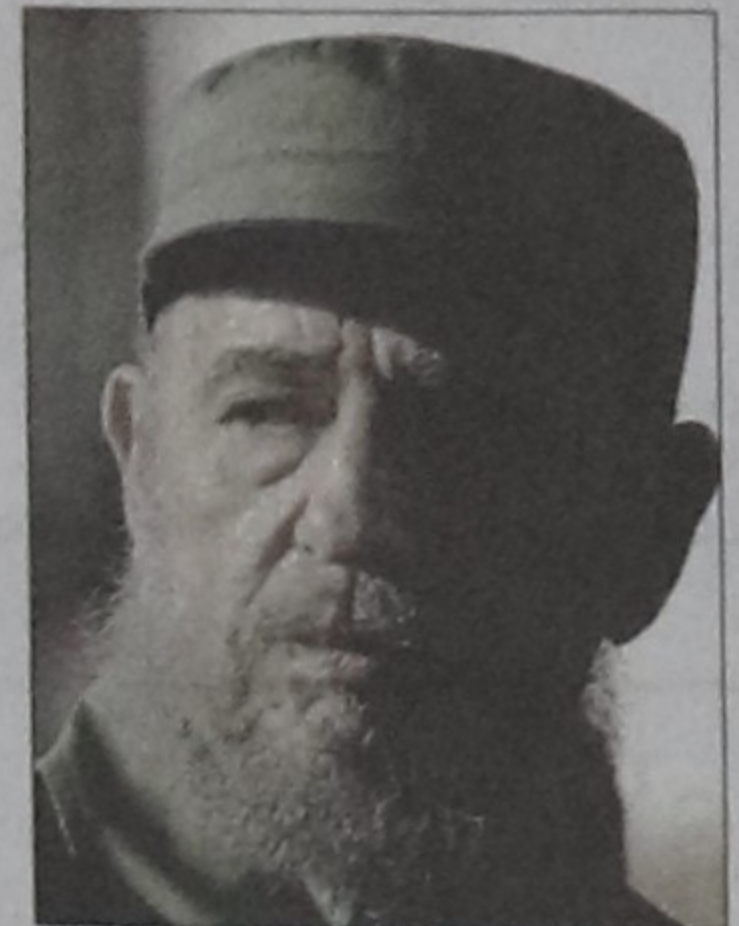
AP, Havana

An ailing Fidel Castro resigned as Cuba's president yesterday after nearly a half-century in power, saying he will not accept a new term when the new parliament meets Sunday.

"I will not aspire to nor accept I repeat, I will not aspire to nor accept the post of President of the Council of State and Commander in Chief," read a letter signed by Castro published early Tuesday in the online edition of the Communist Party daily Gramma.

The announcement effectively ends the rule of the 81-year-old Castro after almost 50 years.

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Fidel Castro

**Power plant 'graft' Charge framing against Hasina shifted to Feb 26**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday postponed hearing on charge framing against Sheikh Hasina and seven other people in the Tk 3 crore barge-mount power plant corruption case to February 26.

The court also re-fixed the same date to pass order on Hasina's bail prayer in the case after the defence submitted certified copy of a High Court (HC) judgment that threw out an extortion case involving Tk 2.99 crore against the Awami League president.

The HC also declared illegal bringing the extortion case under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

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**Prof Yunus launches microfinance outfit in Paris**

UNB, Dhaka

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus launched a 150 million-euro global micro-finance outfit styled Grameen-Credit Agricole Foundation in Paris on Monday.

Credit Agricole SA, a global banking group, has committed to fighting world poverty alongside Prof Muhammad Yunus, the founder and managing director of Grameen Bank that earned the Nobel Prize for both for their pioneering role in institutionalising collateral-free small credits for the poor.

According to a message from Grameen Bank secretariat, looking to foster the development of micro-finance institutions in developing countries and emerging economies, Credit Agricole SA and Grameen Trust have teamed up to create a dedicated foundation with an endowment of 150 million euros.

Of the fund, 50 million euros will be available immediately and another 100 million added next year.

The Grameen-Credit Agricole Micro-finance Foundation will

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**Stripping Gen Mustafiz of rank illegal**  
Declares HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday declared stripping former army chief Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman of a four-star general's rank illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Khairul Huq and Justice Abdul Awal delivered the judgment after hearing a ruling the HC issued on the government in 2004.

Upholding the former army chief's entitlement to the general's rank, the court said the government's taking away it was motivated and was done without

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

**JP set to curb party chairman's power**

Plans changes to party constitution

RASHIDUL HASAN

HM Ershad-led Jatiyo Party (JP) is set to bring significant changes to its constitution including curbing of the current absolute authority of the party chairman.

The fourth largest party of the country is also trying to bring a balance between the power of the chairman and the power of its presidium, the highest policymaking forum, by increasing the latter's power.

JP reform affairs sub-committee in its final draft of a reform proposal talked about bringing those changes to the party constitution.

The draft reform proposal will be placed in the presidium, which will later be adopted by a special national council for party reforms.

The issue of reforms within political parties has been discussed since the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11 of last year.

According to the present constitution of JP the chairman has abso-

lute power to form, suspend or abolish committees at all levels.

Currently the chairman also has absolute power to appoint anyone to any post or suspend anyone from any post, with the power to replace any official of the party with any person of his choice.

But according to the new draft constitution, the chairman will have to discuss with the presidium and will have to take its advice to exercise those authority.

According to the draft party reform proposal, no party member will be allowed to hold the chairmanship of the organisation for more than two terms.

Besides, the chairman and the secretary general will not be allowed to hold any government post including any post in the cabinet, if the draft constitution is adopted.

According to the draft constitution, the presidium will be the highest executive authority for settling any interpretation dispute

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**পূবালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড -এর**  
**বি.বি.এভিনিউ কর্পোরেট শাখাটি**

এখন- নতুন ঠিকানা

**পুরাতন ঠিকানা**

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৬৫, বি.বি.এভিনিউ  
ঢাকা-১০০০।

**নতুন ঠিকানা**

পূবালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড  
বি.বি.এভিনিউ কর্পোরেট শাখা  
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ঢাকা-১০০০।

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Notice for Alumni

Bangladesh International Tutorial celebrates its 25th Anniversary - this celebration will continue for four days starting from February 23rd till the 26th. All Alumni are cordially invited to attend these concerts. Please collect your invitation card from BIT's Head Office (address given below) or on the day of the function from the venue. Looking forward to seeing you all.

23.02.2008 and 25.02.2008 - A Midsummer Night's Dream  
24.02.2008 and 26.02.2008 - Bangla Dance Drama: Chandalika

Time: 6:00 pm Venue: The Red Brick School

For any queries, please contact:  
Nafees Ahsan Chowdhury  
BIT Alumni Association  
House - 02, Road - 128, Gulshan - 1212 Tel: 88110044, 9886016  
The Red Brick School  
Plot - 13, Road - 1/A, Sector - 14, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka.

BIT students performing in A Midsummer Night's Dream

BIT students performing in Chandalika