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**NEWS flakes**

**One more HC judge places wealth report**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another High Court judge yesterday submitted his wealth report to Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque.

Justice Mohammad Anwar-ul Haque sent his wealth report to the office of the chief justice, SC Registrar Ashraf Islam told The Daily Star, adding that a total of five SC judges placed their wealth reports to the chief

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**Padma Bridge cost doubles in 4 years**

Ecneec okays project at Tk 20,507cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) yesterday approved seven projects involving Tk 22,520 crore including the revised Padma Bridge Project.

Construction cost of the bridge has been revised at Tk 20,507 crore which is more than double the initially estimated cost of Tk 10,161 crore, approved by the Ecneec in 2007.

Of the revised cost, Tk 17,516 crore will come from development partners.

The projects were okayed at an Ecneec meeting at the planning ministry with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Later, Planning Minister AK Khandkder told

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talking with her Bhutanese counterpart Jigmi Y Thinley at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

**Maternity leave now 6 months**

ALPHA ARZU

The government yesterday published a gazette notification on six-months maternity leave for the public servants.

The leave will be effective from January 9 this year.

The gazette notification states when a government servant applies for maternity leave, authority shall grant the leave for six-months from January 9, 2011 or from her confinement for the purpose of delivery, whichever is earlier.

According to the Bangladesh Service Rules, a public servant can enjoy maternity leave for four

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**Govt eyes 2,000MW more power this year**

SHARIEF KHAN

While the government scored a record of signing dozens of deals for generating around 3,000 megawatt power last year, this year it aims at making another record: adding more than 2000MW electricity to the national grid.

If successful, this would increase Bangladesh's power generation capacity by nearly 50 percent. While this would significantly reduce the ongoing power crisis, there would still be some shortfall.

Chairman of the Power Development Board (PDB) Alamgir Kabir told The Daily Star that if all goes well, the level of load shedding would be strikingly low by the end of this year.

Plus, this additional power generation

would not put any pressure on the natural gas supply as most of the new power plants will operate on fuel oil, he said.

Gas has been the main source of power generation till now, and its crisis has affected power generation.

On the negative side-- the country's oil import cost is expected to shoot up significantly. When all of these new oil-based power plants would launch operation, these are expected to consume 1.9 million tonnes of diesel and heavy fuel oil a year thus almost doubling the country's petroleum import cost, according to an estimate of the PDB.

In addition, there had been questions of how the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) would be able to store

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**Municipal polls will be free: AL**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The municipal elections will be free and fair, and the government gave the administration necessary directions in this regard, said Mahbubul Alam Hanif, joint secretary general of Awami League.

He said BNP always thinks about vote rigging, as it had rigged elections earlier.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a discussion in front of party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital. Krishok League, a Pro-AL

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**Col Taher was not the only victim**

496 military men executed thru' secret trial during Zia's period, Inu tells HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Huq Inu yesterday told the High Court that 496 military officers were executed after a secret military trial for protesting the "autocracy" of Ziaur Rahman. All freedom fighters, they were not allowed to defend themselves.

He placed the statement before an HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain during the hearing on the petition challenging the trial and execution of Col Taher in 1976.

The bench on Monday asked six politicians -- Sirajul Alam Khan, ASM Abdur Rab, Maj (ret'd) Zia Uddin, Hasanul Huq Inu, Sharif Nurul Ambia and Mahmudur Rahman Manna -- to place statements before it.

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**BNP doubts fair voting in municipalities**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP yesterday expressed doubt if the municipal elections starting today will be free and fair. It alleged the ruling party men and the administration are harassing the BNP-supported candidates.

"We repeatedly requested the Election Commission and the administration to take actions against those who are obstructing our leaders and workers in conducting campaign. But it is unfortunate that no steps were seen," said

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**BDR accused try to create chaos in court**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday warned an accused jawan as he was attempting to instigate others to create chaos in the courtroom during the proceedings of the trial.

According to the BDR officials, Sepoy Alauddin encouraged other accused jawans to create disorder in the courtroom, which was caught on a close circuit camera.

The court later

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**GRAFT CASE Ex-AL whip Suja acquitted**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday acquitted former Awami League lawmaker and whip Mostafa Rashidi Suja and his wife Khodeza Rashidi, who were sentenced in a corruption case during the caretaker government.

A special court on March 12, 2008 sentenced Suja to 13 years' imprisonment for acquiring illegal wealth and providing false statement to Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) while Khodeza was

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**Shops burnt in mall fire**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four shops were burnt to ashes in a fire at Suvastu Nazar Valley Shopping Mall in the city's Badda yesterday morning.

No casualty was reported in the incident.

Fire Brigade

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**Murder spree in city**

15 killed in 10 days

M RAHMAN

Murder of over 15 people coupled with frequent robberies and gun attacks in the capital within the first ten days of the new year mark an alarming slide in law and order.

A sense of impunity evolved among the criminals due to the government's recent recommendations for releasing the accused in a number of murder and robbery cases, observed some police officials.

A total of 52 robbery cases have been withdrawn between January and June 2010, said sources in police headquarters. Of these, seven cases were filed on charges of robbery with murder. But the government committee concerned found all these cases were filed in a bid to harass the accused.

Police did neither prepare nor it were asked to make a list of cases to be considered as politically motivated, Hassan Mahmood Khandker, inspector general of police (IGP) told The Daily Star.

Police headquarters sent a letter to the home ministry expressing concern regarding withdrawal of some cases listed under this category.

Many accused in these cases, mainly ringleaders, have been released but the authorities concerned denied providing the list of freed persons.

"If an accused is spared untried, the culture of impunity will encourage the criminals and it would be tough for the law enforces to control crimes," said M Shahjahan, former IGP.

"If accountability of concerned law

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**56 more cases against AL men to be dropped**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday recommended withdrawal of 56 cases filed against Awami League (AL) leaders, during the tenure of the caretaker government and the BNP-led four-party alliance with the 'intention of political harassment'.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the inter-ministerial committee at the home ministry presided over by State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam.

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**US pledges to help conduct credible war crimes trial**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States will provide all necessary assistance to Bangladesh to ensure fair and credible trial of the 1971 crimes against humanity, said Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday.

The minister said this at a press briefing after a meeting with Stephen J Rapp, US Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues, and James F Moriarty, US Ambassador to Bangladesh, at his Secretariat office.

Shafique said the US representatives observed that the International Crimes Tribunal Act is good for holding a fair trial of the crimes against humanity. But they recommended amending its rules for providing more time to the defence to take preparation for their protection, he added.

As per section 9 (3) of the act, the International Crimes

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Equipment and materials for today's election being taken to polling centres yesterday from the deputy commissioner's office in Bogra.

**MUNICIPAL POLLS 2011**

**Rebels, voters face intimidation**

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Voters of the district's different municipal areas have allegedly been warned not to cast ballots against candidates backed by local ruling party lawmakers.

The accusation surrounds local Awami League MPs Abdul Wadud Dara, Enamul Haque and Shahriar Alam, and Durgapur Upazila Chairman Abdul Majid.

Durgapur Upazila AL President Nazrul Islam, who failed to secure party support in the mayoral race, alleged the unit's law affairs secretary Abdur Rahim offered him Tk 10 lakh not to compete with Tofazzal

Hossain. Tofazzal is the unit's general secretary whom Abdul Wadud Dara backs.

"I refused to negotiate. Now they are threatening my supporters to break their hands and legs," Nazrul said. Abdul Majid had joined hands with Dara in harassing rivals, he added.

In this connection, Nazrul has filed a complaint with Altaf Hossain Sheikh, returning officer of Durgapur municipality.

Altaf said, law enforcers were asked to look into the matter and security was tightened in the areas mentioned in the complaint.

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**PRAYER TIMING January 12**

Azan	Jamaat
Fajr 5:30	6:05
Zohr 12:45	1:15
Asr 4:00	4:15
Maghrib 5:36	5:40
Esha 7:00	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

**ONLINE POLL**

Do you think the government is responsible for the biggest fall of the stock market in its 55-year history?

Yes (75.3%)  
No (23.8%)  
No Comments (0.9%)

TOTAL VOTES : 5199

**TODAY'S POLL**

Do you agree with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia that the ruling Awami League has established 'one-person' rule and created 'reign of terror' in the country?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)