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GREETINGS
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A happy New Year.
2014

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US, UK move to break deadlock

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT
Undeterred by the international community's recent failure to break the political deadlock, the USA and the UK have made fresh moves to bring the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP to the negotiating table. With the one-sided January 5 polls only a few days away, the latest diplomatic efforts aim at convincing the two parties to soften their stances in order to prevent Bangladesh from slipping into a deeper crisis. As part of the moves, British High Commissioner Robert Gibson was on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Monday and AL General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam yesterday, while US Ambassador Dan Mozena met the BNP chief yesterday afternoon. But so far, there have been no signs of progress. Khaleda told the British and US envoys that the stalling situation could end only through a cancellation of the January 5 election and the holding of a free, inclusive and credible election under a non-partisan polls-time government, said sources in the BNP. On the other hand, the AL told the British diplomat that the January 5



Anwar Hossain, a vendor on Manik Miah Avenue, used to have a sale of Tk 800 to 1,000 a day. But over the last one month, it has come down to only Tk 200 to 300 amid political violence. The photo was taken yesterday.

Big blow for small traders

SUMAN SAHA
Shahid Miah opened his small, makeshift shop at Purana Palatan intersection to sell nuts as usual Monday afternoon, one and a half days after he closed it. But Shahid, whose only source of income is selling nuts, looked worried because his customers have thinned out due to the ongoing political unrest. He usually sells Tk 500 to Tk 700 a day to provide for his family that lives in Bhairab. "I have sold worth only Tk 6 in an hour starting at 2:00pm. I am worried because of the poor sales," said the 52-year-old vendor. Like him, all the traders including roadside vendors and tea stall and restaurant owners were going through a very dull day in Purana Palatan, Jatiya Press Club and Supreme Court areas. Centring on the BNP-led opposition's

OUR NEW YEAR'S (RE)APPEAL Please do not hold Jan 5 polls

MAHFUZ ANAM
We had made this "Appeal" last Friday, with a detailed explanation as to the reasons why and the likely consequences of status quo of the political situation. (Read "An Appeal to the EC and the PM" published on Dec 27, 2013) Today, as we look towards the New Year, and as we are overwhelmed by the fear of the continued political stand off causing greater violence and loss of life, and the economy being made to suffer more debilitating losses which may lead to its near collapse, we feel compelled to reiterate our "Appeal". This we do as our duty to strengthen democracy, people's faith in our Constitution, and voters' faith in the election process. We also do so to prevent the impending disaster likely to befall the economy if the political unrest continues. Our last Friday's Appeal (abridged) contained the following points:
A. The EC and the ruling party should desist from holding the election on 5th Jan. 2014. Legal grounds may be found to hold it within the next 90 days.
B. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina may advise the President to reconvene the 9th Parliament and work out a consensus for an all-party polls-time government headed by the President.
C. If the 9th Parliament is reconvened for the above purpose then the opposition must join without preconditions and must commit to participate in the elections and also call off all sorts of hartals, aborodhs and related programmes.
D. Jamaat's participation must be conditional in compliance with the High Court verdict.

Country has a lot more to lose

INAM AHMED
In March 2014, Bangladesh is supposed to be in the international limelight because one of the greatest sporting bonanzas -- T20 World Cup -- is slated to be held here. Before that another electrifying event, Asia Cup cricket, will take place. But if the current political violence and uncertainty continue, one can be sure that the venues for these events will change. Bangladesh will lose a unique opportunity to host such prestigious games and heighten its prestige to a great extent. With the current political situation, 2014 could actually be a year of

2014 off to a bad start

M ABUL KALAM and RASHIDUL HASAN
The New Year brings no relief for the people of Bangladesh as the nation braces itself for an indefinite blockade from this morning. Living with uncertainty over the last one month, people yesterday had a brief respite from violent political programmes. Commuters moved freely in the capital as there was no transport crisis, security check or harassment by law enforcers that they had gone through on Sunday and Monday. The BNP-led 18-party opposition combine enforced a blockade for 23 days since November 26, demanding postponement of the parliamen-

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সোস্যাল ইসলামী ব্যাংক ফাউন্ডেশন এর কার্যক্রম-
"কাছেই আছি, পাশেই আছি - Staying Close" এর আওতায় আমাদের সকল কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারী তাদের পুনরায় ব্যবহারযোগ্য জামা-কাপড় দেশের সুবিধা বঞ্চিত বিতহীন মানুষদের প্রদান করছে- বছরব্যাপী এই কার্যক্রমে আপনিও অংশ নিতে পারেন।
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