

# Open free kitchens for monga victims

## Hasina asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the government to open free kitchens for the victims of famine-like situation, locally known as *monga*, in northern districts.

"Thousands in northern districts are starving because of *monga*, but the government made no sincere effort to distribute food and other essentials among them," she said at an iftar party the Awami League (AL) hosted for newpersons at its Dhammondi office.

The call for saving the people living close to starvation came before Hasina flies to China on a weeklong visit early this morning at the invitation of the Communist Party of China.

Hasina said she would discuss bilateral issues with China and urge the Chinese businesspeople to invest in Bangladesh.

The AL president alleged corruption of the ruling BNP men in distributing vulnerable group feeding (VGF) cards among the poor in northern districts, saying, "They (ruling party men) are selling VGF cards openly."

"Food was in surplus during our rule, but all disappeared in the first two years of the coalition rule," she said, accusing the BNP-Jamaat alliance of making brisk money and skirting responsibility to people.

Hasina echoed AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil's prediction about a change

of the government by April next year and said it would be good for people if the coalition quit as early as possible. "It will be even better if it is by the year-end," she added.

The changeover would lead to installation of a democratic rule in Bangladesh, Jalil said at a press conference on Tuesday.

Hasina counted law and order downside, price spike of essentials and unrest in society as signs of the government's failure.

The AL is trying to form a broader alliance with the like-minded and pro-liberation forces in its efforts to launch an anti-government movement.

On the AL's comeback to the coming session of the Jatiya Sangsad, Hasina repeated her decision to boycott parliament.

Hasina was critical of the failure of law enforcers to rescue Chittagong businessman Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, abducted on July 24 for ransom, saying, "Our prime minister thinks giving assurance of rescue to the abducted businessman's family is enough."

On the recent waves of violence over the death of a garment worker in police fire in Narayanganj, Hasina claimed more than one worker were killed on Monday and said: "At least four are still missing."

Senior party leaders were also present.

# Phone shop looted at Tejgaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers looted cash, mobile phone sets and prepaid cards said to be worth about Tk 7.33 lakh from a pay phone shop at Awlad Hossain Market in Tejgaon Monday night.

The gang came in front of the Bridge Tel with a pile of garment garbage on a rikshaw van. They dumped the garbage at the door and burgled the shop under cover of it.

They took away 64 mobile phone sets, 300 prepaid phone cards and cash money. The gang left the spot fixing a new set of locks.

MA Razzak, owner of the shop, found the new locks Tuesday morning.

In presence of police, he opened his shop to make sure of the robbery.

A case was filed with Tejgaon Police Station but police neither could recover the goods nor could they arrest anyone till 9:30 last night.

# Two AL men shot dead in Jessore, Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

One Awami League (AL) leader and a worker of the party were gunned down in Khulna and Jessore last night.

Ibrahim Hossain Sardar, labour secretary of the Abhoynagar unit of the AL and a ward commissioner of Noapara Pourasava in Jessore, was shot dead allegedly by outlaws at 7:45pm.

Ibrahim was going to party office when gunmen waylaid him and fired four shots from close. Witnesses said the outlaws then marched out without any opposition chanting slogans in support of the M-L faction of the Purbo Banglar Communist Part (PBCP).

The Awami League leader was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) at 8:45pm where attending doctors declared him dead.

At Bagerhat, AL activist Sheikh Alimuzzaman (43) was gunned down at about 10.30pm on Tuesday at Chitalmari upazilla of Bagerhat district. Police recovered his body from Mollarhat Hariharipour Primary School ground early this morning.

According to police, a group of three armed men abducted him at gunpoint from one of his relatives' house at Chitalmari upazilla. The gunman fired three shots at his head and chest claiming his life then and there.

Police recovered two used shells of gun cartridges from the primary school ground where he was killed.

Police quoting his relatives said Alimuzzaman was given death threat by extremists several times for which he used to stay away from his house at Mollarhat at night to save his life.

The slain AL activist is son of late Sheikh Abdul Hye of Kadamatala village of Atjuri Union under Mollarhat upazilla. Sheikh Alimuzzaman was defeated by his rival in the last election of Atjuri union parishad as candidate for the post of chairman.

# BB premises

FROM PAGE 12

"This is an early warning that the government is not backing the BB governor and that political patronisation of unruly CBA activists continues," said a top banker.

This is also visible from the fact the CBA office was not relocated from the main building of the bank till yesterday although the authorities on November 1 ordered shifting of union offices within 48 hours.

The three other unions however shifted their offices to the annexe. Meanwhile, a rally organised by the BNP-backed Bank Employees' Federation that was to be held yesterday was postponed.

A Sonali Bank CBA leader told journalists the rally was suspended upon "assurances" from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at an iftar party on Tuesday.

On October 30, the central bank terminated 10 employees including the presidents and general secretaries of Bangladesh Bank Officers' Welfare Association and the CBA.

The central bank took the action on grounds of their misbehaviour with Governor Fakhruddin Ahmed two days ago.

A BB official said the bank has prepared another list now being scrutinised before action against all others who flouted the bank's rules could be taken.

The BB on October 29 filed a general diary with Motijheel Police Station and police raided the houses of the CBA leaders to arrest them.

# Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

The AL president's statements on the godfather issue came just hours before her departure for China on a weeklong visit late last night. Hasina's claim of taking measures against her party godfathers however belies the fact that five months after its formation an AL probe body has failed to come up with a report on godfather-famed Joinal Hazari.

Prior her Germany visit on October 25, Hasina had said in addition to the October-16 disclosure of the names of 102 ruling coalition godfathers, AL would publish more names of godfathers.

She said names of more godfathers were pouring into the AL office in Dhaka from across the country every day and she would disclose those "at an appropriate time."



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia chairs a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday.

# Palestinian leadership meets as dispute goes into overtime

AFP, Ramallah, West Bank

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and his prime minister Ahmed Qorei were meeting yesterday in a bid to resolve a dispute over the formation of a new government that has already dragged into overtime.

Arafat was chairing the central committee meeting of the mainstream Fatah movement in the West Bank town of Ramallah in a bid to finally break the deadlock over the choice of an interior minister.

The term of office for an emergency cabinet which has been headed by Qorei for the past month expired at midnight Tuesday but Arafat has asked the former speaker of parliament to stay at the helm of a caretaker government.

The pair have been at loggerheads for several weeks over Qorei's choice of Nasr Yussef as interior minister, in an

echo of a dispute which helped bring down the previous premier Mahmud Abbas.

Qorei sees the appointment as vital if he is to come to grips with the security situation in the Palestinian territories, but Arafat is still smarting from Yussef's refusal last month to join the emergency cabinet.

Abbas, who doubled up as interior minister during his four-month term of office, quit in early September after repeatedly clashing with Arafat as he sought to wrest control of the security apparatus away from the veteran leader.

Central committee member Abbas Zaki said that the interior ministry issue would be the focus of Wednesday's meeting.

"Several options will be examined but apart from this (interior minister) problem, the government is ready," Zaki told AFP.

The US State Department said overnight that Qorei must be given control by Arafat over all the security forces.

"Our view continues to be that the Palestinian prime minister must have control of all the security forces, and that any new cabinet must make clear its opposition to all forms of terrorism," said deputy State Department spokesman Adam Ereli.

The new prime minister must also "take tangible to steps to see that terrorists and military organizations not under (Palestinian Authority) control ... are disarmed and dismantled," he said.

Sharon, who returned overnight from a trip to Moscow, had planned to meet Qorei "within days" but the prospect of a resumption of talks has been pushed back by the failure of the Palestinians to form a government.

# Chandrika declares

FROM PAGE 1

that her moves could lead to chaos and anarchy.

Analysts said it was difficult to predict what would come next until Wickremesinghe's return on Friday.

"A lot depends on how the prime minister responds, he can try to challenge it in court, he can accept the new reality, or he can use parliament to try to compel her to change," said Rohan Edrisinha, a Colombo University law professor.

Cabinet spokesman GL Peiris said even though parliament was suspended until November 19, the government was in no danger of losing its majority in the legislature.

"The government of Ranil Wickremesinghe continues to enjoy the confidence of the vast majority of members of parliament. We are firmly in control of parliament," he told a news conference.

The developments also come just days after the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) released a proposal on power-sharing that the government said was a basis for fresh talks.

"Surely at this delicate stage in the peace process these developments are not helpful. What the country needs is confidence. Confidence is being deliberately undermined by the arbitrary and capricious actions..." Peiris said.

Kumaratunga's party sharply criticised the proposals, but Kadirgamar said it was the president's belief that the security situation was deteriorating that led to her actions.

An LTTE spokesman in northern Sri Lanka said he had no comment on the president's moves but denied rumours the main north-south highway that runs through rebel-controlled territory had been closed.

The political crisis pushed the Sri Lankan stock market down 13 percent on Wednesday in its biggest-ever fall as mounting uncertainty over the peace process cast doubts on whether the current economic boom would last. The market has been among the world's strongest this year.

Kumaratunga's actions sparked concern worldwide, with Prime Minister Tony Blair the latest to speak out.

"I welcome the commitment that both the president and the government have demonstrated in taking the peace process forward. The recent developments must not be allowed to jeopardise that process," he said in a statement.

India, which sent troops to Sri Lanka to fight the LTTE in the 1980s, also expressed surprise at the sudden turn of events.

"We hope that the situation does not provoke a constitutional crisis, which

would impact on political stability in Sri Lanka and on the ongoing peace processes," an Indian External Affairs Ministry statement said.

Japan, by far the biggest donor of aid to Sri Lanka, also called on the president and prime minister to "swiftly" settle their differences.

But Kumaratunga's moves have already created unease among Tamils, both because of worries about arbitrary arrests and a return to war.

"I'm going to wait a few days before I go to Jaffna in case something happens. I don't want to get trapped there," said one Tamil visiting Colombo from Canada.

Jaffna is in the Tamil-dominated north of the country and has been the focal point in the 20-year civil war between the Tamil rebels and the government, which is dominated by the majority Sinhalese community.

# Sweden Aslam

FROM PAGE 12

state-declared criminal like Aslam should be punished to set an example.

The judge read out the highlights of the 34-page judgement in 25 minutes and said the charges pressed against the convict were proved beyond doubt.

Islam observed that people usually feel discouraged to give statements against a state-declared criminal, but the prosecution witnesses in the May 1997 case against Aslam gave statements before court without hesitation.

Both the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments on November 1 after the court recorded statements of 11 out of 13 prosecution witnesses.

Aslam was arrested at his DOHS home on May 20, 1997 after a case was filed with Cantonment Police Station.

A team of detectives led by AC Akram Hussain, now serving his jail term in the Rubel murder case, seized a pistol, a shotgun, a shooter gun, a revolver and six bullets from him.

The investigation officer pressed charges against Aslam on July 10, 1997 and the court framed charges against him on January 14, 1998 before the trial began on September 14 the same year.

Assistant Public Prosecutor Mohammad Giasuddin dealt with the case on behalf of the state, while advocate Saidur Rahman Manik defended the accused.

Another court in Dhaka cleared Aslam of charges in an arms case on October 9.

# Frigate scam case Hearing on charge framing against Hasina adjourned till Nov 20

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A court in Dhaka yesterday adjourned till November 20 the hearing on charge framing against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in the frigate purchase graft case following a time petition by her defence lawyers.

Judge Rezaul Karim of the Special Court for Dhaka Division granted the petition that asked for the adjournment in light of the fact that a criminal revision already filed with the High Court seeking quashment of the charges against Hasina might be up for hearings shortly.

Five others accused in the case were present at the court yesterday. They are former navy chief rear admiral (ret'd) Nurul Islam, former assistant chief of staff (operations) of Bangladesh Navy commodore (ret'd) AKM Azad, former director (naval plan) commodore (ret'd) Harun-or-Rashid, commodore (ret'd) M Shahabuddin and President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries Abdul Awal Mintoo.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) filed the case against the accused with Tejgaon Police Station on August 7 last year for buying the frigate from South Korean company Daewoo at a price higher than offered by the lowest bidder.

Daewoo, the fourth lowest bidder quoting \$99.97 million, was awarded the contract that resulted in a loss of Tk 511.17 crore of public money, the case alleged.

After a yearlong investigation, Bac pressed charges against the accused on August 3.

# Dengue

FROM PAGE 12

society to help increase public awareness.

The mayor, referring to the limited manpower of the DCC, said there are about 7,000 cleaners for 1.20 crore city dwellers. He urged the urban dwellers to keep their yards clean so that Aedes cannot lay eggs.

Chief Health Officer Colonel Azizul Haque said, "We have identified Dhammondi a risky area."

He said a team has started working from yesterday to monitor Aedes population. Whenever detected, a rapid action team will spray on a radius of 200 yards of the spot.

The DCC officials said it has taken a 15-day awareness building programme.

# Girl rescued, four abductors held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-year-girl, abducted from Shahidnagar area in Lalbagh Monday, was rescued from Eastern Plaza shopping market at Hatirpool Tuesday night.

Police also arrested Sadia Hossain Olin's four abductors -- Delwar, Babu, Idris and Kaiyum.

Daughter of a small trader Dulal Hawlader, Olin was playing at the Lane No. 4 in front of their house at 263/1, Shahidnagar at 12:30pm when unidentified people picked her up.

"Seeing her playing there, I entered their house, but did not see her after a little while," Olin's uncle Mahmudur Rahman said in a general diary filed with Lalbagh Police Station Monday.

As they failed to find her out on that day, Olin's father Dulal filed an abduction case with the same police station Tuesday.

At around 7:30pm Tuesday, an acquaintance of Dulal phoned at a pay phone shop adjacent to his house, saying he had seen Olin with an unknown man at Eastern Plaza.

"Dulal informed us of the phone call and accompanied our team to the Eastern Plaza," the duty officer at Lalbagh Police Station said.

"Checking the monitor of close-circuit cameras at the market, our team found the man, Delwar, and Olin on the second floor of the market and caught him at 7:45pm," he said.

Acting on Delwar's information,

police arrested three other abductors -- Babu, Idris and Kaiyum -- from the area. The four, hailing from Faridpur and Barisal, live in rented houses in Shahidnagar and are members of an organised group, police said.

Police returned Olin to her parents the same night.

# Music

FROM PAGE 12

conference room was presided over by State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar.

Actions would be taken against officials for neglect to act immediately after getting information about abduction.

# Five firms

FROM PAGE 12

will stabilise the bank and develop a management plan.

In the second phase, the management team will implement the plan to operate the bank.

The team will minimise the bank's operating losses, curtail new lending other than those to good borrowers and eliminate any waste, fraud and political influence.

The management team will financially restructure the bank to prepare it for privatisation.

In six months, it will develop a human resource master plan and branch rationalisation plan.

The management team will be appointed for 36 months with an option to extend the tenure by another 12 months.

# Knit factory

FROM PAGE 1

police manned the town and the industrial belt in Fattulal yesterday.

Thousands of garment workers meanwhile staged a rally at the Rail Gate area in the town that was addressed by Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) leader Khalequzzaman and Workers Party leader Bimal Biswas.

The leaders demanded a judicial inquiry into Monday's incident.

Residents and garment owners of the town are still living on their nerves in fear of fresh violence. Several factory owners expressed anger over the administration's failure to maintain law and order.

They said the two days of commotion could have been avoided had the administration acted sensibly.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) at a press conference at Narayanganj Press Club yesterday claimed that the factories incurred Tk 200 crore in losses due to the stoppage of production during the last three days.

BKMEA President Manzurul Hoq said monetary loss each day was about Tk 25 crore due to production disruption in 430 factories.

He said clothes worth about Tk 10 crore which were under dyeing process

was damaged as the workers ran riot. Manzurul also urged the BKMEA members to clear all outstanding dues of the workers before Eid-ul-Fitr.

# 41 more

FROM PAGE 12

dengue patients, Shaheed Suhrawardi Hospital two, Dhaka Shishu Hospital four, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital two, Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital two, BIRDEM Hospital four and Bangladesh Medical College Hospital six.

Moreover, seven patients were admitted to AL-Raji and Monwara clinics and Nibedita Hospital and 10 to Shamaria and Central hospitals.

A senior doctor said, "It is not necessarily a dengue case when one has high fever and rash on skin. Several other factors may also cause such symptoms. It is the season for communicable diseases like influenza and typhoid."

Dengue is a mosquito-borne infection, which in recent years has become a major international public health concern. Dengue is found predominantly in urban and semi-urban areas.

Doctors pointed out there are four distinct but closely related viruses that cause dengue. Recovery from infection by one type of virus provides lifelong immunity against that virus and partial and transient protection against subsequent infection by the other three.

# Foreign missions

FROM PAGE 12

responsibilities."

Even if they are not directly involved in any big irregularity, they will have to shoulder the blame of the lapses and failures of their respective missions, a foreign office source said yesterday.

Golam Hossain, ambassador to Libya, has also been recalled for unspecified reasons.

Meanwhile, Ashfaqur Rahman has been chosen as ambassador to China and Enamul Kabir will become ambassador to Bhutan. The post of ambassador to Bhutan has been lying vacant for quite some time.

Sharjil Hasan, ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Mirza Shamsuz-zaman, ambassador to Abu Dhabi and Shahed Akhter, ambassador to Thailand, are due to retire early next year. The government, however, may consider their cases for extension, the source indicated.

Former secretary Mofazzal Karim has already left for UK to replace Shaikh Razzak Ali as Bangladesh high commissioner to UK.

Ambassador Anwar Hossain will return home from Morocco as his extension will expire soon. The post of ambassador to Kenya is lying vacant for some time.

# Fitra

FROM PAGE 12

Nawabbari Jame Mosque Maulana Rezaul Karim in the chair.

Also present at the meeting were Khatib of Chawkbazar Shahi Jame Mosque Maulana Obaidullah, Pesh Imam of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Mufti Maulana Md Nuruddin and former director of the Islamic Foundation Maulana Mufazzal Hossain Khan.

# 10 die

FROM PAGE 12

it from different vendors.

Eight of them died till yesterday noon -- one at the general hospital and seven at their houses, sources said.

The dead are Masum, 25, Shafigul, 35, Amir Hossain, 30, Habibur Rahman, 36, Khalla, 40, Ahsan, 22, Wazed, 50 and alcohol seller Sohan, 45 -- all from the town.

The death toll might rise as the identity of many others, who fell ill, could not be known, one source said. Some homeopathy medicine stores and about 20 vendors in the town allegedly sell such alcohol.

Superintendent of Police Abdus Salam said action is being taken to check illegal trade of alcohol in the district.