

# New-old leadership divide dogs BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP is apparently facing an intra-party crisis and organisational activities have virtually stopped due to conflicts between new and old leadership, gap between the government and party and frustration among field-level leaders and activists.

Party insiders said though the crisis has been prevailing for long there is no move as yet to overcome it as most ministers, who also hold top party positions, are busy with government affairs.

There have been no party programmes or organisational activities worth mentioning since the party assumed power on October 10, 2001. The party leadership appears to be avoiding responsibilities only by

announcing programmes like discussions on the occasion of various days such as the founding anniversary of the party and National Revolutionary and Solidarity Day.

Moreover, a three-month programme to form BNP committees at union, thana, municipality, district and city levels aimed to bring in new leadership and revamp the party has also come to a halt due to the lack of initiative of the assigned leaders and others concerned.

"Senior party leaders are reluctant to go ahead with the programme as one of the joint secretaries general of the party is taking unilateral decisions regarding formation of committees of different units of the party and its front organisations," one leader said seeking anonymity.

"The party has gone inside the government...Everybody is busy doing business and various types of bidding... No-one finds time to enquire about the party and its affairs," he added.

To remove the widening gap between the party and the government, ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers and such other party leaders had begun to sit at the party central office in January last year. They used to give regular audience to party leaders and workers of various levels but the process stopped in less than one and a half months.

The programme had started on an instruction from Prime Minister and BNP chief Khaleda Zia but it came to a halt mainly because the ministers got tired of listening to

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Poachers skin a spotted deer, one among 500 trapped or shot for meat in the Sundarbans during the Rash Mela on November 3-8.

PHOTO: KHOSRU CHOWDHURY

# When death prowls the Sundarbans

## 500 deer poached during Rash Mela

KHOSRU CHOWDHURY

At least 500 deer were poached at the Sundarbans during the Rash Mela this month, when hordes of poachers plundered the world's largest mangrove forest.

The poachers in engine boats have penetrated deep into the forest with deadly traps and guns since November 3 and carried on the mindless killings till November 8.

Jhapa, Tinkona Island, Tiar Char,

Ambaria and Chanmia Khali are the places where the plunderers worked day and night, trapping hundreds of deer.

The forest department could do nothing to stop the killing spree, as it became virtually impossible to check thousands of boats entering the forest in the name of carrying pilgrims to the festival site.

Rash Mela is the traditional Hindu festival observed in the

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# Hermaphrodites' group gets govt recognition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has officially recognised a hermaphrodites' organisation, Hizra Badhon Sangha, by registering it with the Department of Social Welfare in what is viewed as a radical step.

The government move is a step forward to the realisation of the rights of the community including their long-awaited demands for voting rights and an end to repression, its leaders feel.

The registration of the body on October 27 as a non-profit organisation is as a 'first official recognition of hermaphrodites' and 'a radical step', they said at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

They asked the government and countrymen to give them equal rights and facilities in society.

They said their counterparts were enjoying a raft of facilities in other nations and were contributing to society in several ways like men

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# Fate of cabinet secy hangs in the balance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is still in a fix whether to give incumbent Cabinet Secretary Saadat Husain an extension or appoint someone else.

A proposal for the job extension of Saadat, who is to go on leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) November 23, has already been sent to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia but

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# SL PM, president agree to hold further crisis talks

REUTERS, Colombo

The first meeting between Sri Lanka's feuding prime minister and president since their power struggle erupted into a political crisis last week went well and another session has been planned.

No breakthrough had been expected during the two and a half hours meeting yesterday to try to end the crisis that has overshadowed efforts to get stalled

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# PM leaves for KSA today to perform Umrah

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia leaves today for Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah.

She will leave Zia International Airport (ZIA) by a VVIP flight of Bangladesh Biman at 6:30pm and is expected to arrive at Abdul Aziz International Airport in Madina at 10:30pm local time.

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# 'Gas export to India if there is surplus'

AFP, Singapore

Bangladesh may take the domestically controversial decision to export natural gas to India but only if there is a proven surplus, Foreign Minister Morshed Khan said here Wednesday.

"We have no plan and desire to keep it (gas reserves) buried underground. If such surplus (is there), we have to look for an export market," Khan told diplomats, business executives and academics at a forum organised by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies here.

"And who can take advantage? It is the geographical proximity that will have the advantage," he said in response to a question whether Bangladesh could export gas to its giant neighbour India.

"It has to be a win-win situation."

Bangladesh has proven recoverable gas reserves of at least 369 billion cubic meters (13 trillion cubic feet), of which more than 85 billion cubic meters have already been extracted, official figures show.

According to a government study, current natural gas reserves would last until 2020.

But Khan said Bangladesh was yet to determine the entire quantity of its gas reserves and its first priority is to ensure the country's domestic needs are met before making any decision on exports.

International donors and energy companies have for years

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# Babar unhappy with police performance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday criticised the police department for failing to arrest listed criminals and to improve city's law and order.

Chairing a meeting of the monitoring committee on law and order at the home ministry yesterday, the minister ordered vigorous policing of the city's crime-prone areas apprehending increased criminal activities in the last fortnight of Ramadan.

The meeting decided that traffic police would continue to be sta

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# Indigenous refugees get ration after 4 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has resumed ration for the indigenous refugees in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region after four months.

Distribution of ration in the three CHT districts -- Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban -- resumed on October 25 as per a directive from the prime minister, official sources said.

Earlier in July, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had asked the CHT affairs ministry to stop

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## Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
17	13		5-17
18	14	4-50	5-17

## Prayer Timings

November 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-50	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-17	5-23
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation