

PM sees more 'conspiracies' by a political party

UNB, Pirojpur

Apprehending further political plots during the remaining period of her government by a certain party, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said her government along with the people will foil all conspiracies to maintain the tempo of development.

"They (indicating her political opponent) will hatch conspiracy during the remaining months of the tenure of the coalition government. But people will remain with us," Khaleda, also chairperson of the ruling BNP, told a public meeting at Pirojpur Government High School ground.

She urged people to vote for BNP and its alliance in 2007 general elections to maintain the ongoing trend of development as well as implement the new development programmes taken up by the coalition rulers.

Listing her government's development activities, she said massive development activities have been

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Much-hyped militancy dialogue fizzles out

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The prime minister's much-talked-about national dialogue on militancy with the political parties and professional bodies has virtually proved eyewash as it has come to a halt without holding talks with most invitees.

The possibility is also very slim that the dialogue will resume soon although Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to the PM, yesterday told The Daily Star that the meeting with other invitees will be held soon.

"The first phase of the dialogue has been completed for the time being," he said.

The talks have also proved useless as the government has apparently made no move to implement the important suggestions placed by some political parties and professional bodies during the talks last December.

Harris, however, claimed that

the government is initiating steps to implement those recommendations.

The government has meanwhile started to portray the dialogue as a success in combating militancy. In a written answer to a lawmaker's query, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar in parliament on February 5 termed the national dialogue an "effort to build national consensus against militancy".

With the dialogue with most invitees pending, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on February 1 told the House that she formally invited different political parties and social organisations through letters and discussed the issue of militancy.

Of the 27 political parties and 15 professional bodies invited to the national dialogue that began on December 12 amid boycott by the opposition alliance, the PM met with only three political parties and five professional bodies. She last

met with the freedom fighters on January 4.

Officials at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said they have not been instructed to arrange any meeting with any invitee for the dialogue since then.

Meanwhile, the invitees yet to meet the PM have already lost interest in the dialogue due to the lengthy process.

ATM Azharul Islam, assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, the second largest partner of the coalition government, yesterday told The Daily Star, "I do not know whether or not any date has been fixed for our meeting with the prime minister."

The chairman of a faction of Islami Oikya Jote (IQJ), another partner of the ruling coalition, Fazlul Haq Amini said the PMO was supposed to inform them the date of the meeting but has not yet done so.

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US investors offer 1,000 CNG-run buses to BRTC

UNB, Dhaka

The visiting US-based consortium of investors yesterday offered Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) 1,000 CNG-run double-decker and single-decker buses in its fleet to improve the transportation system in Dhaka.

The new buses will replace the old ones, which have been plying the city roads, polluting air and creating traffic congestion.

In two separate meetings with BRTC and Board of Investment (BoI), the US investors also proposed its assistance in infrastructure development for modernising inter-city bus terminals in Dhaka, Chittagong, Bogra, Khulna, Rajshahi and Sylhet.

The four-member delegation, led by Chairman of American Transport System Corporation (ATSC) and Chief Executive Officer

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PROF TAHER KILLING Mohiuddin played principal role

Say police; accused teacher suspended, taken on remand

ANWAR ALI and ABU KALAM, Rajshahi

Dr Mia Muhammad Mohiuddin, a teacher of Rajshahi University (RU) arrested in connection with the murder of Prof S Taher Ahmed, was suspended from his post and taken on a six-day remand yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Fazlur Karim Chowdhury granted the remand for six days as the police submitted a prayer for ten days.

Meanwhile, the students enforced a daylong strike bringing the campus life to a halt.

RU Registrar Abdus Salam told The Daily Star, "If any teacher is arrested and accused in a criminal case, he will be suspended. Yet

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Dr Mia Muhammad Mohiuddin

DHAKA-CTG EXPRESSWAY Malaysian consortium wants early start to work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian investment organisation Azimat Consortium yesterday expressed willingness for early start of the construction of Dhaka-Chittagong expressway.

"We are ready with money and technology to start the project immediately," Chairman of the consortium Haji Mannan Bin Amir, who led a seven-member delegation, told Communications Minister Nazmul Huda.

Malaysian Alliance Merchant Bank Director Francis Thong was also in the delegation that called on the minister yesterday.

The Azimat Consortium comprising six Malaysian companies last year proposed to invest over \$900 million in Bangladesh and construct the 210-kilometre long four-lane ultramodern expressway

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National Biosafety Framework to be in place by year-end

REAZ AHMAD

The National Biosafety Framework (NBF) will be ready by the year-end to kick start applications of genetic modification in crops and livestock in the country without causing any harm to the natural environment.

The decision to finalise the NBF by December 2006 was taken at the first meeting of the National Coordination Committee on Biosafety held at the Ministry of Environment and Forest yesterday.

Biosafety refers to the maintenance of safe conditions in biological research to prevent harm to labs, field workers and the environment.

Sources involved in the NBF drafting process told The Daily Star that once Bangladesh puts all regulatory set-ups in place under a full-fledged biosafety framework,

the land-strapped country will be free to produce, transfer and research genetically modified (GM) crops.

Official sources confirm that Bangladesh has four varieties on its priority list of GM crops drought and saline tolerant rice, late blight resistant potato, fruit and shoot borer resistant eggplant and pod borer resistant chickpea.

Rice Research Institute (BIRRI) and Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) are at the final stage of testing GM rice and eggplant in greenhouse environment. They will then field-test those prior to releasing the GM varieties for commercial production.

Though a biosafety guideline was officially gazetted in 1999, it was re-modified in line with the Cartagena Protocol, to which

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PHOTO: STAR

Police deployed to avert further violence yesterday in the city's Badda area where four people were shot dead on Tuesday evening.

2 gangs' rivalry leads to Badda murders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vengeance and rivalry between two gangs over domination in the area led to Tuesday's four near-simultaneous murders at South Badda in the capital.

The two gangs, known in the area as Alauddin group and Mamun-Leon group, have been engaged in fights after Alauddin

killed Mamun's father Lutfar Rahman five years back, locals said.

A gang of around 12 of Mamun's group on Tuesday evening hunted down and killed Al Amin alias Alauddin alias Ala, Tajul Islam, Abdul Kader Masum, and Rubel, and injured Jalal Uddin Rumi and Mohammad Kamrul in South Badda.

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ICC U-19 WORLD CUP Young Tigers stun Pakistan, move to Super League

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh inflicted a four-wicket defeat on defending champions Pakistan on Wednesday at the Nondescripts Cricket Club ground in Colombo to qualify for the Super

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Criminal killed in Mirpur 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged criminal was killed in 'crossfire' during a shootout between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and criminals at Paikpara of Mirpur in the capital yesterday.

Accompanying Alamgir Hossain Ali, 33, who was arrested

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3 new envoys appointed, one gets extension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed three new ambassadors and extended the contract of another one.

ATM Nazmullah Chowdhury

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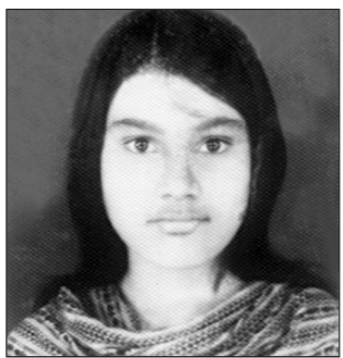
Prayer Timing		
February 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

A marriage decision meant for nightmare

MORSHED ALI KHAN

A poor rickshaw-van driver, Biswanath Roy of Battara in Agailjhara thana in Barisal, married



Beauty Roy

off his eldest daughter 17-year-old Beauty Roy to Binoy Madhu of neighbouring Bahadurpur. Little did he know that in seven months he would have to go door to door begging justice for his beloved daughter's unnatural death.

As Biswanath was peddling his rickshaw-van on a village road on December 22, villagers gave him the dreadful news of his daughter being taken to Gollia Health Complex, unconscious. He rushed to the health complex where doctors told him Beauty was dead and the same people who had brought her took the body away. Dr Shafiqur Rahman who attended Beauty told The Daily Star she was already dead. "But as a moral responsibility I immediately informed the

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Low turnout, violence blight Nepal polls

AFP, Kathmandu

Durbar Square, the historic heart of old Kathmandu, was thronged with people Wednesday, but only a few were voting at two polling stations erected for the first elections since King Gyanendra's coup a year ago.

Dozens of heavily armed soldiers and riot police patrolled the area as people sat on temple steps.

Handfuls of tourists wandered around, snapping pictures of ancient temples and palaces that make up the square as stern-looking soldiers toting rifles waved on vehicles that came to a stop.

At lunchtime, only five people voted in half an hour, and most did so more in hope rather than in expectation the polls would change anything in the nation

racked by a deadly Maoist revolt aimed at toppling the monarchy.

"I've come to vote for peace," said Ishwori Nepali, a housewife, as she left the sandbagged polling station set up at the entrance to the royal museum.

"Elections are the only way that things can improve -- that's why I decided to vote."

Although shops selling tourist trinkets and copies of Buddhist holy paintings were closed as part of a Maoist-declared general strike aimed at thwarting the polls, a woman selling corn to feed holy cows and pigeons in the square was doing a roaring trade.

In back alleys surrounding the square, taking advantage of the vehicle ban imposed for polling day, dozens of young men played football, cricket and badminton, ignoring the election.