

Zia, Khaleda backed killers of Bangabandhu
Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said verdict of Bangabandhu killing case would not be executed under the present BNP-Jamaat regime as the killers of Bangabandhu got direct support from the governments of Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia.

"Ziaur Rahman gave indemnity to the killers of Bangabandhu and Khaleda Zia gave passport to a

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BNP MP had lunch at criminal's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A ruling BNP lawmaker's having lunch at the house of a wanted criminal on Saturday created resentment in his constituency.

Witnesses said Zahiruddin Swapan, central information and research secretary of BNP and lawmaker of Gournodi-Agoiljhara constituency, had lunch at the house of Jubo Dal leader Ashraf Alam Chhoton, also an absconding criminal.

Chhoton personally welcomed

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Biman to hike domestic fares by 6pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In wake of a price hike of jet fuel, Biman Bangladesh Airlines increased its domestic airfares by about six percent on an average. The increased fares will be effective from next Wednesday.

The newly fixed one-way airfare on Dhaka-Chittagong route is Tk 3,500, on Dhaka-Sylhet and Dhaka-Syedpur routes Tk 3,100, on Dhaka-Cox's Bazar route Tk 4,050, on Dhaka-Jessore route Tk 2,250, on

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5th Expert Group Consultation session today

STAR REPORT

Nagorik Committee 2006 organises its fifth Expert Group Consultation session on the Vision 2021 for Bangladesh, Goal Five: "To have a skilled and a creative workforce" at Cirdap Auditorium in the capital today.

The committee has identified eight inter-related goals for the vision. Separate consultation sessions on four goals were held earlier.

Universal access to education

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Prayer Timing		
August 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-41	6-44
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Dying rivers plundered by encroachers

SHARIFUL ISLAM with ABU AHMED

Influential people continue to encroach banks of the rivers, even their beds, in the southwest of the country as quite a few of them have already silted up and many others are facing the same fate.

Large-scale encroachment is hastening the death of the rivers, which were once the lifeline of trade and commerce in the region, particularly in Satkhira.

Bamboo barriers by so-called fish cultivators and obstruction of the rivers' normal flow by owners of shrimp enclosures are also contributing to their death.

Even a few years back, those rivers were the main routes to transport merchandise to many riverside bazars (business centres) including Bardal, Patkelghata, Kaliganj, Uzirpur, Tarali and Parulia in Satkhira district where steamers, launches, cargo and boats carried huge amounts of merchandise.

The once flourishing trade centres

are losing importance with dwindling trade and hundreds of boatmen and labourers have lost their jobs, local traders said.

During a visit to the region, The Daily Star correspondents found houses, shops, clubs, factories, and brickfields have been constructed on the riverbanks through earth filling. At places, the riverbeds are being used as fish and agricultural farms.

The encroachers grabbed the lands of rivers before the eyes of local administration, but there is no initiative to recover the lands despite demands from people of all classes.

Locals said influential quarters in connivance with local administration have also taken lease of dried up riverbeds.

Those who have lands are showing up as landless and taking lease of riverbed with the help of local administration, said Abdul Motaleb Gazi, a landless person living in Tipna village in Dumuria along the completely dried up

Hamkura river.

He said the land grabbers recorded the khas land following silting up of the rivers in the names of their relatives.

No landless people get lease of the 32 km of khas land of Hamkura River, said Ali Ahmed of the same village.

Rabiul Islam, a resident of Binerpota village in Satkhira, said some influential locals have filled up shoals of Betrabati river at Binerpota and set up brickfields, dwelling houses, shops and a fish hatchery there.

Asked about encroachment of rivers in Khulna region, Executive Engineer of Khulna Water Development Board Abdul Malek said as the rivers are silted up, deputy commissioner's office leased out the lands to local people.

Thirty-two kilometres of Hamkura river flowing through

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PHOTO: STAR

A fry hatchery set up on the bank of Betrabati river at Binerpota in Satkhira. Encroachers continue to occupy large portions of the bank and grab more land narrowing the river.

WATERLOGGED AREAS HC asks govt to ensure living, food for villagers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to ensure safe dwelling place, food, water, medicine and other essentials to the people of 144 waterlogged villages in Abhaynagar, Manirampur and Keshabpur upazilas of Jessore so long as the water logging continues.

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14-party holds 25km road march in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The main opposition Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine organised a 25-kilometre road march in Kushtia yesterday.

Senior opposition leaders of the coalition took part in the road march which started from

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PHOTO: STAR

A team of Anti-Corruption Commission seizes watches and audio cassette players in a container at the Inland Container Depot in the capital yesterday. The goods were imported under the false declaration of torch-lights.

MANPOWER EXPORT Malaysia blacklists 16 Bangladeshi recruiters

PORIMOL PALMA

Nearly 100 recruiting agencies, in connivance with some corrupt government officials of both Malaysia and Bangladesh, are engaged in forgery of passports and other documents and the unholy competition of securing job demand letters from Malaysia, manpower businesses said.

Such acts were partly responsible for Malaysian government's imposition of ban on employment of Bangladeshi workers for almost a decade, they said.

Besides, the malpractice increased the migration cost for the Bangladeshi workers going to Malaysia

Recent blacklisting of 16 such Bangladeshi recruiting agencies and detaining of two Bangladeshis who were engaged in manpower business under the cover of herbal

medicine business in Kuala Lumpur bear testimony to the fact.

A report published in the August 11 issue of Malaysian daily 'The Star' said Malaysian authorities blacklisted the agencies for bringing in 103 workers with false documents in the first week of this month.

The blacklisted agencies are Paradise International, Akeya Trade International, Akia Trading International, The Super Eastern Ltd, Surma Overseas Ltd., PMP International Company Ltd, Sakib International, Golden View Ltd, Al Itteshal Air Services Ltd, Al Khalesh Ltd, Mat International, ATT International, ABC Avenue, Master Express, Sukma International and Fantasy International.

Five Malaysian agents recruiting workers from Bangladesh are also on the run following

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Heavy Lanka fighting cuts off Jaffna

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna peninsula has been cut off from the rest of the island as hundreds of residents try to flee heavy fighting in the area, military officials said.

Fighting that started on Friday and continued through the weekend has cut the main road connecting government-held regions of the peninsula with the mainland, a military official said.

The defence ministry has said 36 troops and 150 Tamil rebels have been killed in the fighting on the peninsula and near Jaffna city, which the rebels controlled as their capital from 1990 to 1995.

The main airfield of Palaly on the peninsula has also been shut down, with private airlines ordered to halt flights there, after taking several artillery hits on Friday, officials said.

"There is a day time curfew in Jaffna in addition to the night curfew in the high security zones," a military official said.

"But we have reports of civilians moving out of their homes and sheltering in public buildings."

The bulk of supplies and troops to Jaffna are sent by sea from the northeast port of Trincomalee, which also came under artillery attacks on Saturday.

"The army pulled back from some of the defensive positions because of heavy artillery attacks on Friday," a military source said.

"Troops are now in the process of re-establishing the bunkers they lost on Friday."

The pro-rebel Tamilnet.com website said the guerrillas had breached military defences in the Muhamalai area, at the southern entrance to the government-held area of Jaffna.

The Tigers said they launched the latest attacks to defend against a government military onslaught. The defence ministry however has denied the charge and blamed the

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THIRD KARNAPHULI BRIDGE JS body sees strong debate over design

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday saw a strong debate between the ruling and opposition lawmakers over construction of the third Karnaphuli Bridge in Chittagong.

The parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry at the meeting recommended that the communications ministry go ahead with its plan to set up a pillar bridge over the Karnaphuli and said there is no reason for worries about navigability of the river or operation of the port.

But the committee members from the opposition Awami League (AL) expressed strong disapproval

of the move and said a pillar-based bridge will be harmful for the river and might threaten the existence of the country's premier port.

Describing the decision as suicidal, the opposition members asked the government to change its stance. They said the ruling coalition has rushed into the decision mainly 'to gain cheap popular support in a bid to clear the election hurdle'.

The committee recommendation however says that the people of Chittagong do not want any politics over the issue. A bridge over the Karnaphuli will be of great use in accelerating the country's

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PHOTO: STAR

A pair of white owls rest in the hole which they made their nest at a building in Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd yesterday. They have been living there for several years.