

People to foil 'conspiracy' against polls

Says PM

UNB, Narayanganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said people will thwart any "conspiracy" to disrupt the coming election and thereby help maintain democracy and development in the country.

Addressing separate public meetings in Narayanganj and at Demra Ghat and Shyampur in the capital, she cautioned people that "conspiracy" was going on to obstruct stability in the country and hamper the tempo of development.

"It is imperative to maintain the trend of democracy and stability for uninterrupted development of the country," Khaleda said.

The prime minister observed that fair election is necessary to maintain stability in the country, saying that a congenial atmosphere is prevailing in Bangladesh.

She asserted that fair election will be held in 2007 as it will be held under a caretaker government, not under any political government.

"Today the opposition is out to destroy the fair environment of holding election and trying to create indiscipline and anarchy unless their demand is met," she said.

She reminded that the caretaker government will run the country as

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Mob beat 2 robbers to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Angry villagers lynched two robbers in Banskhali upazila early hours yesterday.

The dead were identified as Mahmudul Islam, 28, and Nasir, 31, of Shikup village in Banskhali.

Sources said a gang of some 16 robbers gathered at East Chambal Sarak in Banskhali and were preparing for robbery at around 12:30am.

The robbers shot and hacked a villager, Nizamuddin, critically as he noticed the robbers making preparations for robbery while he was passing by the area and screamed out for help.

The villagers came forward after hearing his cry for help and surrounded the gang from all sides.

They captured two of the robbers while the others managed to flee by firing at the chasing mob that left 10 injured, sources said.

The mob beat up and killed the two captured robbers on the spot.

Later, Banskhali police raided Chambal and surrounding areas and arrested five suspects of the attempted robbery.

The arrestees were Mostak Ahmad, Syed Mia, Morshed Ahmad, Jakir Hossain and Harun.

Critically injured Nizamuddin was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital while the other villagers who were injured while chasing the robbers received first aid at a local health complex.

Loan of top defaulters jumps by 23pc in June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The volume of classified loans of different commercial banks with their top 20 defaulters rose by 23 per cent to stand at Tk 10,129 crore in June this year, which is 43.17 per cent of the total defaulted loans.

Under the circumstances, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) governor yesterday asked the commercial banks to initiate exemplary measures to bring the loan defaulters to book.

"We have directed the commercial banks to take exemplary steps against at least one top defaulter in their respective banks so that others are forced to repay the money," BB Governor Salehuddin Ahmed told newsmen after a meeting with the top officials of different commercial

banks at his office.

A latest picture of defaulted loans of different banks placed at the meeting showed that the total defaulted loans of the banks was Tk 23,465 crore as of June 30 this year.

"The top loan defaulters include Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation [BPC], Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation and Shinepukur Holdings of the Beximco group. These organisations owe Tk 4,662 crore to the banks, which is 81 per cent of the total defaulted loans by 20 clients," said a meeting source.

Sources said the top 20 defaulters share Tk 5,697 crore or 56 per cent of the overall defaulted loans in the banking sector.

Officials of Sonali Bank attributed the rise of the bank's defaulted

loans to BPC's failure to pay back its huge amount of loans. They, however, said a negotiation is now underway with BPC officials for rescheduling the loans and hoped that the bank's defaulted loans will reduce by the end of this year after this rescheduling.

Sources said banks have filed cases against defaulted loans of Tk 2,554 crore while Tk 7,591 crore defaulted loans are still out of any legal action. The BB governor asked the managing directors of different banks to take legal action against these defaulted loans soon.

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No scope to compromise on reforms

Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there is no scope to compromise in the ongoing dialogue over the electoral reforms to ensure a free and fair election in the country.

"If Justice KM Hasan is appointed as the chief of the next caretaker government ignoring our demands, you will have to come to Dhaka with whatever you have," Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League (AL), told the leaders of her party's front organisations at a meeting in the capital.

The AL chief instructed her party leaders to make people across the country aware so that they could make all out preparations to come to Dhaka with sticks,

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The slow pace of work on installing sewerage pipes causes sufferings to the residents of Tally Office Road at Rayerbazar in the capital.

PHOTO: STAR

2 outlaws killed in 'shootouts'

STAR REPORT

Two outlaws were killed in separate incidents of shootouts between the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members and their accomplices in Khulna district on Saturday.

The slain outlaws were identified as Shamim alias Galakata Shamim, 34, of Pabla ward under Daulatpur police station of the city and Billal Hossain, 24, of Shamontashena under Rupsha upazila of the district.

According to a press release issued by Rab yesterday, Shamim was a member of the Gazi Kamrul faction of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BPC). He was wanted in several criminal cases including three for murder filed with the Daulatpur Police Station

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Feeder operators' coterie rules container carrying business

RAFIQ HASAN

A group of five feeder vessel operators in the name of Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC) has established a monopoly in container carrying business between Chittagong and Singapore and other connecting ports.

The vessels under CFTC do not carry Bangladeshi flag as those are registered outside the country and are not bound to obey any rules and regulations of the government.

As the vessels are not accountable to Bangladesh government on their earnings through transporting cargoes, the group siphon off money worth several thousand crores of taka from the country every year, sources said.

Out of 36 feeder ships regularly running on the route -- between Chittagong and other connecting ports like Colombo and Tanjung Palapas in Malaysia -- only 11 ships are registered in Bangladesh.

Nine of the 11 ships belong to HRC Shipping and two to Bangladesh Shipping Corporation.

While the vessels registered in Bangladesh are bound to appoint local crew and seamen and go for annual survey in Bangladesh providing revenue to the government, the CFTC ships are not under any such obligation.

Besides, the Bangladeshi flag carriers bring foreign currency.

There are a few Bangladeshi owners in the CFTC but it is

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Khaleda goes to Saudi Arabia Oct 14

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to go to Saudi Arabia on October 14 to meet King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz and perform Umrah.

She will also meet heads of some international organisations in Jeddah before returning home on October 21.

This visit might be Khaleda's last foreign tour before handing over power to the caretaker government by the end of this month.



People queue up at the parcel counter of the General Post Office (GPO) in the capital yesterday to send gifts to their expatriate relatives ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

PHOTO: STAR

Gayle crushes Zimbabwe

AFP, Ahmedabad

Chris Gayle grabbed three wickets in 13 balls and hammered 41 off 34 balls as the West Indies whipped Zimbabwe by nine wickets in a Champions Trophy qualifying match here on Sunday.

Gayle took 3-3 in 3.1 overs with his off-spin and seamers Jerome Taylor and Dwayne Smith picked up two wickets each as Zimbabwe were shot out for 85, the third lowest total in the biennial tournament.

The West Indies, hoping to defend the Champions Trophy they

won in England in 2004, coasted past the modest target in the 15th over after left-handed Gayle smashed seven boundaries and a six.

Gayle, who contributed 41 in a first wicket stand of 66 with Shivnarine Chanderpaul, holed out in the deep against Elton Chigumbura in the 10th over.

But West Indian captain Brian Lara (24 not out) and Chanderpaul (14 not out) ensured the match ended before the scheduled dinner

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Power situation worsens as 3 units trip

UNB, Dhaka

Three power generation units tripped yesterday, dealing a severe blow to the efforts of the authorities to improve the supply situation as violent protests and demonstrations continued across the country for smooth electricity supply.

Reports reaching the UNB desk said the unit-1 and 2 of the coal-fired Barapukuria power plant went off due to technical faults at 2:00pm, but a few hours later the unit-1 resumed generation while the unit-2 remained inoperative.

UNB Sirajganj correspondent

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UNSC prepares Iran sanctions resolution

Tehran urges world powers against using the 'language of threats'

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday urged world powers against using the "language of threats" over its nuclear programme as UN Security Council diplomats prepared to draft a resolution proposing sanctions against Tehran.

In a meeting late on Friday, representatives from the five per-

manent US Security Council members plus Germany agreed to discuss sanctions against Tehran after it failed to suspend sensitive uranium enrichment operations.

Senior US official Nicholas Burns said the so-called "5+1" group would start drafting this week a sanctions resolution, although he admitted finding a consensus on the

extent of punitive measures would be difficult.

"I recommend to the 5+1 group not to talk to Iran with the language of threat and sanction," retorted Iran's conservative parliamentary speaker Gholam Ali Hadad-Adel.

He reaffirmed that Iran was

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30 killed as battle rages in Shia city

REUTERS, Diwaniya

US and Iraqi troops killed 30 militants early yesterday in fierce fighting in the flashpoint southern Shia city of Diwaniya, the US military said.

The military said an M1A2 Abrams tank was severely damaged in the battle that erupted after militants opened fire with rocket-propelled grenades on US and Iraqi forces on a mission to detain a "high-value" target.

Diwaniya's southern districts are a stronghold for the Mehdi Army militia of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose movement is a key player in the Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government of national unity.

A Mehdi Army official, who declined to be named, denied any involvement in the fighting and blamed rogue gunmen. He said Sadr had issued orders to the Mehdi Army "not to attack anybody, including the Americans."

Another Mehdi Army official denied reports of the 30 killed and said only three people had been wounded. Hospital sources said four civilians were wounded, three men and a woman.

Maliki, under increasing pressure from Washington, has vowed to crack down on militias, which are blamed for much of the violence fuelling the Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict.

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Truckloads of illegal rickshaws, seized from the city streets, being taken from Agargaon in the capital to Sirajganj yesterday for distribution among the poor ahead of the upcoming general elections.

PHOTO: STAR