

Step up agitation to oust BNP govt: Hasina

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for stepping up the current agitation to force the BNP "regime" to resign and pave the way for elections under a neutral caretaker authority, reports UNB.

Addressing a group of political and social workers of Sunamganj, who joined Awami League at 29 Minto Road, Hasina blamed the ruling party for destroying democracy by ignoring the demand for scrapping the rigged by-election in Magura-2 and fresh voting in the constituency.

She questioned as to how democracy will be protected if people are not allowed to exercise their voting rights independently.

Hasina, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, said BNP has failed to govern the nation for its inefficiency. People have lost their faith in the government because of its widespread corruption.

The AL chief said the government has now resorted to

repression to stick to power. She alleged repressive measures including detention of her party leaders and workers under Anti-terrorism Act.

Criticising the government for inadequate relief in cyclone-hit Cox's Bazar, Hasina said the news of relief distribution broadcast by radio and television had no link with the reality.

Hasina, who visited the affected areas in Cox's Bazar, said cyclone victims have not yet received relief materials. The government's propaganda about relief distribution is confined to helicopters and television screen only.

A press release of the Awami League said Sunamganj pourashava Chairman Mominul Motzuddin, pourashava commissioner, former BNP president of Sunamganj district and ex-MP Dewan Shamsul Abedin along with more than 200 political, social and cultural activists met Hasina and formally joined the party.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Kotchandpur in Jhenidah yesterday. —PID photo

BNP govt striving to improve country's image: Khaleda

KOTCHANDPUR (Jhenidah), May 7: The nation has improved its image by turning itself into a country of development, production and new potentials, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today said, reports UNB.

"The country has now improved its image abroad. We have succeeded in establishing democracy and increasing production," she told a mammoth public meeting here.

Addressing at the local high school ground this afternoon meeting Begum Zia said the people had fought for independence to bring democracy and economic emancipation. But that dream could not be realised immediately after independence because the post-Liberation government was busy in realising its own interest, ignoring the people's welfare.

"The country was then branded an international basket case," she said, pointing out that it was the government of late President Ziaur Rahman which succeeded in erasing such a negative image through its policy of development and increasing production.

The Prime Minister also said the country was once again branded a "nation of beggars" during the past autocratic regime. The BNP government has now again removed such bad image through its policy of ensuring national development that aims at changing the lot of the common man," she added.

"We have reduced foreign dependence. A nation cannot hold its head high by depend-

Educate students in practical farming, PM tells agri officers

The Prime Minister yesterday told district agriculture officers to help secondary teachers in imparting practical education to students who are studying agriculture as a compulsory subject from this year, reports UNB.

"You are experts in different branches of agriculture. In addition to your responsibilities, you should educate the students in practical farming," Begum Khaleda Zia said while inaugurating a day-long workshop at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in the city.

The workshop was attended by about 300 district agriculture, animal husbandry, forest and fisheries officials.

The Midnight File

Stolen 'Scream' recovered

OSLO, May 7: Norway's most famous painting, "The Scream" by Edvard Munch, has been recovered almost four months after it was stolen from an Oslo museum, police said Saturday. Ellen Holager Andenaes of the Oslo police said the painting was apparently not damaged. The painting was recovered at an Oslo hotel. Police arrested three people, the national news agency NTB reported, says AP.

Velayati in Sarajevo to open embassy

SARAJEVO, May 7: A high-powered Iranian delegation headed by Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati arrived in Sarajevo today to open an Embassy in the Bosnian capital, officials said. Velayati was greeted by President Alija Izetbegovic on his arrival at the Presidency where around 100 people had turned out to welcome him.

BATEXPO '94 ends Orders worth \$56m expected

The country's garments manufacturers and exporters are expected to receive orders worth US dollar 56 million from foreign buyers who attended a three-day export fair, BATEXPO, that ended in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

Redwan Ahmed, MP, chairman of the BATEXPO '94 organising committee, told newsmen at a press conference at the end of the exposition that spot orders worth US dollar 22.57 million had already been received by Bangladeshi participants at the fair.

"Our participants and units are still negotiating for more orders with the visiting buyers and their representatives," Redwan, who is also the president of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGM-EA), said. The total order could run up to US dollar 56 million, he indicated.

The BGMEA organised the Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition (BATEXPO) '94 at the Sonargaon Hotel to display the country's ready-made garments products to foreign buyers.

Some 86 foreign buyers participated in the exposition. Besides, 258 local representatives of foreign buying houses visited the three-day BATEXPO — the only international fair of its kind organised in the country.

BGMEA vice president SM Fazlul Haq, Treasurer Jinnat Ali Mia, Director General of the EPB Mazharul Haq and other leaders of the BGMEA were present.

Pre-budget dialogue

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ture and tighten our belts," he said.

The finance minister said the government now wants economic growth with reasonable distribution of resources.

"We are going for a growth strategy that would ensure employment," he maintained. "I believe that poverty will go down with growth taking place."

"Resource will not be a problem, but we need a good guidance for poverty alleviation," he added.

He explained that the reform programme which would stop wastage of resources in unproductive sectors and shift them to productive ones will ultimately lead to growth, thus reducing poverty.

He said until the private sector comes forward with investment, the government will continue investment in physical and social infrastructure.

Saifur Rahman said he is still at a loss about what to do with the surplus employees of some organisations like the TCB, and the import control offices in Dhaka and Chittagong. "The TCB has 1300 workers and the import offices have 600 employees doing virtually nothing," he said, adding "This is a touchy problem."

The dialogue revolved round the speech delivered by Prof. Rehman Sobhan.

Prof. Sobhan felt that the government should monitor the results of the budget policies, and added, "It is imperative for the finance minister to actively know what is going on because of his policies. This would help correction in the next budget," he said.

Being highly critical of the donors, specially the World Bank which, he said, is "the



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina addressing a group of people from Sunamganj who joined her party at her Minto Road residence yesterday. —Star photo

Kamal for dialogue

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Opposition in and outside the JS.

"In the past three years, the government's failures, inefficiency, inability and the practice of politicising have been nakedly demonstrated. The opposition parties have also failed to play their due role."

About the much-talked-about by-election in Magura, Dr. Kamal alleged that rigging, the use of arms and musclemen and violation of election rules had made the electoral process questionable.

Dr. Kamal also criticised the protests like hartals, called by two opposition parties.

In an oblique reference to the AL, the GF leader also questioned the justification of launching anti-government agitations simultaneously with the defeated autocratic forces (meaning the Jatiya Party).

Replying to a question, Dr. Kamal said, the issue of holding the next general elections under a caretaker administration should be resolved through dialogue and by mobilising public opinion on the issue. He, however, avoided questions on his party's stand on the matter and said they were yet to decide on the issue.

Answering questions about

Int'l forum on pvt investment in power sector begins today

A five-day international forum on private investment in the power sector of Bangladesh will begin at the Sheraton Hotel today (Sunday).

President Abdur Rahman Biswas will inaugurate the forum.

The forum will be attended by high officials of the ministries of Energy, Finance, Planning, Commerce and Industries and the USAID, the US Embassy in Dhaka, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the embassies of Denmark, Norway, Finland, Kuwait, The Netherlands, Japan, Canada, Saudi Arabia, France, UK, Sweden and other countries.

Delegates from India, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Philippines will also attend the workshop.

Some trainers and experts from the United States will also participate in the forum which has been jointly organised by the Ministry of Energy and the USAID. The Rural Electrification Board will coordinate the work of the forum.

Admin reform

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administrative reform: This skepticism is, however, tempered by the appreciation that significant and long lasting reform of the administrative system will not be possible without getting support from the Opposition parties.

The donors want that the action programme for administrative reform be drawn up through open public debate. In a background paper prepared by the UNDP for the recently held Aid Group meeting in Paris, the Government has been requested to involve the private sector, civil servants as well as parliamentarians of all parties in deciding upon the nature, scope, method and timing of administrative reforms.

The requirement of making the action programme for administrative reform open to public debate is going to put the government into some difficulty. Among the four committees that are reviewing administrative reform proposals two are composed of ministers. The remaining two are official-level committees where only three of the 29 civil service cadres have representation. None of the committees have members from outside the government and, according to the UNDP, they lack transparency.

Observers say that the switchover from the heretofore closed process to an open and consultative process of administrative reform will take some time. Reaching of consensus on an action programme for reform will take longer. The only way that the deadline of December 1994 can be met is close understanding on administrative reform between the government and the Opposition.

Red Crescent Day today

Bangladesh will be among 163 countries to observe the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day today, reports BSS.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has taken up an elaborate programme to observe the day, which symbolises the birth of the founder of the organisation Jean Henry Dunant.

This year's theme for the day is "Dignity For All, Focus on Children."

Hasina for Japan

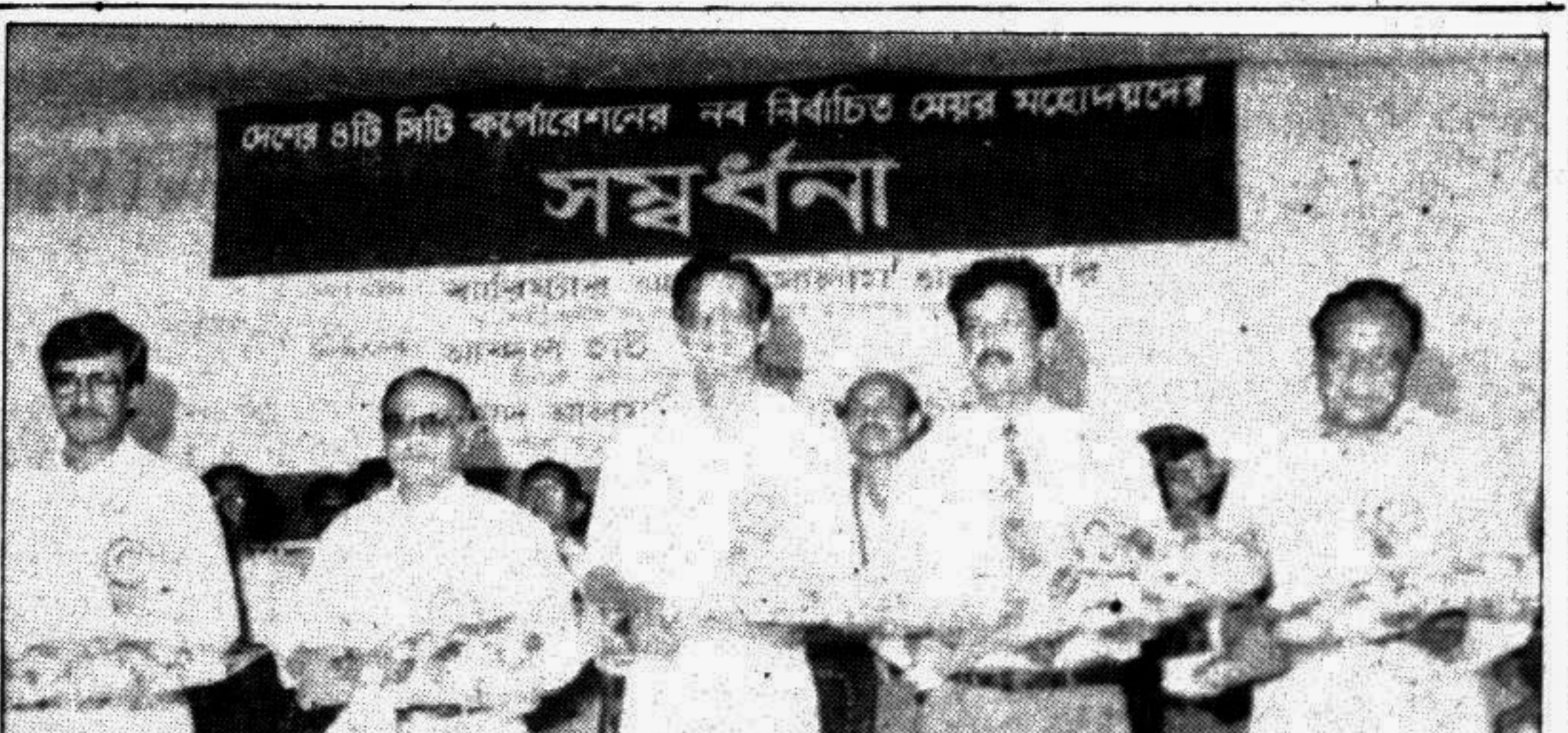
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reports UNB.

The 4-day seminar will begin tomorrow. Hasina will deliver a speech at the seminar on its second day on May 10.

Shah AMS Kibria, a member of the AL advisory council, Abul Hasan Chowdhury MP, Syed Abul Hossain MP and Nur-e-Alam Chowdhury MP will accompany Hasina during her visit to Tokyo. Salma Wazed, her daughter, will also be with her during her Japan tour.

She will return home on May 13.



(From left to right) Deputy Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Abdul Hye, Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Abdus Salam Talukder, Dhaka Mayor Md. Hanif, Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu and Khulna Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman seen at a reception for the Mayors hosted by the City Corporation Employees' Joint Federation at the Nagar Bhaban yesterday. —Star photo

Tagore

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ing up the path of jealousy and hatred and called upon all to devote with renewed zeal to work together to create a peaceful atmosphere for establishing human values and dignity.

The Prime Minister said that it would be the best way to pay respect to the great poet who championed peace and humanism.

She also called for re-evaluation of Tagore in his totality because the great poet's genius did not keep him confined to literary pursuits alone. He also took definite initiative for the betterment of the people and overall national development, she reminded.

A four-day programme organised by the cultural affairs ministry on the occasion begins today at the Shilpakala Academy in the city.

Tornado

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The tornado, with a speed upto 120 km per hour and lasting for about an hour, blew away more than 1000 kutcha and tin-shed houses. A high school and a madrasa were also badly damaged in the tornado.

Besides, a large number of trees and electric poles were uprooted.

The loss from the calamity, according to preliminary assessment, is about Taka 10 lakh, the sources said.

The bodies were sent to the thana hospital for post-mortem while the injured were admitted to Purbodhala hospital immediately after the calamity. Five of them were transferred to the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Deputy Commissioner Dewan Afaruddin today went to the tornado-hit areas to assess the extent of damage. He told local journalists that necessary steps would be taken for helping the tornado-affected people after getting the full picture of losses.

The calamity left a trail of widespread devastation rendering hundreds of people homeless. They were seen staying under the open sky.

Local people told the BSS correspondent that the tornado was so severe that several houses and even some tubewells were blown far away.

Bodies recovered

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Police said that most of the 15 bodies were recovered from Kalatoli to Heemchhari beach near Cox's Bazar town.

Five of the victims were buried early today, officials said.

The nationality of the drowned fishermen could not be ascertained but officials believed that they were Thai fishermen whose boats were wrecked in the cyclone.

Cox's Bazar district authorities until Friday recovered 28 bodies of foreign nationals killed in fishing boat capsize in the Bay. The bodies were rescued from the Bay in Cox's Bazar Sadar and Teknaf thanas.

The cyclone, which mauled the southern Cox's Bazar district and Bandarban, killed 165 people including 86 Rohingya refugees, earlier reports said.

'Monstrosity'

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Saifur Rahman has said.

Speaking at a pre-budget dialogue at the NEC auditorium in the city yesterday, he said "It is a monstrosity of thinking that every five years a caretaker government will conduct elections replacing democratic government."

Opposition parties and groups in Parliament have taken a unanimous stand on the issue of a caretaker government and stayed away from the current session of Parliament to press home their demand.

"You should go back to Parliament and discuss how to improve the election process," the finance minister urged the Opposition. "This parliament was elected for five years... it should and must stay to institutionalise the democratic process," he said.

The finance minister had invited a number of opposition members of parliament, among others, to participate in yesterday's dialogue. But none of them except Shahjahan Siraj turned up, supposedly in line with the Opposition boycott of the Parliament session and meetings of the standing committees.

Pointing to the absence of the Opposition members, Saifur Rahman said "I invited them. It was not a structured political forum that they needed to keep away."

Question papers

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The examination in the subject of English was held today while the Mathematics test will be held on Monday.

Some copies of the leaked questionnaire for English were made available to our correspondent who found that 47 of the objective questions in the leaked papers were similar to those contained in the actual question paper today while all the subjective questions were the same.

The Board authorities were, however, yet to cancel the examinations.

Chairman of the Board Abdul Majid, talking to this correspondent, said a high-powered inquiry would be held soon to identify the persons involved in leaking the questions.

Question papers were also leaked here in 1990 and 1991 and inquiry committees were duly formed but none of them has published any report so far. The Board authorities later transferred the matter to the Detective Branch.

Point to ponder

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Prof Mohabbat said the Rules of Business, as they exist today, cannot be acceptable in a democratic system. A new Rules of Business was prepared in draft form as early as November, 1991 which envisaged changes in the role-relationship between the Minister and the Secretary. The minister was made responsible for the performance of his ministry and the secretary was to work under his supervision and control.

"But this draft Rules of Business has not been approved by the Cabinet and not placed before Parliament," he noted.