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EACH DAY EVERY DAY
TO INDIA

BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia giving receipt to a member of the party on the first day of the party's membership renewal and collection drive at her Minto Road official residence yesterday. — Star photo

More laboratory facilities for arsenic test

The national steering committee formed to prevent arsenic pollution at a meeting in Dhaka yesterday decided to enhance laboratory facilities in Atomic Energy Commission and Geological Survey Department to detect the effect of arsenic among the people, reports UNB.

The meeting decided that the ministry concerned would take necessary measures to test nail and tissue at the laboratory of the Atomic Energy Commission as it presently has facilities to test hair and water only.

The meeting, chaired by Health and Family Welfare Minister Salauddin Yusuf, was told that steps would also be taken to set up a full-fledged laboratory at NIPSOM and increase the laboratory facilities of Geological Survey Department so that any kind of arsenic test could be done there.

Water Development Board has been asked to submit reports to the committee on the existence of arsenic in its project areas and also expand their project areas to help detect the

arsenic affected area, said an official handout.

It was informed that the Scientific Research Committee had taken emergency steps for conducting research under the auspices of the Atomic Energy Commission, Geological Survey Department and Water Development Board.

Several measures, including conducting IEC activities and appointment of additional physicians to detect arsenic patients, have already been taken.

The meeting was told that training for doctors and health personalities were also being conducted by the government and non-government organisations.

It also called for taking necessary measures for implementation of the decisions taken in last meeting.

State Minister Dr M Aman Ullah, Cabinet Secretary Ataul Haq, Health Secretary Mohammad Ali, Secretary in-charge of Science and Technology Ministry M Fazlur Rahman attended the meeting.

Malaysia

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A total of 960,164 illegals had signed up under the six-month amnesty last July to register and legalise illegal foreign workers — the second such programme since 1992.

Immigration authorities have lamented that the illegal immigrants were playing a 'cat and mouse' with them.

We have had to switch our strategies in conducting midnight raids because the illegals are no longer staying in their quarters at night," an immigration official said.

Megat Junid called on the public, especially employers, to give their full cooperation in resolving the burgeoning problem of illegal immigrants.

The government had admitted that the number of illegals had reached a critical stage and even blamed them for Malaysians' rising social problems and outbreaks of communicable diseases amid crowded housing conditions.

Malaysia's rapid economic growth, averaging more than eight per cent yearly since 1987, has attracted the influx, officials said.

Khaleda

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all the institutions were destroyed and the educational campuses were occupied by government-backed armed terrorists.

Criticising a section of the press, the BNP chief made it clear that the party would go ahead with the plan for anti-government agitation and strengthening the party.

She acknowledged that her party suffered a setback in the past general elections as it lacked a strong organisational base despite enjoying massive public support. She asked the party workers to strengthen organisational base at each and every corner of the country and also to guard against "any attempt to snatch the party victory in the next elections."

Hasina

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Elaborating on the reform programmes, she said the main objective of her government is to fight hunger and thus bring about people's welfare.

Hasina, who will preside over the inaugural session of the World Micro-credit Summit this afternoon, also called upon all to work together to achieve the target of eradicating poverty and hunger.

She told the function that her government would always work towards the welfare of commonmen deprived for the last 21 years.

Chaired jointly by Dr Golam Aktar and Saiful Islam, the function was also addressed by Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzaq, Shamim Jahanara Hasan, Tosarraf D Costa, Ramzan Ali, Iftekhar Hamad Khasru, Shah Alam Majumder, Prodip Barua, Humayun Kabir, S Salam and Nurul Islam Anu.

She had a word on corruption embedded in different spheres of social life. "All out efforts would be made to wipe out corruption from society. It takes a lot of time to clear the misdeeds of the past," she said.

The Prime Minister also answered some queries at the reception.

Representatives from 185 countries are expected to attend the meet aimed at providing micro-lending for self-employment for 100 million poor families of the world by the year 2005.

Sheikh Hasina is one of the four co-chairpersons of the three-day international conference of heads of state or government.

President assents to four Bills

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday gave assent to four Bills passed earlier by the Jatiya Sangsad, reports BSS.

The Bills are Artha Rin Adalat (amendment) Bill, 1997, Rangamati Hill District Local Government Council (amendment) Bill, 1997, Khagrachari Hill District Local Government Council (amendment) Bill, 1997 and Bandarban Hill District Local Government Council (amendment) Bill, 1997.

2 killed in city

Two young men were killed in separate incidents at Mirpur and Uttara in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

One person was identified as Mohammad Motaleb, 35, an employee of a saw mill at Guadarhat under Mirpur police station. He died on the spot at around 2 pm when a stock of a tree fell on him. His body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

In another incident, Cantonment police recovered the body of a young man, aged about 25, from Jasim Uddin Road in Uttara Sector-1 in the morning.

Corruption

Court summons

Benazir, Sharif & Imran

LAHORE Feb 2: A Pakistani High Court today summoned political party leaders Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan on a petition seeking to have them barred from public office court officials said, reports AFP.

The three have been asked to appear before the Lahore High Court in the first week of March, on an exact date to be fixed, to answer allegations of corruption.

The summons was issued on a petition filed by Javed Iqbal Jafri, leader of a local human rights group.

The petition contends that former premiers Benazir, leader of Pakistan People's Party, and Sharif, who heads the Pakistan Muslim League, face charges of financial corruption.

Imran, leader of the Movement for Justice, has been accused of 'moral corruption' over a paternity case filed in a US court by Sita White who claims Imran is the father of her four-year old daughter.

Benazir's brother Murtaza, who was killed in a police shootout in Karachi in September along with seven of his colleagues. The group is led by his widow, Lebanese-borne Ghinwa.

Pakistan's main fundamentalist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, is boycotting the elections in protest over what it sees as Leghari's failure to bar corrupt politicians from taking part in the elections.

He has also stepped up corruption warnings in recent days, accusing the President of turning the election into a 'farce' and calling on Leghari to resign.

Leghari has blamed a 'coterie' which she said was determined 'at all cost' to deprive her party of power.

Benazir also appealed for the Pakistan army chief to ensure free and fair elections.

In a letter to general Jahanzeb Karamat, a copy of which was faxed to the media, she claimed 65 National Assembly constituencies had been 'earmarked for electoral fraud.'

Without directly accusing President Farooq Ahmed Leghari she blamed a 'coterie' which she said was determined 'at all cost' to deprive her party of power.

Leghari has left Benazir and Sharif, who dominated Pakistan politics throughout the 1980s, to again monopolise the polls.

At the last election in 1993, the PPP won 86 seats against 68 for the MLP.

A new force in Sindh is a splinter PPP group, founded by

CEC asks officials

Maintain neutrality in Thakurgaon by-polls

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Muhammad Abu Hena said free, fair and neutral election is the safeguard to democracy and hence there is no alternative to holding elections with sincerity and impartiality under a democratic dispensation, reports UNB.

He was addressing a meeting in the city with the chiefs of law-enforcing agencies and officials of Rajshahi division and Thakurgaon district in preparation for by-election to Thakurgaon-1 constituency.

The voting is set for February 18 for the Parliament seat which fell vacant with the death of ruling Awami League MP Kademul Islam.

He said local administration and law-enforcing agencies must ensure overall security at the polling centres so that the voters could cast their votes freely.

Abu Hena said the administration would have to ensure a favourable atmosphere for inspiring a massive voter turnout.

He asked the officials concerned to conduct the election neutrally rising above all unholiness.

The CEC instructed the officials to maintain law and order strictly and apply code of conduct irrespective of party and opinion. "Take stern action against the violators of code of conduct," he ordered.

"Legal action will be taken

against the officials concerned in case of failure to maintain neutrality and in negligence while taking legal measures," he told the meeting and urged officials to discharge poll duties with all boldness and courage.

Home Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat, Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Rezwan-ul-Haq, Inspector General of Police M Azizul Haq and Deputy Director of Ansar-VDP Brigadier Enayet Karim also addressed the meeting.

They expressed their total solidarity with the measures undertaken by the Election Commission and assured all out efforts so that the election could be held in peaceful, smooth and neutral manner.

Meanwhile, Dada Match Factory here reopened today after a meeting between the CBA leaders of the factory and the management on Saturday night. Jatiya Sangsad Whip SM Mostafa Rashidi Suja, MP was present at the meeting.

The stevedores of the Mongla port, the second largest port of the country, went on strike on Tuesday to realise their demands.

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