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#### PM's directive to strengthen 'economic diplomacy'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed Bangladesh missions abroad to expedite their activities projecting the country's prospects in various fields in pursuance of 'economic diplomacy,' reports

"The cornerstone of our foreign policy is to strengthen economic relationship with other countries for promotion o trade and commerce," she said while presiding over a cabinet committee meeting on Foreign Affairs at her office yesterday.

She said her government inherited a fragile economy and was now making allout efforts to improve the economic condition with various development activities. "We want to improve the lot of common men."

The Prime Minister said the foreign policy pursued by her government was being appreciated at home and abroad. "We are following the policy of friendship with all and malice to none as initiated by father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

She said her government is maintaining close ties with all countries, particularly with the neighbours, and called for further consolidating regional cooperation for the welfare of the

#### Criminal laws to be amended

A cabinet committee yesterday decided to amend relevant criminal laws making tough provision, including camera trial, in a bid to control serious crimes, reports UNB.

The committee at a meeting on law and order directed the Law Secretary to take step for amending and modifying the laws for combating crimes like terrorism and extortion, officials said.

In the meeting, the process of prosecution against terrorism and extortion was discussed in detail to evolve means of eliminating these terrible vices from

It was noted that "none does dare to stand witness against the terrorists for fear of life, which makes it difficult to convict the criminals.

Considering this threat on justice, the meeting decided measures providing security of both the witnesses and the victims, including submission of their testimonies in camera (judge's private room) in absence of the accused.

The meeting also directed the police to take effective steps to stop print and use of obscene magazines and posters.

The issue of checking smuggling also came up for the discussion. The meeting also directed the agencies concerned to take steps against cross-border

BNP complains to CEC

#### AL violating election code of conduct

BNP has complained to Chief Election Commissioner of violating election code of conduct by the government leaders and arrest of opposition activists in Pabna on the eve of by-election in Bera-Sujanagar constituency, reports UNB.

BNP vice-president Shamsul Islam MP and joint secretary general Haris Chowdhury yesterday met with Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena at his office.

They also alleged that a section of the government officials are campaigning in favour of the ruling party candidate.

## - Inside Today —

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Mid East Peace Process

The Rocky Road to **Final Status** Agreement

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Beximco mounts pressure on BB for extra loanrescheduling facilities

**Business** 

Malaysian economy shrinks 8.6pc

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## '96 polls results | Review '78 verdict that put ML above Constitution of 51 centres in Dhaka-10 void

Results of 51 out of 78 polling centres under Ramna-Tejgaon constituency (Dhaka 10) of the Jatiya Sangsad have been declared null and void by an election tribunal yesterday.

A press release issued yesterday by Maj (Retd) Abdul Mannan, the BNP contestant who lost to AL nominee Dr HBM Iqbal in June 1996 polls in that

#### Of trucks and traffic sergeants

By Staff Correspondent Truckers removing sludge from Dhanmondi lake has stopped work because traffic sergeants at different city points have allegedly seized their papers demanding

regular payment', sources said. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) officials said they have notified the DC Traffic and the Police Commissioner of the situation but "nothing has happened".

Removing the sludge is part of a re-excavation work to implement DCC's Dhanmondi Lake Development Project. scheduled to be completed by June next.

Truck drivers alleged that traffic sergeants seized papers of about 30 trucks which were carrying sludge to dump those at Joar Sahara in the last one week. The sergeants were posted at Sankar, Bijoy Swarani east and west, Mahakhali police box. Kakoli and other points.

The police officers did not file any case against the truckers but told them that their papers would be returned against a 'payment' of Tk 1,000 each. The truck drivers also alleged that See Page 12 Col 8

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY.

Nov 29: President Shahabuddin

Ahmed has reiterated his call to

the political parties to free the

students from their control for

seat of learning. It is the expec-

tation of all that the university

campuses would remain

friendly for academic activities

with the joint effort of the stu-

dents and teachers," the presi-

dent told the seventh convoca-

tion of Rajshahi University

education to keep pace with the fast-moving world. But the

standard of education in every

field in our country has reached

the lowest level. Foreign coun-

tries do not accept our certifi-

cates because of growing trend

"We have no alternative to

(RU) yesterday.

"University is the highest

betterment of the country.

President repeats call

Leave campuses out

of politics or face

a dark future

From RU Correspondent

constituency, claimed that the tribunal gave the verdict after hearing statements of 87 wit-

nesses over the last two years. ABM Jahangir Hossain Sohag, a lawyer for the plaintiff. told The Daily Star over telephone that they would lodge a petition this week to have the parliament seat declared va-

Earlier, Mannan had lodged

accusing Iqbal of rigging.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Iqbal said he would appeal in the High Court against the verdict and claimed that neither he nor his lawyers were aware of the pronouncement of the verdict yesterday.

within 30 days. "In my constituency, votes were rigged nowhere. But I'll

See Page 12 Col 1

## Law Minister urges Supreme Court

The 1978 Supreme Court verdict that put martial law above the Constitution needs a review, the law minister said yesterday.

"I would most humbly like to urge upon our most respected judges of our apex court to kindly (see) whether the judgement given in the Halima Khatun case can be reviewed." minister Abdul Matin Khasru told the inaugural session of British-Bangla Law Week.

The event was organised to mark the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights at the British Council yesterday afternoon and attended among others by Chief Justice A T M Afzal.

"Though the judiciary is the guardian of law, protector of

By Staff Correspondent

individual rights and media for balancing the social equilibrium. Unfortunately in Bangladesh, the judiciary came under pressure from the extra judicial powers at different times, Khasru said.

Referring to the judgement in the Halima Khatun case, the law minister said the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court categorically said that the Constitution shall not compete with the proclamation of Martial Law.

In their judgement given on January 4, 1978, their judges

said: "The Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972, stands subordinate to the Proclamations, Regulations or Orders as may be made by the President by virtue of assumption of power and as such the Constitution is no longer the supreme law of the country."

"This judicial pronouncement of the apex court made the Constitution subordinate to the proclamation. So, if this judgement is not overruled by review, it will continue to stand as an obstacle towards the independence of the judiciary and

democratic development.

"The Constitution of Bangladesh was adopted through a democratic process reflecting the sovereign will of the people ... It not only embodied the principles of constitutionalism, rule of law and human rights. It made specific provisions in articles 44 and 102 for realisation and en-

forcement of those as well. "It is undeniable that a strong judiciary is the best safeguard against violation of, and best protection for preservation of, human rights. Article 7 of the Constitution provides for the supremacy of the Constitu-Court."

"It is a matter of historical fact that judiciary can flourish only in a truly democratic system of government which can succeed in an environment of civility and respect."

"We have a functioning democracy in our country with complete transparency of action ... The press enjoys full freedom and the opposition is assertive. We will therefore pursue the human rights goals as a matter of principle," he said. Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal

See Page 12 Col 8

#### Land dispute 3 killed, 50 hurt in Habiganj

From Our Correspondent HABIGANJ, Nov 29: Three people were killed and 50 others injured in a clash over land dispute today. Police said two rival groups

clashed at Patharia village under Baniachhang thana this morning. Both the groups used deadly weapons. The victims were identified

as Noor Muhammad, 25, Afil Uddin, 40, and Shamsul Huq, 20. Besides, 20 received serious injuries. Witnesses said the two groups clashed at about 7:30 am

when the supporters of one Karam Ali allegedly set the house of their rival Ali Mahmood afire. Noor Muhammad, the younger brother of Ali Mah-

mood, died on the spot when their rivals hit him with sharp weapons as he tried to prevent them. Ali Mahmood was also seriously injured during the in-Afil Uddin died on way to

Sylhet Medical College Hospital (SMCH) while Shamsul Haq at Habiganj Sadar Hospital.

Most of the injured were admitted to the Sadar Hospital. Later seven of them - Yaar Mahmood, 30, Shukur Mahmood, 16, Amir Hossain, 26, Shah Alam, 20, Syed Ali, 50, Ali Mahmood, 38, Razzak, 40 were shifted to SMCH in critical condition.

#### BR probe body on 'rescued'

The Bangladesh Railway

BR sources said the committee comprised the Dhaka Divisional Commercial Officer and the Dhaka Divisional Commandant of the Railway Security Force. They have no time

The BR officials maintained that there was "nothing to worry about" the children. They were only being taken to a far away place to be then released just to rid the station of increasing number of vagrant children"," said a BR official.

By Staff Correspondent

a case with the Election Tribunal (Dhaka Division) soon after the parliamentary polls

An appeal against the ver-dict would have to be made

fight the case as per the proce-dures of law," said lqbal. His lawyers could not be contacted for comment last night.

The centres of which election was declared void included Bangladesh Institute of Ceramic, Staff Welfare High School, Nakhalpara Govt Primary School, Hossain Ali High School, Hajee Maran Ali Madrasha, Tejgaon Mohila College, Tejgaon Govt Girls High School, Govt Science College, Nazneen High School, Rajabazar Rotary Boys and Girls Primary School, Tejgaon College, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Govt Primary School, Tejgaon Farm Govt Primary School, Eskaton Garden High School, Viqarunnessa Noon School and College. Siddeswari Girls School Habibullah Bahar College, Siddeswari Boys High School Shahnoor Ideal Boys High School, Bara Moghbazar Govt

of taking unfair means in the

unfair means in examinations

is that the schools, colleges and

universities cannot teach the

students are being used for po-

students well, he said.

the campus and said.

The reason behind taking

"The main reason is that

He regretted bloodshed on

"Bloodshed on the campus is

very common. In addition, ex-

tortion through terrorism is re-

ported very often. Present

trends in student politics are

responsible for these destruc-

tive practices ... The students

leaders have chosen this as a

aires overnight in this way.

See Page 12 Col 4

"They are getting million-

very profitable business."

examinations.

litical gains.

#### Disowning IFIC liabilities could hit at the roots of third-party guarantee

ernmental Primary Teachers' Association in the city yesterday demanding nationalisation of the primary schools.-Star photo

TIME TO BE TAKEN CARE OF: Police intercepted a procession, on way to the Secretariat, by Bangladesh Non-gov-

## Banks get raw deals from Beximco

Father of Shazneen

cross-examined

By M Shamsur Rahman

More than four years after owning up the loans taken under different fictitious front organisations and providing guarantee for those. Beximco is now trying to disown those lia-

Beximco has claimed in a case filed in October this year against the Bangladesh Bank. IFIC and Baghkhali Fisheries that the guarantees it provided after the Bangladesh Bank had detected on the fictitious accounts in 1993 are 'not bank

guarantees as understood in the common sense". Beximco has obtained an injunction which bars the Bangladesh Bank (BB) from including its name as a loan defaulter on the Credit Informa-

tion Bureau (CIB) list. According to banking experts, the ulterior motive of this case was to torpedo a BB process to remove Salman and Sohel Rahman from the IFIC Bank

Board. These latest statements by the Beximco have left the IFIC Bank in dire straits. If Beximco

now backs out of its commitment. IFIC will be left with loan liabilities amounting to hundreds of crores of taka with

none to fall back upon. But the whole banking system may fall into jeopardy as a consequence of the case. There are thousands of crores of taka in loans under third party guarantee with different banks in the country. If these guarantors also follow suit, the banking sector may crash, experts

This is why both the finance ministry and the Bangladesh Bank should take Beximco's case very seriously to avert any such possibilities, they added.

Beximco's claims have put IFIC Bank in a very difficult situation, according to sources. While Sohel and Salman Rahman are chairman and vicechairman of the bank, they have at the same time filed the case against IFIC, among oth-

This action of the Rahman brothers has gone against the

interest of the bank they partly

own, and IFIC is wondering how to deal with the situation. Even in the last board meet-

ing of November 19, IFIC's strategy regarding the case was discussed in the presence of the Rahman brothers who themselves are the plaintiffs in the case. As a result, the discussion could not be effective.

IFIC's 40 per cent shares are owned by the government that has four directors who constitute one third of the board.

As a result, their role in taking position on the conflict of interest caused by the chairman and vice-chairman has become crucial

Banking experts feel that the government directors have really not performed to protect the interests of the government and the depositors regarding the Beximco cases. According to them, their roles had not been very effective when, as 40 per cent shareholder, they should have played a responsible role in protecting the government's

To support the claim that it

tious companies, Beximco states that it had come across several small business concerns in the course of its operations and wanted to help them out. Salman and Sohel Rahman

had no link with these ficti-

are "personally interested to help and promote small scale business concerns for a prosperous Bangladesh." They said several business concerns had approached them

because of their reputed "generosity" to recommend loan applications of small businesses to the IFIC. According to Bangladesh Bank statistics, Beximco Group had channelled Tk 118.46 crore

rescheduled - from IFIC Bank through fictitious accounts. It had also taken Tk 72.19 crore in loans - which have also been rescheduled - from AB Bank against dubious ac-

- which had later been

counts. Beximco's activities came to light in 1993 when a BB inspection team found gross irregular-See Page 12 Col 1

### children Staff Correspondent

(BR) has formed a two-member enquiry committee to probe Saturday's incident at the Kamlapur railway station in which 40 vagrant children were rescued from a sealed goods wagon, destined for an unspecified

barrier to submit the probe re-

## Congress won't 'destabilise' Vajpayee govt now

From Pallab Bhattacharya



Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi is garlanded by supporters in New Delhi yesterday after an overwhelming win in the assembly elections in three of the four Indian states that went to polls. — AP/UNB photo

NEW DELHI, Nov 29: The Congress today notched up landslide victories in Rajasthan and Delhi and retained its hold in Madhya Pradesh belying pollsters.

thirds majority in 70-member

Delhi assembly and raced to an

unprecedented three-fourths

majority in the 200-member

Rajasthan legislature leaving the ruling BJP far behind. However, the Congress had to bite the dust in the northeastern state of Mizoram where it was defeated by the main opposition Mizo National Front and Mizo Peoples Conference

alliance. A jubilant Congress President Sonia Gandhi said the election results reflected the "total failure" of the BJP in governing the country while a thoroughly disappointed Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said the outcome was against his party's expectations.

parties termed the poll outcome in the Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh as a referendum against the BJP while Rashtriyo Janata Dal demanded Vajpayee's resignation. But Vajpayee himself ruled out any threat to his ninemonth-old government saying

all allies of BJP expressed their

solidarity with the country's

The Congress and the left

ruling alliance. See Page 12 Col 7

A defence lawyer cross-examined business tycoon Latifur Rahman, father of murdered schoolgirl Shazneen, yesterday as hearing resumed in the court of the sixth Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka. The Congress secured two-Mohammad Ali, the lawyer

> cused, began questioning the informant whose 15-year old daughter was brutally killed on April 23. The cross-examination has been adjourned till 3 pm today. During the cross-examination, Latifur Rahman gave

for Badal, one of the seven ac-

replies to the questions asked:
My father had five brothers and three sisters. The house in which I reside was built during my father's lifetime. My grandfather was not the owner of the house and my grand fa-ther Khan Bahadur Waliur Rahman died during the British period. The plot was allotted to my father during the Pakistan period.

We are two brothers and three sisters. They all are married and alive. My father was the owner of the house when he My younger brother's resi-dence is located at Road no 113,

My sisters have been living in their respective houses with their husbands and children. My eldest sister resides in Dhanmondi.

Gulshan. The house was bought

during my father's lifetime in

By Staff Correspondent My second sister lives in the US. She owns a house in Gulshan. My youngest sister lives in the Central Road under Dhanmondi. She also owns a plot at Gulshan but is yet to build a house there.

The suggestion that there is enmity among us (brothers and sisters) is completely false. My uncle Obaidur Rahman

was killed. That was possibly in 1980. One of my cousins, Syed Asaf Ali, was also killed at Dhamai Tea Estate in Sylhet. That was sometime in mideighties. Those who were chargesheeted were convicted and sentenced. I cannot remember whether

any of my blood relatives were

killed other than these two.

The suggestion that there was

absence of good relations among my relatives after the killing of my uncle and cousin is not correct. I got married in 1965. My father-in -law's house is in Assam. My wife was converted to Islam and the marriage was

solemnised under the Muslim The suggestion that my relation with my parents and brothers and sisters got strained because of the marriage is not correct. Besides my younger brother was only about nine years of age when I got

married.

I am the Managing Director and the Chairman of the See Page 12 Col 4

## যে শিশুটি থাকে ঘরে আমার তার দায়িত্ব আমার না তো কার





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