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*Will little Abdi
get back her
eyesight?*

By Staff Correspondent

Tortured housemaid Abdi has to wait till tomorrow to know if she will get back her eyesight.

She now cannot see anything with her left eye and sees very little with her right eye.

The eight-year girl was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Thursday with severe injuries in her eyes and on the forehead and back as her mistress allegedly tortured her at a Gulshan residence in the city.

Police arrested the housewife -- Salma Azim -- on Saturday, produced her in the CMM's Court and the court sent her to Dhaka Central Jail.

Just before the home minister visited the victim at about 11 am on Saturday, DMCH doctors in a hurried move did an X-ray of her head. Since then she remained unattended until doctors paid a routine visit at around noon yesterday, hospital sources said.

Asked about the minister's instruction about Abdi's treatment, doctors told The Daily Star she was kept under observation. "Pus and clotted blood in her forehead were removed by an operation," said one of them.

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Two envoys recalled

By M Anwarul Haq

Two Bangladeshi ambassadors have been recalled to the headquarters. Foreign Ministry sources said yesterday.

Besides, one ambassador has sought voluntary retirement, while a senior diplomat has declined an offer for extension of service.

Syed Mohammad Hossain, Ambassador to Morocco and Rashed Ahmed, envoy to Japan, have been asked to report back to Dhaka. The reasons for their recall were not known. Hossain is due to retire on January 8 and Ahmed on January 17. Both were seriously lobbying for extension.

Meanwhile, of the three senior diplomats granted extension recently on contract for one year each, Anwar Hashim is learnt to have declined to accept the offer.

Anwar Hashim, the second senior most diplomat is now serving as Principal of the Foreign Service Academy. There were suggestions that his ser-

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Election expenses MP candidate jailed for not submitting accounts

JESSORE, Dec 8: A contestant in the 1996 parliamentary election has been sentenced to two years' RI and fined Tk 5,000 for not submitting accounts of his election expenses, reports APB.

According to a judgement passed by Mahmuda Khutun, Additional Sessions Judge-1, Narail, Torikul Islam, who had contested in Narail-1 constituency with a Gano Forum ticket will have to suffer RI for six months more if he fails to pay the fine.

The judgement was passed on November 23 under Clause 4 (A) (A) of the 1972 Public Representation Act, court sources in Narail has said.

According to a delayed report available here today, three other contestants in Narail — Bimal Biswas, Sheikh Asad and Gazi Ashra — are awaiting judgement for the same offences.

Deputy Commissioner of Narail, Taj Mohammed, had filed these cases on behalf of the government.

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BAPEX 'crippled' further

By Sharier Khan

Oil and gas exploration by BAPEX may be limited further and its financial position has become "crippled" following two government decisions.

The energy ministry last week decided that BAPEX should be "prepared for competition" with foreign oil companies, which sources and experts say, means denying it any government-sponsored exploration work.

Furthermore, it will have to depend on the sweet will of ministry officials for funds instead of a share of Petrobangla's profit which it is receiving now.

The Ministry has also asked Petrobangla to outline a future exploration strategy for BAPEX in the light of "competition" and make an official presentation about the strategy.

The sources said, under this decision BAPEX would not be given any exploration area without any competitive international bidding. The priority and importance that were verbally given to BAPEX by higher authorities have all become meaningless with this decision," an official source said.

Prior to taking the decisions, high officials of Petrobangla and energy ministry had discussed on several occasions that all "ring fenced" or government-reserved oil and gas exploration areas which were excluded from the Second

Round Block Bidding process should be kept for competitive bidding in future.

It was also discussed that the "relinquished" areas in various blocks being explored by foreign companies under Production Sharing Contract (PSC) would also be subjected to competitive bidding.

About 25 per cent area in

Meghnaghat plant

Cabinet body's
'no' to giving
contract to
Marubeni

Star Report

The Cabinet's Purchase Committee yesterday rejected an energy ministry proposal for awarding without any bidding or negotiations a contract to Japanese company Marubeni to set up the second phase of 300 MW -450 MW Meghnaghat Power Plant.

Sources said that the finance minister rejected the proposal at the Committee's meeting.

Negotiations for signing a contract for the first phase of plant is still incomplete.

Energy ministry officials

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each block is relinquished every three years when the foreign companies concerned fail to achieve the maximum target. These relinquished areas were previously earmarked for BAPEX's exploration with local funds.

The ministry in its last week's meeting did not specifically discuss about the "ring fenced" or "relinquished" areas. Rather, it focused on putting BAPEX in competition with giant foreign companies.

The sources said, the ministry was well aware of the fact that with poor equipment and technology, BAPEX would not score in any competitive bidding. "It is still not ready for competition," said an official. "At this hour, BAPEX needs government support so that it can stand up on its own. It needs some exploration activities."

BAPEX's activities remained crippled for over a decade now on the pretext that the government did not have enough funds for exploration activities.

However, out of the three exploration schemes it undertook in the last 10 years, BAPEX struck gas in two at a cost lower than that of foreign oil companies, the sources said.

Since BAPEX was separated from Petrobangla in 1989, its funds were arranged from Petrobangla's annual profit at

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Hasina alleges at city meeting BNP's armed cadres are now in Pabna

Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina yesterday reprimanded

opposition leader Khaleda Zia's

threat of hartal ahead of Pabna

by-polls, saying she is perhaps

scared of "ballot verdict". re-

ports UNB.

"We've got faith in the people and we believe in popular ballot," she told a meeting at Palan Maidan marking the 26th founding anniversary of Awami Juba League, the ruling party's youth front.

Rebutting BNP's apprehension of rigging, Hasina said it's their old phobia as they had also cried wolf during the by-elections in Manikganj and Barisal. But they kept mum when they won those elections.

The prime minister said ballot belongs to the people and they would cast their votes according to their choice. "We're not concerned like her (Khaleda Zia), since we came to power with people's mandate. We're only concerned about how to

lead the nation to economic prosperity."

Hasina said Awami League candidate won the Pabna-2 seat in last general elections when BNP got a drubbing despite manipulating votes.

Hurling a counter-allegation of creating disturbance in the run-up to by-election, she accused Begum Zia and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury who enjoy the status of minister and state minister of violating election rules during the electioneering in Pabna.

She alleged that BNP had herded up its armed cadres from different parts of the country into Pabna with an ill motive to disrupt the vote.

The prime minister ridiculed BNP's repeated allegation of rigging, saying that people at home and abroad still know who had set a classic example of vote stealing and rig-

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CEC's advice uncalled for: Nasim

From Nurul Kabir

PABNA, Dec 8: Telecommunications and Housing Minister Mohammad Nasim has said the Chief Election Commissioner's advice for the ministers regarding election campaign is "un-called for".

CEC Mohammad Abu Hena told newsmen on Sunday, he was unhappy that the ministers were actively campaigning for the Awami League candidate in the parliamentary by-election in Pabna-2 constituency. The CEC also said that he had earlier "advised" Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to prevent her cabinet colleagues from being actively involved in the election campaign.

When his attention was drawn to the CEC's comments, Nasim, who has been coordinating the campaign on behalf of the AL candidate told this correspondent, "The CEC has not done the right thing by ex-

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No Bangladeshi refugees in India, says Advani

NEW DELHI, Nov 8: Indian Home Minister L K Advani today told the Lok Sabha that there were no Bangladeshi refugees in his country, reports BSS.

Replies to a question from Congress member Sudhil Kumar Sinde he said detection and deportation of illegal infiltrators was a continuous process.

Answering a question whether the issue of illegal immigrants was discussed with Bangladesh, the minister said

the matter was taken up with the Bangladesh government on various occasions. This issue was also discussed during the home secretary level talks between the two countries in Dhaka last month.

He said the Bangladesh side assured that measures would be taken to strengthen security on the border to prevent illegal border crossings.

Replies to another question from a Congress member

Golam Osmani on the harassment of people in the name of illegal immigrants, the Home Minister said those cases would be looked into.

Answering another question from Congress member Rajesh Pilot, Advani said that the government first proposed to detect the illegal immigrants and then issue them identity cards, saying that the dimension of the problem was major in eastern and north-eastern states of India particularly Assam.

The home minister, without giving any time frame, said separate identity cards would be issued to citizens and non-citizens.

Advani told the member that it was not correct to say that all illegal immigrants were agents of Pakistan's army intelligence ISI. He, however, said that some were deliberately infiltrated as ISI agents while many others came to India for economic reasons.

Addressing a press conference at the party central office in the city yesterday, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman also cautioned the people against what he said BNP conspiracy to destabilise the situation after the Pabna by-election.

Zillur blamed BNP chief Khaleda Zia for inciting terrorism and encouraging vote-rigging in the by-polls through her statement at a public meeting in Pabna.

Several BNP leaders including Khaleda Zia, Badruddoza Chowdhury and Mayor of Ra-

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BNP conspiring to destabilise situation after bypolls: AL

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League has accused BNP of raising "imaginary and incredible" allegations against its opponent sensing the party's sure defeat in the Pabna-2 by-election.

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Several BNP leaders including Khaleda Zia, Badruddoza Chowdhury and Mayor of Ra-

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Armed ruling party activists threatening voters : BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has urged the Election Commission to ensure security of voters, especially women, so that they can cast their votes without any fear in the by-election in Pabna-2 constituency tomorrow.

Silent terrorism is now going on in the constituency as armed activists of the ruling party have started moving door to door of voters, threatening voters not to cast votes in favour of BNP, he said at a press briefing at BNP central office in the city yesterday.

Bhuiyan alleged that terrorists belonging to Awami League were threatening the voters within the knowledge of police not to go to polling centres if they do not cast vote for "Boat" election symbol of AL.

"People of the constituency are now very much scared whether they will be able to cast their votes or not," he said and

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Both candidates 'optimistic' of winning polls

From Nurul Kabir

PABNA, Dec 8: Both the Awami League and BNP candidates for the parliamentary by-elections in Pabna-2 constituency said they are "highly optimistic" of winning the December 10 polls.

"I am very confident about victory," AL candidate A K Khanjaker told The Daily Star minutes after he addressed a projection meeting at Sujanagar this afternoon.

He lost to a BNP candidate by some 10,000 votes from the Pabna Sadar seat of Jatiya Sangsads in the last general election.

Khanjaker denied opposition allegation that he is enjoying extra privileges in the campaign as a ruling party candidate. "Even the ministers involved in the campaign are not using the state facilities they are usually entitled to at other times."

He refused to comment on the Election Commission's de-

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Khaleda at election rallies in Pabna Guard polling booths, catch vote thieves

From Our Correspondent

SUJANAGAR, Dec 8: BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda today said the government would be compelled to call a mid-term poll to save the people from its atrocities and the nation from ruination, reports BNN.

"I am very confident about victory," AL candidate A K Khanjaker told The Daily Star minutes after he addressed a projection meeting at Sujanagar this afternoon.

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Khanjaker