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11 outlaws killed in Jessore clashes

From Our Correspondent
JESSORE, Dec 12: Eleven persons of two rival outlawed parties were killed in two separate incidents in villages 10 kilometres from here this morning, police and local people said.

A group of armed men numbering about 12 led by Asad of Samajibi Mukti Andolan swooped on Zakir, a regional commander of Sarbahara Party at Ghoshnagar Bazar while he was taking tea at about 6 am. Zakir died on the spot. Immediately after the incident, the followers of Zakir

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BNP, allies call hartal today

By Staff Correspondent
The BNP led 7-party alliance will observe a dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country today to protest "massive vote rigging and terrorism" in Pabna-2 by polls and demand for cancellation of election results and re-polling in the constituency.

Dawn to dusk

In separate statements, BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jatiya Party (Z-M), Jatiya Ganotantrik Party (Jagpa), Democratic League (DL), Progressive Nationalist Party (PNP) and Nationalist Democratic Alliance (NDA) have called upon the countrymen to make today's hartal a complete success.

These parties are enforcing the hartal rejecting the call of the government, business leaders and other bodies to withdraw it considering huge economic loss. The opposition argued that Awami League enforced a total of 173 hartal, when BNP was in power.

Hospitals, medicine shops, hotels, vehicles of newspapers, emergency water, electricity and gas supply will remain out of the purview of hartal.

Anti-liberation forces blamed for B'baria incident

A meeting of country's eminent citizens in the city yesterday blamed anti-liberation forces for violent acts in Brahmanbaria on Monday, reports UNB.

They held "so-called" imams of two or three mosques and teachers and students of several madrasahs responsible for the incident and demanded punitive action against them.

The meeting condemned the role of local DC who made

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Special audit finds BTTB books in big mess

By Gobinda Bar

Crores of takas have gone down the drain as Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) "misused" and "irregularly spent" money, says a special audit for six years from 1990.

The audit into BTTB accounts from 1990 to 1996 has revealed the widespread irregularities and malpractice, described in detail in the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The audit report was submitted to the President and presented before Parliament last month.

According to the report, at least 3,000 officials and employees

have been working in the BTTB without approval from proper authorities, causing a huge loss for the government. BTTB authorities and the telecommunication ministry claimed that 2805 of them have so far been regularised and that the others are under process, the report said.

But the officials failed to show any document regarding the regularisation to the auditors, the report said.

The government loses around Tk two crore every year due to unauthorised and excessive number of vehicles at the BTTB, according to the auditors. At present, 79 vehicles are used

by the officials and employees while the "Enam Committee" had recommended 27 vehicles for the BTTB Head Office.

A total of 45 drivers were appointed on various terms, violating the Committee recommendations, the report said. BTTB clarified that the increased number of vehicles was required with the expansion of its activities and the vehicles were being used to implement some "post-project activities".

"It is illegal to maintain the vehicles out of approved T&D, and pay the drivers from government fund without prior approval from the Establishment Ministry," the audit report said,

refusing to accept the BTTB and the ministry versions.

Pointing to maintenance cost of vehicles at the BTTB Head Office, the report said the huge cost was "not logical at all". In 1995-96, Tk 1.44 crore was spent for maintenance of 79 vehicles, which meant each cost Tk 1.82 lakh a year.

"Most of the vehicles were shown to be repaired three to four times every month through split-up vouchers and the government rules for repairing vehicles were not followed in most of the cases," the audit report said.

Huge money was "irregularly spent for maintenance of BT-

TB's 20 divisions".

An audit of the maintenance vouchers of 1995-96 of Divisional Engineer (Phones) Maghbazar, Dhaka, showed that at least Tk 17 lakh was paid to external labourers for cleaning switch rooms and MDF and maintenance of drop wire and cable only in the month of June 1996, the report said.

"Despite having blower machines, four cleaners and 30 other authorised labourers for cleaning and maintenance, this huge expenditure shows that gross irregularities are taking place in maintenance," the report said.

When asked, the authorities failed to give any satisfactory answer but some of the divisional engineers said they were often forced to approve those irregular vouchers in the face of pressure from Employees' Unions.

The report said at least 10 BTTB officials have been occupying the government flats and service telephones in Dhaka though they have been transferred to other places. They are also using the earmarked government residences as dormitories and telephones at their present working places, the report said.

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Nation remembers martyred intellectuals tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

A grateful nation will observe the Martyred Intellectuals Day tomorrow with a renewed pledge to materialise the ideals for which they had made the supreme sacrifice.

On December 14, 1971, just two days before the nation's final victory in the independence war, local collaborators of the Pakistani occupation forces -- Razakar, Al Badar and Al Shams -- picked up the worthy sons of the soil from their residences and brutally killed them in the darkness of night.

The occupation forces and their local collaborators killed the intellectuals under a blueprint when they become sure of their defeat in the nine-month war against the unarmed innocent people of Bangladesh.

They picked up university teachers, physicians, litterateurs, poets, writers, journalists, engineers and other renowned personalities and killed them two days ahead of the historic December 16 when Bangladesh appeared as an independent and sovereign country.

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Khaleda Zia asks How can British dogs protect Bangladeshis?

By Staff Correspondent

People of this country once drove the British away. But how could the government import dogs from Britain and how could British dogs protect the people of Bangladesh?

This is what former prime minister Khaleda Zia said at a gathering at her official residence in the city yesterday evening.

"The Awami League government has imported dogs to check crimes after losing confidence in the police and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). But how can the dogs work properly unless their handlers are sincere and honest?" The Taka six crore spent on the dog squad could have been better spent on the law enforcing agencies to combat crimes, she suggested.

"The foreign dogs are being fed imported soups and kept in air-conditioned rooms. It's simply a luxury for a country like ours where many people still cannot get food and shelter," she said.

"The government is spending money on dogs while the President is practising austerity by cutting down staff at the Bangabhaban," said Khaleda, also Leader of the Opposition and Chairperson of BNP.

Khaleda calls CEC incompetent, asks him to quit

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia has reiterated her demand for resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena, calling him "incompetent, partisan and a total failure".

"You've proved your partiality time and again. The (just-held) Pabna-2 by-election is a document of your failure and inefficiency. Cancellation of results of 51 centres in Dhaka-10 seat (of the Jatiya Sangsad) proved that 1996 general elections were also not fair," the BNP chairperson said addressing a gathering at her Minto Road official residence in the city yesterday evening.

The gathering was organised to mark the joining to BNP of some 50 lawyers led by Rajshahi Awami League leader advocate Serajul Alam.

She also demanded that a Supreme Court judge be appointed as the new CEC to ensure free and fair elections in future.

Terming the Pabna-2 seat equally important for both the AL and the BNP, Khaleda Zia said, "You (CEC) should quit immediately".

BNP had first demanded Abu Hena's resignation after the party lost the 1996 general elections. It had taken to the streets against the CEC following BNP's loss of two seats, vacated by

Khaleda Zia. But the main opposition party kept mum on the demand after winning by-elections to two other seats that fell vacant following the death of BNP MPs in Manikganj and Barisal. The demand for CEC's resignation has been revived after the party lost the Pabna-2 by-polls.

The opposition leader reiterated her allegations that election in the Pabna-2 constituency was marked by massive rigging and violence, and alleged that ministers campaigned there violating the election code.

"The government was determined to win the by-poll to

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Politics casts cultural movement down

President opens 5-day victory celebrations

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday said that healthy cultural movement was being influenced by party politics as different cultural organisations or forums like student bodies were being used as front organs of various political parties, reports BSS.

"The entity of different cultural forums or organisations is now being sighted as front organs of various political parties and their main objective is to mobilise public opinion in favour of their political parties

and highlight the country's cultural heritage from their own political point of view," he said. "Such trend will not at all help flourish the traditional national culture."

The President was inaugurating the five-day victory festival being organised by the Sammlito Sangskritik Jote at the Central Shaheed Minar here. He declared open the grand victory festival by releasing a bunch of balloons as dance artists were demonstrating the victory through their perfor-

mance to the tune of patriotic songs.

The victory festival, dubbed "Bijoy Utsav 98," will be held till December 16 under the title "Our march forward continues with the spirit of freedom."

On arrival at the venue, the President along with country's leading cultural personalities and educationist paid homage to the heroes of the great Language Movement by placing wreaths at the alter of the Shaheed Minar.

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PM promises upgradation of Barisal pourasava

Any vote they lose is unfair

BARISAL, Dec 12: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has ridiculed opposition leader's remark about the Pabna-2 by-polls saying any election they lost is termed by them unfair and rigged, reports UNB.

"The opposition won the Barisal-5 by-election. So, to them it was fair. When they were defeated in Pabna, they say it was rigged," the Prime Minister said ridiculing the claim of BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia.

Addressing a huge public

meeting at Bangabandhu Udyan this afternoon, Hasina said Begum Zia also brought allegation of rigging in Barisal election before the results were announced.

BNP also announced that they were going to enforce hartal in protest of rigging in Barisal election, but it turned quiet when they found their candidate won, added the Prime Minister.

If the allegation of BNP was right, the results of Barisal election should have cancelled, the

Prime Minister said adding that the Pabna by-election was also free and fair.

"She (Begum Zia) smells a rat everywhere. That is why she is bringing in false allegation against the voting in Pabna by-polls," Hasina added.

Begum Zia made a record of rigging in February 15 election in 1996 and for that misdeed they had to quit power, the Prime Minister said. "People ousted them from power for the massive vote rigging. People do

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Criminal-employee nexus at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

An organised gang of criminals in collusion with a section of dishonest employees of the Biman, Civil Aviation security personnel and loaders have been active at the Zia International Airport in cutting open incoming luggage and robbing the passengers of their valuables.

They commit such crimes by opening suitcases and other luggage — mostly unaccompanied ones — during unloading and before putting those on the conveyor belt. Sources at Zia said this mischief occurs right in presence of the entire array of security people on duty in the airport area.

In recent days, the incidences of luggage cutting and lock breaking have increased substantially. Official sources said more than 1,000 complaints, mostly related to stealing, luggage cutting and lock

breaking have been lodged with the authorities concerned in the last one year till November 30 despite vigilance by half a dozen intelligence agencies.

Airport sources said currently Customs Intelligence, Civil Aviation security, Airport security, Special Branch, NSI and DFI personnel are working

ordination among the law enforcing agencies working at the airport. However, the criminals are working in a well-planned and coordinated way.

Officials at Zia said at present mishandling of baggage is the number one problem at the airport. Handling of luggage and goods of all foreign air-

Tale of travellers' woes

round-the-clock to curb crimes at ZIA, but criminal activities are going on in full swing.

There is no specific figure of stealing and missing incidents. Filing of complaints by officials has become a "very normal" matter. At least 2 or 3 complaints are lodged every day. Most of the officials refused to provide any specific information.

Sources said there is no co-

lines, except the Indian Airlines, are being done by Biman. Taking advantage of this situation, the entire gang consisting of a section of Biman and Civil Aviation personnel have been indulging in rampant crimes.

Affected passengers cannot lodge complaints with Biman directly. They have to first lodge complaints with airlines concerned if they lose their luggage. Then the complaints move

through a lengthy process, to complete which the passengers have to face a lot of difficulties and harassment.

According to officials concerned, around 1,000 complaints were lodged during the last one year (November 1, 1997 to November 30 this year), but none of them knows exactly how many passengers have got back their missing goods or were compensated.

Biman authorities are yet to take any effective steps against such stealing although they know that an organised gang is involved with the handling staff. As a result, stealing of luggage, cutting and breaking of suitcase locks have become an everyday incident.

Sources concerned said a powerful organised gang has long been active at the airport and in recent days this gang has

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Apology for Bapex, again

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar here yesterday said that BAPEX, the lone oil and gas exploration unit in the country, should be awarded blocks 9 and 11, instead of giving all the blocks to foreign companies.

They also said that the government must immediately review the existing PSCs and the gas purchase sales agreements (GPSA) signed with foreign oil companies considering the local sale price of gas.

There should be a government-sponsored study on the gas sector and a policy formulated for its use, they said at a seminar on "Growth of Natural Gas Sector in Bangladesh-Issues and Options", organised by the Chemical Engineering Alumni Association at BUET. Noted experts on oil and gas resources presented papers and took part in the discussions.

BUET Vice Chancellor Prof. Nuruddin Ahmed was present as chief guest and president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries Rashed Maksud

Khan as special guest.

K A Salek, Deputy Managing Director of Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd (GTCL), a subsidiary of Petrobangla, presented the key note paper. Among others, Prof. Emeritus M A Naser, Prof. AKM Abdul Kader, geologist Rafidul Islam Khan, Dr. Dil Afroz and chairman of the association Prof. Waliuzzaman took part in the discussion.

Rafidul Islam Khan focused on the "inability" of the government in handling the PSCs signed with four foreign companies and said, "Considering the reality, we should not sign any further contract in next five years."

He maintained that the existing PSCs would bring into production new gas fields which would be supplying adequate gas to meet the local demand in the next few years. "We must remember that we need to build our infrastructure. We must also have adequate foreign cur-

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এই দুই দিন ২ ফোঁটা করে
পোলিও টিকা খাওয়ান

প্রথম রাউন্ডে ১-৫ বছরের
সকল শিশুকে একটি
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