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PM announces at public meeting Steps taken to turn Ctg city into commercial capital

CHITTAGONG, Feb 27: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today suggested the opposition political parties to take lesson from the just concluded municipal elections and launch movement on socio-economic issues to win the people's heart, reports UNB.

"Also take lesson from the people's participation in the municipal voting," she told her political opponents while addressing a public meeting at the Polo Ground here in the afternoon.

Hasina said the people, already quite conscious of their fundamental rights, took part in the election to exercise the right to franchise.

The people have "foiled all conspiracies against the municipal election," she said, adding that the City Corporation and Upazilla elections would also be held with the "same spontaneous" participation of the people.

The Prime Minister urged the people to remain alert against any plot to snatch their fundamental rights. "We've earned the voting right at the

cost of blood, remain alert so that none can snatch it again."

She said the Awami League called hartals while in opposition to restore the voting rights of the people, but the present opposition has been calling hartals against that right.

Referring to the recent entente of Begum Khaleda Zia and H M Ershad, she said: "We don't understand how the opposition leader can join hands with a person whom she once identified as the killer of her husband."

"Both Begum Zia and Ershad were rejected by the people for stealing votes in the elections of 1996 and 1990. Now the two thieves have joined hands," Hasina said.

About the Zia murder case, she said the government has given permission to proceed with the case that is now pending with the Chittagong court.

"Trial of the killers of Zia will be held on this soil," she asserted.

The Prime Minister said the government has taken all necessary measures to develop the port city as the commercial cap-

ital of the country and will continue its efforts in this regard.

Listing the development activities, she said the government has taken up Tk 1,000 crore development projects for the port city.

She said a five star hotel will be built at the city's Tiger Pass hill at a cost of Tk 580 crore.

Hasina said a project of Tk 550 crore has been taken up to develop the Patenga beach area as a modern entertainment hub with Japanese investment.

An export processing zone (EPZ) is being set up by a South Korean firm on the bank of river Karnaphuli on 2527 acres of land. After the setting up of this EPZ about 1.5 lakh people would get jobs and export earnings would increase substantially, she said.

The Prime Minister introduced the incumbent City Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury as the next mayor candidate of Awami League, saying Mohiuddin, during his tenure, tried his best for the development of the port city.

Indo-Pak 'follow-up' talks next month

NEW DELHI, Feb 27: Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh said Friday he wanted to hold talks soon with his Pakistani counterpart to follow up on last weekend's landmark Indo-Pakistan summit in Lahore, reports AFP.

"Our prime minister has directed me to hold consultations with my Pakistani counterpart (Sartaj Aziz) on all issues of mutual dispute including nuclear issues," Singh told parliament's lower house.

"I hope these meetings happen soon," the foreign minister

BNP, allies to contest SC Bar polls jointly

By Staff Correspondent

Major opposition parties have decided to contest the upcoming Supreme Court Bar Association election jointly.

Abdur Rab Chowdhury and Saidur Rahman have been selected as candidates of the combined opposition panel for the posts of president and general secretary respectively.

It was decided at a joint meeting of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and other like-minded parties on Friday, said a press release.

Presided over by incumbent president Habibul Islam Bhuiyan, the meeting was attended among others, by Khan-daker Mahbuddin Ahmad, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar MP, Barrister Nazmul Huda MP, Mahbubur Rahman MP, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Barrister M Aminul Haq MP, Barrister Ziaur Rahman MP, Joydul Abedin, Abdul Awal, Barrister Shahjahan Omar, Sanaullah Miah and Humayun Kabir of BNP, Kazi Feroz Rashid and Nitya Roychowdhury of JP and Shaikh Ansar Ali, Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan and Nawab Ali of Jamaat.

The election of the Supreme Court Bar Association will be held in mid-March.

Singh, in a separate address to parliament's upper house, said he would meet Aziz in the middle of next month to "discuss all issues of mutual concern."

The Indian foreign minister said the bilateral meeting would take place on the sidelines of a South Asian ministerial conference in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

Singh accompanied Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on his historic visit to Lahore last weekend, at the end of which Vajpayee and Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif signed a declaration aimed at easing tensions between the two newly nuclearised states.

Singh said: "We believe Pakistan will walk the path with us for the sake of our children and future."

Singh, rejecting suggestions of a third-party mediation between India and Pakistan, said the talks would be held at the level of "experts, foreign secretaries and foreign ministers".

"Some foreign powers had tried to fish in troubled water in the sub-continent, but New Delhi has firmly told them that there is no room for outside intervention," Singh told the upper house.

"Whenever any such suggestion for mediation came from the United States or Britain, it was rejected outright."

"India has pointed out to all countries that India and Pakistan were born of the same wound, we talk the same language and we do not need interpreters to convey to each other what we are doing."

Liquor poisoning

From Page 1

Police Super Kazi Anwar Hossain admitted the incident and said he directed the Special Branch to probe the matter.

On December 12, last year, nine people died and at least 25 fell sick in a similar incident at the same thana.

Share experiences

From Page 1

Bangladesh and in other countries facing similar crisis.

United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh David E Lockwood said, "Experts predict tens of millions of people might be affected by the groundwater arsenic contamination within the next decade. This is the first time that all the different bodies and agencies concerned have come together to try to elaborate a national action plan which will enable them all to proceed in harmony."

Lockwood said, "Despite many preliminary programmes being undertaken, it is apparent to all of us that coordination, communication and information sharing amongst the various parties involved in arsenic mitigation activities are the need of the hour, in order to tackle the problem with all national and international resources available."

"Indeed, a well designed national programme will certainly attract new funding from partners who are always ready to support good initiatives commanding high priority."

The two-day conference, being held at the LGED Bhawan in

the city, is organised by Ministry of LGED & Cooperatives in association with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Others who spoke at the inaugural session were Health Minister Salahuddin Yusuf and Health Secretary M M Reza.

Experts from India, Austria, Japan, USA and South America are participating in the conference. Local experts from BUET, DPHE, BGS, DFID, Dhaka University, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, ICDDR,B, NGO Forum, Dhaka Community Hospital, BRAC, LGED, UNICEF, WHO, World Bank and UNDP are also taking part in the two-day brain storming sessions.

The experts during their technical sessions would discuss issues of sources, causes, occurrences and distribution of arsenic contamination in groundwater in Bangladesh, effects of arsenic contamination of drinking water on health and its management.

They will also discuss supply options for safe drinking water and groundwater studies and field measurement of level of arsenic in water.

At the concluding session today, a set of recommendations would be made for action.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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PM's directive Take effective steps to check crimes in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Feb 27: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today asked the administration here to take drastic action against crimes, reports BSS.

"Take special and effective measures to stop crime at all cost," she said.

Addressing a meeting of the Chittagong Divisional Law and Order Coordination Committee at the local circuit house, the prime minister also directed the authorities concerned for quick disposal of cases.

Sheikh Hasina asked them to be cautious so that the people do not become frustrated about rule of law. She directed them to take necessary measures so that the criminals are not freed by taking advantage of procedural loopholes.

The prime minister further asked the law enforcing agencies to identify the sensitive spots and deploy all available manpower and other machinery to check crimes.

Ekushey Book Fair concludes today

By DU Correspondent

The Ekushey Book Fair on the Bangla Academy premises concludes today.

Meanwhile, a discussion meeting on 'Bangla Academy: Expectation and achievements' was held yesterday on the Academy premises.

Chaired by Manjur-e-Mawla, the discussion was participated by Prof Abul Kashem Fazlul Haq, Santosh Gupta, Selina Bahar Jaman and Prof Shahidul Islam.

Forty-two more new books were introduced at the fair yesterday.

A function marking the end of the month-long fair will be held on the Bangla Academy premises at 5 pm today with Poet Shamsur Rahman in the chair.

6 burnt alive

From Page 1

a few hours ago. Last night, thousands of affected people were found sitting under the open sky helpless; many of them had nothing to eat as their children cried for food.

Home Minister Rafiqul Islam and Dhaka mayor Mohammad Hanif went to console the slum dwellers. Hanif immediately ordered 160 kilograms of rice from DCC's relief godown for the hungry.

PM: UZ polls

From Page 1

chief said divisions not only inflict loss on the party but also weaken its foundations.

She urged the leaders in the meeting to nominate a single candidate for each seat in the next elections on consensus; she also warned that "disciplinary actions would be taken against anyone who disobeys party decision."

Sheikh Hasina assured that she would come to Chittagong soon to address three public meetings each in the city, north and south Chittagong.

Tobarak

From Page 1

in smoke. Till policemen came to pick up the remains, the charred bodies were scattered on the ground for two hours, Taslima said.

Wailing Taslima said none came in aid of her aunt as all were running for life in every possible direction.



Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad addressing the meeting of the D-8 Council of Ministers at a city hotel yesterday.

D-8: Tremendous potential

From Page 1

nearly half the population of OIC states. "We are not outside the OIC but have made a more meaningful forum for taking up more positive economic programmes," said Ossama Mohammad Tawfiq, Egypt's Ambassador to Bangladesh.

All the D-8 countries — Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Turkey and Bangladesh — are members of the OIC. These states have a combined population of nearly 800 million and command nearly nine per cent of the global GDP.

Preparations are now almost complete to hold the Summit which would bring Bangladesh into the international arena of multilateral diplomacy.

The heads of state or government of four member-countries and high level representatives from four others are scheduled to attend it.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the Summit at the newly constructed Sheraton Conference Centre at 3 pm tomorrow. The inaugural ceremony will be followed by a state banquet

hosted by President Shahabuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban in the evening.

On March 2, the leaders attending the Summit would go for a three-hour river cruise on the Meghna aboard the refurbished luxury vessel M V Masud. It will be capped by the signing of the Dhaka Declaration enshrining the pledges and commitments of the participating nations.

Three heads of state or government due to attend the Dhaka Summit are Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan and Turkish President Suleyman Demirel. Abdus Samad Azad said "Due to unavoidable domestic preoccupations," Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Iranian President Khatami and Indonesian President B J Habibie sent messages communicating their inability to be present at the Summit.

Nigeria which is having general elections is expected to be represented by a two-member delegation led by a Cabinet Minister, it was learnt yesterday.

Egypt is being represented by

its Foreign Minister Amre M Moussa, Indonesia by its Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare and Poverty Eradication Haryono Suyono and Iran by its First Vice President Dr Hassan Habibi. Its Foreign Minister Dr Kamal Kharrazi is also participating. The Malaysian team headed by the Prime Minister includes Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar Bin Syed Jaafar Albar. Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem are also participating.

Ahead of the Summit, a two-day Commissioners' meeting concluded Friday while the meeting of the Council of Ministers ended yesterday. Today there would be no official programmes.

All the foreign dignitaries are being lodged at Sheraton Hotel which has been closed to all others. A massive security dragnet has been thrown all around the hotel and all places to be visited by the dignitaries.

Meanwhile, the responsibility of identifying and coordinating projects in the 13 areas of cooperation among the member-countries has been divided in the following manner: Bangladesh is looking after Rural Development and Micro-Credit, Egypt—Trade and Industry, Indonesia—Poverty Alleviation and Human Resources Development, Iran-Science and Technology, Malaysia—Finance banking and Privatisation, Nigeria—Energy, Pakistan—Agriculture and Turkey—Industry and Health.

The D-8 was launched on June 15, 1997 in Istanbul through the adoption of a 12-point declaration. Leaders present during the launching were Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, Lt Gen Mohammad Haladu of Nigeria, President Suharto of Indonesia, Prime Minister Kamal Gansouri of Egypt, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

After holding meetings of different working groups, the eight countries have decided to embark on the following programmes: Iran has proposed making an industrial and technological database, Pakistan is implementing a programme for the number of persons detained under these provisions, it added.

On judiciary, it said, "A large case backlog slows the judicial process, and lengthy pre-trial detention is a problem."

"The government sometimes infringes on citizen's privacy rights. Journalists practice some self-censorship. The government limits freedom of assembly. Social discrimination against women, trafficking of women and children for prostitution, and bonded labour remains serious problems. The government continues to limit some worker rights. A 1995 agreement has resulted in elimination of approximately 95 per cent of child labour in the garment sector, the main export industry. Child labour and abuse of child workers are widespread. Vigilante justice resulted in numerous killings", it said.

port said.

The Special Powers Act and Section 54 of CrPC allow for arbitrary arrest, preventive detention and harassment of political opponents and other citizens by detaining them without formal charges, it said.

However, government statistics indicated a sharp decrease in the number of persons detained under these provisions, it added.

On judiciary, it said, "A large case backlog slows the judicial process, and lengthy pre-trial detention is a problem."

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Shimul, brother of Sheuli, who received bullet injuries in his hand was shifted to Dhaka Pangu hospital in critical condition.

Police arrested Mithu, 25, son of Abul Hossain of the same locality today suspecting his involvement in the murder.

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Rashidpur Gasfield 7800ft of Well-5 drilled without major trouble

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 27: Drilling in Well No 5 at Rashidpur Gasfield in Habiganj is going on in full swing.

So far, drilling of over 7800 feet has been completed without any major trouble.

Talking to The Daily Star, an official of Sylhet Gasfields Limited, (SGFL) a unit of Petrobangla said, "We are hopeful about successful completion of the drilling programme since later tests including casing at zones in the well indicated positive signs. Everything is being done carefully and under highest safety arrangements." Drilling of the well is to be done up to a depth of 9500 feet within 90 days from the start of drilling, he said last night.

Drilling in the well began on January 5. The project is being implemented by the SGFL under its Gas Infrastructure Development Programme (GIDP), financed by the World Bank and IDA.

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited of India has been given the task of drilling under a contract signed on May 27 last year.

Drilling of the three wells will cost Tk 124 crore including a foreign exchange component of Tk 83.4 crore.

Under the project, two other wells, Rashidpur-6 and Rashidpur-7, will be drilled in the same structure, the official said. If everything goes well, drilling of the three wells will be completed by November this year, he said.

To process the produced gas, two silica-gel plants of 45 mm-cd capacity each are also being installed at a nearby location at a cost of Tk 117 crore, provided by the World Bank and IDA. Measures have been taken to complete the plants simultaneously with completion of drilling of the wells officials added.

The approximate reserve of gas in the wells would be about 1.32 trillion cft officials of SGFL said.

BNP in deep waters

From Page 1

Against this backdrop, for the last two days, BNP chief Khaleda Zia had continued parleys with her party colleagues. Members of the four-party liaison body were also in touch with each other to decide new anti-government programmes.

The municipal polls over, the opposition parties are now planning to add another point — cancellation of the polls results — to the four-point charter of demands including resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

The opposition leaders' public stance has however been that they have succeeded in the resist-election movement, which should now be backed by "new form of protest" in the days to come.

Reached by phone, BNP vice-chairman Shamsul Islam told The Daily Star that the 66-hour shutdown, enforced during the three-day polls, was "definitely a successful move" against the "one-party farcical" elections.

"The polls were rigged everywhere," he said, "How is it possible that 60 per cent voted in the polls, boycotted by all

major parties?"

Asked on their "performance" during the hartal, Islam said the opposition workers could not take to the streets due to large-scale terrorism unleashed by the ruling Awami League.

He denied that BNP participated in the municipal polls and said his party, expelled all those who defied the decision of boycott. "We're still discussing the post-election issues and will decide our next course of action soon," said Shamsul Islam who was among those BNP leaders, meeting Khaleda Zia last night.

Asked what they discussed at Minto Road with the party chief, he replied, "Problems of the country came up for discussion." Asked if more hartals were likely in March when the SSC examinations are due, he said, "There are these examinations but there are problems in the country too."

JP presidium member Kazi Feroz Rashid also claimed success in the opposition agitation against the municipal polls which he said was contested by AL only. "Whether hartal was successful is not important. The fact remained that we could establish the elections were farcical as none but the ruling party men contested it," he said.

Asked if they could resist the polls, he explained, "Balloting could not be foiled due to strong security measures with the army participating. But the turnout of voters was abnormally low."

The JP leader also saw no prospect of a government-opposition dialogue to resolve the current political standoff as "both the sides have reached a point of no return".

Rashid said the only way to a negotiation lay in scrapping the election results, which he thought did not do by the government. The JP leader also hinted that a new round of anti-government would follow in a week. He declined to give details.

Jamaat leader Qamaruzzaman said, "We have just completed a phase of movement and will sit soon to evaluate the polls-related developments and then take up new programme."

One source said the opposition parties might go for a massive campaign in the form of a long march, blockade and visits to districts. Chiefs of the four parties might participate in those programmes. But chances are slim for more hartals next month, the source said.

According to sources, the opposition liaison committee would soon meet to sort out the next course of action.

Occidental

From Page 1

ment of Explosives to start drilling in the structure, the company official said.

Occidental has already drilled one exploratory well and one appraisal well in the Bibiana structure at Nabiganj in the district.

11 killed

From Page 1

cident took place at about 3:30 am. Hashim, 30, died on the spot.

Eight of the injured were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where Babul, 35, succumbed to his injuries.

Abul Kalam, 40, Nurul Amin, 30, Fayed Uddin, 30, Borhan Uddin, 50, Izzat Ali, 40, Siddique, 50, and Khalilur Rahman, 30, were admitted to MMCH.

A report from Jhenidah says, one person was killed when a truck skidded off the Jhenidah-Chaudanga road and fell into a ditch this morning.

Police said Torab Ali, 25, died on the spot. Five others injured in the accident near Ansar camp were admitted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital.

Post-polls violence in Daudkandi: One killed, 10 hurt

COMILLA, Feb 27: A housewife was killed and 10 others were injured in a post-polls violence at village Nurpur in Daudkandi pourasava today, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Sahera Khatun, 36, wife of one Giasuddin of the village.

The clash erupted following an altercation between the supporters of Motalib Hossain Meer, an elected commissioner, and a defeated candidate Naimul Haque at about 8 am.

The supporters of