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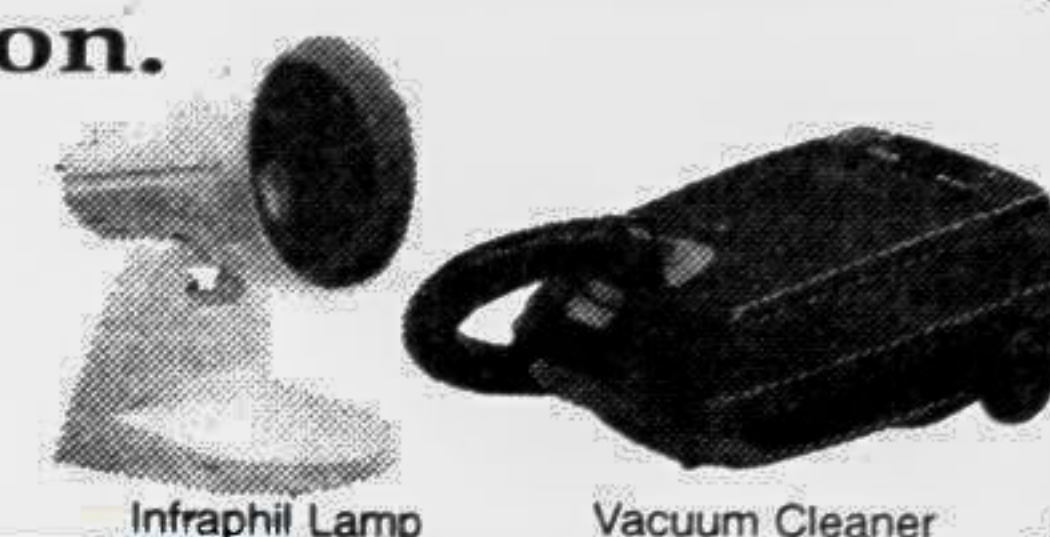
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IEB election today

By Staff Correspondent

The biennial election of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) for the year 2000-2001 will be held today.

The election will be held simultaneously at IEB's 14 centres in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna, 21 sub-centres and in three overseas centres.

The election will be held in Dhaka to elect eight office-bearers including president, three vice-presidents, honorary general secretary, three honorary assistant general secretaries.

Noted newscaster and incumbent vice-president (Finance and Administration) Engr Serajul Majid Mamoon, Engr Md Abul Hayat, Dr Engr Muhammad Shahjahan and Engr Aminul Haque are contesting for the post of president. Engr Md Ibrahim Miah, Khan Monjur Morshed, Md Nuruzzaman, A K M Khademul Haque, Md Inamul Haque and Abdur Razzak are contesting for the post of honorary secretary general.

Some 7,800 voters will cast their votes to elect the IEB executives. The result of the election will be known tomorrow.

One jumps from sect bldg, dies

By Staff Correspondent

An employee of a textile mills who came to meet his brother at Secretariat allegedly committed suicide after jumping from the 17th floor yesterday, police said.

The victim was identified as Mehdi Hasan Bablu, 30, an employee of Madhabdi Textile Mills in Narsingdi. Bablu hails from Sribaddi in Sherpur.

Mehdi came to visit his brother constable Abdul Jalil. Jalil is working under Ministry of Education at the Secretariat.

The incident took place at about 3:45 pm when the victim allegedly jumped from the seventeenth floor of building No 6, police said.

Police quoting the victim's diary said Bablu committed suicide as he was frustrated with his family.

Police recovered the body from the spot and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

9240 'chocolate bombs' seized at Magura

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Dec 22: Police recovered 9,240 'chocolate bombs' from a Dhaka-bound passenger bus at Magura bus stand this evening.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the bus coming from Benapole and recovered the bombs. None was, however, arrested.

Announcement

The Star Weekend Magazine will be bringing out a 48-page year-end issue on Friday, December 31, 1999.

Due to the added pressures at bringing out such an issue, we regret to inform our valued readers that we will not be printing our regular issue on Friday, December 24.

Dhaka may seek Delhi's help to develop telecom network

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Bangladesh will seek Indian investment to help develop telecommunication network, especially in villages, and will respond positively to New Delhi's keen interest in setting up an optical fibre telecom link between the Indian capital and Dhaka when delegation-level talks between the two countries are held here tomorrow.

Bangladesh Home and Telecommunications Minister Mohammed Nasim will lead his

country's delegation at the talks with the Indian side to be headed by Indian Telecommunications Minister Ram Vilas Paswan.

Nasim, now here on a week-long visit, will also hold extensive talks with Indian Home Minister L K Advani tomorrow morning.

The Nasim-Advani meeting was earlier scheduled for today but was re-scheduled for tomorrow due to urgent preoccupations of the Indian Home Minister in parliament whose winter session closes tomorrow.

Official sources here say Bangladesh is likely to call for Indian investment in its telecom sector and would propose a joint venture to manufacture modern telephone sets in keeping with the switch from analogue to digital network in Bangladesh.

The earlier venture between Bangladesh's Telephone Shipa Sangstha (TSS) and the Siemens company had produced telephone sets only for analogue system.

Hence, the need felt for modern sets for which Dhaka says India has the requisite expertise.

The sources said Bangladesh will favourably react to India's interest in upgrading the telecom link between New Delhi and Dhaka through optical fibre.

"Although India and Bangladesh are two immediate neighbours, the telecom link between the two countries are the most difficult," said Nasim.

Border issues

Cross-border terrorism is likely to figure in Nasim's discussions with Advani who is expected to urge Bangladesh not to provide shelter to Indian insurgents, the sources said.

Dhaka would however deny the existence of insurgents in Bangladesh. There is no question of Bangladesh either giving shelter or training to any Indian insurgents, the sources added.

The Nasim-Advani talks are also expected to take up the issue of unsavoury incidents at the border between the two countries, including skirmishes between BDR and BSF, and Bangladesh side is likely to press for more frequent meetings between civilian officials of the two sides at the level of district administrators and interactions between field-level officials of BDR and BSF.

Bangladesh is also likely to raise the issue of India's alleged "push-in" by stating that the problem be solved as through talks as per the understanding already there between the two

See page 11 col 7

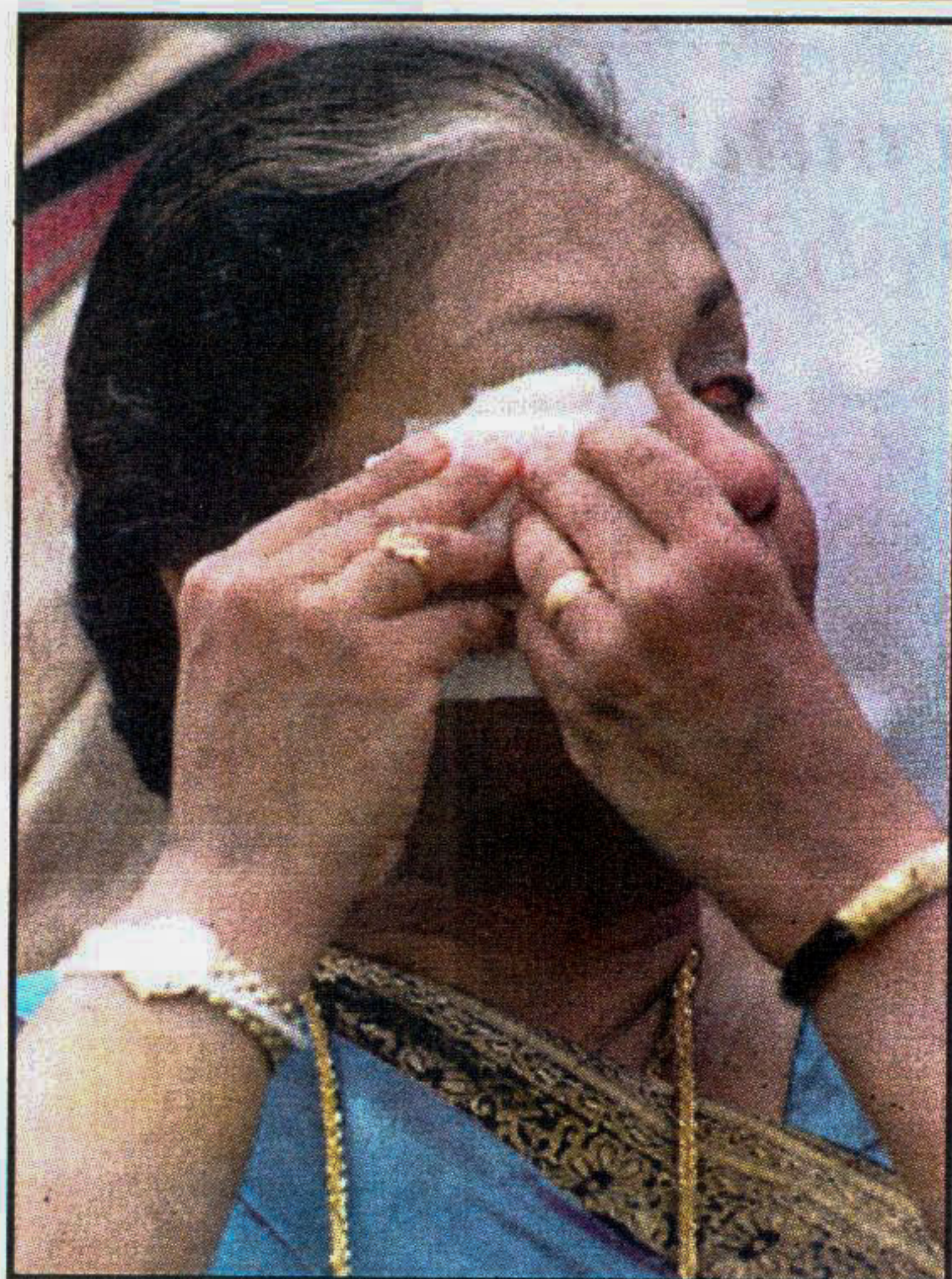
Two leaders of Markajul Islam granted bail

By Court Correspondent

A metropolitan court yesterday granted bail to two leaders of Al-Markajul Islam, an NGO, who were arrested on charge of planting anti-tank mine at Janakantha Bhaban on October 8 this year.

Nine people were arrested in connection with the incident. Of them, Mufti Shahidul Islam, and Sayed Al-Mesbah, Chairman and director of the organisation, were granted bail yesterday. The rest were detained at the Dhaka Central Jail.

Shahidul and Mesbah have also been accused in another case filed in connection with planting of bombs at a mosque at Mirpur in the city the same day.



Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga nurses her wounded eye, caused by a blast on Saturday, as she poses outside her residence for a group photo with her cabinet after she was sworn into office for a second term yesterday. — AFP photo

Chandrika takes oath

From page 1

In 1994, when she won Sri Lankans over with a vow to end the war against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) separatist rebels, cruising to victory with a record 62 per cent of the vote.

Chandrika Kumaratunga took her oaths before the Chief Justice Sarath Silva at a simple ceremony at her official residence, Temple Trees, after being declared winner by the commissioner of elections. She later swore in her cabinet without any changes.

This victory is without doubt a very special and portentous gift of the gods. For I believe that there now stands before you... the one leader who is the single most qualified to lead us to the peace we long for," Chandrika said in a speech.

She said her wounds and "new lease of life" made her more determined to end the country's ethnic war and she would not rest until she rid the land "of hatred and its curse and destruction".

"Let all those who aid and abet terror be warned... let those who secretly or openly condone the path of violence pursued by the cowards of the LTTE be warned: the days of terror in this land are numbered, and that number is small."

Chandrika polled 4,312 million votes against Wickremesinghe's 3.6 million. Some 8.6 million of around 11.8 million eligible voters cast ballots in an election that until the weekend bomb attack was seen as a close race between Chandrika and Wickremesinghe.

The president, who broke down twice during her speech, said she commiserated with Wickremesinghe and asked him to join the government in an effort to find peace.

Chandrika said the significant support that Wickremesinghe commands means that the people wanted him to play a major role.

There was no immediate comment from Wickremesinghe on her offer, but he told Reuters earlier that the polls were a "threat to democracy" because of malpractices.

Sylhet incident

From page 1

When the processionists reached Court Point, some of them started hurling bricks and crackers at the police standing nearby, police resorted to lathicharge that led to the violent clash.

Police official said, several hundred people under the banner of All-Party Action Committee swooped on the police while they prevented them from marching towards the DC's office. Police had to resort to lathicharge and firing shots to disperse the agitators, he added.

Meanwhile, the All-Party Action Committee (Opposition) has shifted its tomorrow's haral at Sylhet town to December 25.

Nasim calls on Vajpayee

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Home and Telecommunications Minister Mohammed Nasim called on Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at his South Block office here this evening, reports BSS.

During the meeting, Nasim, who is on a visit here, discussed with the Indian Prime Minister the entire gamut of bilateral relations.

The discussion was held in an atmosphere of utmost cordiality and friendship, a meeting source said.

Gopalganj, Florence now 'twin cities'

FLORENCE, Italy, Dec 22: The authorities of Florence city and Bangladeshi diplomats in Rome have decided to twin up the Bangladesh district town Gopalganj with Florence, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at a meeting at the Mayor's office here on December 20.

Mayor of Florence Leonardo Domenici, Councilors Daniela Lastri and Eugenio Giani led the Florence side while Bangladesh Ambassador in Rome Muhammad Zamir, Political Counselor Imtiaz Ahmed and Honorary Consul General of Bangladesh in Florence Dr Gennaro Granata attended the meeting.

Under the umbrella of "twin city status", different fields of cooperation were identified at the meeting. The areas of cooperation include exchange of expertise for restoration of archaeological monuments and sites, hosting of artistic exhibitions, exchange of students and youths belonging to the two places to enable the fostering of ideas related to culture and tradition.

The meeting also decided that exchange of musical, folk, artistic events and fashion designers would take place to portray the rich cultural heritage of Tuscany region and that of south-western Bangladesh.

Full moon

From page 1

which also appears in a copy of the article on the almanac's Web site, "caught on like the Melissa virus," said Geoff Chester, a spokesman for the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C.

Susan Peery, managing editor of the Dublin, N.H.-based almanac, said Monday that some readers may have taken the full-moon article the wrong way.

"(The article) points out that it's the first time in 133 years that all these factors are in place," but it's not necessarily saying it's the brightest moon in 133 years," Peery said. Yet she added, "even a matter of a few percentage points closer could make a big difference."

Maybe. At most, experts said, the moon may be 10 to 30 per cent brighter this week than when its light is weakest. But the human visual system has trouble telling even when one light source is several times brighter than another, Chester said.

And, saner elements warned, don't count on driving your car by the moon's light.

Yet, as just about anyone with heartstrings to play will tell you, the moon does curious things to the soul of human beings.

For Bengalis, the moon brings up all sorts of romantic notions. As legendary Manna Dey sang: "Chand dekhte gey am tomal dekhe felerchi... (I saw your face trying to see the moon, and I am in a fix to ascertain which one is brighter).

Clear skies encouraged thousands in Dhaka to gather at the BUET playground for a look through one of the Bangladesh Astronomical Association's telescopes, but at least one person didn't sound too impressed.

"Why do you need a telescope to see it? It's all clear and bright."



Testing time: Parents wait anxiously as their children go through school admission tests at Viqarunnisa Noon School yesterday. — Star photo

Haripur power project Bidding closed: Only 3 Japanese cos participate

Star Report

After re-scheduling the bid closing time twice, the Power Development Board (PDB) Tuesday closed bidding for the Japanese funded Haripur 109 MW power project, participated by only three Japanese companies.

Sources said the bidding was supposed to be closed on November 17. But till that time, only one Japanese company, Mitsubishi, had participated in the bidding.

To make it competitive, the Japanese donor — JBIC — asked the PDB to extend the bid closing time till December 14. As the new deadline also failed to attract more bidders, the JBIC again asked PDB to extend the time till December 21. Two more bidders — Mitsui and Marubeni of Japan — dropped their proposals then.

Contrary to this, response from power companies was much better in case of other PDB projects in the recent past, the sources said. "Last year, when PDB floated a tender for Shazibazar 60 MW power project, nine bidders from several countries submitted bids," one source said.

But in case of the Haripur project, no bidder other than Mitsubishi participated in the bidding, probably suspecting 'foul play', the source claimed.

Normally, projects financed by Japan go to Japanese companies. "In this case, though the JBIC loans are untied and all companies are eligible for bidding, only three Japanese companies submitted bids," he noted.

He claimed that the tendering was an eye wash. The bid winner was determined long before floating of the tender. "It was pre-determined for Mitsubishi and other companies were later persuaded to submit bids to make it look competitive," he said. "Such manipulated bidding means higher project costs."

However, another PDB official denied allegations of foul play. He said there was a 'down-

See page 11 col 2

Dr Kamal to chair Kader Siddique's convention

By Staff Correspondent

Kader Siddique floats a new political party as he finds the existing ones failing to live up to the people's expectations, said Fazlur Rahman, convenor of the Convention Preparatory Committee during a press conference yesterday.

Dr Kamal Hossain will be the chief guest at the convention due on December 24 at the Engineers' Institution in the city. Rahman said and added that the name of the party will be announced during the first session of the convention. "It (the name of the party) will be chosen as per suggestions of the delegates and participants at the convention."

"The party (that will be) floated only few days ahead of the new century will follow the ideals of secularism, progressive culture and democratic polity," Rahman said.

The convention beginning at 10 am will end at 4 pm, he said. The ad-hoc committee that will be announced before the end of the daylong programme will be given six months to announce the full committee.

"We are expecting over 3000 delegates in the convention," Rahman said, adding other than national leaders, professionals of different disciplines and elite from the capital; many are expected to attend the convention from remote areas of the country.

"All the MPs and political leaders excepting those identified as anti-Liberation have been invited to attend the convention," Rahman said.

BCL-JCD clash in Feni, 10 hurt

From Our Correspondent

FENI, Dec 22: At least ten people were injured and local Russel Smriti Sangsad was torched during a fresh clash between BCL and JCD activists at Chhagalnaiya in Feni district last night, police said.

The clash was a sequel to Saturday's clash at village Moluha in Chhagalnaiya, thana, police and witnesses said.

The feuding groups exploded crackers, fired shots and used sharp weapons during the clash. The injured were admitted to Chhagalnaiya health complex.

The BCL activists locked some 35 BNP activists in shops at Jammadar Bazar when miscreants torched the Russel Smriti Sangsad and damaged portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

UNB adds: Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia has condemned terrorist acts being unleashed by 'ruling party goons' in Feni.

In a statement yesterday she said Feni now turned into safe haven for terrorists.

Begum Zia said several people were killed recently in Feni in violence triggered by ruling party-patronized terrorist god-fathers. The situation worsened as police failed to arrest the culprits.

"Instead of taking murder cases, local police are filing false cases against the district leaders of BNP and harassing them," she said.

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Officers and employees chant slogans in the corridor of Board of Investment offices demanding removal of executive chairman M Mokammel Haq. — Star photo

Bomb blasts at AL rally

From page 1

ister Engr Mosharrat Hossain was also disrupted by explosion of crackers.

But no injury or damage was reported in the explosion.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury while addressing the meeting said those who feared defeat in polls were trying to foil the public rally through exploding bombs and declared if the opposition parties wanted to participate in the mayoral polls he would resign from the post and contest for it.

He said Mir Md Nasir Uddin of BNP and Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury of JP were not elected mayor, on the contrary, he was elected one. "They are afraid of polls, but I will wel-

come polls," he added.

"We had fought against the enemies in '71 and know how to resist bombing," he said. Explosions would not be able to foil our rally and those who indulged in it would be given punishment being dragged out of their houses. Nobody would be allowed to destroy Chittagong enforcing hartals, he said.

Presided over by senior vice president of city AL Abul Kalam Sawdagar, the rally was also addressed by Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan, local leaders Khorsheed Alam Sujan, Adv Nazrul Islam, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and former MP Yusuf Mia.

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