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132 examinees start 'fast unto death'

By Staff Correspondent

The 132 Motijheel Model High School and College students barred from the upcoming HSC exam began a fast unto death yesterday amidst speculation the Dhaka Education Board would reverse its decision.

The college authorities claimed the prime minister, who is now in the United States, called the Ministry of Education and told it to resolve the issue immediately. The ministry denied that it received any such call.

Dhaka Education Board officials said the authorities may consider the students' request. Board officials told the Daily Star.

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PM returns today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrives in Dhaka this morning, concluding her fortnight long visit to the United States, reports BSS.

During her stay in the United States the prime minister received the prestigious Pearl S Buck award and delivered speeches at educational institutions.

Announcement

Tomorrow's issue of The Daily Star on Friday will contain a two-page special on the recently-held Daily Star-Bangladesh Scouts workshop on the Building Construction Act, 1952 and the Building Construction Rules, 1996.

— Editor

Our new numbers

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Prayer Timings

April 20

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:45	5:15
Johr	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:25	6:30
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation



The government demolished the slum behind Sonargaon Hotel, but residents, with nowhere else to go, have already started rebuilding it.

— Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

Joint statement by SC Bar leaders

Political controversy damaging atmosphere for fair trial

By Staff Correspondent

The Supreme Court Bar Association has expressed 'grave concern' over the political controversy arising out of a Supreme Court judge getting embarrassed to hear the Bangladesh murder case.

The association also found public criticism as well as the language used in the criticism 'damaging' to the congenial atmosphere needed to ensure justice.

"The increasing political heat generated over a judge getting embarrassed to hear an under trial case has been damaging the congenial atmosphere for fair trial", said a joint statement issued by President

of the Association Barrister Moinul Hossain and Secretary Advocate Shahidul Karim Siddique yesterday.

Expressing 'grave concern' over the situation, they 'urged' all concerned not to create any controversy over the matter involving the judges and 'abstain from issuing statements and counter statements on the issue'.

"The way the Supreme Court Judges have been criticised publicly at Paltan Maidan and the language used by the critics against the judges are detrimental to the congenial atmosphere needed for ensuring justice," they said. "This is not desirable."

The statement went on, "The court has to look into the issue of speedy trial of a case of public importance like Bangladesh murder case." But "co-operation of all quarters is required to expedite the process of the trial", it added.

The SC Bar leaders felt that "the government's concern over the issue could have been communicated to the Chief Justice through the Attorney General".

A judge could feel embarrassed, apprehending that s/he might not be able to conduct the trial neutrally, they pointed out. "It means that s/he has

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Opposition blasts ministers for their remarks on judges

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition parties have blasted the ministers for their remarks about the judges and for pressuring them for immediate hanging of the killers of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

They said their comments and the procession by the ruling Awami League activists carrying stick demanding immediate hanging are acts of interference in the judiciary.

Top leaders of the parties said the judges have the right to be embarrassed and it is accepted all over the world. But Awami League wants to snatch that right of the judges. They said the statement and activities of the ruling party is a serious threat to the judiciary and

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131 die in Filipino plane crash

DAVAO, Philippines, Apr 19: A Philippine airliner packed with Easter holidaymakers crashed and burst into flames on a resort island near southern Davao city today, killing 131 people aboard in the country's worst air disaster, reports Reuters.

Air Philippines flight GAP 541 was preparing to land at Davao airport at the end of an early morning flight from Manila when it slammed into a coconut plantation in the hills of nearby Samal island, air transport officials said.

The cause of the crash was not known but one village official said he saw smoke pluming out of the plane while it was still in the air and then he heard a blast before it smashed into a hill.

"It was still in mid-air when I saw it and heard an explosion," village headman Sammy Badilles told reporters.

Badilles said after the plane

disappeared from sight, he heard "an even bigger explosion", indicating it had crashed. He said he was one of the first to reach the scene.

The Boeing 737-200 was packed to capacity with people leaving Manila for the Easter break, which begins on Thursday.

Airline officials said there were 124 passengers, including four infants, and seven crew on board.

The Australian Embassy said the victims included a 35-year-old Australian man, his two-year-old daughter and Filipino wife, all residents of Manila.

It was not immediately known if there were other foreigners aboard the plane but several people listed on the manifest had apparently foreign names.

"It is confirmed that there are no survivors, unfortunately,"

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Govt hindering process of justice: Khaleda

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Apr 19: BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia today blasted the government for 'threatening the judges of the higher courts and hindering the process of justice'.

Khaleda also urged the people to join the Opposition's one-point movement against the 'terrorist government' for 'true' democracy, better living, independence of judiciary and for establishing rule of law in the country.

Addressing a public meeting at Magura-Adarsha Degree College ground this afternoon Khaleda Zia said "We want to establish a people's government by removing this autocratic government which totally failed to run the country."

The BNP chief alleged that the ruling party is least bothered about the welfare of the people and could not fulfill any of its pre-election pledges.

"Instead, one after another, repressive laws like Public Safety Act, have been enacted. They are patronising self-declared terrorists godfather like Zainal Hazari but arresting innocent people and opposition leaders and activists under the PSA."

Khaleda claimed that US President Clinton's recent visit to Bangladesh was a 'painful' incident for the nation as he avoided to go to Savar National Mausoleum for security reasons.

About the current movement, Khaleda claimed that all opposition parties are now united to replace the ruling AL by a nationalist one as the government has failed in every sector.

"There is no alternative to ouster of this government," she said.

UNB adds: Khaleda Zia ac-

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Rajshahi-5 bypolls Saturday

52 out of 72 polling centres 'very risky'

From Abdul Wadud

RAJSHAHI, Apr 19: All the 72 polling centres for parliamentary by-election in Rajshahi-5 Constituency are 'risky', sources in the office of the Returning Officer said.

Out of the 72 centres, 52 have been identified as 'very risky', the sources added.

The by-election in the constituency comprising Charghat and Bagha thanas is scheduled for April 22.

The authorities have taken necessary measures to hold the bypolls free and fair, said EC officials.

A total of 1358 personnel from police, Bangladesh Rifles and Ansar will be deployed in the election centres to maintain law and order.

One magistrate will be on duty at each centre. Two special teams of army will be stationed at the two thana headquarters to face any emergency situation.

Besides, ten mobile teams, each under one magistrate, will supervise the election centres. Additional District Magistrate of Rajshahi will coordinate all the activities relation to law and order.

The authorities have already imposed a ban on movement with licensed arms in the constituency from midnight of April 20 till midnight of April 23.

Independent candidate and general secretary of Charghat thana unit of Awami League Raihanul Haque Raihan apprehended massive vote rigging in 25 polling centres by the ruling party candidate.

He submitted a list of the centres the Returning Officer that included Tatarpur, Salna, Bilmaria, Fatepur, Aram, Tetulia, Maria, Bausa, Chakrampur.

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Nasim threatens to try Zia, Ershad and Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim threatened yesterday to try Ziaur Rahman, H. M. Ershad and Khaleda Zia 'for their involvement in the conspiracy to kill Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman'.

The minister, before inaugurating a torch procession in the city, also said that BNP chief Khaleda Zia's current agitation is a conspiracy to protect the killers of Bangabandhu.

"None can stop the trial, no matter how big the conspiracy is," he told a gathering at Awami League central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city.


The Awami Sechchasebok League organised the torch procession demanding speedy trial in the Bangabandhu murder case.

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Rejoinder

The Dhaka University authorities in a clarification have protested a report published in The Daily Star under the headline "DU Shoot-out: It all happened over toll collection".


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Ctg Export Processing Zone All 428 plots occupied, needs expansion

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Apr 19: Investments, mostly foreign, surged in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone, the country's first and the biggest export processing zone based in the port city, officials said.

"It has now reached the saturation level as all the 428 plots developed in 330 acres of land overlooking the sea have been occupied," said an official of CEPZ.

"It took 17 years to sell all the plots in the CEPZ that went into operation in 1983," he said. The officials said the CEPZ was developed in three phases at a cost of over 100 crores taka to woo foreign investment to improve the country's sluggish economy.

The CEPZ has contributed Tk 856 crores to national economy in the last fiscal and Tk 736 crores the year before, one official informed. It now houses 100 operational industries with 62 of them fully owned by foreign investors, 18 in joint ven-

ture and 20 by local entrepreneurs, the officials said. They informed that 50 other industries are expected to go into operation in next three to six months, drawing an investment of 150 million US dollars.

"Still we are receiving queries from foreign investors interested to come here. So we need to have another EPZ to welcome them," an official said.

Apart from the Bangladeshi ones, investors from South Korea, Hong Kong, U.S.A., U.K., Malaysia, Denmark, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Germany, China and U.A.E. are doing business in the CEPZ.

Trade union activities are banned in this zone, officials said.

South Korea topped the list with 26 industries while Japan follows it with 16, officials said.

Cheap labour and its strategic location near the country's

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Opening Today

Center will be inaugurated by Lt. Gen. Noor Uddin Khan psc (Retd)
Hon'ble Minister for Science & Technology at 9:00 am

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