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Polls in time, PM tells cabinet

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated that the next general election would be held in time and asked her party colleagues to prepare for that.

The PM's position was clarified at a meeting she held last night with her party colleagues in the Council of Ministers and her advisers, according to meeting sources.

The nearly three hours meeting was held at her official Gana Bhavan residence, four days before she leaves for USA.

Hasina asked the ministers to make sure that all attend the forthcoming session of the Jatiya Sangsad, beginning on September 6.

The meeting also discussed measures to strengthen the ruling party's position against the opposition front and stressed the need for resolving intra-party bickering immediately.

BDR-BSF mass troops along northern border

LALMONIRHAT, Aug 29: People from frontier villages were evacuated today as BSF and BDR massed troops and heavy armaments along the northern border, reports UNB.

Officials and locals said Fakirbari Amtoli and Monglirbari were deserted as BDR and BSF took respective positions in bunkers along the Burmari and Thangliara frontier areas.

Bangladesh Rifles and Indian Border Security Force met in a flag meeting at demarcation pillar no 842 at Burmari from 2:30 pm "amid high security."

BDR 27 Rifles Battalion Commander Lt Colonel Humayun Kabir was leading a 3-

Noisy protest at WAPDA Bhavan

By Special Correspondent

A section of employees of Water Development Board (WDB) staged a noisy demonstration at the WAPDA Bhavan yesterday demanding removal of its Director General.

WDB sources said the employees led by some union leaders kicked on the closed door of DG Mohammad Golam Rabbani and shouted slogans demanding his removal.

Failing to enter the DG's room, they hurled chairs and tables on the corridor, creating panic.

The GD later left the office under security escort, sources said.

Such incidents reportedly took place at the WAPDA building earlier also. It was alleged that an engineer was physically assaulted and another was threatened by his driver.

Leaders of the Water and Power Engineers Association in a statement yesterday condemned the incident.

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August Sun Rises Sun Sets

Aug 30 5:40 am 6:18 pm

Aug 31 5:40 am 6:18 pm

Prayer Timings

August 30

Fajr 4:30 5:05

Zohr 12:45 1:15

Asr 4:45 5:00

Maghrib 6:30 6:35

Esha 8:00 8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Foreign aid shrinks by over 44pc

By Inam Ahmed

True to the apprehension of a global aid fatigue, Bangladesh's share of development assistance has shrunk by more than 44 per cent in a year since fiscal 1998-99, according to the Economic Relations Division (ERD).

This drastic fall in foreign assistance is also marked by an over 37 per cent drop in project aid.

"This situation is quite significant for many reasons. Without going into the debate of whether it is good or bad to have reduced foreign aid, it is significant to note that Bangladesh's share of soft loan reduced very significantly during the time," said an ERD high official.

According to the latest statistics prepared by the ERD,

the total foreign aid commitment was US\$1480.8 million during fiscal 1999-2000. This included 1254.3 million dollars in project aid, 175.1 million dollars in commodity aid and 51.3 million dollars in food aid.

However, only a year ago, the aid commitment was as high as 2648.5 million dollars with 2017.3 million dollars in project aid, 362.5 million dollars in commodity aid and 268.8 million dollars in food aid.

These figures show that total aid commitment dropped by 44.09 per cent while project aid, the largest chunk of the aid basket, dropped by 37.82 per cent.

According to the ERD sources, the main reason for the fall in aid is the trimming of

IDA credit. The soft loan window of the World Bank reduced its lending from 1038 million dollars in 1998-99 to only 178 million dollars in 1999-2000.

While the aid commitment dropped, the country's aid pipeline maintained its bulge. According to latest figures, the opening pipeline for this fiscal as of July 1, 2000 was 5957 million dollars against 5980 million dollars on July 1, 1999.

According to the sources, this year's aid commitment has been envisaged at 2030 million dollars, of which 160 million dollars have been available until August 23, 2000.

Meanwhile, the ERD has made the final estimate of disbursement until May of last fiscal.

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Opposition calls dawn-to-dusk hartal today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will observe a dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country today protesting price-hike of gas and petroleum products.

This is the second such programme of the alliance in a span of seven days.

Opposition's last hartal was observed on August 23 protesting murder of city BNP leader Advocate Habibur Rahman Mandal. Mandal was gunned down by unidentified assailants in the city on August 20.

Utility services, newspapers, medicine shops, restaurants, hospitals and law enforcing agencies will remain out of the purview of hartal, said a BNP press release.

Today's hartal has a different significance with the JP activists becoming more active on the streets since their leader,

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PM seeks help to root out political killings, terrorism

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought firm commitment from political parties and the press to stop political killings and terrorism for the sake of democracy and economic advancement of the country, reports UNB.

"I don't want to see any bloodshed, as I am the victim of this politics of killing. All parties should have consensus on this point and the press can play a positive role..." she said while exchanging views with the editors of national dailies and news agencies at Ganabhaban.

During the two and a half-hour discussion, the editors raised pressing national issues like killings and terrorism, price-hike of oil and gas, crisis of electricity, devaluation of taka, traffic jam, opposition politics and election as well as

regional and international issues. In her replies, the Prime Minister narrated how her government had been striving to resolve those problems during the last four years and also her future plans. She also spoke of "obstruction and non-cooperation" by her political opponents in resolving the national issues.

Hasina said she believes in democracy and constitutional rule, as development of a country is not possible unless democracy is strengthened.

The Prime Minister said she did not spare any offenders even if they belonged to her party and will not show any complacency in future. All parties should have this mentality of not giving shelter to killers and criminals.

But in reality, she said, it

was seen that the opposition tried to give political colour to terrorists whenever they were arrested on specific charges of killing or terrorism.

In reply to a question, she said the next national election would be held on time and an announcement to this effect would be made at an appropriate time.

Asked her opinion about the opposition's decision for electoral alliance and united government, Hasina said there is nothing new in it since all these parties have got identical aims and ideology. Sometime they take different positions, sometime they get united for strategic reasons.

To a query whether Awami League would form any such alliance, she brushed aside such possibility, saying she had

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Mohiuddin, 11, of Kishoreganj used to work as an assistant to tempo driver. A road accident four months ago required his right foot to be amputated. Maimed, the poor boy found no one by his side. Desperate for a living, he came to Dhaka and started begging on the Farmgate footover. Mohiuddin needs immediate medical attention. - Star photo by AKM Mohsin

Ershad desperately looking for the vacation judge

By Staff Correspondent



H M Ershad

The lawyers of Jatiya Party Chairperson H M Ershad are desperately looking for the vacation judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court with a petition seeking stay of operation of the High Court order and extension of time for the deposed president's surrender.

A group of lawyers went to village home of vacation judge AM Mahmudur Rahman in Narsingdi yesterday morning to have the stay order, sources said.

Ershad's lawyer Advocate Khandoker Mahbub Hossain told The Daily Star last night that "Moulana Obaidullah Sheikh Sirajul Islam, Amanur Panna and Human Kabir Manju, all lawyers of Ershad, visited the village home of the judge. "But they did not find the judge at his village home."

The lawyers will again visit Narsingdi district tonight as

his wife told them that the judge would be available at the house after 9 p.m., Khandaker Mahbub added.

Earlier on Monday, Advocate Mahbub along with the other lawyers went to the Supreme Court looking for the judge. They also went to the judge's Dhanmondi residence but could not meet him.

The former president is seeking stay of a High Court order, asking him to surrender immediately to the trial court, which had sentenced him to seven years in prison in the Janata Tower Case.

The High Court on August 24 upheld the sentence but reduced his jail term to five years and fined him Tk 5 crore.

Meanwhile, police have been stationed at the Jatiya Party central office at Kalabagan in the city for the last three days. Leaders and activists of Jatiya

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One killed, 25 hurt as BCL attacks Fatikchhari thana

CHITTAGONG, Aug 29: One person was killed and 25 others were injured, 12 by bullets, as Chhatra League activists stormed Fatikchhari thana and fought police to free their three arrested colleagues today, reports UNB.

Witnesses and police said the local activists of the ruling party's student front laid siege to the police station after Shawkat, Soleman and Osman were arrested at noon.

They exchanged fire with police and exploded bombs. The BCL activists managed to take away one of the three during the melee.

Police said construction worker Rafiq, 22, son of Abu Taher of South Rangamati, was killed in crossfire during the attack.

The unruly protestors also put up barricades on the road in front of the thana disrupting traffic during the three-hour-long clash.

Twelve of the injured were hit by bullets while the rest with bomb splinters. They were hospitalised.

Triple murder at Khilgaon in city

By Staff Correspondent

Partially decomposed bodies of three unidentified young men with marks of bullet injury were recovered from a house at Khilgaon in the city in the early hours yesterday.

Police said they also recovered eight bullets and two bottles of phenyl from the four-storey building near Khilgaon police outpost.

Those killed used to frequent the flat and were not residents, neighbours said. Those rented it about a month ago are absconding, police said.

The two-room flat belongs to one Noorjahan, who lives at Bashaboo. She had rented the flat to one Tomal Haider Chowdhury of Baniakhamar in Khulna, neighbours said. Four others used to share the flat with Tomal, they said.

Tomal had introduced himself as a foreign currency trader

when he rented the flat, they said.

Khilgaon police said they recovered the bodies at around 3:30 am yesterday after an anonymous caller told them on telephone at about midnight that foul odor was coming out of the flat.

The flat was locked for the last two days. One of the neighbours seeking anonymity told this correspondent that he heard gun shots at about 6:30 pm on Sunday.

The three bodies bore marks of bullet injury in the head. One of those had such marks also in the chase, police said.

One of the victims was aged about 28 and the two others were aged about 32, all wearing shirts and trousers, police said. Saidul Haq, guard of the building, has been taken into custody for interrogation, police said.

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Safety measures BGMEA to take steps against owners

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) will ask its members to take proper safety measures at factories and if they fail to improve the situation, steps will be taken to suspend their export activities.

This was decided at a meeting of the BGMEA standing committee yesterday. The meeting also formed a five-member committee to investigate Sunday's fire incident at Globe Knitting factory at Banani. The Committee headed by Ali Azim Khan will submit its report on the accident within the next week.

Meanwhile, garments workers yesterday held protest rallies and brought out mourning processions in the city.

They held the factory owner responsible for the tragic deaths of 12 workers at the factory at Banani and demanded compensation.

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Murders turned into UD cases!

Tale of 3 housewives & a young maid in Sirajganj

By Morshed Ali Khan and Akhtaruzzaman Bablu in Sirajganj

Police in Sirajganj are puzzled with the increasing number of 'unnatural deaths' of housewives and young girls.

Three housewives and a young maid have died since October 1999. In all the four cases, police were initially told that the victims had committed suicide. The autopsy and viscera tests and circumstantial evidences in these cases suggested that the victims were raped, poisoned or strangled before being "hanged" from the ceiling.

Police officials said that excepting one, all the suspects are now at large having obtained bail from courts.

Hashi, a 14-year old girl worked as a maidservant at the house of Mohammad Saidul at Shoyagovinda in the town. After the death of her mother, her father abandoned Hashi to remarry. Saidul picked up a destitute but 'good looking' Hashi from Royganj of the district and employed her at his residence as a maid.

According to neighbours, Hashi was soon subjected to sexual harassment by both Saidul and his son and barely a week later police were told that the girl had hanged herself. Police recovered the body and sent it for autopsy. The autopsy report said Hashi had been raped before being throttled to death.

Police arrested Saidul and framed charges against him for raping and killing Hashi but did not implicate his son for reasons best known to them. Meanwhile, Saidul soon obtained bail from court despite "overwhelming evidence of his involvement in the case," said top police officials of Sirajganj.

Ruby, 24, a housewife and mother of two children at Dirdhangora in the town, ran into trouble with her in-laws over the share of money sent by her husband from Saudi Arabia. The in-laws of Ruby informed the police that she had committed suicide by hanging herself on March 20 this year.

"When we went to the spot we found out that the place from where Ruby was hanging was lower than her own height and instantly we were sure that it was a foul play," M A Abdul Aziz, Assistant Superintendent of Police of Sirajganj said. The autopsy report said that Ruby was throttled to death, Aziz added. The case is still being 'investigated' while the suspects are roaming freely.

Mouira Begum, housewife and a mother of one, was first poisoned to death and then hanged from the ceiling on May 24 at Shoyagovinda. Her husband, Mannan, is still in prison and the police are investigating the case.

Smriti Rani, a mother of a baby son, was found dead at her husband's house at Kalibari in the town on June 17. Md Anwar-gazeb Mohbub, Additional Superintendent of Police told The Daily Star that when he went to Smriti Rani's house, he

confronted two opposing groups.

"One group was insisting that it was a murder while the other was trying to convince that Smriti Rani had committed suicide," said Mohbub.

Police officials said that immediately after her death, Smriti Rani's family members did not complain about any possible foul play but later they prayed before the court for an investigation. The court, in turn, asked the police to investigate.

"Meanwhile, we received the viscera report from Dhaka which confirmed that she died of poisoning," ASP Mohbub said.

In Smriti Rani's case, police appeared to be almost "sure" that it was a case of suicide rather than homicide. Officials alleged that the family prayed to the court for further investigation after they failed to reach a "negotiation" with the family

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Jatiya Garments Sramik Federation, an organisation of garments workers, staged a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding compensation to the families of victims of fire at Globe Knitting Ltd at Banani on Sunday. They also demanded security of the garments workers at their workplaces.

— Star photo