

## 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 Bhawan 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 recent developments in the opposition front and stressed the need for resolving intra-party bickering immediately.

## BDR-BSF mass troops along northern border

ALMONIRHAT, 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, Antoli and Monglibari were deserted as BDR and BSF took respective position in bunkers along the Burinari and Thanglihara frontier areas.

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

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

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## Noisy protest at WAPDA Bhawan

By Special Correspondent

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

WDB sources said the employees led by some union leaders were in the closed door of DG Mohammad Golam Rabbin 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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## 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 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.

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 Mandol. Mandol 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

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 a possibility, saying she had ex-

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## Bangladesh to play first Test Nov 10

By Sports Reporter

Bangladesh will make their long cherished debut in Test cricket against India beginning on November 10.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), disclosed this at a press conference in the city yesterday.

Interestingly, India were also the first Test opponents of Zimbabwe, who earned Test status, way back in 1993.

"I'm glad to announce that we will play our first Test match against India from November 10-14," Saber told reporters at the BCB office. He also mentioned that the Board has no plan to stage the historic event at any place other than the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

"This (BNS) is the lone, ICC (International Cricket Council) recognised Test venue in our country. So, it is implied that the one-off Test would be held at the historic venue," said Saber, ruling out any possibilities of

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## PM's official visit to US Oct 17-18

By M Anwarul Haq

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will pay a two-day official visit to the United States on October 17 and 18 at the invitation of President Bill Clinton.

The date will be announced in the two capitals shortly, it was learnt here yesterday.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister would be lodged at the Blair House where some of the most distinguished visitors were welcomed.

The visit, first by a Bangladeshi head of government in many years, is being viewed as significant by political and business circles in both the capitals.

Officials in Dhaka and Washington are now having "intense consultations" to fix the itinerary of the trip when several agreements on bilateral trade and business are likely to be signed, sources said.

It has been learnt that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Clinton would spend almost an entire day in meetings and jointly participating in various programmes.

The US President is also ex-

pected to host a reception for the Bangladesh Prime Minister at the White House. Several members of Clinton's Cabinet and top executives of leading US multinational companies will seek appointment with Sheikh Hasina.

Hasina's official visit is a follow-up of Clinton's March 20 trip to Bangladesh, when he had extended an invitation and suggested the month of October for it.

A high official in Dhaka termed the visit as a defining moment in Bangladesh-US relations.

"It will increase Bangladesh's prestige and profile in the American capital," the official said.

Analysts say the United States has now given greater focus on improving ties with Bangladesh. The US has a "changed perspective" and is considering Bangladesh as an "important geo-political player" in South Asia.

Dhaka's initiative in founding the SAARC and its recent

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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, garment 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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## Ershad desperately looking for the vacation judge

By Staff Correspondent

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 Othidullah, 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

Party 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.

## 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 protesters 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.

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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.

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