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People's Right to Know

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## PM renews offer for polls in June

### Opposition urged to shun "path of violence", prepare for early elections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Khaleda Zia to prepare for the polls to be held before June 12, the timeframe which is in line with her previous statement.

"Prepare for the polls which I announced would take place before June 12 instead of calling hartals, killing rickshawpullers and bus drivers, and inflicting sufferings on people", Hasina said yesterday while inaugurating the 25th national conference and council session of the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh (IDEB).

The prime minister ignored the opposition ultimatum for resignation of her government by March 30 and statements by two powerful ministers of her cabinet on Wednesday that the government would quit only after completing its term on July 13.

She, however, reacted sharply to the opposition ultimatum announced by Khaleda at a rally at Paltan Maidan on Wednesday. "As the opposition leader has given me the ultimatum, I must accept the challenge, and wait and see whether she can drag me out of power."

"Do you have enough strength to give me a push or pick me up and throw?" she asked Khaleda.

Responding to the opposition threat that it would go for hartals if the government did not pay heed to the ultimatum, the premier urged the opposition leader to let the people live in peace, and face the election.

Hasina said she had agreed to an early election as demanded by the opposition. "But now she (Khaleda) is

not accepting our offer. (And) that means she does not want election."

She asked the people to be on guard against such ominous manoeuvring by the opposition parties. They are out to scuttle the elections because as they do not want democracy.

Referring to the remark she made in the Saudi Arabian city of Medina as regards early polls by June 12 and the recent declaration that she would announce dissolution of the parliament after the April 17 anniversary of the Mujibnagar government, the prime minister said: "We made the announcement for early elections hoping she would not give any more hartals and let people sleep in peace. We met the President and discussed formation of the caretaker government after dissolution of parliament 15 days after it in the face of the opposition demand although my term ends on July 13 and there would be 15 days for handing power to a caretaker government," she added.

"It is unfortunate that she gave the ultimatum and called hartals to pull us down", Hasina noted.

The threats followed within three months of her assuming office. "It has continued ever since and we had to run the country facing them every now and then", she said, referring to the opposition agitation.

"This morning before coming here I read the opposition leader's speech (in newspapers). She said during the past four and a half years we have ruined the country. But, when we assumed office we inherited a ruined

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasinadigs soil as she lays the foundation of a multi-storied building for the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh in the city yesterday prior to inauguration of its national conference.

## US orders mass expulsion of Russian diplomats for espionage

### Moscow terms it spy mania, may take tit-for-tat measure

AFP, Washington

The United States was to formally notify Russia Thursday of its decision to expel six diplomats in retaliation for the case of Robert Hanssen, the FBI agent recently arrested on suspicion of spying for Moscow, US officials said.

Russia's ambassador to the United States Yuri Ushakov was to be summoned to the State Department to hear details of the decision to declare the six diplomats "persona non grata" over the Hanssen affair, and to order the departure of as many as 50 other diplomats, due to long-standing concerns about the large Russian intelligence presence here, they said.

A White House statement confirming the expulsions was expected around 9:30am (1430 GMT), they said, adding that Ushakov, who was given an outline of the decision by Secretary of State Colin Powell on Wednesday, was due at the State Department sometime after 10:30am (1530 GMT).

The batch of expulsions will be the biggest such move against a diplomatic mission in the United States since 1986, when former president Ronald Reagan ordered some 80 Soviet diplomats out of the country during the height of the Cold War.

Russia's RIA Novosti state news agency Thursday cited one senior Russian security service source as saying that "hundreds" of US embassy officials might now be expelled, in a tit-for-tat move by Moscow.

Two leading US dailies said Powell told Ushakov he wanted the 50 Russian diplomats who are not subject to immediate expulsion to leave over the next several months, to signal the Bush administration's intention to crack down on what it sees as increased Russian spying activities in the United States.

Powell was expected to comment on the expulsions Thursday at a previ

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**Announcement**

What is a Non-party Caretaker Government? Can the Caretaker Government extend its term? After dissolution of Parliament within how many days the election has to be held? What are the basic laws that deal with election? What are the norms of election monitoring? Can you monitor election of your own locality?

Find out answers to these questions and many more in the two-page Special Issue of Law and Our Rights on Non-party Caretaker Government and Laws of Election, coming out next Sunday, March 25, 2001.

## Inside the hostage drama

### Untold story on how the 3 Europeans were freed

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Now that the Ranganamati hostage crisis is over, more facts are coming to light about the abductors and the way the hostages were released on March 17.

According to diplomatic and other sources, four days after a gang of bandits abducted Briton Tim Selby, and Danes Torben Mikkelsen and Nils Hulgaard on Ranganamati-Khagrachhari road on February 16 at gun point, a new group of people with sophisticated arms like AK47 took over charge of the hostages from them. The original abductors were 'illiterate' and badly armed. It was extremely difficult for the three European hostages to communicate with them.

According to one of the hostages, leader of the new group was a 42-year-old highly trained Chakma known among his followers as 'Captain'. He said the 'Captain' was a former 'Shantibahini officer', respected by his followers for his



A file photo shows Briton Tim Selby flanked by Danes Torben Mikkelsen (L) and Nils Hulgaard upon their arrival at the Bangladesh Air Force helipad in the city on March 17, after they were freed from captivity.

## Couple found dead in city

### Wife's throat slit, husband's hands cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The couple was married over seven years ago but had no child. Ali returned from Korea in December last year after three years' service.

Mohammadpur Police said they suspected that the husband might have killed his wife and later committed suicide.

But a CID team which visited the spot and collected evidences said it could be an incident of murders. It is not possible for a man to cut tendons of both his hands, CID said.

The couple and other members of the family had gone to bed at about 10 on the previous night, family sources said. There were feuds sometimes but it was not such that one would kill another, they said.

Akram hailed from Sheikhpara in Khulna town.

The two-storied building the couple lived in is owned by Ruma's father Mosarraf Hossain, a retired teacher now working in a private organisation.

Hossain filed a case with Mohammadpur police.

A couple was found dead at their bedroom at Baitul Aman Housing Estate in the city's Mohammadpur area yesterday.

Rumana Tahneen, 25, and her husband Akran Ali Iku, 30, shared a ground-floor flat with her younger brother Kawser.

Getting no response after repeated knocks on the door at about 10:30 am yesterday, Kawser opened it and found the dead couple lying in a pool of blood. Ruma's throat was slit and tendons of Ali's hands cut.

He then called other members of his family and informed Mohammadpur police, who sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Sources said there were scratches on the two bodies and an NT-cutter was found beside Ali's body. Bloodstains were seen in different parts of the floor.

## Nasim wants Khaleda to quit JS by Mar 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday demanded resignation of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia from the parliament by March 30.

"She should resign from the parliament as she has been abstaining from attending parliamentary sessions," Nasim said while inaugurating Osmani Nagar thana in Sylhet.

Regarding Khaleda's ultimatum to the government for resignation, he said Awami League would not hand over power without fulfilling its tenure.

Nasim blamed the BNP chief for conspiring to foil the forthcoming general election in order to grab state power through the backdoor.

## Mutilated body of young girl recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mutilated body of a young girl was recovered from a slum at Motijheel in the city at about 12:30pm yesterday.

The identity of the young girl aged about 15 could not be known till last night.

Hospital sources said that the body, cut up in six pieces, was stuffed into a sack and left at Kuffim's slum behind the Bangladesh Bank.

Motijheel police sent the body to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

In another incident, Mirpur police recovered the beheaded body of a man from the embankment in Mirpur yesterday.

The identity of the man aged 25 could not be known immediately.

The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College hospital morgue for autopsy.

The recent spate of mutilating

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## Wesfarmers plans to invest US\$200m in LNG plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wesfarmers Energy Pty of Australia plans to invest up to US\$200 million dollars in a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plant in Bangladesh.

"We have a big plan for Bangladesh to set up a liquefied natural gas plant, as my company would invest up to US\$200m dollars," David Robb, managing director of the company, said yesterday in an interview with The Daily Star.

Wesfarmers Energy is a unit of diversified agricultural and industrial resources group Wesfarmers Ltd.

Robb said the proposed plant would have a production capacity of two to three million tonnes of LNG per year, which would not only meet domestic demand, but might leave a surplus for export as well.

He said it would be basically an extraction plant in which we will extract LNG from natural gas condensate.

"We have been closely working with the government for the plant,



David Robb

which is proposed to be set up at Ashuganj," said Robb, who arrived in Dhaka on Monday on a four-day visit.

"Wesfarmers Energy plans to diversify into backward linkage industries and also lateral expansion of distribution networks regionally," he said.

The government and the private LPG companies meet a small part of the huge demand, Robb said.

"That's why we have already invested Tk 40 crore in a plant to bottle liquefied petroleum gas in a joint venture," he said.

Wesfarmers' partners are Bangladesh's Palmal Consortium and Elpiji Malaysia Snd. Bhd.

Using Wesfarmers' know-how, Elpiji has built an LPG bottling facility with a capacity of filling 20,000 cylinders daily of 12.5 kg each at Mongla, Robb said.

LPG storage capacity at Mongla was 1,600 tonnes, which would be doubled "in phase two," he said. "We will invest Tk 20 crore more to double its capacity."

He said we have also a plan to set up a 'cylinder-making plant' in the country to reduce dependency

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## Arms snatched from Satkhira police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A group of armed miscreants severely beat four policemen and snatched four rifles loaded with 140 bullets from them while they were on patrol duty at Jahanabai, about 9 km from the Satkhira town on Wednesday night.

The miscreants numbering 15 to 20 attacked the policemen when they were on patrol duty on Satkhira-Assassuni road near Jahanabai Mosque. They beat the policemen and snatched the rifles and ammunition. The four policemen belong to Brahmamarajpur police camp at Sadar upazila. Satkhira SP Aminul Islam confirmed

the incident.

The firearms included three 303 rifles and one SLR.

The policemen were Nayek Chand Mea and constables Mizanur Rahman, Dhilon Ghosh and Liton Kumar Bairagi. Chand Mea, Mizanur Rahman and Dhilon Ghosh were admitted to Satkhira Hospital with serious injuries.

Three persons identified as Aminur Rahman, Babu and Mizanur Rahman of Dhulihar Chandpur village were arrested in this connection just after the incident.

Additional DIG of Khulna Range Enayetullah Dewan, RRF Commandant Khulna Yasmin

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## Airbus case against BNP chief listed for hearing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The corruption case against Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia over the purchase of two Airbus for Bangladesh Biman has been listed for hearing at a division bench of the High Court. The case was stayed earlier upon a petition for quashing it.

Another case over renovation of the former prime minister's Shahid Mainul Road residence at Cantonment also came up in the list of cases for hearing at the division bench comprising Justice Hamidur

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## Army cordon in, around Kalapahar withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Security cordon thrown in and around Kalapahar area of Ranganamati hill district following abduction of three Europeans on February 16 has finally been withdrawn.

Security sources said about 700 troops deployed there to maintain the cordon were pulled out yesterday, security sources said.

Earlier, with the end of the

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## Need for a consensual policy on India underscored

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Formulation of a 'consensual' foreign policy, especially regarding India, was underlined by speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday.

"Incidentally, our political parties generally have a broad-based consensus on all foreign policy aspects, except on India. What we need is a India policy based on consensus," observed Prof. Syed Anwar Husain of History department, Dhaka University.

"We should look at various elements of reciprocity with India in our dealings," said Farooq Sobhan, former foreign secretary and President of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, a new think-tank.

"Linkages should be opened up with the north-eastern Indian states for mutual benefit," Prof M Shahiduzzaman of DU International Relations department noted.

They were giving their views at a working session on "Security of Bangladesh in the New Millenium" in the day-

long Independence Day Commemorative Seminar, organised jointly by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU).

In his paper on " Bangladesh's Foreign Policy: Fundamentals and Emerging Dynamics", Prof Anwar Husain said the political parties should evolve a consensual foreign policy so that the country could steer itself well in the domain of diplomacy.

He went on, "Just having signed the water agreement does not mean we have solved the water problem for all times. But it has created a legal basis for water sharing for the future. Similarly, the signing the CHT accord does not mean the ethnic problem has been solved. It only marks the beginning of a peace process."

Prof Husain said Bangladesh's foreign policy lacks adequate planning and there is much 'ad hocism', particularly about dealing with India.

He felt that a special foreign policy planning cell should be set up to 'conceive, dissect and direct' foreign policy.

Farooq Sobhan, who was chaired the session, pointed out that elements of reciprocity with India must be looked at in the right perspective.

"India is taking full advantage of our market but they are not reciprocating."

He said the scope of establishing economic ties with the north-eastern states of India must be immediately probed. It is possible for Eastern India to export 500 MW of hydro-electricity.

"If they can export 500 MW of cheap and clean hydro-electricity, we can then think of exporting gas to them."

The challenge of Bangladesh's foreign policy planners regarding India, he felt, should include a quest for demographic equity and a move for regional cooperation based on reciprocity. Developing countries should stress opening of international markets for labour.

Sobhan noted, "If flow of global capital is allowed in a new economic world order, flow of manpower should also be

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## Manzur still trying to keep JP MPs away from JS

STAR REPORT

Secretary General of Jatiya Party (Ershad) Nazimur Rahman Manzur, now in hiding, is lobbying hard to convince party MPs not to join the coming parliament session.

On the other hand, JP chief HM Ershad's family members are determined to take party MPs to parliament at any cost.

Meanwhile, Ershad's wife

Raushan and brother GM Kader have continued negotiations with the ruling Awami League to strike a deal for Ershad's release.

Manzur said this is damaging the four-party alliance of which JP is a component.

JP sources said Manzur prefers that party MPs ask Raushan to make sure Ershad would be freed before they join parliament session. Some

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