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PM's security No decision yet on scope of planned law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is still undecided over the scope of a planned law ensuring lifetime security to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her only sister Sheikh Rehana.

Official sources told The Daily Star yesterday that it was yet to be decided whether the new law would also provide for similar security measures for all former heads of the government and their immediate family members.

Mentionably, preparation is underway for introducing a bill in the last session of the Seventh Jatiya Sangsad to provide lifetime security to Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, the only surviving family members of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Ministry of Law is now preparing a draft of the proposed bill on

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Bid for new law under fire

UNB, Dhaka

The government bid to enact a new law for security of the prime minister even after her tenure came under fire by the four-party opposition alliance yesterday.

Leaders of the alliance has observed that the PM is trying to protect herself from public wrath in the name of security.

"The government has failed to give security of public life and property. We as well as our leader don't want our security through formulating law people will provide our security." BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said at a rally before leading a march through

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US slowdown to hit 20 export-dependent countries: WTO

DSE, CSE price quotations

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 24		6.39 pm
May 25	5-12 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	4-20	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-44	6-48
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		



Venezuelan President Hugo Rafael Chavez receives a bouquet from a little boy on his arrival at the Zia International Airport yesterday as President Shahabuddin Ahmad and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina look on.

Venezuela to resume technical assistance for energy sector

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Venezuelan President Hugo Rafael Chavez arrived in the capital yesterday on a one-day visit, aimed at boosting ties between the oil rich Latin American country and Bangladesh.

A 21-gun salute heralded the arrival of the South American leader at the Zia International Airport (ZIA). As Chavez emerged from his aircraft after a private visit to India's commercial capital Bombay, red carpet was rolled out to welcome him.

President Shahabuddin Ahmad and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina greeted the Venezuelan president on his maiden visit to the country.

Chavez, leading an eight-member delegation on a 20-hour visit that forms part of a wider tour of the region, reviewed a guard of honour presented by a smartly turned-out contingent of the three services.

The Venezuelan delegation includes Foreign Minister Luis Alfonso Davila, Planning and Development Minister Jorge Godiani, Science and Technology Minister Carlos Genatios in addition to the president's son, Hugo Chavez-Colmenares.

From the airport, the Venezuelan president went to the National Memorial at Savar where he laid wreaths, planted a sapling and signed the visitors' book. He also visited the Bangabandhu Museum at Dhanmondi.

Briefing newsmen on the second ever visit by a Latin American president after Peruvian Alberto Fujimori, Foreign Secretary Syed Muazzam Ali said that Chavez was moved by the progress the country had made in institutionalising democracy, empowering women, and in micro-credit and social advancement.

Prime Minister Hasina gave Chavez a resume of the country's progress in these areas during official talks at

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Charges framed against Mamun in newsmen assault case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Public Safety Tribunal here yesterday framed charges against Jubo League cadre and terrorist ward commissioner Mamunur Rashid Mamun in the case filed against him for assaulting two senior journalists on April 18.

Judge A N M Bashir Ullah framed charges in presence of Mamun who was produced in the tribunal amid tight security. Mamun surrendered to the CMM's Court on May 7.

The tribunal fixed June 24, 25 & 26 for hearing of the case.

Advocate Ahsanul Haq Hena appeared on behalf of Mamun while Advocate Nurul Abser Talukder for the state.

Mamun along with his four

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Revised visa accord with Delhi signed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A revised visa agreement between India and Bangladesh was signed in Dhaka yesterday, which will open up more facilities for the visa seekers of the two countries.

Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs M M Reza and Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka ML Tripathi signed the agreement on behalf of the respective governments at the ministry conference room.

As per the new agreement, the single entry tourist visa will be valid up to three months from the date of entry, while students will get visa for the entire period of study.

The agreement has also simplified the procedure of visa extension on medical grounds. And the diplomatic passport holders will enjoy a 30-day visa-free stay.

Moreover, there will be a facility of long-term multiple visa for professionals, work permit holders, investors, businessmen, and research scholars and fellows. The

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Little Tisha frees herself from the claws of kidnappers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A witty 10-year-old girl managed to free herself from the grip of kidnappers while they were taking her to their den somewhere at Gulshan in the city on Tuesday night.

Arifa Maruf Khanam Tisha, 10, a student of class five, was abducted by a gang of miscreants from their residence at Kaola in the city's Uttara area, her relatives and neighbours said.

One of the gang members went to the second floor flat and knocked the door in the afternoon. Tisha's mother and elder sister were asleep at the time and her father Mafizur Rahman, a businessman, was out of the house. As soon as the girl opened

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Polarisation of terrorists ahead of next polls

ZAYADUL AHSAN

They belong to different political camps and are ideologically miles apart, and, as such, are fierce rivals. There is one common ground though. They are all terrorists and care more about having and maintaining control over the areas they operate in than anything else. With a view to making sure that they do, terrorists loyal to a faction of the ruling Awami League, main opposition BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami-backed Islami Chhatra Shibir, and now-defunct NDP have held a 'joint convention' at violence-prone Rangunia in Chittagong last month.



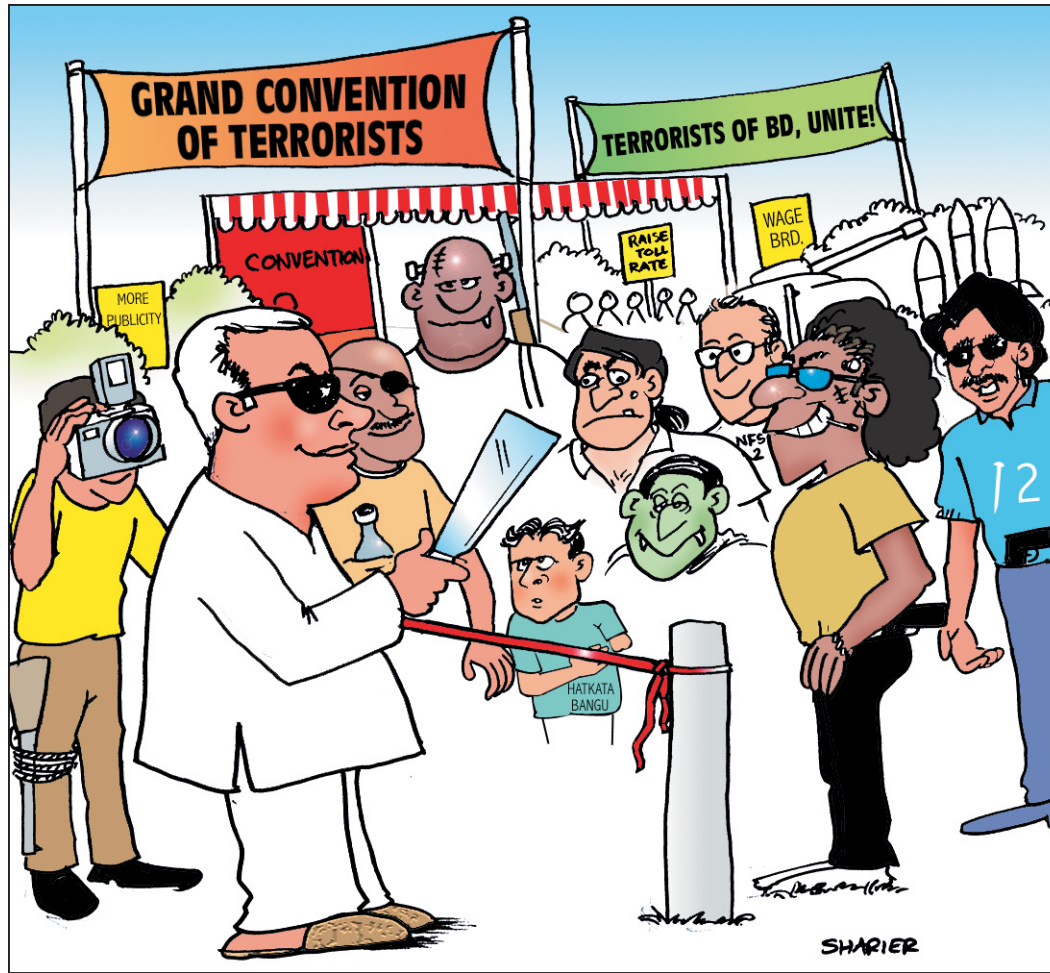
Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury convened the meeting days before he got expelled from the BNP on charges of acting against the party interest. Early this month, two top terrorists were killed. Local people and underworld sources believe that there is a connection between the convention and the killings.

Back in 1996, Fazle Karim Chowdhury, a cousin and also political comrade of SQ Chowdhury, joined AL. Some terrorists, loyal to

SQ Chowdhury, also followed him. When AL nominated Karim for the June 12 general election, it enraged former Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Jahangir Sattar Tinku. His hopes to run for AL in Jatiya Sangsad dashed, Tinku joined SQ Chowdhury to get back at Karim.

Although Karim eventually lost to SQ Chowdhury in the Rangunia constituency, his rivalry with Tinku continued. On May 8 this year,

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EC recruitment rules for filling 1400 posts yet to be approved

NAZRUL ISLAM

Despite repeated attempts by the Election Commission (EC) to fill its nearly 1400 posts of officers and employees before the coming general election, the government is yet to approve its proposed recruitment rules.

Senior EC officials fear that the commission would have to face an acute crisis during the election if this long drawn problem persists till then. "It is only the government's sincere desire that can put an end to such a situation facing the EC," said one official.

Asked about the fate of the proposed recruitment rules, an apparently frustrated Chief Election Commissioner M A Syed said, "We requested the authorities con-

cerned long ago to approve the rules but it brought no result so far."

The commission wrote to the Ministry of Establishment several times to make an arrangement for recruitment of necessary staff for its smooth functioning.

On March 19, in a letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who is also in charge of the establishment ministry, the CEC sought her personal intervention in resolving the problem. He also had a discussion with the Prime Minister on various

issues concerning the general election including recruitment of EC staff, at a dinner on April 14, sources said.

In line with decentralisation of its offices down to upazila level, the EC had drafted a proposal for recruitment rules providing for direct appointment of its officials and employees and submitted it to the establishment ministry on July 26, 1998.

As there had been little progress

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Cultivation of hybrid rice may 'cease' from next season

REAZ AHMAD

Cultivation of hybrid rice in the country will virtually cease from the next IRRI-Boro season unless the government releases any home-grown variety or extends the time limit for seed import, sources concerned said.

The government in September 1998 allowed four companies to import hybrid rice seeds from China and India for three years and asked seed importers to produce hybrid seeds within this period.

The time limit expires in the current IRRI-Boro season.

If import is stopped, exporters will no more give 'parent lines' needed for producing hybrid rice varieties as Bangladesh has not yet introduced a 'Plant Variety Protection' Act, the sources said.

The four companies allowed to import high breed rice seeds were Malika Seed Company, Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI), Ganges Development Corporation and McDonald Bangladesh Pvt. Ltd.

They imported three varieties

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Hybrid paddy on a stretch of land could become a rare sight soon, if the government fails to release any home-grown variety or extends the time limit for seed import.