

COMMITTED TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781 Vol. XI No. 20 DHAKA FRIDAY OCTOBER 19, 2001 MAGH 20, 1407 BS ZELKAD 7, 1421 HIJRI 16 PAGES PLUS MAGAZINE PRICE: TK. 10.00

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Address to field-level administration No interference, no influence: Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked field-level administrators to perform their responsibilities without fear as per rules and regulations, giving them full authority to clamp down on terrorism and corruption.

"Maintain transparency and accountability in all your works. There will be no interference or influence," she told a meeting with Divisional Commissioners, DCs and SPs and senior police officials at the International Conference Centre here yesterday afternoon.

Warning of action if found negligent in their duties, the prime minister made it clear that their government is "determined to prove that the administration will only be friends to law-abiding citizens and lawbreakers will not be spared by

the administration".

The PM and BNP chairperson said criminals and terrorists have no political identity and told the field officers that they could "take action without fear against anyone indulging in terrorism, crime and anti-social activities even if that person does so under the banner of ruling party."

Foreign Minister Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Minister of Home Affairs Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar, PM's Political Advisor Haris Chowdhury, Cabinet Secretary Akbar Ali Khan, Home Secretary, DG of Ansars and VDP Maj General Jamiluddin Ahsan and DG of BDR Maj General Ishaq were also present in the meeting.

The prime minister instructed the officials to be on their guard so that the anti-social elements with the help of financial power of the influential cannot build close nexus with vested quarters in the adminis-



Khaleda Zia

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Top terrorists slip thru' legal loopholes

18 final reports in 389 cases

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Due to an increasing dominance of terrorists in the society, most witnesses often refrain from giving their depositions in the court. Those who appear to testify against the terrorists end up changing their statements under pressure from the henchmen of the accused.

The terrorist network intimidates the witnesses by issuing threats on their lives, the sources added.

It is alleged that most of the charge sheets filed by the police against these terrorists are either poorly substantiated or contain a lot of loopholes. On the other hand,

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Moyeen seeks media support

Editors urged to create public opinion towards repeal of Official Secrecy Act

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan sought cooperation of editors of the national media to discharge his responsibilities properly.

Exchanging views with editors of national dailies, news agencies, weeklies and the electronic media at Sonargaon Hotel last night, he said, he was an ardent believer in free flow of information and would welcome criticism in order to do his job as a minister perfectly.

He said the editors could help create favourable public opinion in order to make it easier for the government to repeal the Official Secrecy Act.

Earlier, the editors warmly congratulated Dr Moyeen Khan as the new information minister.

They drew his attention to some issues including the new government's attitude to the press, repeal of an act, guideline for private TV channels and news coverage of BTV, newsprint problem and government advertisement.

The editors requested the minister not to treat press

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Dengue claims two more

72 hospitalised in last 3 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more persons died of dengue pushing the death toll up to 21 since May this year and another 72 were hospitalised in the last three days, official sources said yesterday.

The sources also said seven people were infected with dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) among the total of patients admitted in the last 72 hours ending at 6:00pm yesterday.

Renu Akhter, 28, admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on October 7, died eight days later. Tora, another victim, died a day after she was admitted to the DMCH medicine ward on October 16. Both died of DHF.

Among the patients admitted in last three days 16 were to the DMCH, 12 to Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, 11 to BIRDEM and Dhaka Shishu Hospital each, 13 to Mitford General Hospital and nine to the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

243 MW power shortage likely today

BSS, Dhaka

The country is expected to experience power shortfall of 243 megawatt (MW) during the evening peak hours today.

A Power Development Board release yesterday said, as against the expected peak-hour-demand of 2,850 MW this evening, the power production in the country is likely to be 2,607 MW.

This will leave a shortfall of 243 megawatt of electricity during the evening peak hours, the release added.



An Afghan refugee girl tries to grab her share of charity bread from a local food donor in the outskirts of Islamabad yesterday. Thousands of Afghan refugees throughout Pakistan depend on food donations for their family's survival.

Bush indicates switch to ground assault

AFP, Kabul

A series of direct hits on residential areas in Kabul highlighted growing concerns over the ability of US forces to hit what is left of the Taliban's military infrastructure without the risk of killing innocent civilians.

One man told AFP he had lost five members of his family when bombs destroyed six houses in the south-eastern Kalae Zaman Khan area, while residents said an eight-year-old girl died in the eastern suburb of Macroyan.

"I have lost my mother, my brother, my brother's wife, my grandmother and my sister. I have lost all hope, they were my hope," said Abdullah, 27, as he searched the ground.

After three days of ferocious attacks, particularly on the Taliban's main base Kandahar, the volume of yesterday's daytime raids was relatively light.

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A society of marijuana growers!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It may sound incredulous, but it is true. Despite a worldwide ban, ganja or marijuana is being cultivated and marketed by a society in one of country's northeastern districts.

The Ganja Society of Naogaon, which exists as a legal entity, cultivates, processes, markets and exports ganja. Recently, some 6,600

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EC bid to regain control over upazila polls

NAZRUL ISLAM

The Election Commission (EC) has initiated a move for revival of its authority to hold upazila parishad elections, which the immediate past Awami League government had taken away through amendment to the original law by parliament at the fag end of its tenure.

According to EC sources, the commission has now focused its attention on election to upazila parishads, the most vital tier of local governments, ahead of election to all other local government bodies. It will discuss on Monday various aspects of election to these bodies.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) M A Syed has asked officials concerned to place a summary of the formation of upazila parishad and related laws at Monday's meet.

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New faces of terrorists-3 More tales of minority plight

MORSHED ALI KHAN

After months of noisy campaigns and sporadic clashes between political rivals, the election results left an uncomfortable lull in Barisal. People everywhere waited in apprehension.

The former chief whip and self-proclaimed "ruler" of Barisal, Abul Hasanat Abdullah and his notorious gangs had disappeared from the scene. Barisal's famous Dhakaghat and the Notullabad bus and truck terminals had changed hands smoothly.

Signboards put up by AL leaders on illegally occupied public lands near the launch terminal and elsewhere had also disappeared. New signboards on party offices depicted a victorious Khaleda Zia with a

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Ramesh Chandra Das (R), chairman of the Raziar Union at Agailjhara, and other members of the Hindu community, who have fled their homes and taken shelter at Ramshil to escape repression by ruling party hoodlums.

Bangladesh a competitive country now

First time in GCI since independence

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh, for the first time since its independence, has become one of the competitive countries of the world.

The World Economic Forum (WEF), a Geneva-based organisation, has put Bangladesh for the first time in the Growth Competitiveness Index (GCI).

Peter Cornelius, Director of the Global Competitiveness Programme of WEF said, "It reflects the rising integration of developing countries into the global economy."

"Bangladesh, though ranking near the bottom of the Growth Competitiveness Index (GCI) scale, showed tremendous potential for growth if it is able to enhance its political and technological capacities under the auspices of stable macroeconomics," the WEF said in its Global Competitiveness Report 2001 which was released yesterday.

In the GCI index, Bangladesh ranked 73rd position.

Finland ranks first in both GCI and Current Competitiveness Index (CCI) while The United States slipped into second place and Canada third.

Japan, which continues to experience economic stagnation, maintains a low position at 21st, down one slot from last year.

Banks asked to devise plans to cut lending rate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Huge defaulted loans of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private sector as well featured highly yesterday at a meeting of the country's bankers.

Governor of the Bangladesh Bank Dr Mohammad Farashuddin convened meeting in the backdrop of the directive by the finance and planning minister for devising a plan to cut banks' lending rate.

The meeting was also attended by the managing directors of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs), specialised banks and financial institutions.

The BB governor asked the bankers to come up with plans to lower the lending rate and commit more funds to project loans. However, the bankers pointed out that it was difficult for them to cut the

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Decision to stop production, use of polythene

BSS, Dhaka

Government yesterday decided to stop production and use of polythene in the country as early as possible.

It was decided at an inter-ministerial meeting held at the Ministry of Forest and Environment. The meeting formed a Task Force headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forest for speedy implementation of the government decision regarding complete stop of production and use of polythene. The Task Force has been asked to submit its opinion regarding evolution of alternative items to polythene in the next inter-ministerial meeting.

The meeting stressed on the use of jute, thread and paper made bags as alternative to polythene bags. It also asked the task force to prepare a paper containing cost analysis of such alternative items.