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Hasina didn't join reception at Senakunja

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Over 4000 guests including VIPs attended the Armed Forces Day reception at the Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, ministers and heads of foreign missions attended the reception on the premises of Senakunja.

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina was conspicuous by her absence from the reception.

Normally, armed forces receptions are a meeting point for key ruling party and opposition leaders.

In most of the previous years, both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina turned up at the November 21 Armed Forces Day receptions either as Prime Minister or Leader of the

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PM calls for allout nat'l unity to face challenges

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called for forging a broad-based national unity sinking differences in view of external and internal situations of the present times.

In support of her proposal, she said the present world situation is not in favour of the interests of developing nations and there are also many problems on the domestic front tackling which presupposes united efforts of all.

"Under the present perspectives, compared to previous times, an all-out national unity is imperative for securing our dignified existence," said the prime minister at an army function.

As she spoke, leader of the Opposition and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina, who is boycotting the first parliament session, was also conspicuous by her absence from the Armed Forces Day function.

Khaleda said under the present circumstances all irrespective of political ideology, opinion and path

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia spends a few sombre moments after placing wreath at the Eternal Flame at Dhaka Cantonment on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day yesterday.

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Rise and fall of graphs

Column: Byline

M J Akbar

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Interpreting and cultivating democracy

ACI
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Fate of Kunduz hangs in the balance

REUTERS, AP, Kabul

The fate of Afghanistan's besieged Taliban-held enclave of Kunduz hung in the balance yesterday despite negotiations on surrender terms and agreement on wider talks on the country's future.

Thousands of Afghan Taliban troops and Pakistani, Arab and Chechen fighters linked to Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network are encircled in Kunduz, the fundamentalist militia's last redoubt in the north, facing daily US bombing raids.

Taliban defectors and anti-Taliban Northern Alliance troops surrounding the city say Afghan Taliban fighters want to surrender but their al Qaida comrades, aware they have nowhere to run, plan to fight to the death and are executing Afghans who want to give themselves up.

Gen Tommy Franks, the American commander, told report-

ers at a US base in Uzbekistan that the siege of Kunduz would end in defeat for Taliban forces and fighters for al-Qaida terrorist network.

"I don't know how long that battle will continue but at the end of the day, we will prevail in the city of Kunduz," said Franks, who met with anti-Taliban leaders in northern Afghanistan on Tuesday night -- the first such trip inside Afghanistan by such a senior US military official.

He also spoke of the tightening noose around the Taliban's home base of Kandahar, in the south of Afghanistan.

"We need to complete the work in Kandahar ... and most importantly we need to complete the destruction of the al-Qaida terrorist network," Franks added.

Franks, the commander of the US Central Command, said he was confident a 25 million dollar reward for the capture of Laden will help locate the suspected terrorist.

In northern Afghanistan, the

opposition's Gen Mohammed Daoud said late Tuesday he was optimistic that he could finish brokering surrender of Afghan Taliban at Kunduz, perhaps within a day.

"We are hopeful that Wednesday will be the conclusion of talks," he said in the northern city of Taloqan.

Talks have been carried out in the no man's land between Taliban and northern alliance front lines east of Kunduz. Daoud has been negotiating with the Taliban commander of Kunduz, Dadullah, and former deputy defence minister Mullah Fazil Musliymyar.

Daoud said the talks are being carried out independently of the foreign fighters holed up at Kunduz - mostly Arabs, Chechens and Pakistanis loyal to bin Laden -- and that there have been no negotiations with them.

Afghan Islamic Press says, US warplanes yesterday unleashed

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EU promises 50m euro in technical assistance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) will provide Bangladesh about 50 million euro in trade-related technical assistance over the next five years in the country's bid for export stability through diversification.

"This assistance will be in addition to the one billion euro development grants earmarked for Bangladesh for the next five years," EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy told a press conference yesterday.

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud also spoke on the occasion.

The EC will also send a programming mission to Dhaka in January next to advise what actions need be taken for diversification of exports with special focus on two or three areas.

Khasru expressed his satisfaction over the outcome of the talks with the EU trade commissioner and the first EU-Bangladesh joint commission.

However, the EU sidetracked

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Business leaders seek soft credit from World Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's business leaders have sought soft credit line from the World Bank to cope with the global recession, compounded by September 11 terror attacks on the United States, and challenges of the post-MFA era.

Their request came during a meeting with Miesko Nishimizu, the visiting WB vice-president for South Asia, yesterday.

Representatives of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bankers Association were present at the meeting among many other business leaders.

The business leaders informed the WB official that the cost of busi-

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A week after gunfight at DU

None of the gun-wielding cadres arrested yet

STAR REPORT

None of the armed cadres involved in the gunfight between the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on the Dhaka University (DU) campus on November 13 could be arrested till yesterday.

Following the incident, Home Minister Altaf Hossain had assured stern action against the armed cadres after they were photographed brandishing firearms in

national dailies on November 14. The gunfight between the student fronts of the ruling BNP and opposition Awami League over occupation of residential halls left 15 persons injured.

Sources said most of the armed men are roaming freely on the campus but police are not arresting them. Newspaper photographs showed six armed youth -- four reportedly belonging of the JCD and two to the BCL brandishing firearms during the incident.

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The gun-toting youths in the three photographs, taken during a gunfight on Dhaka University campus on November 13, have been identified as cadres of JCD and BCL. Despite such a compelling evidence and assurance from the home minister of their arrest, the culprits freely roam around the campus.

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
6	22	-	5-14
7	23	4-55	5-14
8	24	4-56	5-14

Awami League expels 24 party 'rebels'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League has expelled 24 party rebels who contested the October 1 parliamentary election without its approval and decided to serve show cause notice on party men who acted against its interest during the polls.

The expelled include sparty presidium member Dr Mohammad Selim, sources said following a special meeting of the AL Central Working (ALCWC) yesterday.

Though some meeting sources put the number of expelled at 36, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman confirmed expulsion of 24.

Thirty-six 36 rebels had initially submitted nomination papers without party approval for contest-

ing last month's election from different constituencies. However, 12 of them later withdrew those amidst repeated warnings from the party leadership.

With party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair, the nearly three-hour meeting of ALCWC held at Awami Foundation at Dhanmondi in the city also took some other important decisions.

The decisions include serving show cause notice on party leaders and workers who worked against party-nominated candidates in the election and restructuring different party cells on finance, industry, agriculture, labour and others.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Zillur Rahman said expulsion

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News Analysis

Mixed signals from Musharraf

STAR REPORT

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain has caused confusion and dissatisfaction among government officials, independent experts and the public with some of his recent statements. His role has also been equally confusing as well as disappointing.

While talking to The Daily Star, several officials and experts have criticised Mosharraf for the allegations he has levelled against Petrobangla.

They feel that such allegations from the state minister, leader of Petrobangla, have actually undermined the organisation.

Mosharraf is also spreading around a gas-reserve figure, not owned up by the government, apparently to justify a decision, should it come, on immediate export of gas, they say.

Meanwhile, speakers at different seminars in the city, held last week, have questioned the state minister's integrity.

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