

Repressors never last long: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said those who voted for 'Sheaf of Paddy' at the last polls would change their decision if another election were held in the country right now.

"Those who voted on the 'Sheaf of Paddy' are also repressed now. They have already regretted their decision. If there is a parliamentary election now, they will think otherwise," said the Awami League chief who, along with her deputies, refrained from joining the new parliament on the excuse that the voting was not fair.

She made the observations while addressing a special extended meeting of her party's student wing, Bangladesh Chhatra League, yesterday morning at the Bangabandhu Avenue party office.

Hasina claimed that Awami League, Jubo League and Chhatra League activists as well as minority people across the country were tortured after the October 1 polls. And the BNP-Jamaat government is patronising terrorism though they pledged to curb crimes.

The country has already come to a standstill with progress of the economy stalled and that's why the people of the country want relief from such a situation, she told her student activists.

"Repressors never last long. Victory of the truth is universal, but victory of lies is temporal," Hasina said urging her student followers to protect the repressed and tortured people across the country. "You

Shahriar

FROM PAGE 12
The repressed slogans against Shahriar Kabir and organisers of the reception.

When contacted yesterday evening, CMP Commissioner Shahidullah Khan said, "We have already taken enough safety measures. No one will be allowed to disturb law and order in and around the reception venue. Police will go for prompt action against any lawbreakers."

Air Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1
CAAB also found some discrepancies in the documents of a chartered aircraft the company brought to Dhaka to ferry hajis, he added.

Sources concerned said the AB managed to obtain a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the religious affairs ministry, saying it would carry Hajj pilgrims. But it was not clear how the ministry gave the NOC when the AB did not obtain permission from CAAB to operate passenger flights.

He admitted that the AB had cheated the pilgrims and also tried to swindle the government by issuing a cheque of over Tk 2 crore which later bounced.

The secretary said the government was doing its best so that the stranded pilgrims could perform hajj. Different foreign airlines have been requested by the authorities to carry them, he added.

Protest in Kolkata

FROM PAGE 12
"In any recognised madrassah is found indulging in anti-national activities, it will be immediately shut down," Sattar said. "West Bengal will not fund madrassahs which teach children to fight for Islam."

Thousands of Muslim protesters marched through the streets of Kolkata yesterday to warn the government against intervening in religious education.

"Let the West Bengal government prove terrorists activities in these madrassahs, and we will take all necessary action to stop it," said Syed Asad Madani, president of the powerful Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind organisation.

"Otherwise, the government cannot close down our religious schools," Madani told a rally.

"Religious education is our fundamental right and no one can take it away from us."

Indian intelligence officials

Neurosurgery ward

FROM PAGE 1
nation table, as more patients arrived from the emergency ward. The boy was placed on a dirty, worn-out mattress on the floor.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that so-called helpers have got hold of trolleys who charge up to Tk 100 for carrying a patient each time.

Unable to pay such an amount, Halim preferred to wait and after half an hour, the trolley arrived to take Sohail to the X-ray room.

The X-ray on the skull revealed nothing serious but the boy had his left leg fractured.

Doctors said even if Sohail needed an operation, he had to wait until the following morning. "In fact, we need to have more investigations on him before we can open his skull for surgery," said one of the doctors.

"Usually, we don't operate (upon a patient) after the work hour. But if we decide to do go for an operation, we often have to request the anaesthetist, ward boys and nurses to assist," said another doctor.

"If the autoclave is not ready and

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 12
The prosecution side was ready for hearing. Moreover, Mojibur Rahman, first prosecution witness and complainant of the case appeared in the court to face cross-examination by the defence lawyers.

After hearing both sides, the court granted the petition.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan thana on April 24, 1998, accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at his residence.

Mojibur Rahman filed a rape case with Gulshan thana accusing seven people including Shahid after six months of investigation into the murder case.

All the accused Shahid, Hasan, Shaniram, Badal, Minu and Parvin - were produced in the court during the hearing.

Advocate ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahbub Ahmed and Sheikh Baharul Islam appeared for the state while Advocate Mohammad Ali and Mizanur Rahman for the accused.

AL reaction

FROM PAGE 1
Sheikh Hasina's government had undertaken massive steps reducing power outages. Khaleda's government has no credit in this sector, he added.

Refuting the Prime Minister's observations about her plan to celebrate the election victory, Azad said "As a matter of fact there was no mood for celebration among the people after the rigged election of October 1. People were rather stunned by the election results manipulated under a deep conspiracy."

Instead of celebrations, people showed their "no-confidence" in the alliance government for continued repression, extortion, killing and forcible occupation. "Today, the situation has come to such a pass that people are burning terrorists and hijackers even in the capital city in the wake of government's miserable failure to control law and order."

Referring to Prime Minister's remarks about opposition observations on Taliban connections with this government, Azad noted that those who are in the alliance government had declared themselves as Taliban.

He said the alliance candidates, including Mufti Shahidul Islam, who contested against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina had claimed themselves as Taliban. "Awami League made its observations about these elements only to protect the country."

The Shimla accord was signed in 1972 by the then Indian and Pakistan Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Z A Bhutto and Lahore declaration was initiated by Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and former Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif in February 1998.

The discussions between Ivanov and Singh covered a wide range of issues, including South Asian situation in the light of Indo-Pak border stand-off, reconstruction in post-Taliban Afghanistan, bilateral

Route permits

FROM PAGE 1
wheelers to ten thousand in the city", one leader said. Then a large number of fit three wheelers with required documents would also not be allowed to ply, he added.

But BRTA officials said there was no such decision. Abdur Rob, an assistant director of BRTA, said there must have been some misgivings in this regard.

According to him, nearly 18 thousand registered three wheelers have been plying on the city roads since 1994. Of these, three thousand are yet get route permit from the authorities.

Besides, a few thousand more have already become unfit to ply on city roads. "So, it is very much possible to reduce the number of three wheelers to 10 to 12 thousand without stopping a fit vehicle from plying on city roads," he added.

Acid throwers

FROM PAGE 1
false cases. A person will face a maximum of seven years in jail and monetary fines for lodging fake complaints.

The law also stipulates that proceeds from fines will go to acid victims. In case the victim dies, the money will be given to his or her successors.

The Acid Control Law '2002 proposes to constitute a board to control import and production of acid. The minister for Women and Children Affairs will be the chairman of the board while four secretaries of ministries concerned, a woman lawmaker, an expert and the chairperson of the Jatiya Mohila Sangstha will be its members.

The draft law proposes introduction of licensc and maintaining of proper registers on imports, production, transportation, stocks, selling and use of acid.

The deputy commissioners will be given the authority to issue licences for transportation, selling and use of acid.

The licence issuing authorities have been empowered to conduct raids on illegal traders and seize acid and cancel licences.

If any individual imports, produces, uses and sells acid without having valid licences, he would face imprisonment up to 15 years along with fines.

The new laws also propose setting up of a treatment and rehabilitation centre for the acid



A group of plastic and burn surgeons perform an operation on an acid victim, Nurjahan, at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday. The cabinet yesterday proposed tough new laws to punish those responsible for hundreds of acid attacks every year.

Indo-Pak dialogue: Russia backs Delhi's stance

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Unambiguously backing Indian position, Russia has said India-Pakistan dialogue could resume only after Islamabad takes "sustained and irreversible steps" to end infiltration of terrorists into India.

A joint statement issued after talks between the visiting Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh here Sunday night Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's commitment to fight terrorism "can only be judged by the concrete action he takes on the ground."

The statement asks Pakistan to cooperate in "stopping infiltration of terrorists into India, across the international boundary and the Line of Control and ending continued terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir state and other parts of India."

"Sustained and irreversible steps in this direction will create conducive environment for the resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan in accordance with Shimla agreement and the Lahore Declaration," it said.

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Protect Gulshan Lake: BEM rally today

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Environment Movement (BEM) will hold a rally in the city and submit a memorandum to the authorities today demanding proper steps to protect Gulshan Lake from pollution.

Environmentalists, local people and activists of different environmental organisations will participate in the rally at 11 am in front of the RAJUK Bhaban.

It said the authorities re-opened sewerage lines to the lake on January 22 this year, ignoring concern over pollution and health hazards.

In November last year, a huge number of fishes of the lake died due to serious contamination of its water by the waste that flowed in through the sewerage line.

JCD activist murdered in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

An HSC student and activist of JCD was murdered by the miscreants at Ramkantapur Kheaghat under Ullapara Upazila Sunday night.

The victim was identified as Rassel Hoque, 19, son of Mojnu Bepari of village Gopalpur under Enayetpur Police Station. Rassel was a second year student of Akbor Ali Science College.

Police suspected that when the victim was returning from Ullapara Bazar to Ramkantapur some miscreants murdered him due to enmity.

Police sources said some marks of injury were found in Russel's body when they sent it to Sirajganj general hospital for autopsy. A case had been lodged with Ullapara Police Station.

relations in political, economic and military spheres and Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposed to India this year-end.

During the discussions, Ivanov strongly condemned continued terrorism against India from across the border and said these activities from Pakistan and the territory controlled by it cease completely.

Significantly, one of the issues that came up for discussion between the two sides was cooperation between India, Russia and China in what is seen as Moscow's keenness for trilateral efforts for a multi-polar world.

The proposal was first mooted by former Russian Prime Minister Primakov way back in 1998 but China had at that time cold-shouldered it. Russia and China are concerned over long-term military American military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asian countries like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in their neighbourhood in the wake of global campaign against terrorism, according to analysts here.

Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji, during his recent visit to India, is understood to have brought the issue of US presence in Central Asian countries.

But the Indian External Affairs Minister made it clear last night to mediapersons after talks with Ivanov that while Russia, China and India exchange views on specific important issues, this would not take the shape of a "formal axis."

Mindful of US sensitivities of India-Russia-China cooperation, New Delhi would not like to signal that the three countries are coming together in a formal alliance, sources here say.

Three run over by train in Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

Three persons perished under the wheels of a running train and 10 others were injured while crossing a rail gate near Charaikoil railway station, 8-km away from Kushtia town last night.

Police sub-inspectors Monir and Alauddin, a pedestrian, were killed when they were run over by a Goalundo-bound shuttle train from Poradah.

Monir and Torab were in a police pick-up van along with 10 others. The vehicle crossing the rail gate was twisted and thrown about 30 feet away by the running train, witnesses said.

JCD leaders

FROM PAGE 12
their way into the examinations hall at the college without permission of invigilators on Saturday afternoon when the Degree (pass) and Subsidiary Examinations were going on.

They drove Ishtiaq Ahmed Dollar, vice-president of the NSGCSU and BCL leader, and Uzzal Kumar Howlader, a BCL worker, out of the examinations hall.

Explaining why he filed the case, the officer-in-charge reasoned that the two students belonging to the BCL were feeling insecure.

Clashes kill 55 in Lagos

AP, Lagos

Thousands fled neighbourhoods of Nigeria's largest city yesterday during a third day of ethnic violence that has killed at least 55 people and injured 150, officials said. Fighters carrying machetes, swords, slingshots, bows and arrows vastly outnumbered police officers.

PM's address

FROM PAGE 1
your rights. Who you are angry or aggrieved with that you are forging these rights?" she posed a question to Awami League who are boycotting the 8th parliament from its very inception.

Addressing the nation over the national TV and Radio yesterday evening to apprise the people of her government's successes in its first 100 days' start-up programme, Khaleda said they would uphold the rights of the opposition to speak in parliament and make constructive criticisms.

"But, we will have to protect the interest of the people, hard-earned democracy and discipline at any cost," she categorically said in her eight-page speech.

In presenting the evaluation of the 100-day agenda, which she launched in her maiden address to the nation on October 19, the PM said a government can't be judged only by 100 days of activity."

A big success cannot be expected within two or four months as we started off in a difficult situation shouldering a heavy burden of problems and crisis, serious disorder and anarchy," she said.

"We need time for this. Our journey just started afresh," she said seeking cooperation of all and pledging to present them with a prosperous Bangladesh.

"We know your (people's) expectation is high. But our problems are complex and resources limited. So it is not possible to change everything overnight," the Prime Minister said calling for the countrymen to be patient.

Detailing the successes of the hundred days' programmes of her government, the Prime Minister mentioned the recovery of illegal arms, arrest of identified terrorists and the beginning of their trial.

She said work also started for forming local committees on law and order at district, upazila and union levels to maintain peace.

"The process of repealing two black laws - PSA and SPA - both formulated during the Awami League regimes, is underway," Khaleda Zia said. Legal procedure has also begun to release political detainees and many had already been set free while cases of political harassment are being reviewed.

The Prime Minister said the judicial commission had started investigating the much-talked-about incidents of deadly bomb explosions during the previous regime of Awami League.

She highlighted her government's activities to increase the export of manpower to Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, UAE and some other countries. Besides, efforts are being made for legal entry of Bangladeshi youths to Italy and other countries.

About her government's focus on rearing a skilled workforce, she said English courses for nurses and hotel employees are on in the capital.

She mentioned the restoration of discipline at Zia International Airport as well as Chittagong and Mongla seaports.

Touching on reforms, Khaleda stressed the need for restructuring government institutions and rightsizing the administration for an effective and proper administrative system. "A number of organisations deemed unnecessary are being abolished," she said.

A secretariat committee has started working to formulate laws against violators of official discipline and free the administration from unwanted influence, the Prime Minister said in her radio-TV speech.

She mentioned the rescheduling of the office timings and the weekly holiday to bring dynamism in the government offices and improve the quality of services.

Publication of a two-volume white paper on corruption and irregularities of the previous Awami League regime was another major thing she listed as done during the 100-day lead-in rule of her coalition government.

Legal procedures and investigations have been started to identify those involved and bring them to book. "We have to wipe out the black spot stamped during their regime on the fair face of the nation as number-one corrupt country," the Prime Minister said.

Khaleda Zia highlighted the importance laid on computer literacy by her government. "We want to reach computers to remote village schools," she said informing that despite resource constraints, steps have been taken to procure 10,000 computers for schools across the country.

She assured imparting adequate training to the teachers and expanding modern information technology to the district level.

The Prime Minister, in her lengthy speech, criticised the Awami League regime for abandoning the "Food for Education" programme introduced during the BNP government in 1991-96.

She announced that the programme with cash stipend instead of wheat would be resumed in all primary schools. She also mentioned the steps taken for retirement benefits and promotions for non-government teachers.

Khaleda claimed marked success in removing traffic congestion and assured further improvement of the situation with construction of some flyovers and circular road around the capital.

Unfit, obsolete and polluter vehicles, harmful to public health and encumbrance to traffic, have been removed from the streets. "It might cause temporary inconvenience to many but the suffering will not prolong," she reassured stating the justification of the step to encourage new vehicles in a streamlined traffic.

She said her government successfully faced the challenge of reaching textbooks with necessary corrections to the students in time.

Government efforts have been intensified to cleanse the educational institutions of terrorism.

Khaleda Zia mentioned the teams sent aboard for increasing garment quotas for Bangladesh and said they returned home with positive outcome. Two influential congressmen from the US during their visit to Bangladesh have assured of looking into the matter.

Accusing the previous Awami League government of inducing the worst of nepotism and corruption in the power sector, the Prime Minister said more time would be necessary to fulfil the conditions of the donors, restructure the sector and to overcome financial and managerial problems.

"But work has started for improvement of transmission and distribution and making it more efficient," she said claiming that loadshedding has come down. She also said that stress has been laid on expansion of rural electrification.

The Prime Minister said she could not be satisfied with the progress of recovery of illegal arms, arrest of identified terrorists and their trial process although the work was begun in last 100 days.

"Implementation of some of our programmes was delayed. We also could not finish part of some programmes," she informed the nation saying such limitations and delays should be admitted before the people.

Because, she maintained, there were only heaps of problems everywhere when they took over.

"Law-and-order situation should be further improved. Social security and peace should be ensured. This is a tough job though," she said about the tasks ahead, adding that there remain huge unauthorised weapons in private hands.

"Dangerous criminals are hiding to escape. They all should be brought to justice," she said hinting at continuing anti-crime hunt.

She regretted the failure to arrange a convention against "terrorism carried out by Awami League." She, however, assured that political initiative would be taken soon in this regard.

The PM said her government had to face much trouble in restoring total peace in society because of patronage given to terrorists and politicisation of police administration by the last Awami League government.

She mentioned that the government had taken some tough steps to bring back discipline and professionalism in police and other law-enforcing departments.

The PM also mentioned the stern actions taken by her government against the lawbreakers wherein even her party leaders and workers were not spared.

Expressing grievances over the opposition's behaviour towards former president Shahabuddin Ahmed, the PM pointed at the reactions that appeared in newspapers and said that it was clear to everybody how hurt and humiliated a senior person like him had been.

She recalled that everybody together made the former chief justice head of interim government in 1990 and under his supervision a free and fair election was held in 1991.

Shahabuddin was also elected unopposed president in 1996, Khaleda Zia said reminding that BNP did not put up any candidate against him but the Awami League chief had threatened to stage a hunger strike to create pressure on him when he first refused to run for the presidency.

Implying the Awami League, the Prime Minister said that the "defeated party" had created lot of pressure on President Shahabuddin to do a lot of unjust things.

The defeated party had also asked for cancelling the results of the elections, but Justice Shahabuddin had remained unmoved even under "threat on his life" and stood for truth and neutrality. "He did not become their puppet to fulfil their illogical desires and for this there is now indecent remarks against him. He is even being called 'betrayor', unfaithful and traitor," she lamented.

Khaleda Zia alleged that the opposition does not want that a person who has self-respect, a person who is competent and respected should become president of the country in future.

She said a senior person like Justice Shahabuddin was humiliated because he did not give in to the unjust pleas. "Everybody should shun such indecent behaviour in the name of politics, otherwise the youths will not respect us and courtesy will disappear from society."