

Protests swell in France as Le Pen vows victory

AFP, Paris

Protests swelled in France yesterday as far-right challenger Jean-Marie Le Pen began campaigning against incumbent conservative Jacques Chirac for next month's presidential run-off, insisting he stood a strong chance of winning.

Thousands of high school students took to the streets in the cities of Montpellier, Le Havre, Rouen, Montauban and Toulon in a repeat of the vociferous protests Monday against Le Pen's weekend electoral breakthrough.

The 73-year-old head of the anti-immigration National Front (FN) party stunned France when he won 16.86 per cent of the vote in the first round of the presidential race, qualifying for the run-off against President Chirac on May 5.

His unprecedented triumph - which forced Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin out of the election - was condemned across the political spectrum, and has provoked a nationwide series of protests, some of which have ended in violence.

In the Bastille quarter of central Paris overnight Monday 14 people were taken into detention after riot police confronted a group of protesters who threw firebombs and bottles and smashed shop windows. Police said 13 officers were slightly hurt in the clashes.

Le Pen was in ebullient form yesterday, challenging Chirac to a face-to-face television debate and refusing to accept the opinion polls that show he lags behind the president by around 77 per cent to 23.

Gujarat violence

FROM PAGE 12
removal of Chief Minister Narendra Modi. The BJP has rejected Modi's removal and given him a clean chit.

But the main opposition Congress, the Left parties and the Samajwadi Party, headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav, had insisted on a discussion under rule 184 contending the killing of more than 800 people in Gujarat violence could be dismissed as a subject concerning only a state.

Giving his ruling yesterday, Sayeed told reporters that violence in Gujarat could not be viewed only as a concern of the state.

The motion, which will now be discussed in Lok Sabha, says, "That this house expresses its grave concern over the failure of the administration in ensuring the security of minority community in various parts of the country, especially in Gujarat, and urges upon the government to take effective steps to restore confidence of the minority communities and to protect them."

The BJP said it had accepted Sayeed's ruling even if it did not agree with what he said. The Congress predictably welcomed

"I can be elected," he told RTL radio. "I am counting on the French people. I am the candidate of the people against the candidate of the system....

I am counting on the millions of French people who think that things are not going well."

The FN leader also repeated his pledge to restore the French franc and take France out of the "Europe of Maastricht", which he said was an infringement on French sovereignty and made impossible the reforms the country needs.

Procession fired on: 2 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were bullet-hit when unidentified gang indiscriminately fired on a procession at Ring Road in the city's Dhamondi area last night.

Sirajul Islam, a DCC commissioner candidate of the four-party alliance of ward 50, came under attack when the procession he was leading reached Ring Road at about 9:30pm.

Debare Hossain and Mohammad Halal were injured by bullets. They were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Local police said police picked up one person for his alleged involvement in the shoot-out.

Ad-interim bail for Dipu Chy

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Sajedul Islam, alias Dipu Chowdhury, accused in a criminal case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order upon a bond of Tk 30,000 with guarantors.

In its order, the court said that the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case could not submit the report regarding involvement in the case against the accused in the last six months. So, the bail petition is rejected on March 7.

The defence lawyers Advocate Quamrul Islam and Khorshed Alam Bachchu submitted a criminal appeal on March 31, seeking bail from the Sessions Judge's Court after the rejection order of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka. Later, the judge heard the appeal on Monday and gave the order yesterday.

The CMM's Court on March 18 rejected the bail petition of Dipu. It was alleged that Dipu and 8 others entered the Kite Car Repairing Servicing Motors in the city's Uttara area and threatened the owner of it on March 1 last year and later on July 22 they took away parts of private car, worth about Tk 20 lakh.

Young man

FROM PAGE 12
the spot at about 11:45 am yesterday and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Some sources in the area claimed that Babul had informed police about Phenisidyl racket in the area.

The victim's wife, Kalpana, filed a case with Sabujbagh police accusing three persons - Manik, Rubel and Shahar Ali - for killing her husband.

Sabujbagh police arrested Manik and a woman - Saleha - in connection with the incident.

CIH virus

FROM PAGE 12
The BCC has advised computer users in the country to keep a back up of all important files before using the computer on this day.

The virus can also be checked by the latest anti-virus software and the BCC called upon the computer users to contact its web site www.bccbd.org for help. Users can also dial 8623467, 8631331 and 8622082 for information about the virus.

Shihab murder

FROM PAGE 12
absentia, the order said.

The court order was published in the Daily Sangbad yesterday.

Detective Branch Inspector Nazrul Islam, Investigation Officer (IO) of the case submitted a charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka on April 18 against six people.

The accused are - Monir Hossain Liton, Abu Syed, Faisal Sharif Raju, Mahbubul Haq Rubel, Imran Hossain Sabuj and Mohammad Nasim Sheikh. Of them, Liton and Syed were arrested and detained in the Dhaka Central Jail.

Liton and Syed gave confessional statements before a magistrate disclosing names of other accused Raju, Rubel, Sabuj and Nasim.

Shihab, 13, a student of Class Seven of Motijheel Model High School, was abducted from in front of his school on February 7. Later, he was killed as he recognised one of the abductors.

Harun murder

FROM PAGE 12
a description to DB interrogators how the murder was planned and committed.

He also named the PBPC armed cadre who fired shot at Harun's chest killing him on the spot at Mugunni at 7:30 pm on March 2. Cadres were deployed at eight places from Deana village up to Dainik Purbanchal office to kill the journalist at any available opportunity. Baby told DB officials who recorded his statement under Section 161.

But the prime accused in Harun murder case staged a high drama on Monday, stunning the magistrate and police officials who are jointly investigating the case.

The magistrate could not record statement under Section 164, said Inspector Shibli Noman. Noman refused allegation of doing any "excess" during interrogation.

On Monday, Baby's mother Fatema Begum submitted a petition before the CMM's court alleging Harun's mother was not in Khulna on the day of Harun's murder. He was staying elsewhere for the last five years after the murder of her eldest son Khokon (Tiger Khokon) on November 29, 1997, she said.

"On April 25, 1998, my fourth son Jamil was murdered. My two sons were murdered at the instigation of a leader of a outlawed party (BPC) and they are again trying to implicate Baby in Harun murder case after failing in several attempts to kill him", Fatema stated in her petition.

The CMM, after receiving Fatema Begum's petition, ordered the authorities concerned to arrange proper medical treatment of Baby if required. He was then lodged in Khulna district jail.

Sources said Mister, who was loyal to the ruling BNP, was killed by his rivals as he was preparing to run for tomorrow's DCC election from the same ward. He was allegedly involved in drug peddling in the Mirpur area.

Sadek Khan, a commissioner in

Ganjojyoti's brother Sulal Barua was an arranged one. Sulal was forced to sign a pre-paid FIR, they said. "If this sounds untrue, then why should Sulal have marks of torture on the Buddhist monk."

In a protest statement yesterday, she said that once again it proved that there was no security of life under the rule of the fascist, corrupt, and killer government.

Hanisa conveyed her sympathy to the Buddhists and urged people to build resistance to the BNP-Jamaat government.

His death has also created a

Commissioners

FROM PAGE 1

Shahid, who was arrested from his Satish Sarkar Road residence on February 13, is now awaiting trial in Dhaka Central Jail. He is contesting the DCC polls as an independent candidate from ward No. 83.

Shahid is facing charges for the murder of Azizur Rahman Khokon in Sutrapur on January 25 and BNP leader Habibur Rahman Mandal in front of his residence at Chandra Mahan Bashak Lane on August 20, 2000.

Police are also investigating whether he had hands in the double murder in Gandaria Rifle Club on June 19 last year. Shahid might face charges for his 'masterminding' the killing of another local young man, Ahmed Hossain Suman, 23, on February 9, 2000.

Ward Commissioner Habibur Rahman Mizan of Mohammadpur and Lalmoni area was implicated in several cases including one for

murder.

Sadek Khan, a commissioner in

Rayerbazar, allegedly grabbed acres of low-lying land, managed hefty allocations from the DCC and constructed roads through the plots

and went on to name those roads after him and his family members.

In Lalbagh, charges have been pressed against Ward Commissioner Haji Mohammad Selim in the BNP leader Shamsul Haque Shanti murder case. Seven cases against Selim are pending with Ramna, Lalbagh and Fatullah police stations. He is facing charges for abduction, harassment of women, attempt to murder and illegal trespassing in those cases.

He allegedly runs an armed gang and committed acts of hooliganism in different areas of the city.

Gummen shot dead Shawkat Ali Mister, commissioner of ward No. 12, in front of his residence at Ahmednagar Paikpara in Mirpur on August 25 last year following a brawl over sharing the proceeds from a school.

Sources said Mister, who was

loyal to the ruling BNP, was killed by his rivals as he was preparing to run for tomorrow's DCC election from the same ward. He was allegedly involved in drug peddling in the Mirpur area.

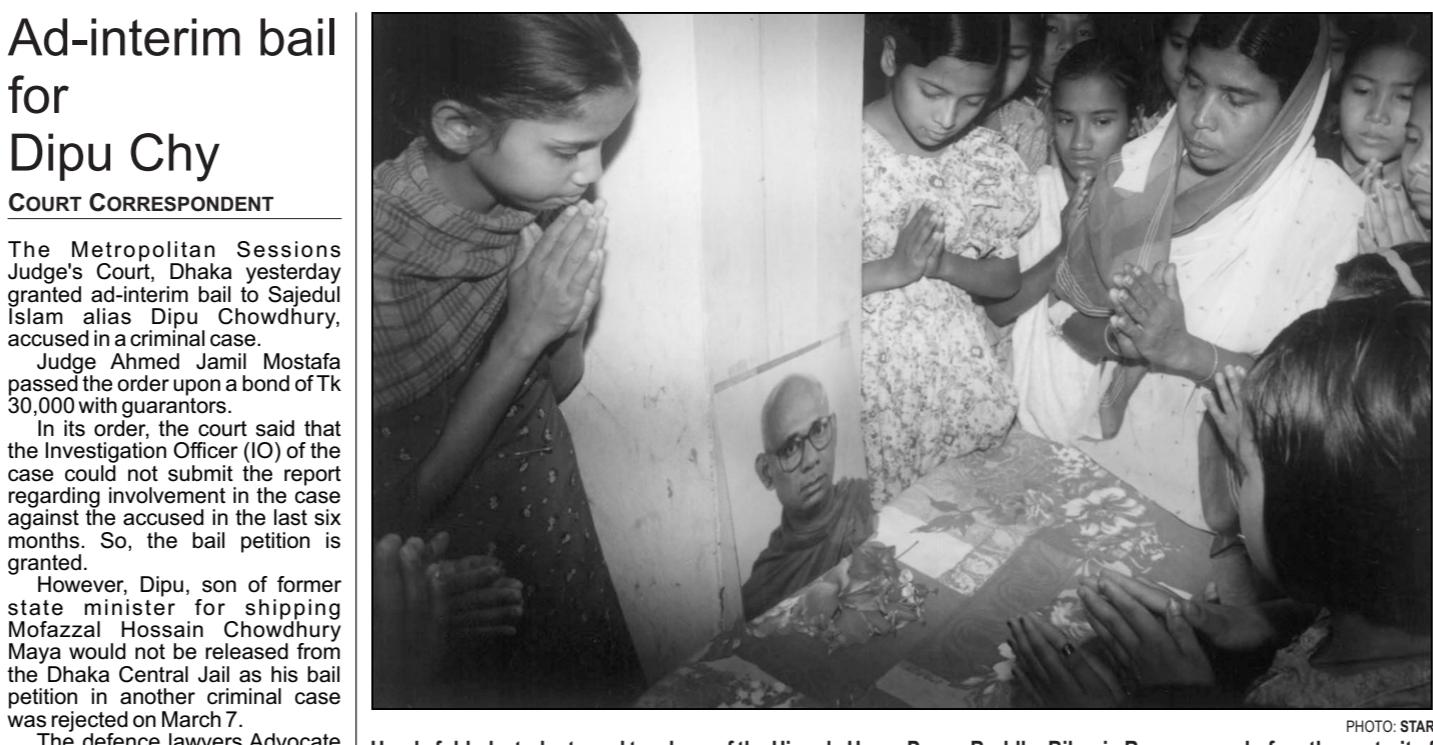


PHOTO: STAR
Hands folded, students and teachers of the Hingala Hoara Puyan Buddha Bihar in Raozan pray before the portrait of Buddhist monk Ganjojyoti Mohashthobir, slain on Monday. (Story on Page 12)

Khaleda: Gas export

From Page 1

Centre, the prime minister blasted the main opposition for 'tarnishing' the image of the country abroad and said the party is engaged in a campaign to project Bangladesh as a Talibani state.

"This unholy campaign will affect Bangladesh and its people abroad. This will obstruct our students from getting foreign scholarships, hamper manpower export, and dent the image of the country," she said and called upon the opposition to come to the parliament to voice its views.

Khaleda also regretted newspaper reports on various issues, particularly on crimes and repression on women. She said the government probed a number of reported incidents, but found these exaggerated and false.

"I will not say that incidents of crime and repression on women are not happening, but I can vouch that such events have come down in last six months compared to the previous regime. I am still not happy with the current situation, but I am confident that my government would be able to check crime gradually," she added.

Referring to the communal violence in the Indian state of Gujarat, she said the government, with the support of the people, has successfully checked all provocations.

Criticising the role of newspapers, she said "I do not find the newspapers playing a responsible role; the press lack responsibility. The media are blowing up some issues in a way as if these events never happened in the past."

She hoped that the media would

play a more 'responsible role' for the greater interest of the country and its people.

Khaleda said the AL government patronised criminals, indiscriminately issued licences for arms and allowed its party men to possess illegal weapons.

"We would not be able to eliminate crime overnight because of previous state backing for criminals. We are proceeding in a planned way to check crime."

In this context, she said crimes in violence-prone Barisal, Feni, Narayanganj, Laxmipur and other areas have been reduced drastically. She also said the government has already brought about changes in the police administration and taken punitive measures against corrupt cops. More changes are underway, she mentioned.

However, she said the police are poorly treated as they have no proper training and facility. They are also provided with poor quality food and suffer from shortage of personnel and vehicles.

Electing to the local bodies in time would improve the law and order situation and reduce crime, she said. The elected representatives would then take care of their respective areas to contain violence.

She said the city corporation polls of Sylhet and Barisal and upazila polls would be held after the elections to the four metropolises Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna. After completion of all elections, she said the elected representatives would be given the responsibility to curb crime.

About electricity crisis, she said

maintenance works in the power sector were not initiated in last five years and many projects were taken up solely to rip off money by the previous ruling party.

She said the government has taken some effective steps to improve the power situation, but said it would take some time to make a difference.

On elections to women's seats in the parliament, the prime minister said although the women organisations have long been demanding direct elections, none of them came up with any modality.

She said the women leaders belonging to the BNP who are contesting the city corporation polls have informed her of the difficulties they are facing in campaigns.

"I personally feel that it is not possible for a woman to cover three wards. It is very tough," she said, adding, "We will soon take a decision on the women's seats in the parliament".

About formation of parliamentary standing committees, she said these are almost finalised and will soon be formed through discussions with the speaker and the chief whip.

She said the government will soon appoint a spokesperson who will hold regular briefings on major events.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Political Secretaries to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury and Mosaddeq Ali were present during the discussion.

Hanif's shenanigans

From Page 1

Some of the most scandal-addled land grabbing actually happened in the space of last eight years when Hanif illegally allocated playgrounds, footpaths, roads and designated car parks for commercial ventures in exchange for money. For instance, residents of Mohammadpur helplessly watched in 1999 how half of the Shaheed Park, a rare playground in the area, vanished into a mosque-cum-shopping centre.

Mr Mayor's endeavours another sneaky deal was frustrated when he allocated a green space in front of the Shishu Park to build a market. In the face of flak from the press, the construction work was stopped by a court order. The half-finished structure still stands as a testimony to the mayor's wreck on the city landscape.

Hanif has been deft in using his so-called election pledges to deface the city, the pledges the city dwellers did not own. He once released

about Tk 3 lakh from the public coffer to fence off a large chunk of public land in the city's Osmany Udayan. His excuse - the land was needed to fulfil his election pledge to rehabilitate street hawkers. Again, public outcry snubbed his attempt to grab the park.

Hanif could not have bothered less about his miserable failure in finding a solution to the garbage problem in Karwan Bazar. This track record did not stop him from embarking on allocating footpaths, a designated car park and a public thoroughfare 'temporarily' to build markets and shops. Nobody in the Nagar Bhaban knew what was Hanif's legal cover for the act. A source in the Nagar Bhaban said such allocations are totally illegal because the lands do not belong to the DCC.

In shovelling off the city's 3,500 tons of daily wastes, Hanif's efforts were restricted to sealing deals with foreign companies to import containers and vehicles. He could not

have cared less that actually not even 40 per cent of the daily wastes are cleaned. In many areas of the city, taxayers lack access to any municipal facilities.

The myopic vision of the mayor to manage the city affairs was soon telling upon the Nagar Bhaban's health as well. Despite having huge land assets and money-spinning resources, the DCC is now teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. Over the last few months the DCC has been unable to buy insecticides for its mosquito eradication programme, leaving the citizens in the danger of dengue infection and malaria.

That Hanif failed in his affairs now