



PHOTO: STAR

Anxious people in a boat (left) traverse the Meghna river in search of their relatives who are presumed missing in a launch capsized Friday night, and salvage operation by rescue vessels Hamza and Rustom is on.

Resolve all disputes for taking AL to parliament: Hasina

UNB, New York

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina has said the government will have to resolve all problems with Awami League for it to call off its boycott of the parliament.

"On the question of joining parliament, we are on our previous stand. Government is continuing its torture and repression on our workers, filing false cases and disgracing the portrait of father of the nation. It will have to settle all these disputes to take us to the parliament," she said.

Hasina, now in the US capital of Washington on a personal visit, came up with the views in an interview with a Bangla weekly, Natun Probashi.

The ex-PM dismissed talks with the government on these issues. "There is no question of holding talks with a government whose cadres have raped my daughters."

She alleged the cadres of BNP-Jamaat coalition were raping even minors, mentioning that only in the month of April some 175 children were deflowered in Bangladesh.

Replying to a question about the allegation against Awami League that it is involved in damaging country's image abroad, she dismissed it as a blatant lie. The image of the country is being tarnished for the misdeeds of the government, she said in a counteroffensive.

"The alliance government is involved in widespread corruption, which caused a breach in the inflow of foreign aid. Many countries have withdrawn their grants," she told the newspaper.

About the speedy trial law, the Awami League president said the alliance government "cheated" the people by introducing the law. The Public Safety Act did not curtail the fundamental rights of the people, but this law did it.

"The ruling party has not only taken the law into its own hands but also established the reign of terror across the country," she said.

Extortionists beat contractor to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A contractor was beaten to death by extortionists in the city yesterday and another person was killed in gang violence late Saturday night.

A gang of extortionists beat a contractor to death in front of his house at Maddhya Badda in the city yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Abul Kalam, 35, a land filling contractor and son of Jainuddin.

Sources said Abul Kalam was supervising the earth filling work near a five-storey building when a gang of five extortionists led by Mokhtar went to him at about 9:45am and demanded toll.

When Kalam refused to pay, they got into an argument and at one stage the gang started punching and kicking him on his face and chest, knocking him down unconscious on the ground.

Kalam's wife Kohinoor Begum later rushed him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

The duty officer of Badda Police Station said last night that they were yet to receive any complaint in this regard.

In an earlier incident on Saturday night, gangsters stabbed and killed a fellow member of their gang at Miah Jan lane in the city's Demra area following a feud over dominance in the area.

Sources said a gang of five called Khokan 25, an alleged gang member, out of his 92/2 Miah Jan Lane, Maniknagar, and stabbed him indiscriminately.

He was sent to a local clinic where the attending doctors declared him dead at about 11pm. The body was sent to the Mitford hospital morgue for autopsy.

Hartal paralyses life in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The dawn-to-dusk hartal called by Rajshahi Nagorik Committee (RNC) was observed in the city and nine upazilas of the district yesterday, paralysing normal life.

The hartal was called demanding cancellation of Rajshahi City Corporation election and removal of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).

The main opposition Awami League, 11-party alliance and a fraction of Jatiya Party extended their support to the hartal.

At least ten persons were injured as police clubbed pro-hartal activists in Shaheb Bazar and Court areas during the hartal.

At around 11:30 am, armed BNP

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PM leaves for NY today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia leaves for New York today to lead Bangladesh delegation to a special UN session on children beginning May 8.

This is the first major UN conference to be held in New York after the September 11 attack on World Trade Centre.

The three-day UN session will review the achievements of the goals adopted at the landmark World Summit on children in 1990 in order to improve condition of children in various parts of the world.

Some 71 heads of state or government, vice-presidents and crown princes from around the globe are expected to attend the UN special session to address problems of world children.

Prime Minister Khaleda will address the General Assembly session on the first day of the three-day event. She will also participate in a roundtable discussion with other heads of state or government on the theme "Renewal of commitment and future action for children in the next decade."

Minister for Women and Children Affairs Khurshid Zahan Haque, PM's Advisor for Mass and Primary Education Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum and Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu will accompany the prime minister.

Cabinet Secretary, Foreign Secretary, PM's Political Secretary-II and other senior officials are in the PM's entourage.

Rangs showroom looted in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Dacoits looted electrical and electronic goods from a showroom of Toshiba/Rangs at the city centre of Jamal Khan here in the early hours of yesterday.

Sources said, a number of dacoits entered the roadside showroom adjoining to Chheragi Pahar intersection breaking the locks of its shutters and glass door at around 2am.

The dacoits reportedly confined the local night guard Abdur Rahman, 50, in a chamber inside the showroom and looted 31 pieces of different items worth around Tk. 3.77 lakh as well as Tk. 34,000 in cash.

The looted goods include six television sets, three VCDs, four electric irons, three microwave ovens, two rice cookers, two pioneer deck sets, one air cooler and ten cameras.

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PM asks secretaries Reduce dependence on foreign aid, check corruption

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said the country will have to reduce dependence on foreign aid and be selective in drawing projects that are dependent on external assistance.

"We have to work unitedly to establish ourselves as a self-respecting and self-reliant nation," she asserted while addressing secretaries of all the ministries at a meeting held at the International Conference Centre here yesterday.

It was the third meeting between the Prime Minister and the hierarchy of bureaucracy for policy directives since the present government of four-party alliance came to power.

The Prime Minister asked the top bureaucrats to give special attention to implementing development programmes undertaken by her government ensuring proper use of the available funds, as foreign assistance is becoming

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Chirac set for a sweep

AFP, Paris

President Jacques Chirac looked set for a landslide victory over far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen in a run-off election yesterday, riding high on strong voter turnout and a groundswell of opposition to his rival's anti-Europe, anti-immigrant programme.

Left-wing parties and French newspapers from across the political spectrum had called for a massive vote in favor of the conservative Chirac to limit the score of Le Pen, head of the National Front party.

Three hours before polls were due to close, 67.6 per cent of the country's 41 million voters had cast

their ballots, significantly higher than the 58.55 percent that had voted by the same time in the first round on April 21, according to the interior ministry.

Opinion surveys published before a weekend blackout showed Chirac could win up to 82 per cent of the votes.

The last polling stations are to close at 8:00pm (1800 GMT), with computer projections of the results to be issued immediately.

Many left-wing voters said they had supported Chirac, 69, after Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin was eliminated by Le Pen in the first round of voting, although

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Nigerian plane crash 100 die on board, 83 on ground

AFP, Kano, Nigeria

Investigators combed blackened rubble in the Nigerian city of Kano yesterday, as the official death toll from an airliner crash topped 100 and rescuers said scores more had perished.

President Olusegun Obasanjo announced that at least 106 people died when a twin-engine passenger jet ploughed into a densely inhabited Kano suburb Saturday, levelling homes and a school.

The Red Cross said yesterday that at least 130 people were killed and 49 seriously injured in the crash and that the figures could yet rise.

A statement from the Nigerian Red Cross said that more than 30 homes had been destroyed in the crash and that hundreds had been left homeless.

However, rescue volunteers at the scene told the AFP that 83 more people had died on the ground and that more bodies were trapped in the ruins of houses destroyed in the crash and subsequent explosion.

An official from the Nigerian private airline that operated the plane, EAS, told AFP at the Kano

airport that 105 people had been on board, the plane's maximum capacity.

Hospital officials said yesterday that only five had survived.

Local volunteers bore the brunt of the overnight search for bodies and survivors after the police and fire brigade appeared overwhelmed by the tragedy, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

Shehu Tofa, an engineer with another airline, was one of those who raced to the scene to help in the rescue. He told AFP that the plane's black box flight recorder had been recovered.

As the investigations continued, crowds of stunned relatives thronged to the scene, weeping and confused. Some street protests broke out, as grieving families demanded answers.

The British Aerospace 1-11-500 jet operated by the EAS crashed shortly after takeoff on the second leg of a domestic flight from Jos to Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital.

Obasanjo cut short a four-nation tour of southern Africa when he learned of the crash, flying back overnight from Botswana.

5 killed as storm hits Sunamganj, Barisal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five people were killed and 50 others injured as norwester lashed Sunamganj and Barisal districts yesterday.

Of them, three were killed in Sunamganj and the rest two in Barisal.

Our Sunamganj Correspondent reports: Three people were killed by lightning during a severe storm that lashed Derai upazila of Sunamganj district yesterday noon.

The victims were identified as Abul Kalam, 30, son of Abdur Hannan, Rabeya Khatun, 14, daughter of Shahed Ali and Salema Banu, 42, wife of AbdulAziz.

All the three were struck by lightning while harvesting paddy in the field at village Radhanagar.

Thousands of kutcha houses were damaged and a huge number of trees uprooted during the storm.

In Barisal, norwester lashed

seven upazilas of the district in the early hours of yesterday, killing two persons and injuring 50 others, according to UNB.

Chairman of Jangalia Union in Mehendiganj upazila said a woman of Charbholanath village was killed in house collapse while a man of the same village was killed by lightning. The identity of the two could not be known.

At least 50 people were injured in the storm in Mehendiganj Upazila alone. Uprooted trees fell on different roads, blocking traffic, said the chairman.

Met office and local administration sources said the storm damaged kutcha houses, standing crops and uprooting trees in seven upazilas.

Several hundred houses including schools were razed to the ground by the storm that lasted about 25 minutes.



Shazneen case Bail prayer of accused rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) has rejected the bail prayer of the accused in the Shazneen murder case.

A division bench consisting of Justice Gaur Gopal Saha and Md. Abdur Razzak on Saturday handed down the verdict on hearing of the petition.

In the petition, Advocate Anisul Huq, the lawyer for the accused, said that since the case was pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions' Judge's Court, Dhaka and was stayed on an order of the High Court the accused should be granted bail. Moreover, the accused are sick and need treatment, the defence lawyer said.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Abdul Awal opposed the petition saying the petition was filed in 1998, but the hearing on the case was going on at the trial court. If the accused were sick, they might have recovered from their illness by this time, he said.

The government has taken steps to speedily dispose of 100 sensational cases, including the Shazneen murder case, the DAG said.

Advocate Mojibur Rahman appeared on behalf of Latifur Rahman, father of Shazneen.

Court accepts charge sheet in Sajal murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday accepted the chargesheet in the Sajal Chowdhury murder case.

The court also fixed May 26 for next hearing of the case.

Former Awami League lawmaker Hajj Mookbul Hossain and seven others have been chargesheeted in the case.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted the chargesheet to the CMM's court on Thursday.

In the chargesheet, 19 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Sajal Chowdhury, a BNP activist was gunned down near the Science Laboratory in the city by armed men from a convoy of vehicles allegedly led by the then AL lawmaker Mookbul Hossain during an opposition called hartal on February 9, 1999.

Dhanmondi police recorded a murder case in this connection. In the FIR, it was stated that Sajal was shot dead during a clash involving activists of BNP, Jamat-e-Islami and the then ruling Awami League.

Later, the victim's father filed a General Diary (GD) alleging that a gang of gunmen led by Mookbul Hossain shot his son dead.

Jubo Dal men attack Shamim Osman's house at N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A group of Jubo Dal cadres attacked the residence of former AL lawmaker A K M Shamim Osman in Chashara area of the town last night. They also attacked the residence of Jubo League activist Nasir alias 'Tunda Nasir' in the same area.

According to witnesses, the Jubo Dal cadres led by Lablu reached in front of the house of Shamim Osman at around 11:15 pm and fired gunshots at the three-storey building.

None, however, was injured as the house remained vacant since October 1 election.

The Jubo Dal men left the scene and went to the residence of Jubo League activist 'Tunda Nasir'. They fired 2 rounds of shots at the house and tried to break open the main gate.

A case was filed in this connection.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 6		6-30pm
May 7	5-21 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-33	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation