



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks as chief guest at a programme on the World Food Day at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday.

Rickshaw owners, pullers threaten strike on Oct 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Rickshaw and Van Malik-Sramik Sangram Parishad yesterday demanded the government issue new license for the proposed 55,000 rickshaw and vans in the city without further delay. They announced a dawn-to-dusk strike on October 27 if their demand is not met within October 25. The parishad at a press conference yesterday at the Dhaka Reporters Unity office also demanded that the city corporation authorities include representatives of the Sangram Parishad in identifying illegal rickshaw.

Use surface water as much as possible

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This year's theme of the day "Water: Source of Food Security" as very timely. Organised by the Agriculture Ministry at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium, the function was addressed, among others, by Agriculture Minister Matiuir Rahman Nizami, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and FAO Representative in Bangladesh Bui Thi Lan. The prime minister recalled that Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman realising this fact had first taken initiative to build up an integrated infrastructure by using surface water for better management of irrigation. "He (Zia) had launched the programme for canal digging and river dredging, and encouraged the people to dig thousands of kilometres of canals and dredge rivers in remote villages of the country," she told the audience of diplomats, MPs, ministers, government officials and agricultural experts. Explaining the usefulness of this

scheme, Khaleda said water to be held by these canals and rivers in the rainy season would be used during dry season for irrigation. She said Bangladesh had attained food autarky within a short period of time due to this revolutionary step of Shaheed Zia. Khaleda said farmers would have to be made aware about soil and water management apart from being encouraged to adopt scientific methods of cultivation. Turning to the growing population and shortage of arable land in Bangladesh, Khaleda Zia called for producing more food through optimum use of land and adopting modern technology. "The country's population will hit 17 crore in 2025 when the demand for food will go up to 3 crore metric tons," she said. The prime minister reminded that there are problems of excess rain, floods, drought and salinity in Bangladesh. "So the challenge to boost food grain output for the increased number of population is very tough, particularly in this adverse situation." Underlining the importance of bringing qualitative changes in crop production management, the prime minister said more and more lands are needed to be brought under irrigation facility. "Salt tolerant varieties of crops will have to be cultivated on lands in coastal areas where crop do not grow due to salinity and water logging. We have to apply biotechnology, if necessary," the prime minister said. "It means we have to ensure the best use of every inch of our land. That's how food security can be ensured," Khaleda told the function. The prime minister said the country's development activities should be carried on by proper and logical use of natural resources in the interest of the present and future generations. Referring to the increasing trend of irrigation in agriculture, she said in irrigation 77 per cent of water comes from underground sources while 23 percent from rivers, canals and ponds. On the occasion of the World Food Day, the prime minister called upon all to get involved in Tele-Food Programme to fight against hunger. Agriculture Minister Matiuir Rahman Nizami said, "We need to boost the country's food production by 15 per cent to meet the increased demand in the year 2025." He said the demand for water would be 24,370 million cubic metres in the year 2020 when the deficit will be 880 million cubic metres.

14 hurt as armed criminals clash

UNB, Munshiganj

At least 14 people were injured, three with bullets, in a gunfight between two rival groups of criminals at Palerbarhat in Sadar upazila here yesterday. Police and witnesses said the trouble erupted when the supporters of Mohsin-Kana Babul attacked the followers of another criminal City Bachchu in the afternoon. Bachchu, a possible chairman candidate of Rampal Union Council, went to the area for election campaign. During the half an hour fight, the two rival groups fired gunshots creating panic among the villagers. The injured were admitted to different clinics and hospitals. Condition of bullet-injured Aman, bodyguard of City Bachchu, was stated to be critical.

Ctg JCD office

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Chairperson Khaleda Zia's visit to Chittagong today. Meanwhile, a group of about 16 JCD men including the new committee's convenor Mosharraf Hossain Dipti and member secretary Yasin Chowdhury Liton on their way back to the city from the mazar of late President Ziaur Rahman at Rauzan reportedly came under attack by the agitating faction in the afternoon. Sources said activists of the agitating faction put up a barricade at Braxmanhut under Rauzan and reportedly chased and assaulted some members of the Dipti group. Dipti could not be contacted for comment. A tense situation prevailed in and around the city JCD office at Nasimom Bhaban where additional police were deployed. Our CU correspondent adds: Leaders and activists of Chittagong University unit of JCD are reportedly unhappy over its 51-member new convening committee declared on Monday. The central committee declared the new convening committee with Mohammad Selim as its convenor and Ferdous Morshed Khan as acting general secretary, and Miton Chowdhury, Ujjal and Khorshed as joint convenors. Announcement of the committee evoked anger among leaders and activists of JCD CU unit who alleged that the committee consisted of non-students, including Mohammad Selim, as well as Shibir cadres. Requesting anonymity, some leaders of the JCD CU unit said Mohammad Selim failed to appear in his MA (preliminary) examination from the university's political science department in 1999. As it was his last chance to take the exam, he lost his student status as per CU ordinance.

However, sources said the university recently granted Selim permission to sit for the exam, which makes him a student. The JCD leaders also alleged that some cadres loyal to Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) were included in the convening committee. They identified four of such ICS cadres as Noyab Ali Noyem, a master's student of the Sociology department, Baizid and Mahtabuddin, both fourth-year students of the Marketing department, and Mahtab Alam, a fourth-year student of Accounting department. The new committee will form a full-fledged committee of JCD CU unit by December, the sources added.

Contraband goods seized

BSS, Dhaka

Members of Bangladesh Coast Guard in cooperation with officials of fisheries, forest and local administration, seized different contraband items worth about Tk 2.62 crore during the last 15 days, a press release said here yesterday. The coastal security forces ran their operation at Chandpur, Laxmipur, Ramgoti, Doulatkhan, Chalna Bazar, Sitakunda, Bhola, Patenga and seized the goods that included nearly 13 lakh metres of current fishing net worth Taka 2.37cr.

Upazila

He added there was also constitutional obligation and court order to hold upazila elections. The Local Government Division has far sought time for 16 times over the last 10 years to hold upazila polls and there is a court order to complete the polls by December 18 this year, Mannan Bhuiyan told the meeting. Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Industries Minister MK Anwar, Information Minister Tariqul Islam and some others also took part in the debate and favoured revival of upazila and elections thereby as early as possible. On November 19 last year, a five-member cabinet committee was formed to review the upazila system. The committee submitted a set of recommendations for holding the election by amending some laws. The committee comprised Mannan Bhuiyan, Mosharraf, Moudud, MK Anwar and the then information minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, who was later replaced by Tariqul Islam. Huda was also included in the committee later on.

Crop growers

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Alamgir was critical of the slide in public investment in the irrigation sector and the donors' suggestion for farm subsidy cut. The state minister, however, believes the development of the agro-based industry can maximise prices on farmers' crops. He suggested that a separate division be set up in the agriculture ministry, which will be completely dedicated to promotion of the agro-based industry. Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, who also attended the seminar, has said poor farmers starve in a particular season because of their poor purchasing capacity. Speakers hope that fair pricing can help prevent farmers from switching over to non-farm occupations. Agriculture Minister Motiuir Rahman Nizami, FAO representative to Bangladesh Bui Thi Lan, BARC Executive Chairman Dr Nurul Alam, ex-member director of the BARC Moniruzzaman and Country Director of the IUCN, Bangladesh Dr Ainun Nishat also spoke at the seminar. Former vice-chancellor of the Bangladesh Agriculture University Shah M Faruk presented the keynote paper on the World Food Day's theme -- "Water: Source of Food Security". Also, a three-day food fair was arranged at the BARC premises in the Farmgate area. Meantime, while the government policymakers underscored adoption of frontier technology to augment food production for ever-increasing population, some pro-environment non-governmental organisations (NGOs) went against genetic engineering. UBINIG, an NGO, held a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, denouncing any move to adopt hybrid and genetic engineering in agriculture. In a written statement, the UBINIG executive director, Farida Akhtar, gave a strong view against the use of chemical fertiliser and pesticide. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in a news release yesterday regretted its

inability to respond to the ever-mounting hunger crisis, despite generosity of donors and enormous sacrifices by relief workers. WFP Executive Director James T Morris said natural calamities and strife nowadays lead to hunger around the world. In its annual report titled "State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002," the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said progress in curbing world hunger has virtually come to a halt. Millions of people, including six million children under five, die from hunger each year, said the report released on the occasion of the World Food Day. The FAO estimates that there were around 840 million undernourished people in 1998-2000, 799 million in the developing countries, 30 million in the countries in transition and 11 million in the industrialised countries. Between 1990-92 and 1998-2000, the number of undernourished people decreased by barely 2.5 million a year, but the number of the undernourished is actually growing in most regions. FAO cautioned that unless the trend is sharply reversed, the world will fall far short of reaching the World Food Summit 1996 goal of reducing the number of the hungry by half by 2015.

Foreign secretary

ing from a ship in Chittagong port was verified by the government, the foreign secretary said, "It is the shipping ministry's task to look into the matter." "The government has categorically denied the report. They (the Time authorities) could have written such a report just because we are an open and democratic society. They abused our hospitality and sought to hurt the country's image." Speaking about the possible consequence of the report, he said, "We are worried about its long-term implications on Bangladesh's travelling outside." Asked if the government would ban the current issue of the Time, Chowdhury said he does not know about any such move. He regretted that the Time carried the report at a time when Bangladesh is recognised as a "role model of communal harmony and transparent Muslim nation" and when the United States and Europe praised Bangladesh for its clear stance against terrorism. He said US President George W Bush wrote a letter to the Bangladesh president lauding the country's commitment to combating terrorism. Besides, the US Congressional hearing committee and US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca appreciated Bangladesh's role.

Villager gunned down in Fatikchhari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Unidentified gunmen shot dead a villager at South Paidong under Fatikchhari upazila in the early hours of yesterday. The dead was identified as Badiul Alam Babul, 35, son of Ahmad Gani. Police said a gang of miscreants stormed into the house of Babul at around 1.30 am and shot in his abdomen and legs. Other inmates of the house immediately took Babul to upazila health complex where the doctors declared him dead. A case has been lodged with the Fatikchhari thana in this regard.

RHD contractors demand payment of overdue bills

A CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Contractors of the Roads and Highways Department in Barisal yesterday put offices of the additional chief engineer, the superintendent engineer and the executive engineer under lock and key demanding payment of a long overdue bill of Tk 75 crore. Earlier, the contractors brought out a procession and held a protest rally in town. They demanded abolition of package system, cancellation of joint registration and payment of bills in instalments. Later they put the offices under lock and key ousting the engineers and employees of the department. The contractors said that they would keep the offices sealed off until the authority met their demands.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addresses the party's second divisional conference in the Rajshahi city yesterday.

Saddam scores 100

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territory. We will surprise them and fight them everywhere, in every village and every town," he vowed. The Iraqi president, in power since 1979, had garnered 99.96 per cent of the vote in the country's first referendum in 1995. The ruling Baath Party had targeted a 100 per cent "yes" vote this time and created a festive mood in defiance of US plans to topple Saddam, whom Washington accuses of developing weapons of mass destruction. "To my knowledge, no proof has been found, or in any case officially made public, of a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda," Chirac said. "Even if some terrorists have found refuge in Iraq, you mustn't mix up issues," he said, adding "the main aim of the international community concerning Iraq must be disarmament." Chirac's comments challenged statements by Bush, who has tried to link al-Qaeda, which Washington blames for the September 11, 2001 attacks, and Saddam's Iraq. The United States is pushing for the Security Council to pass a resolution allowing immediate recourse to force if Iraq refuses to scrap its alleged arsenal of banned weaponry. France, which has veto power on the council, is lobbying for two resolutions: one that would give a deadline for compliance with arms inspections, then, if that was ignored, another that would spell out the consequences for Baghdad. Chirac said that an attack on Iraq might also have repercussions for what the United States terms a worldwide "war on terror."

"We cannot exclude terrorist groups using the Iraqi matter as a pretext for new actions and as a basis for propaganda," he said. In Baghdad, Ibrahim said it was counting on France to do more to restrain the United States. "We have high hopes that France will develop its position to the better in the event of (US) aggression against Iraq (or) in order to prevent this aggression... or to back us if need be," he told reporters. Moscow, which also has veto power in the Security Council, said that the British-backed US draft resolution calling for the automatic use of force against Iraq was "unacceptable." "The US draft resolution on Iraq has not undergone any changes. It remains unacceptable, and Russia will not support it," Deputy Foreign Minister Yury Fedotov was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency. Fedotov said Russia's position remained close to that of France and that Moscow was pressing for a quick return of UN weapons inspectors who would check whether or not Baghdad was developing weapons of mass destruction.

She (Khaleda Zia) has come to power pledging to fight crimes and corruption, but now it seems that her government, corrupt ministers, MPs and criminals have joined hands in a war against the people." Referring to the recent wheat scam, Hasina alleged that The chief of this government had allocated Tk 100 crore for purchase of wheat when the growers had no stock. Then low quality Indian wheat was imported and stocked in government granaries at the cost of the people. She also suggested reducing the size of the cabinet and the council of ministers to avoid wastage of public money for them. "The only success this government has achieved is in oppressing the opposition leaders and activists... And they are doing this to eliminate the Awami League, but this is never possible because it is the party of the people," Hasina said. "This government is also plotting to sell gas to India... This move must be foiled," she said. At the conference, about 2000 people joined the AL under the leadership of Chapainawabganj Jatiya Party General Secretary Abdu Samad and former MP from Ishwardi Panjab Biswas. Earlier on Tuesday night, Hasina held separate meetings with the leaders of city AL, Jubo League, Chhatra League, Krishak League, Sramik League and Mohila AL at the circuit house. The conference was also addressed by, among others, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Jubo League General Secretary Quazi Iqbal, Pabna district AL secretary Rezarur Rahman Lal, Sirajganj AL acting president Shahidul Islam Talukhdar, Joypurhat AL convenor SM Sulaiman, Bhangura (Pabna) AL vice president Mokbul Islam, Ratinagar (Naogaon) AL organising secretary Amjad Hossain, Natore district AL Sajedur Rahman, Bogra district AL president Mantaj Uddin and Puthia upazila AL president Abdus Salam Mandol. Earlier, Sheikh Hasina offered prayers at the Mazar of Hazrat Shah Mokhdum (RA) at Dargapara in the city.

Karachi rocked

"A senior police officer told AFP. One policeman's hands were blown off. A fourth parcel bomb was later discovered near one of the targeted police stations just before 3:30pm (1030 GMT). Police said they defused the bomb and there were no casualties. "It is an act of terrorism," Sindh provincial home affairs secretary retired Brigadier Mukhtar Sheikh declared. "If the message was to deter us from pursuing the war on terrorism these terrorists are mistaken," he told AFP. "Our war against terrorism will continue." Just before 1:30pm a parcel bomb exploded in the office of the Pakistani police force's top al-Qaeda investigators at the Crime Investigation Department (CID). CID investigator Mukhtar Junejo told AFP. "We received two parcels and when an officer opened one of the parcels it exploded and two police officers received minor injuries," Junejo said. The CID was set up in Karachi 12 months ago to track down fugitives from Osama bin Laden's network as well as Pakistani Islamic militants.

Pro-Taliban cleric PPPP of banned former prime minister Benazir Bhutto holding 63 seats. The religious MMA secured 45 seats, or nearly 17 per cent, in the biggest surprise of last week's general elections, the first since a military coup in 1999. Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won only 14 seats in a severe setback for the party that held a two-thirds majority in the last parliament. The ethnic grouping Muttahidda Quami Movement (MQM) and the pro-government multi-party National Alliance secured 13 seats each, while the rest of the 272 contested seats went to smaller regional parties and independents. Repolling and by-elections have been ordered for three national assembly seats because of irregularities. Punjab, the most populous Pakistani province, showed the highest turnout at 46.3 per cent, while sparsely populated southwestern Baluchistan province recorded the lowest number of people voting with 28.5 per cent.

Pro-Taliban cleric

Abducted schoolgirl rescued STAFF CORRESPONDENT Police yesterday rescued an abducted schoolgirl from Khagrachhari. A gang of miscreants abducted the girl, a student of class II, from in front of Lions School at Nayatola Chairman Lane in the city on October 7. Victim's father filed a case with Ramna Police Station under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on October 12. Following the case, police arrested two persons named Motaleb and Ayesha Akther Sumi, 20, from Chankha residential area in Chittagong. On the statement of Sumi, police later rescued the victim from Khedachhara, Matiranga in Khagrachhari. She was brought to the capital yesterday. A case was filed with Ramna Police Station in this regard.

Abducted schoolgirl rescued

Crackdown FROM PAGE 1 ers have been killed over the last five months. The government had formed a high-powered cabinet committee to recommend ways of fighting crimes. The committee recommended 178 steps, but only 14 have been implemented. Against this backdrop, the government issued firearms licences among ward commissioners and also agreed to do so for the petrol pump owners who also reported increased incidents of crime.