

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

#### 14 hurt as armed criminals clash

UNB, Munshigani

At least 14 people were injured, three with bullets, in a gunfight between two rival groups of criminals at Palerbharat 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.

#### 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 vesterday.

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 constituhold 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 fivemember 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 Tarigul Islam, Huda was also included in the committee later on.

#### Foreign secretary

FROM PAGE 1 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 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 Bangladeshis

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.

# Ctg JCD office

of Prime Minister and BNP 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 Nasimon 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 nonstudents, 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

sity recently granted Selim permission to sit for the exam, which makes m 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 fourthyear student of Accounting depart-

The new committee will form a full-fledged committee of JCD CU unit by December, the sources

#### Girl injured

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Tejgaon Police went to the spot and encircled the attackers who also threw crackers at the police. Police responded by firing gunshots, which hit a young man Tuhin, an alleged gang member. in the back

Tuhin was admitted to the

#### Domestic help FROM PAGE 12

a rolling pin. Alam was then locked up in the toilet again, his head

As he started screaming in pain, one of the neighbours called in the Dhanmondi police, who went to the

house and rescued the boy.

Police also arrested Toma for torturing Alam, who is now being treated for head injury.
A case was filed with Dhanmondi

lice station in this regard

### Crop growers

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 agrohased 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

Speakers hope that fair pricing can help prevent farmers from switching over to non-farm occupa-

Agriculture Minister Motiur 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

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 engineerina

UBINIG, an NGO, held a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, denouncing any move to adopt hybrid and genetic engineer-

ing 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 evermounting 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.

#### Villager gunned down in Fatikchhari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Unidentified gunmen shot dead a villager at South Paindong 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 unazila health complex where the doctors declared him death. A case has been lodged with the Fatikchhari thana in this regard.

#### 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.

They claimed that this might stop the 'harassment' that the Parishad members undergo in the hands of police during the illegal rickshaw

At the conference, membersecretary of the parishad M Insur Ali said the communication minister had assured them that their demands would be met within the next ten days.

"But the minister has not yet taken any steps to do so." he

Their demands also include issuing 500 licenses to the hood and body makers of rickshaw. They also demanded that instead of seizing the rickshaw, anyone found plying illegally should be fined.

Among others Sukkur Ahmed, Haji Abdul Mannan, convenor and join- convenor of the Parishad respectively were present at the conference.

#### 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

#### **UNDP** team visits Khagrachhari

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong** 

An advance team of the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) visited Khagrachhari yesterday to delve into the latest condition of the Chittagong Hill Tracts prior to taking development

programmes in the area. Led by the risk assessment expert, Jek Cleson, the team includes Otin Dewan, hill tracts area programme officer of the UNDP.

The team held a meeting with the district commissioner and the superintendent of police on the latest situation of the district.

It was learnt that another team will visit the area on October 19 to asses the project feasibility.

A development project titled "Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Project" was taken before.

#### Launch dacoity in Sunamgani

UNB, Sunamganj

Armed bandits looted valuables worth Tk 3 lakh from passengers of a Sunamganj-bound launch on Sonatala river Tuesday morning.

Police said a gang of 14 bandits came in a boat and took control of the launch "Aziz Monjil" coming from Mohonganj of Netrakona district at gunpoint when it reached Alipur area under Dharmapasha upazila at about 9am.

They beat the passengers indiscriminately leaving four seriously injured and decamped with the booty.

The injured were admitted to Jamalganj upazila health complex A case was filed.

#### Road acciden kills 2 in Keranigani

UNB, Keraniganj

Two people were killed and three others injured, two of them seriously, in a road accident on Dhaka-Mawa road here yesterday

The mishap occurred at about 10:30am when an autorickshaw crashed into a truck, killing the autorickshaw driver Abul Hashem, 28, and passenger Manirul Islam, 26, on the spot. Three injured passengers were

admitted to the Dhaka Medical

College Hospital. The bodies were sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Use surface water as much as possible scheme. Khaleda said water to be

this year's theme of the day "Water: Source of Food Security" as very rainy season would be used during

Organised by the Agriculture Ministry at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium, the function was addressed, among others, by Agriculture Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and FAO Representative in Bangladesh Bui

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

held by these canals and rivers in the

dry season for irrigation. She said Bangladesh had attained food autarky within a short period of time due to this revolution-

ary 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 meth-

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

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

irrigation 77 per cent of water comes from underground sources while 23 percent from rivers, canals and On the occasion of the World

Food Day, the prime minister called

of irrigation in agriculture, she said in

upon all to get involved in Tele-Food Programme to fight against hunger. Agriculture Minister Matiur

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

#### Newmooring

be 880 million cubic metres

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tainer cargo, port sources said. "The project, which Chittagong port is to finance from its own funds, is scheduled to be completed by

2005," sources said Sources said, the Newmooring container terminal project was launched after the demand for modernising the existing port infrastructure was raised by port users, labour unions and other concerned quarters. "The project could see the light of day after remaining shelved



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

## Saddam scores 100

against Baghdad.

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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 "ves" 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.

### Karachi rocked

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tinue.

opened," 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 con-

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

Saddam managed the seemingly impossible as Bush was poised to sign a congressional resolution authorising the use of military force against Iraq. The

signing was due at 1500 GMT. But French President Jacques Chirac warned that a US war on Iraq could spark terrorist attacks, and Russia repeated it would not brook a Security Council resolution mandating the automatic use of force

Speaking to Lebanon's L'Orient-Le Jour newspaper ahead of a visit to Beirut, Chirac also said he knew of no relationship between Iraq and Osama hin Laden's al-Qaida te network.

"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-Qaida, 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 "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 unaccept-

able, and Russia will not support

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

### Miss Photogenic

of mass destruction.

FROM PAGE 12 Chowdhury later presented some favourite songs that enthralled the

Two of the leading business and ress houses in the country -- Lever Brothers and Anandadhara jointly organised the event.

Such events will also be organised soon in Svlhet. Khulna and Rajshahi, a press release issued by Lever Brothers said

### Pro-Taliban cleric

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) are actively courting the MMA's clerics to join a coalition to capture the majority needed to form a government.

But both parties have said the

MMA must roll back its opposition to

the US troops and FBI agents' presence here if they want to enter into a coalition. "What needs to be seen in the next couple of days is whether the MMA is going to bring about any substantial change in its foreign

policy position or cut down its rheto-

ric," PPP secretary general Raza Rabbani told AFP. PML-Q's leader Mian Azhar told AFP that the party would not retreat on its policy of supporting the presence of US troops and FBI agents in

As the MMA's bearded clerics arrived for the meeting at the Islamabad villa of MMA vicepresident Qazi Hussein Ahmed, PML-Q's parliamentary leader Chaudry Shujaat Hussain was inside holding talks with Ahmed.

The PML-Q will send 77 legislators to the national assembly with the

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 irregulari-

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.

### **Abducted** schoolgirl rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Police yesterday rescued an abduc-

ted 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 field with Ramna Police Station in this regard.

Hasina FROM PAGE 12 office detailed reports of repression

and torture by the ruling alliance in their respective areas. She hoped the government would give up its 'plans for eliminating the AL' and would rather work for the welfare of the people.

The opposition leader demanded

establishment of rule of law, immediate separation of the judiciary, effective steps to check crimes, arrest and punishment of those responsible for repression and reduction of the prices of essentials 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 govern-

ment 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 She also suggested reducing the

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

size of the cabinet and the council of

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.

ership of Chapainawabganj Jatiya Party General Secretary Abdus Samad and former MP from Ishwardi Paniab Biswas Éarlier on Tuesday night. Hasina held separate meetings with the

leaders of city AL, Jubo League,

At the conference, about 2000

people joined the AL under the lead-

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 Rezaur Rahman Lal, Sirajganj AL acting president Shahidul Islam Talukhdar, Joypurhat AL convenor SM Sulaiman, Bhangura (Pabna) AL vice president Mokhbul Islam Raninagar (Naogaon) AlL organising secretary Amjad Hossain, Natore

Abdus Salam Mandol. Earlier. Sheikh Hasina offered prayers at the Mazar of Hazrat Shah Mokhdum (RA) at Dargapara in the

district AL Sajedur Rahman, Bogra

district AL president Mamtaj Uddin

and Puthia upazila AL president

### Crackdown

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ers have been killed over the last five

recommend ways of fighting crimes. The committee recommended 178 steps, but only 14 have been implemented. Against this backdrop, the gov-

The government had formed a

high-powered cabinet committee to

ernment issued firearms licences among ward commissioners and also agreed to do so for the petrol pump owners who also reported increased incidents of crime.