

## PM asks army to ensure security of people

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday directed the army to work firmly in recovering illegal arms and nabbing criminals to ensure peace and security of the people.

She gave the directive when Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury called on her at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday afternoon. Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Major General AM Mahmud Uzzaman was present during the meeting.

The army chief briefed the prime minister about the activities of the army personnel deployed earlier yesterday to help the civil administration in improving law and order and recovering illegal arms.

The prime minister hoped the joint drive of the army, BDR and police would be successful with the cooperation of the people.

## Govt has called out army after failing to run country: Hasina

UNB, Bogra

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government deployed the army after failing to run the country amid "an alarming deterioration" of law and order.

"There is no need of this failed government which could not ensure security of public life... During this government's time, musullis are being killed at mosques," she said addressing a protest meeting against the killing of Azam at Shimabari SR Girls High School ground.

The Awami League chief reached the meeting venue about four hours behind schedule as the Dhaka-Bogra highway was blocked by unruly people in protest against the arrest of some ruling party leaders by the army.

Hasina came to Shimabari via Dhaka-Pabna road from Rajshahi, travelling an extra 100 kilometres. Her journey was also delayed by two hours for trouble at Sherpur in Bogra.

Condemning the brutal killing of Awami League leader Azam at Shimabari, the ex-PM observed that

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## 1st Test against S Africa starts today

AFP, East London, South Africa

South Africa will be looking for a convincing win when they begin their inaugural Test match against Bangladesh at Buffalo Park today.

Bangladesh have been the whipping boys of world cricket since they were given Test status in 2000, losing 12 of 13 matches. A rain-affected draw against Zimbabwe in Dhaka last season was the only time they avoided defeat.

The trend seems unlikely to change in the first of two Tests against a South African side eager to reinforce their number two ranking in the World Test Championship after a traumatic 2001-02 season in which they lost five successive Tests against Australia, the champions. A South African side too which will be eager to impress new coach Eric Simons.

Simons has challenged the players to produce high-quality performances against all opponents. There is also competition for places in the South African team and

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# Army swoops on criminals

## 40,000 troops roll into action; shoot one dead in Bogra; 500 rounded up

STAR REPORT

In an unprecedented move, the army launched a massive crackdown on criminals across the country from the early hours of yesterday, rounding up some 500 people and

firearms.

A few minutes after midnight, some 40,000 troops rolled out of different cantonments and raided crime zones across the country. Cellular phone networks were switched off from midnight to dawn

to make sure the criminals were not tipped off beforehand.

In Bogra, the army opened fire on activists of the ruling BNP when they blocked the Dhaka-Bogra highway near the Sherpur bus stand to protest arrest of some leaders.

One rickshaw-puller was killed and three others were injured when army fired on the agitators after they hurled brickbats at around 2:00pm. An unidentified gunman also fired a round of bullet at the troops, witnesses said.

Equipped with magistracy power, the army hauled up alleged criminals and confined them to different cantonments in the country. Temporary camps have also been set up in different cities and towns. The army is now

patrolling the cities and searching vehicles for arms and criminals. It is the first time that the army has been assigned for a drive against crime during the regime of a democratically elected government.

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BNP activists block the Dhaka-Bogra highway and burn tyres yesterday to protest arrest of their leaders during army raid to nab criminals (L); army personnel get down from lorries to disperse the crowd (top-L); trucks are left haphazardly on the highway.



PHOTO: STAR

## Bogra flares up

### Army returns protestors' gunfire, killing rickshawpuller

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bagura

Army fired more than a hundred rounds, killing a rickshawpuller and wounding 20 others after barricading BNP activists had shot at the troops at the Sherpur bus stand on the Dhaka-Bogra highway yesterday.

The agitators were protesting the arrest of their leaders during the overnight anti-crime crackdown by the army.

The dead was identified as Shafiqul Islam, 18, a rickshawpuller. The incident occurred when the BNP activists barricaded the highway after the army arrested four leaders and workers of the BNP, including its Sherpur Upazila unit president.

The wounded, four of them in critical conditions, were taken to the Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital.

During the nine-hour barricade starting from 6:00am, the mob damaged six vehicles.

According to witnesses, the army arrested Jan-e-Alam Khoka, president of the Sherpur Upazila BNP and Bogra Bus-Minibus Owners' Association, his two brothers Shah Alam Panna and Sohel Rana, and another BNP leader Shafiqul Islam Arfan after raiding their residences at around 3:00am.

When the news of their arrest spread, local BNP workers and transport owners and workers put up barricades on the highway. Hundreds of vehicles got stranded due to the barricade.

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## New law afoot for speedy trial of major offences

STAR REPORT

Another new ordinance will soon be promulgated for speedy trial of major criminal offences.

According to law ministry sources, President Iajuddin Ahmed will promulgate the law, titled the Special Tribunal for Speedy Trial Ordinance, early next week, as the parliament is not in session now.

A special cabinet meeting on Wednesday night agreed in principle on promulgation of the new law. The draft was finalised yesterday.

Initially, 25 tribunals will be set up at six divisional headquarters and 19 greater districts to try serious crimes such as murder, rape, and possession of narcotics and illegal

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## Home ministry terms it a success

BSS, Dhaka

The joint operation of police, Bangladesh Rifles, Ansar and the army has achieved notable success with the arrest of many "identified criminals", the Home Ministry said last night.

Some arms and ammunition have also been seized during the operation, said the ministry in a press release.

The joint operation began in the early hours of yesterday to arrest criminals, recover illegal arms and

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# Secrecy was the key

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A countrywide anti-crime drive by the army was launched in the early hours of yesterday under a 'highly secret plan' conceived against the backdrop of deterioration of law and order.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her secretariat are directly supervising the special drive to ensure that it succeeds in combating crimes and improving law and order without any political interference.

Sources close to the prime minister said she has directed the officials concerned to ignore any lobbying for the arrested no matter which party they belong to.

She has also asked her cabinet colleagues not to interfere with the anti-crime drive and let the army operate independently so that all 'listed criminals' irrespective of their political affiliation are nabbed.

Earlier, the prime minister had approved a list of alleged criminals across the country for the army to crack down on.

Official sources said that following the cabinet approval of the decision to deploy army, the government gave a written order to the army, which was collected by a major general from the law secretary. Both came to the Secretariat at about 12:45 am yesterday.

Sources said the decision to deploy army and launch a massive hunt for criminals was discussed within the government for long and it was finalised in the wake of a series of killing of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward commissioners.

The government had long been pressing police to act

sincerely to check crimes, but finally decided to deploy army as police apparently failed to carry out their responsibility.

Sources inside the ruling BNP said the PM had finalised on October 1 her decision to deploy army and then discussed this with some senior cabinet members, other authorities concerned and ordered all intelligence agencies including the DGFI to prepare a combined list of criminals immediately.

Prime Minister's Office (PMO) sources said the chief of army staff met the PM less than a week back with the list of criminals and she approved the list even after seeing it contained names of many of her party men.

As per the PM's instruction, they said, the intelligence agencies, especially the DGFI, kept vigil on the listed criminals mostly having illegal arms so that none could escape.

When the army and the intelligence agencies confirmed completion of their preparation, the PM called a special cabinet meeting Wednesday night but kept the matter secret.

Although the cabinet meeting ended before 11 pm, almost all the cabinet members did not disclose the decision to deploy army till the troops came out on the streets.

Most of the ministers then started getting phone calls from their respective home districts and BNP units at different levels saying that army has started arresting many of the party activists.

Many of the ministers contacted each other about

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# Huge investment needed to develop gas sector

## Dialogue in city split over export option

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Participants in a dialogue on gas utilisation yesterday were divided on the gas export issue but agreed on the country's need for huge investment in the sector.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised the dialogue on "National Committee Reports on the

Gas Sector: Where Do We Go From Here?" at the CIRDAP auditorium.

CPD Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan moderated the discussion attended by lawmakers, political leaders, experts, academics, businessmen and representatives of international oil companies (IOCs).

Chairman of the gas utilisation committee Azimuddin Ahmed presented the brief of the report and Edmond Gomes, member of the reserve committee, briefed the audience on the major issues in its report.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharrif Hossain said the country has to find a solution to the best possible utilisation of gas for development of the country as well as the energy sector.

The country needs, Mosharrif said, an investment of at least US\$20 billion for the development of the energy sector over the next 30 years.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to Leader of the

Opposition Sheikh Hasina, pointed out that there was lack of consistency and clarity in the policy pursued by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Referring to Unocal Bangladesh operations chief James R Stone's comment, Saber said, "I think Bangladesh has gas resource, but I am not sure whether the reserve is enormous."

Earlier, James R Stone mentioned that Bangladesh has an enormous natural gas resource base to meet domestic needs with surplus for export.

Former state minister and Awami League (AL) leader Abul Hossain Chowdhury said the debate on the gas issue has focussed on the wrong point -- gas export.

"Our focus should be how better we can utilise the gas resource for the development of the country."

At one point, Rehman Sobhan has asked James Stone of Unocal whether they have reservation if the government decides not to export

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