

# Unite against govt misrule: Hasina

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her call to the pro-liberation forces to unite against the 'misrule and misdeeds' of the government and launch a movement to topple it.

"Life under the four-party alliance rule has become miserable as of widespread corruption," she said at a rally organised by the city unit of the AL at Mirpur.

Hasina said, "Though the present rulers came to power pledging to root out violence, they are now the main sponsors of countrywide criminal activities." She blamed Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for patronising killers.

Hasina alleged that the government has prepared a hitlist of the opposition leaders including herself.

"I am ready to face any consequence for protesting the misrule of the present government," Hasina said.

She observed that the government was executing its plan of targeting the opposition forces, particularly the AL.

The alliance government is responsible for a battered public life, she said referring to the price hike of essentials.

Hasina blamed the ruling coalition men for attacking lawyers on

## Officials hope to form Gram Sarkar units by deadline

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Over 80 per cent of the 40,392 Gram Sarkar units have been formed so far amid political opposition and a writ challenging legality of the Gram Sarkar Act 2003 pending with the court.

With the formation of 230 units in 18 districts yesterday, the number of units of the local government body, which will serve as an auxiliary to the Union Parishad, now stands at around 33,000.

Officials are optimistic about completing formation of all units ahead of the September 17 deadline. The process to form a Gram Sarkar unit in each of the 40,392 wards under 4,488 Union Parishads (UPs) began on August 2 with a 45-day time limit as stipulated by the Gram Sarkar Act 2003.

The elected UP member from each ward will head each unit while a female elected UP member will be advisor to three units. The 15-member Gram Sarkar unit will have a five-year tenure.

Each unit will have a Gram Sarkar Prodan (chief) and an advisor, while the remaining 13 members will be drawn from representatives of women, farmers, VDP men, general labourers, farm labourers, freedom fighters, teachers and businessmen.

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives will impart training to all members regarding their job description and local development activities.

The Gram Sarkar units will supervise sanitation and tree plantation, and allocate VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) cards and allowances for elderly people among other things, sources said.

Meanwhile, the date for hearing the writ petition filed by eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain on behalf of the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) challenging the legality of the Gram Sarkar Act 2003 has not been fixed yet.

Also, according to press reports, a large number of the Gram Sarkar units were allegedly formed with less than the required numbers of voters, without democratic process and amid clashes over selection of members.

to invest. If we lack that, we will look for other sources."

In pursuing supplier's credit, an opaque method of financing schemes discouraged by the government itself, the government will go for competitive bidding to ensure cost efficiency and transparency, the state minister said.

The sub-committee was informed that three power projects of 530MW capacity are being implemented at a cost of Tk 3,315 crore.

Meanwhile, the Executive Committee for National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved eight projects with 1460MW capacity at a cost of Tk 4,787 crore.

Nine more projects are being planned, envisaging a cost of Tk 7,722 crore to generate 2230MW power till 2007.

In power distribution are six under-implementation projects that outline a cost of Tk 2,041 crore.

The ECNEC approved two power distribution projects, outlining a cost of Tk 467 crore and the authorities plan to carry out eight more distribution projects, seeking an investment of Tk 1,757 crore.

The Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) is implementing two power system plans at a cost Tk 169 crore. Desa will implement several other distribution and maintenance projects of Tk 913 crore.

Only 32 per cent of people are consuming power. With a per capita consumption of only 136 kilowatt an hour, Bangladesh stands as one of the lowest power consuming countries in the world.

The World Bank says the country loses at least \$1 billion worth of industrial production because of power disruption.

No headway in rescue of schoolboy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Police probe into the suspected abduction of schoolboy Devjit Dutt Jitu from the court building area here on Thursday has made little headway with police only indicating that the boy might be in Chittagong.

"We have heard that he (Jitu) is now in Chittagong and our forces rushed there," Duty Officer at Kotwali Police Station Sub-inspector Moholn said at about 4:30pm today.

Experts, civil society leaders and opinion makers from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe will present papers in the symposium.

Commerce Minister and Vice Chairman of the Cancun meet Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury is expected to attend it.

On Thursday, when Abbas addressed legislators, he was heckled

led and shoved by an angry crowd of Arafat supporters, including several armed and masked men.

Even if he hadn't resigned, Abbas might have been forced out. He faced a vote of confidence in parliament in the coming days, and there was growing dissatisfaction in parliament with his performance and his difficulties with Arafat.

Abbas' resignation could also end up being a blow to Arafat, even if at first it appeared the veteran leader had outmaneuvered his politically inexperienced prime minister.

Israel's defence minister, Shaul Mofaz, said earlier this week that Israel might have to expel Arafat before the end of the year, if Arafat keeps getting into the way of peace efforts. Israeli analysts have said Abbas' departure was one scenario in which Israel might decide to act.

It could also lower the threshold for possible Israeli action against Arafat; Israel's defence minister has raised the possibility of sending Arafat into exile.

Israeli Cabinet Minister Danny Naveh on Saturday called for Arafat's ouster, Israel Army Radio said. Other government officials withheld comment Saturday, and Israel's position on the matter remained unclear.

Abbas, who might have been ousted anyhow in a confidence vote in parliament next week, had his resignation letter delivered to Arafat by two senior officials Saturday before addressing the legislature in a closed-door session to explain his decision.

Palestinian officials said they feared the resignation would lead the region into further chaos.

"We are entering a new crisis and the price of this crisis will be the shedding of a lot of blood," said Kadoura Fares, a legislator from the ruling Fatah movement.

Abbas had been frustrated by the constant wrangling with Arafat, his aides said. He was also hurt by the near-collapse of the road map and his inability to improve the daily lives of Palestinians.

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by an angry crowd of Arafat supporters, including several armed and masked men.

Earlier, the US had released the over- shipped garment items following an agreement with Dhaka that double the amount of quota would be deducted in penalty from the following year's export limit.

But considering the sufferings of the 200 garment exporters and an adverse impact on the economy, the commerce minister had sent a letter to the US trade representative, requesting him for waiver.

Zoellick regretted the penalty that caused a flight of business from Bangladesh, resulting in job cuts.

Zoellick recognised the importance of the apparel sector in Bangladesh where more than 70 per cent of export earnings come from garments. He also pointed to the impending challenges Bangladesh will have to face after expiry of the quota system.

He hoped Bangladesh would expand its export base to prepare for the re-distribution of global textile trade after 2004.

Around 40 per cent of Bangladesh's garment exports go to the US that allocates quota in January each year and completes on December 31.

The prime minister also referred to the formation of a high-powered committee at the Ministry of Home Affairs to assist in speedy disposal of sensational cases.

She reminded the judges that honesty, courage, wisdom, ability to deliver sharp judgement and firmness in establishing truth and justice have placed them in a dignified position in society.

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