

People have rejected 'govt for misrule', says Hasina

UNB, Tongi

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has said people have rejected the coalition government for

its 'misrule' over the last two and a half years.

"They (BNP-Jamaat) have made their own fortune but failed to change the fate of our people...And they unleashed a reign of torture and repression," she said.

Hasina said no government in the past could cling to power through torture and repression and

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Speedy Trial Act gets a two-year extension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday extended the term of the Speedy Trial Act 2002 for two more years through an amendment.

At the regular weekly meeting at the Prime Minister's Office with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair, the cabinet made the decision considering its benefits to the people.

The two-year act was scheduled for an April 9 expiry.

Sources however say one of the reasons for the extension is that under the act anyone can be quickly tried for any criminal offence. This gives the government an effective way to handle its political opponents.

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AL, SKSD agree on oust-govt move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the main opposition party Awami League (AL) and left-leaning Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal (SKSD) at a meeting yesterday agreed there was no alternative but to oust the present government through mass upsurge to put an end to what they said a corrupt and repressive regime.

"Both parties share the view that the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition regime marked by unabated corruption and a slide in law and order has failed to properly rule the country in two and a half years and therefore lost people's confidence," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said following the meeting held at the SKSD office in Dhaka.

Siddiqur Rahman, acting general

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Prayer Timings		
February 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-05	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		



PHOTO: STAR
The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal holds a rally at Muktangan, top, and Islami Kathame Nabuwat Andolon stages another in front of the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in Purana Paltan, bottom, during rush hours yesterday. Such rallies are blamed for choking traffic in the bustling city of over one crore people.

Bombing kills 10 in Iraqi police station

AP, Kirkuk

A vehicle bomb detonated yesterday outside an Iraqi police station in a Kurdish neighbourhood of this ethnically divided northern city, killing at least 10 people and wounding 45 others, police and hospital officials said.

The attack was the latest in a string of vehicle and suicide bombings against Iraqi security forces and others seen as cooperating with the US-led occupation, killing more than 300 people this year. It was the third blast since late January to target Kurds in the north.

Kirkuk has also seen rising ethnic tensions as Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen vie for control of the city, located in one of the world's richest oil-producing regions, 180 miles north of Baghdad.

About 20 policemen had gathered in front of the Rahimawa police station to get their day's orders when the car exploded at 8:45 a.m., said the station's chief, Col. Adel

Ibrahim. The explosion heavily damaged nearby buildings and destroyed cars.

A US military rapid reaction team came to the scene, as ambulances ferried out casualties and police closed off the area.

At least 10 people were killed, all of them believed to be policemen, and 45 people wounded, said officials at two Kirkuk hospitals. Among the wounded were a school-boy and four girls from a nearby high school. Lt. Abdul Salaam Zangana, a security officer at al-Jumhuriya hospital, said 10 of the wounded were in critical condition.

The US military command in Baghdad said at least four civilians were killed.

US officials have said foreign Islamic militants may be behind the bloody series of bombings, pointing to an intercepted letter believed to be from a Jordanian militant in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, to al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan or Afghanistan.

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6 killed as fire rips through Indian space centre

AFP, Madras

Six people were killed and several injured when a fire ripped through India's main space centre at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh state yesterday, a space official said.

The fire was sparked by a blast that occurred at 3:30 pm (0920 GMT) in the solid propellant motor testing area in the Sriharikota Space Centre, the official, who would not be named, told AFP.

The space centre has a satellite launch pad, a technical center for rocket testing and assembly, and a range of other facilities for launch control, satellite tracking and remote sensing.

It began operations in 1971 for the launch of rockets of India's domestic space programme.

Magistrate Anant Ram, of the Nellore district in which the space station is located, confirmed the fire.

"(It) broke out in a test motor facility where technicians were testing a fuel. It was not exactly known how many were inside when it caught fire," he said.

He said that the fire had been brought under control.

Govt back-pedals on rickshaw ban on two roads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has once again postponed its decision to ban rickshaws and rickshaw-vans from two major roads from tomorrow in the face of a tough agitation threatened by owners and employees of the non-motorised three-wheelers.

Following the postponement, Bangladesh Rickshaw Van Malik Sramik Sangram Parishad, a forum of rickshaw- and rickshaw-van-pullers and the owners has withdrawn their dawn-to-dusk strike slated for February 26 while Rickshaw Uchchhed Protirodh Sangram Committee has also

called off their road blockade programme.

Leaders of the associations welcomed the decision terming it as an outcome of their agitation against the government move.

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ACAkram sent to jail again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former assistant commissioner (AC) of police Akram Hussain, sentenced to life in the sensational Rubel murder case, was sent to jail yesterday after he surrendered to court.

Judge Mohammad Shamsul Alam Khan of the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court order that Akram be sent to the jail after the Supreme Court overruled a bail order by the High Court.

The much-talked-about police officer was awarded life imprisonment for clubbing to death a student of Independent University, Bangladesh Shamim Reza Rubel on July 23, 1998.

Plan to limit time for int'l calls at cut rate

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) that recently cut international call charges plans to set a call limit to avoid counting crores in losses, sources said.

The call limit for an individual subscriber has been proposed at 5,000 minutes a month, about 84 hours a month or over 2.8 hours a day, an official with the state telephony monopoly said.

Crores of taka in telephone bills remain unrealised as many unscrupulous subscribers make unlimited phone calls before abandoning the phone in the absence of a call limit. The proposed limit aims to restrict a section of subscribers mostly involved in pay phone business who use make unlimited calls and do not pay bills.

Almost every operator, both private and public, across the globe sets call limits to avoid financial

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AL lawmakers demonstrate in JS tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League lawmakers will demonstrate in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban carrying black flags and hand over a memorandum to the speaker tomorrow seeking protection against attacks on the opposition lawmakers and their framing in false cases.

Briefing newsmen at his Sangsad Bhaban office, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid said they would submit the memorandum as per the decision of the AL Parliamentary Party taken on February 18.

Shahid said Sunday's ruling by the speaker banning demonstrations in parliament's chambers, lobby and gallery was unwarranted

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Rajuk staff threaten legal action to get back job

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police resisted the sacked employees of the Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakkha (Rajuk) from entering the office in procession, forcing them to demonstrate outside amid a stalemate over the termination of 413 employees.

People returned from the Rajuk office finding most officials' rooms empty and a huge presence of police and ansar personnel on each floor of the Rajuk office, keeping their work on hold.

The sacked employees from their demonstrations threatened to announce action programmes

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Israel won't bargain with Palestinian leadership: Sharon

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel will not negotiate with the current Palestinian leadership as it is not meeting any of its obligations under the US-backed roadmap for peace, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was quoted as saying yesterday by public radio.

Sharon, addressing parliament's defense and foreign affairs committee, said he intended to present his disengagement plan from the Palestinians to US President George W. Bush during a trip to Washington at the end of March, the radio said.

The hawkish premier said last December he would unilaterally disengage from the Palestinians if they did not respect their end of the

bargain under the roadmap, a peace blueprint that aims to stop Middle East violence and create a Palestinian state by 2005.

Peace negotiations have stalled in recent months, while Sharon and his Palestinian counterpart Ahmed Qorei have failed to meet, although the two both said they were ready to hold talks.

During his Monday address, Sharon was taken to task by two extreme right-wing MPs on his refusal to submit his separation plan to the government before presenting it to Bush.

By submitting his plan first to the US president, from whom he hopes to win backing, "he wants to present

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