

Two-way battle in SC Bar polls

Bikalpa Dhara expels Dr Jakir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two-day election of the executive committee of Supreme Court Bar Association began yesterday, with the two panels led by Rakan Uddin Mahmud and Dr M Zahir appearing as the principal contestants.

In another development yesterday, Bikalpa Dhara Supreme Court Lawyers Committee (BDSLC) expelled its advisor Dr Jakir Hossain, who withdrew from the poll Saturday as the presidential candidate from Bikalpa Dhara-Jukto Front panel and went back to the fold of the BNP.

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PHOTO: STAR

Dr M Zahir (left) and Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud (2nd from left), the government- and opposition-backed presidential candidates for the ongoing Supreme Court (SC) Bar polls, greet voters on the SC premises yesterday.

Don't fund India's river-link plan

Citizens' commission asks donor agencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citizens' Fact Finding Commission (CFFC), an association of several organisations including trade bodies and rights groups, yesterday urged international donor agencies not to fund India's water diversion project through river-linking considering its negative ecological impact on Bangladesh and other co-riparian countries.

"Bangladesh's ecological balance will be upset if India's river-linking project is implemented," said Deputy Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad Akhtar Hamid Siddiqi, a

member of the CFFC, while addressing a meeting of the association at the National Press Club yesterday.

"Padma is going to die out due to India's unilateral withdrawal of water through the Farakka barrage," he told the meeting.

The deputy Speaker also criticised the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty signed during the previous government's tenure.

"Due to absence of any guarantee clause in the pact, Bangladesh has lost all its right to seek international arbitration on water-sharing," he said and urged the

international community to refrain from funding India's river-linking project.

Presenting a CFFC report, Hasna J Moudud, the organisation's co-convenor, said the district of Rajshahi is already encountering severe ecological imbalance as there is no flow of water in parts of the river Padma.

"The farmers of Rajshahi division are already struggling to grow their crops for lack of water. Now if India carries out its river-linking project,

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JS body finds graft in mosque construction in cantonment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday raised allegation of irregularities in the construction of a plush mosque on 6.37 acres in Dhaka cantonment.

The parliamentary standing committee on the defence ministry termed the construction of the mosque in front of the army headquarters at a cost of Tk 15 crore as unplanned and asked all to stop such abuse of public money.

"The selection of the land was not sensible. It should not be built on 19 bighas in front of the army headquarters. If we need to expand the headquarters, there will be a land crisis," committee chairman Mahabubur Rahman told The Daily Star emerging from a committee meeting.

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Trader beaten dead for toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

JCD (Jatiyotabadi Chhatra Dal) cadres allegedly beat a cloth merchant to death in Bagerhat late in the Saturday night.

Police said, the slain, Shahidur Rahman, 34, who was an activist of Bagerhat district Awami League, has been killed for refusing to pay the toll.

According to eyewitnesses, at about 11pm on Saturday, a group led by JCD leader Tanu Bhuiyan took Shahidur Rahman away at gunpoint from his shop to a place behind the Bagerhat cinema hall and beat him mercilessly. As Shahidur cried out for help, locals rushed to the spot

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Govt can't be toppled through 'conspiracy'

PM tells Iswarganj rally

UNB, Iswarganj, Mymensingh

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged people to resist the 'conspirators' now out to stall development and progress and said her government cannot be overthrown through 'conspiracy'.

There are two streams of politics in the country, one is politics of development and production and

the other is politics of chaos, anarchy, violence, hartal, arson and vandalism, she told a big public meeting at Iswarganj Eidgah playground.

The prime minister expressed the confidence that people would cling to development- and production-oriented politics pursued by her party and government.

Criticising the activities of her

political opponents, Khaleda, also the BNP chairperson, said they are cooking up issues by killing their own men and plotting against the government.

"Remain alert about the party," she told the rally, indicating main opposition Awami League (AL), asserting that the wave flow of development will continue and the

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SAF Games start today

SPORTS REPORTER

The ninth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games get underway in the Pakistan capital Islamabad today.

Athletes from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka host Pakistan and new entrant Afghanistan will compete in the regional Olympic competition that faced uncertainty since the events of September 11 in 2001.

The SAF Games were originally scheduled in October 2001. It was shifted to March 2002 but was put off again following border tensions

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Coalition, not AL, believes in politics of killing: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said it was the BNP-Jamaat government, not her party Awami League, which has a "blueprint" to kill political leaders, intellectuals, conscious section of society and those believing in the spirit of liberation war.

She urged the people irrespective of party, opinion or professional attachment to remain alert about the "planned blueprint" of the ruling alliance, saying: "They've an ulterior motive. The way intellectuals were brutally killed in 1971, the BNP-Jamaat coalition are planning to do the same again."

Hasina was addressing a discussion meeting, organised by Awami League marking the Independence Day, at the Engineers Institute in

the afternoon.

The Awami League president's comment came following an allegation by LGRD Minister and BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP on Saturday from the Independence Day rally that "Awami League may kill some noted personalities and its own leaders to topple the government."

Hasina said her party "does not believe in the politics of killing and conspiracy, rather it is the BNP-Jamaat alliance, which believes in the politics of killing. It's a killer government."

"We are sensing a sign of conspiracy in their speeches. Many of the ruling party leaders do BNP (politics) during the day and become outlaws and extremists at the dead of night and that leader (Mannan)

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TU AT EPZs

Meeting ends without a decision

UNB, Dhaka

The sixth meeting of a high-profile committee on allowing trade unionism in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) ended yesterday without a consensus on the modalities of a draft law.

"The process requires talks to reach a consensus," said an official, who attended the meeting at the World Bank's (WB) Dhaka office. "After an intense discussion, we're about to come to a conclusion," he said.

In its meeting on Thursday, the Ministry of Law submitted to the committee the draft Trade Union Law for enterprises in the country's EPZs. But the multilateral committee, formed with representatives from the government, the WB, US labour lobby and investors, could not make the law effective.

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Myanmar PM arrives on April 4

BSS, Dhaka

Myanmar Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt arrives in Dhaka on April 4 on a three-day official visit.

This will be the Myanmar premier's first visit abroad since he assumed office, sources said.

Nyunt will hold talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on arrival and join a dinner hosted by her the same day, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told the news agency yesterday.

He said the two leaders would discuss matters relating to proposed

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Bush Islam's enemy, says Hamas chief

REUTERS, Gaza

The new Hamas leader in Gaza says US President George W Bush is the enemy of God and Islam but has stopped short of threatening revenge on Americans as he has on Israel for its killing of the militant group's founder.

Driven underground by Israel's vow to wipe out the remaining Hamas leadership by air strike, Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi emerged briefly for a fiery open-air speech on Sunday before 5,000 people in the main courtyard of Gaza City's Islamic University.

Israeli warplanes roared overhead at one point during his address and the crowd gazed skyward nervously. But Rantissi seemed unmoved and kept speaking. He was flanked by armed bodyguards and stood on a podium close to the throng.

Rantissi, who last June survived an Israeli missile strike of the kind that killed Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin a week ago, said Thursday's US veto of a UN Security Council resolution condemning

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NEW PROTOCOL FM to see off VVIPs at airport

BSS, Dhaka

As part of a new protocol, instead of the president or prime minister the foreign minister sees off the visiting VVIPs at airport.

A top foreign ministry official yesterday told the news agency that Bangladesh has decided the foreign minister would see off visiting dignitaries as a practice that is followed in different South Asian and South East Asian countries including India and Pakistan.

As part of the new rules, the

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Prayer Timings

March 29

| | Azan | Jamaat |
|---------|-------|--------|
| Fajr | 4-45 | 5-30 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-45 | 5-00 |
| Maghrib | 6-16 | 6-20 |
| Esha | 7-45 | 8-15 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

Jet flies seven times faster than sound



PHOTO: AFP

The modified Pegasus rocket ignites moments after being dropped from a B-52 bomber over the Pacific Ocean yesterday, accelerating the X-43A pilotless plane to a world speed record of 7,700 km an hour.

REUTERS, San Francisco

A revolutionary jet engine has flown faster than seven times the speed of sound in a high altitude test over the Pacific, marking what NASA scientists hailed as a milestone in developing the "Holy Grail" of space travel.

"It's been an outstanding, record-breaking day," lead propulsion engineer Lawrence Huebner told a post-flight briefing on Saturday.

Nasa's 12-foot-long X-43A research vehicle -- resembling a winged surfboard -- hit slightly over Mach 7, about 5,000 mph, during 11 seconds of powered flight before gliding at hypersonic speeds for several minutes and finally plunging into the ocean.

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