

Conspirators

FROM PAGE 1

medical equipment and manpower to the hospitals but the people are not getting optimum benefits.

"The doctor-patient relationship has to be made closer," she said expressing her belief that the sincerity of the physicians will heal the negative attitude of the people towards the hospitals to a large extent.

Appreciating the contribution of Dab branches, some of which are providing free medical checkups to local school students, the prime minister called upon them to introduce one-day free clinic under all its units which will help a large section of the poor.

She called upon them to be more sincere in raising health awareness, creating a positive attitude, intensifying and making government health programmes more worthwhile.

The prime minister in her speech listed the development programmes of the government that included setting up of a cancer hospital in Dhaka, a medical college in Bogra, 500-bed hospitals in Bogra and Dinajpur, and an Ophthalmology Institute at Agorao.

She also spoke of her government's plans to build two more 500-bed hospitals in Dhaka and upgrade all 31-bed upazila hospitals to 50-bed ones.

AL deadline

FROM PAGE 1

Permission has been given to set up seven more private medical colleges, the prime minister informed the doctors, outlining extensive plans for the public health sector.

A Tk10617 crore plan, to be implemented in three years, has been drawn for health, nutrition and family planning service, she said.

The prime minister assured of building a national institute of health management and organising training facilities for government as well as private doctors.

Responding to various demands of the doctors, Khaleda said there were constraints in resource availability but the government gave emphasis on education and health.

She assured that the lost glory of the IPGM would be revived, making it a center of excellence in medical research and practice.

Chaired by DAB president Dr AKM Azizul Huq, the conference was also addressed by Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Health Minister AKM Mosarraf Hossain, State Minister for Health Mizanur Rahman Sinha, Chief Advisor of Dab and BMA President Dr MA Hadi, Dab Secretary General Dr AZM Zahid Hossain and Treasurer Dr Mustaq Rahim Swapan.

Indian polls

FROM PAGE 12

popular Bollywood actor Govinda who has been pitted against Indian Petroleum Minister Ram Naik seeking a double trouble from Mumbai North constituency.

Some of the other political heavyweights whose electoral fortune will be decided on April 26 are Defence Minister George Fernandes in Muzaffarpur constituency in Bihar, Civil Aviation Minister Rajiv Pratap Rudy of BJP against Bihar strongman and RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav in Chhapa and Laloo's latest ally Ramvanshi Paswan in Hajipur.

All these electoral battles are in Bihar where 17 of the total 40 seats are heading for polling in the second phase after voting was held in 11 seats in the first phase. Eminent film director Prakash Jha's maiden electoral outing will also be decided on April 26 from his home constituency of Bettiah, also in Bihar.

The second phase will complete the polling in Maharashtra in the West, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the South and Jharkhand and Assam states in the East. Nationally, polling will be over in 279 constituencies after April 26.

Out of the five-phased elections for a total of 543 members in Lok Sabha, polling in the first phase held on April 20 had covered 140 constituencies and two days later two seats in northeastern state of Tripura went to polls.

Before the deadline for publicity guns to fall silent, Vajpayee addressed rallies in different parts of the April 26 poll-bound states and so did Sonia.

As Rabban's condition deteriorated, he was sent to Bumrungdai Hospital for treatment on April 14. He breathed his last at the hospital at 11:00am yesterday.

His body will be flown into Dhaka by Thai Airways today. He will be buried at military graveyard in Banani.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock at the death of Commodore Rabban.

In a condolence message yesterday, Hasina conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

KEPZ chief

FROM PAGE 12

Chittagong Medical College Hospital and later shifted to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka.

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Ershad Shikder

FROM PAGE 12

His confessions helped Ershad's trial leading to the death penalty.

Nur said Ershad had raped his wife several times at gunpoint and turned hostile to him as he protested this.

Superintendent of Khulna jail Mohammad Farhad Mia ruled out any possibility of appointing an under-trial prisoner (Nur) as hanger of a convict carrying death penalty. "I am not opting for an idea like this although there is no bar to it under jail code," he said.

Meanwhile, Ershad has the wish to meet Shaheed Yasmin (14), his only daughter from his first wife. The jail authorities will arrange this meet at a convenient time before his execution, sources said.

Ahmadiyya

FROM PAGE 1

past attacks on members of the Ahmadiyya community and violation of their fundamental rights.

The inquiry should seek to identify those who killed Ahmadiyya mosque Imam Shah Alam of Raghunathpurkab village in Jessore last October and those who beat up other Ahmadiyyas, the report said.

It stressed identifying those involved in the "excommunication" and nearly 25 days of illegal house arrest of 17 Ahmadiyya families of Kushtia's Uttar Bhabanipur village in October 2003.

The Al also asked the government to identify Islamist leaders and others who, since October 2003, have been engaged in fomenting anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments through chanting hate slogans and organising marches to occupy Ahmadiyya mosques.

"The inquiry should seek to establish if any police personnel has acted in connivance with those attacking the Ahmadiyyas (Ahmadiyyas)," the report said.

The Al urged the government to fully implement the recommendations of the said investigation as soon as they become available.

"While the Government of Bangladesh has acted to prevent the crowds from entering Ahmadi (Ahmadiyya) mosques, it has taken no action against the perpetrators of the hate campaign. Fundamental rights of the Ahmadiyyas (Ahmadiyyas) have been further violated by a government ban on their publications."

This action (the ban, imposed on January 8) by the government has further aggravated the plight of the Ahmadiyya community, the report said, mentioning news reports that Islamists leaders have been putting pressure on the local administration to allow them to enter Ahmadiyya homes and remove the banned publications.

"Amnesty International is urging the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the safety and security of the Ahmadi (Ahmadiyya) community; uphold its members' right to practice their religion without fear of persecution; lift the ban on their publications; and ensure that those responsible for attacks against Ahmadiyyas (Ahmadiyyas) are brought to justice," the report said.

Some NCB officials, however, hope the government's waiver of interest on default farm loans up to Tk 5,000 and some other steps will eventually increase the lending flow in agriculture sector.

Farm credit

FROM PAGE 12

which is 51 percent for Janata Bank, 47 percent for Agrani Bank, 69 percent for Rupali Bank and 44 percent for Krishi Bank.

A field-level official of Agrani Bank working in Khulna region said, "Following the government's high emphasis on goat farming, our head office has also been preoccupied with providing loans for it. This has affected our overall lending trend in agriculture."

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Indian polls

FROM PAGE 12

Sources at the Prime Minister's Office and the ministry said additional security measures were taken on the basis of information that the AL might create lawlessness ahead of the deadline.

Efficient officials from across the country were brought to the capital and high officials were briefing them on the next course of action, a home ministry official said.

He said the authorities doubled the numbers of patrol police in Dhaka and asked them to search suspected vehicles even by putting up barbed-wire barricades at important road crossings.

They also activated mobile courts in city streets and asked the law enforcers to raid sensitive spots.

The police administration in Munshiganj, Gazipur, Manikganj, Narayanganj, Narisingdi, Comilla and Chandpur were also instructed to mount a watch on political activities.

Sources said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called out State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar and inquired about the details of security arrangement.

The home ministry yesterday instructed police to exercise caution during search and raid operations so that people do not feel harassed and asked them not to arrest innocent people during raid or search.

campaigning yesterday to boost BJP's electioneering after the NDTV exit poll for the first phase of polling held in the state on April 20 predicted a disappointing performance by the saffron party.

Out of the six seats which went to polls in the first phase, the exit poll had given just one to BJP and the second phase will witness elections in remaining eight seats in Assam.

Congress candidate and actor Govinda's bid for maiden appearance in Lok Sabha got a fillip when Sharad Pawar campaigned for him.

The actor had been reportedly sulking that local Congressmen had not been whole-heartedly working for his electioneering. Earlier, Sonia also addressed an election meeting in Govinda's constituency.

MANIPUR REBELS ATTACK CONGRESS MINISTERS' HOMES

AFP, meanwhile, reports quoting police from Assam's capital Guwahati that rebels opened fire on the homes of three top politicians in India's state of Manipur yesterday.

Police described the attack as an attempt to trigger panic ahead of elections next week. There were no casualties when the rebels sprayed the homes of three ministers in the revolt-hit northeastern state with automatic weapons fire late Friday, police said.

"The attacks were an attempt to create panic," a police official said.

Some 19 rebel groups are battling in the far-flung state for demands ranging from secession to greater autonomy.

At least three of them have called for a boycott of Monday's election, which is part of the third phase of India's five-stage general elections.

One group has declared a general strike starting Sunday at midnight.

Police said they suspected the Revolutionary People's Front was behind the attacks on the homes of the ministers, who were all from India's opposition Congress party in power in Manipur.

"There's complete panic and chaos with most of us unable to venture out of our homes for fear of rebel attacks," said M. Singh, a member of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party, in the state capital Imphal.

Two parliamentary seats are up for grabs in Manipur. Last Tuesday, attacks by militants and the kidnapping of poll officials marred voting for the first seat. Monday's poll will be for the second seat.

More than 10,000 people have died in rebel-related violence in Manipur over the past two decades.

On Thursday militants killed three security officers in a remote area in Bishnupur district, 120km from Imphal, police said.

OIC chief

FROM PAGE 12

He said Malaysia wanted the post because it felt it was time for the country to put forward its own candidate.

"This will also help as Malaysia is currently the OIC chair," Abdullah said after chairing an Unmo supreme council meeting yesterday.

He said Malaysia's candidate was an experienced diplomat skilled in multilateral diplomacy and the workings of politics and was also well-connected with other organisations.

The OIC secretary-general post is a four-year tenure.

The term of the present OIC secretary-general, Dr Abdellouahed Belkeziz, expires next year.

Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman was OIC's first secretary-general from 1971 to 1973.

Some countries are using this to argue against a Malaysian secretary-general, citing that other countries should be given a chance instead.

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Police also raided Khulna, Khalishpur, Phultala and Rupsha offices of Proshika on Friday night. But no-one was arrested.

Police said they have seized some objectionable documents from Mongla Proshika office which are enough to conclude that the NGO is involved in anti-state activities in the name of voluntary work.

The arrests were sent to Khulna and Jessoro jails.

In Kishoreganj, four Proshika men were arrested in Hossainpur and Bhairab upazilas on Thursday night, according to the UNB.

They are Prodip Kumar Roy, coordinator of Bhairab area, development workers Safrir Uddin and Mofakharul Islam and office assistant of Hossainpur Bazlur Rashid. The arrestees were sent to jail hajat on Friday.

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"During the polls, police patrols should be strengthened," Kazl Fazlul Karim, assistant superintendent of police in Pabna, said.

Home Secretary Omar Faruk assured the Election Commission of taking steps to ensure peaceful polls.

But Director General of the DGFI, Major General Sadek Hasan Rumi, said his office put four municipalities in Dhaka division, 13 in Rajshahi, six in Khulna, 13 in Barisal, three in Sylhet and four in Chittagong divisions as vulnerable.

Sharon said he had informed

Chittagong divisions as vulnerable.

"The figure might increase," he said.

50 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

to Haragach leading a police team and was seriously injured in attacks by the workers. He was admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, police said.

About 50,000 workers of 30 bidi factories of Haragach are on an indefinite strike to realise their eight-point demand that includes enhanced wages, festival bonus, and medical allowance. They have enforced the strike under the banners of Haragach Bidi Majdur Union, and Haragach Bidi Sramik Union.

The situation has become tense since Friday when a section of workers from a procession attacked two bidi factories. Police brought the situation under control.

Witnesses said clashes started yesterday morning as some unidentified people fired blank shots when a procession of around 30,000 bidi workers was brought out by Amin, president of Haragach Bidi Sramik Union, and Khalequzzaman.

They remained stranded at the border for two days with no authorities willing to accept them. Their sordid story could hardly reach the hearts of immigration officials of the two countries because of the language barrier.

"We could neither sleep nor did we have anything to eat for two long days," said Narayanganj's Mustafizur Rahman with tears rolling down his cheeks. "Finally, the Jordanian authorities allowed us to sit under the open

Distraught they return

FROM PAGE 1

"Walking like men possessed in that night, we suddenly met two Bangladeshis. They sent us to a transport office," recalled Azizul of Bogra. "We pleaded with the office owner to give us two cars for \$240 so that we can travel to Amman."

The owner finally obliged them. Spending the night inside a battered house, they set out for Amman the next morning. Much to their horror, they saw the two compatriots lying dead on their way out of the city.