

Donors seek PM's help for rescue of power projects

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Donors have sought intervention of the prime minister in the widespread irregularities and political pressure in the implementation of power projects.

The Local Consultative Group (LCG), a platform of Bangladesh's development partners, in a letter to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on September 26 expressed deep concern at the irregularities and sought a meeting with her to directly share their concerns.

"These concerns are causing major delays in the development of the sector and the expansion of power supply needed for the

economy, jobs and investment. They also make it difficult for donor resources to support the power sector or the rural electrification effort," Christine Wallich, chair of the LCG, said in the letter.

The LCG, on behalf of the ambassadors, high commissioners and agency heads most active in this sector, urged the government to address the governance shortcomings in the power sector and take necessary steps to avert a potential crisis.

"Your actions would have a substantial impact on donor willingness to support projects in these fields..." the donors observed.

Copies of the letter have been

sent to the finance minister, state minister for power, secretary to the Economic Relations Division and envoys of US, UK, Germany, Japan, Norway and the Netherlands, the country director of the ADB and members of the LCG.

Governance issues are taking a toll on the rural electrification programme and the management of both the Rural Electrification Board and Palli Bidyut Samity are 'under frequent political pressure' to construct rural electric lines on political considerations, violating its own agreed economic and financial policies for expanding rural lines, the LCG alleged.

"Allegations of irregularities in

the Mymensingh III and planned Dhaka North Power Plants have raised further questions about governance within the rural power system, and within Rural Power Company.

"The LCG observes with dismay the lack of progress on the independent review of these irregularities despite the Honorable Prime Minister's consent to such an independent and comprehensive review given to German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer during his recent visit to Bangladesh," the LCG further said in the letter to the prime minister.

"By their continued delaying

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GRAND RALLY TOMORROW

AL's last-ditch efforts for common programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amidst uncertainty over other opposition leaders' participation in Sunday's grand rally, Awami League is now putting in a last-ditch effort to bring them to a common anti-government programme, if not on a common platform, at least simultaneously.

Although the AL wanted the leaders of its allies to take part in the planned rally at Paltan Maidan, until

last night responses did not come in its way. Yet, an optimistic main opposition is hopeful of "launching common anti-government programmes," no matter if from different podiums.

However, separate rallies of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) led by Hasanul Haq Inu on the road in between Zero Point and Paltan Crossing and of Workers Party in Hadis Park in Khulna coincide with the AL rally tomorrow.

An yet indecisive left-leaning 11-party alliance sits at 4:00pm today to set out a strategy for future anti-government movement -- brainstorming to resolve the long-drawn question of whether to go alongside the AL or continue to toe an independent line outside the BNP-AL traditional polarisation.

To take stock of the pre-grand rally political situation, the AL presidential members and leaders of its

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Criminal dies in 'crossfire' with elite forces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An Old Dhaka-based criminal died reportedly in crossfire when a shoot-out broke out between his accomplices and a joint team of anti-crime elite forces Cheetah and Cobra in Sutrapur early Thursday.

Faridul Islam alias Killer Farid, 27, son of Khorshed Alam, who had earlier been arrested on Wednesday night, was the second to die in shooting involving the newly formed elite anti-crime force Cheetah.

Police said a joint team of Cheetah and Cobra led by Assistant Commissioner Dr Nazmul Karim Khan of Detective Branch (DB), after a tip-off, raided a residential hotel at BCC Road in Sutrapur and arrested Farid at around 10:45pm on Wednesday.

Farid stands accused in 12 cases including some murder cases

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Deaths in hands of law enforcers double

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 111 people were killed at the hands of law enforcers in the country in the first nine months of the year, while the number was only 56 in 2003, says a press release.

Besides, 71 more people were killed under police custody during the period, said a monthly release of Odhikar, a rights watchdog, yesterday.

The report, compiled from news items published in the national dailies, also said 395 people were killed, 5,004 were hurt, 2,436 arrested and 22 abducted in political violence.

Police in two drives picked up 8,500 people from April 18 to 25 and

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Prayer Timing		
October 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-53	5-56
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

'Define war on terrorism properly to ensure Islam is not hurt'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islam has nothing to do with fundamentalism and terrorism contrary to how it has been misperceived in some parts of the world in recent times, speakers said at an All Religion Conference for Global Peace in the capital yesterday.

"The war on terrorism has to be well defined so that Islam is not hurt in the process," Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister

Moudud Ahmed said at the conference, organised by the Institute of Hazrat Mohammad at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

Islam is a religion of tolerance and harmony and it never advocates violence and terrorism, the minister said and cautioned against using Islam for fundamentalist purposes.

Although Islam is state religion of Bangladesh, it does not mean

Bangladesh is a religion-based state, he said, adding 17 other countries in the world have their state religions.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Harry K Thomas said religion and terrorism are completely incompatible, and religion can be a predominant tool of understanding among the peoples. If misused, religion can lead to destructive ends, he thought.

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Dhaka, Delhi both deny charges of insurgency camps

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

While remaining stuck to their sharply divergent stands on existence of Indian insurgent camps in Bangladesh, illegal migration into India and border fencing, Delhi and Dhaka yesterday decided to evolve "coordinated patrolling" very soon to check illegal trans-border movement and crimes.

At the end of BSF and BDR bi-annual Director General-level talks here, India and Bangladesh also decided to share information on

insurgents and criminals if any serious crime is committed on each other's land.

Responding to BDR Director General Maj Gen Jahangir Alam Chowdhury's request to crack down against alleged anti-Bangladeshi operatives in India, BSF Director General Ajai Raj Sharma said "sincere efforts" were made to verify the list of 79 camps given to him by Chowdhury but "there is no veracity in the claim."

"Similar is the position with regard to the list of 344 Bangladeshi criminals furnished to him by BDR

DG," Sharma said.

For his part, Chowdhury denied the existence of the camps or presence of northeastern Indian insurgents and handed over a list of 90 camps which he charged were being run by anti-Bangladeshi elements in Indian territory.

The Indian side conveyed its concern over smuggling of arms for insurgent groups and counterfeit Indian currency besides cattle-lifting.

Sharma, who signed the 'Joint Record of Discussion' with Chowdhury, handed over a fresh

list of 195 camps run by North East insurgents in Bangladesh and sought their closure along with deportation of 126 insurgents based there.

Sharma denied the allegation that BSF was pushing in Bangla-speaking Indians into Bangladesh and said "on the contrary millions of Bangladeshis were staying in India illegally."

"Due to India being a democratic country with the presence of a free press, an independent judiciary, a slew of human rights bodies and a host of NGOs to keep a close watch

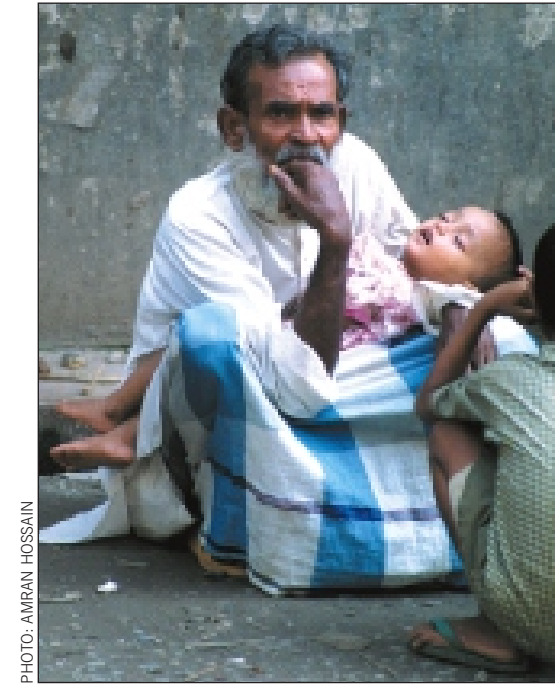


PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Muktar Mian, 60, waits near the detention ward of the CMM Court, Dhaka, with his grand-daughter in lap

Thursday for a miracle to end the misery he and his wards are going through after law enforcers put his son, the lone breadwinner

BLANKET ARRESTS

The poor feel the pinch most

SHARIFUL ISLAM

At 60, Muktar Mian still gets bewildered like a child by the strange turns life takes sometimes. Despair is also written all over his face, as he ponders over the nightmarish situation he and his four wards now find themselves in with their lone breadwinner suddenly put behind bars.

Sitting by a road near the detention ward (hajat) of the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka, last Thursday the riddle Mukter tried most to solve was how to

procure the next meal for his grandsons Redoy, 8, and Murad, 5, 15-month-old granddaughter Dipu and eight months pregnant daughter-in-law Sajeda Begum. The family is utterly bankrupt.

Another issue that defeats him is how to keep their shanty-home on Madrasa Goli in Rayerbazar, as the landlord has been threatening to oust them unless they come up with the last month's rent. Sajeda said on Wednesday the shanty-owner issued a

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HC ORDER MODIFIED

584 more arrested in capital since Thursday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested 584 people from Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) areas in last 48 hours till yesterday morning on the 11th day of the crackdown.

Of them, 110 were arrested under DMP Ordinance (not under section 86), 297 in regular cases, 33 under section 54 of the Code of

Criminal Procedure and 70 in block raids.

Earlier the High Court (HC) on Wednesday issued an injunction against the ongoing blanket arrests of opposition adherents and apolitical people alike under Section 86 of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ordinance until October 3.

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Judicial inquiry body submits report today

Identifies perpetrators of the August 21 grenade attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The one-man judicial inquiry commission headed by Justice Joynul Abedin submits its report today on the August 21 grenade attacks on an Awami League (AL) rally, where it has identified the perpetrators of the grisly carnage, sources said.

The sources however declined to say who the probe has identified to have carried out the bombing in an

apparent attempt to assassinate Leader of the Opposition and AL President Sheikh Hasina.

The report, to be submitted within the extended deadline ending today, specifies where the grenades were thrown from and cites whether the sports utility vehicle that carried Hasina to safety was hit by bullets.

Justice Abedin will speak to the

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