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Hasina vows to sacrifice her life for people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday vowed to sacrifice her life for the cause of the countrymen and urged people from a grand rally in Dhaka to join the ongoing movement to overthrow the BNP-Jamaat coalition government.

"I am not afraid of death... This is my new life after August 21. I am with you and will be with you," she told the huge crowd at Paltan Maidan in her first public speech since the grenade attacks on an Awami League (AL) rally on Bangabandhu Avenue.

"I am ready to make supreme sacrifice for establishing people's rights. I promise you that I will continue protesting all misdeeds until my last breathe," said an emotion-charged Hasina, who narrowly escaped the grisly attacks 42 days ago.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Hartal called for Oct 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mainstream opposition parties yesterday announced a fresh spell of street agitation, besides a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on the third anniversary of the ruling coalition in office, October 10, labelling it as a black day for the nation.

The main opposition Awami League and its allies from separate rallies declared the one-week

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Phenomenal security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Paltan Maidan and the surrounding areas turned into a human sea yesterday afternoon as tens of thousands of people thronged there at the grand rally of main opposition Awami League held amidst an unprecedented security for any opposition programme.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

UK under-secretary due today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sir Michael Jay, British permanent under-secretary and head of the diplomatic service at the foreign office, arrives today on a two-day official visit.

Jay will hold official talks with his counterpart Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury at the foreign ministry in the morning. They are expected to review bilateral relations and measures to further boost cooperation between the two countries.

The talks will also focus on development in regional and international arena, said a foreign ministry press release.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

40 lakh affected by hepatitis C

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 40 lakh people or 3 percent of the total population of Bangladesh are suffering from the hepatitis C virus (HCV), speakers at a seminar in Dhaka said yesterday quoting a preliminary report by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

More than 17 crore people across the world are suffering from HCV, of which three crore are in India, 1.40 crore in Egypt, 1.10 crore in Pakistan and 40 lakh in the USA, according to WHO. The yearly increase of HCV patients across the world is 30 to 40 lakhs, the speakers also added.

These were disclosed at the seminar on 'Mass Awareness to Control Hepatitis-C in Bangladesh' with Professor Mobin Khan, chairman of Department of Hepatology of Banglabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), taking the chair.

Presenting a key note paper Professor Mobin said blood transfusion without proper screening, being shaved in men's salons where the blades are used over and over, and intravenous drug using are the main sources of HCV infection.

He noted that 25 percent of intravenous drug users and 1.2 percent of blood donors suffer from

Family flees home for fatwa

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

A family in a village under sader upazila of Rangpur district has fled their home after local religious extremists attacked and threatened to kill them for non-compliance with a fatwa.

Efzalul and Anjuma Khatun, a young couple of Bouyipara under Utom union, had been subjected to the fatwa (religious decree) that eventually spared none of the family from the terrible ordeal.

Efzalul yesterday narrated the plight of his family at the office of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (Blast), a human-rights organisation.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

JUDICIAL PROBE REPORT Foreign country not named for diplomatic reasons

Commission not fit to identify local abettors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The judicial inquiry commission in its report has obliquely referred several times to a country which it blamed for the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally, but it did not name the country for diplomatic reasons, said sources.

"The commission did not name

the country anywhere in the report but made several hints since naming it will create repercussions in the diplomatic quarter," a well-placed source told The Daily Star yesterday, a day after the one-member commission submitted its report to the government.

The source, however, would not

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Modern ships to replace old ones

PM tells navy men, commissions 7 ships, crafts

UNB, Ctg

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government is actively considering procuring modern ships to replace the old fleets of Bangladesh Navy to enhance the naval power.

The prime minister, also in charge of defence ministry, announced plan of the government at a function organised for commissioning seven navy ships and conferring National Standard Award on BN Flotilla at the jetty of Naval

Force at the BNS Isa Khan.

She formally commissioned the seven newly procured ships and crafts by pressing remote-control device.

She formally handed over the commissioning edicts to the commanding officers of the new vessels- BNS Gumti, BNS Sangu and BNS Turag, three offshore patrol vessels procured from the UK, BNS Dhansiri and BNS Chitra, two fast-attack craft procured from South Korea, and BNT Rupsha and BNT

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Saarc officials meet today to thrash out trade issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

High-level government officials from seven South Asian nations meet in Dhaka today for a three-day negotiation on major trade issues that they need to settle for establishing a free trade area by 2006.

Officials from the ministries of commerce and foreign affairs, Bangladesh Tariff Commission and National Board of Revenue will talk on behalf of Dhaka at the joint secretary level meeting about sensitive list of products and rules of origin with their counterparts of other Saarc countries.

Bangladesh has prepared a list of 1,398 items out of the total 5,226 to keep them out of the free trade deal to avoid major revenue loss as well as protect domestic industries.

According to sources, Indian side

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

19 municipalities go to polls October 6, 7

BSS, Dhaka

Elections of 19 municipalities of the country will be held on October 6 and 7.

Polls in eight municipalities will be held on the first day and the rest on the second, said Election Commission sources.

All the government and non-government offices in the municipal areas concerned will remain closed on the election days, said an EC press release.

Besides, all kinds of gatherings, rallies and processions in the election areas will be banned in the last two days before the polls. The highest punishment for violating the order is seven-year rigorous imprisonment, the release added.