

No alternative to BNP

Khaleda tells Joypurhat rally

UNB, Joypurhat

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged people to help maintain continuity of the present government to proceed uninterrupted with the tempo of development.

"There is no alternative to the BNP and alliance government to ensure people's welfare and country's development," she told a public meeting at Joypurhat Cement Factory ground.

Naming no names, Khaleda criticised a leader of an opposition party who she said has no work in the country and so is only going abroad spreading "propaganda" against the country.

"They unleashed chaos and anarchy on the streets damaging public property to hinder development flow. People did not vote them to power in the 2001 general elections for their acts of terrorism, corruption, destruction of public property and spreading propaganda abroad," she told the audience.

The prime minister said people don't want hartal and they have no faith in the opposition party as they don't keep their word given to the people.

Frustrating the opposition's move for discouraging foreign investors, she said many foreign countries and companies, including Dhabi, Tata of India, Malaysia, Japan, Italy and European Union

countries, are interested to invest in Bangladesh.

The prime minister said they succeeded in freeing the country from terrorism following various steps, including 'operation clean heart' and finally the formation of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

"The opposition has gone mad

BDR, BSF in raw mood over tea plantation

UNB, Panchagarh

The border security forces of Bangladesh and India were in a confrontational state yesterday as the BDR obstructed tea plantation by the Indians on the zero line of the border violating international rules.

Officials said several hundred Indian workers began tea plantation at Majheepara border close to the Panchagarh-Tetulia highway in the morning. They were backed by the BSF of Nayabari outpost, who were seen digging bunkers on the zero line.

BDR Personnel raised objection and asked for a flag meeting. Paying no heed, the BSF men continued digging bunkers and mobilising troops and heavy artillery on the border. BDR took retaliatory measures.

People living in the bordering areas have left their homes, fearing confrontation between the border guards of the two countries.

seeing the development and progress of the country under the BNP led alliance government," she said.

Health Minister Khandokar Mosharraf Hossain, Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General and Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujaheed, Prime Minister's political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, State Minister for Housing Alamgir Kabir, and Rajshai Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu also addressed the meeting.

HABIGANJ BY-POLLS Mubin Chy, 4 others submit nominations

UNB, Habiganj

Abu Lais Mohammad Mubin Chowdhury of the ruling BNP and four others yesterday submitted nomination papers for the April 25 by-election in Habiganj-3 constituency.

The others are Abdul Muktadir Chowdhury (Ind), Krishak Mohammad Sadeque (Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolan), Syed Mamun Miah (Ind) and Moqbul Hossain (Ind).

Political circles here say the independent candidates may finally step aside giving an easy sail for Abu Lais Mobin.

The seat fell vacant following the death of former finance minister SAMS Kibria in a grenade attack at Boldyer Bazaar on January 27. Mobin had lost to Kibria in the 2001 elections in this constituency with a big margin.

Highway blocked for 4 hours in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal-Dhaka highway remained blocked for 4 hours on Monday evening due to clashes between local people and police following the arrest of five persons including the imam of a local mosque at Rahmatpur in Babuganj upazila under the district.

Abdus Salehin, officer in charge (OC) of Babuganj Police Station arrested the imam, a union parishad member and three women as suspected Islamist fundamentalist.

Finding the imam absent before the Asr prayer, the musullis (people coming for prayer) became agitated, organised a procession and blocked the Barisal-Dhaka highway at about 5pm.

They demanded immediate release of arrestees as there was no specific case or allegation against them.

Local leaders and activists of different political parties including the BNP and Awami League joined the agitated mob.

As police led by OC Abdus Salehin tried to remove the road blockade, clashes erupted in which eight people including three police personnel received minor injuries.

Meanwhile, Mizanur Rahman, Assistant superintendent of police of Barisal went to the spot with a large contingent of police.

The demonstrators removed the roadblocks at about 9am after the arrestees were unconditionally released.

RANGAMATI ABDUCTION

No trace of 14 villagers

PCJSS rejects allegation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

None of the 14 villagers of Naniarchar upazila in Rangamati could be rescued as of yesterday evening, four days after their abduction.

Six separate army patrols have so far combed the suspected jungles. Reports say the abduction toll reached 22 in the past four days, in two separate incidents by gangs of indigenous armed insurgents that took place between 23 to 26 March.

The United Peoples' Democratic Front (UPDF), in an anti-peace accord issued here on Sunday evening, blamed the armed cadres belonging to the pro-peace accord Jono Sanghaty Samity (JSS) for the abduction.

But the JSS in a press release yesterday denied the accusation.

However, sources said armed terrorists abducted the 14 villagers of Rangimara, Sakkapara, Morachengri, Sapmara and Borpolepara on Saturday night. Later, in a message, the captors demanded Tk.10 lakh as ransom for their release.

Meanwhile, eight people who were kidnapped from the same upazila on March 23, including a primary school teacher, were set free on Saturday.

Police said 15 armed men stopped two Chander Gari (human carriers) in Bogachhari and took the eight people to unknown places. A couple of days later, the captors set them free at a nearby jungle, they confirmed.