

AL won't take part in any 'staged polls'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Awami League (AL) leaders yesterday once again accused the ruling alliance of conspiring to rig the next general election. Addressing a rally in the city they said the AL would not take part in any 'staged polls.' The AL leaders said they would not allow to hold any election without the proposed reforms in the caretaker government and electoral system. The rally was organised in front of the party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue to protest the criminal activities, bomb and grenade attacks and price hike of essentials during the four-years of BNP-Jamaat-led coalition. AL presidium member Abdur Razzak said the government has conspired to get a loyal person as chief advisor to next caretaker government and already appointed another loyal person as chief election commissioner to snatch people's verdict in the upcoming election. He said the people would not take part in the election until their proposals for reforms are accepted by the government. Razzak said the prices of daily essentials have gone beyond the reach of the common people who are now living in utter insecurity due to grow-

ing criminal activities. Tofail Ahmed said people could not cast their votes in 2001 general election as it was an election of conspiracy. He said the coalition government is responsible for all kinds of bomb and grenade attacks in the country. Tofail said law and order situation cannot be improved as the alliance government released 70,000 criminals from different jails. Motia Chowdhury said the prices of essential always go up whenever the BNP comes to power. She said BNP means criminal activities, price hike and bomb and grenade attacks. She urged the countrymen to be united to oust the coalition government. Presiding over the rally, AL presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury demanded immediate release of all their leaders and activists arrested by the coalition government at different times. AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader, Dhaka city unit General Secretary Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Advocate Shahara Khatun, Dr HBM Iqbal, Moqbul Hossain and Ajay Kor Khokh, also addressed the rally. After the rally, a procession was brought out that paraded different city streets.

PROTEST AGAINST MONDAY'S BOMB ATTACKS Lawyers demand resignation of govt, people's security

BNNEWS, Dhaka

Different lawyers' organisations, including SCBA, yesterday staged demonstrations and held rallies across the country protesting Monday's bomb attacks on courts in Chandpur, Laxmipur and Chittagong. The leaders of the associations demanded immediate resignation of the government for what they said its failure to ensure people's security and to take action against the bomb attackers and their godfathers. The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) urged the Chief Justice to take necessary steps to ensure the security of the judges, lawyers, legal staffs and litigants on the courts' premises with deploying adequate law enforcing personnel. In an urgent resolution, the SCBA also demanded that the government take legal action against the ministers, lawmakers and ruling party leaders who are allegedly involved in militant activities. "An identified vested quarters under the shelter and at the instigation of the present government is hatching a conspiracy to make the country a failed state by creating anarchy through destroying the judiciary and

rule of law. The militant have made the judiciary their targets of their attack. The government is not taking action against the bomb attackers as they have connections with the powerful leaders of the ruling parties," the meeting said. The SCBA organised the meeting at its South Hall yesterday in protest against the Monday's bomb attacks that left two people dead and 23 others, including a district judge and a police, injured. SCBA Vice President Advocate Shah Md Zahurul Haque presided over the meeting. Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad (SASP) Convener Barrister M Amir-ul Islam, Member Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, former SCBA president Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder, SCBA Secretary Advocate M Enayetur Rahim, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Advocate Sirajul Haque, Advocate Sahara Khatun, Advocate KM Saifuddin Ahmed, Advocate Nazmul Ahsan Mizan, Advocate Mamtaazuddin Mehedi, Advocate Ruhul Kuddus Babu, Advocate Md Salim and Advocate Rabiul Alam Babu also spoke with. BNNEWS Chittagong correspondent reports: Chittagong District Bar Association in an emergency general

meeting strongly denounced the Monday's bomb attacks in the courts and demanded of the government to identify the perpetrators and bring them to book immediately. Presided over by Association President Advocate Khurshed Alam Chowdhury, the meeting was addressed by General Secretary Humayon Kabir Raseel, Advocate Rana Das Gupta and former general secretary Montosh Barua. Later, lawyers brought out a procession on the court building premises protesting the recurrent bomb attacks in the courts. The judges, officers, employees, lawyers and litigants in Chittagong Court Building are still reeling under the bomb phobia in the wake of repeated bomb attacks on the court premises. BNNEWS Rajbari correspondent adds: Rajbari District Bar association held a procession and a meeting protesting Monday's bomb attacks. Advocate Syed Rafiqul Salehin, Advocate Chaita Ranjan Guho, Advocate Shaiful Azam Mamun, Advocate Mahbubur Rahman and Advocate ATM Mostafa addressed the meeting held on the judge court premises.

Draft of Bldg Construction (Amend) Act approved

BSS, Dhaka

The cabinet at its regular meeting yesterday approved the draft of the Building Construction (Amendment) Act, 2005 to ensure the use of proper materials in constructing buildings and to suit with the environment. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting held in the cabinet room of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), an official handout said last night. The meeting also okayed the draft of the agreement signed between Bangladesh and Qatar to avoid double taxation with a view to increasing investment and economic cooperation. It also discussed in detail the draft of the Fish Feed Act, 2005, formulated to increase fish production, maintain quality of fish, raise fish export and protection environment. The meeting decided to form a cabinet committee to give recommendations after further scrutiny of the draft. Cabinet members, state ministers in charge, cabinet secretary and concerned secretaries were present.

Poles of fortune

FROM PAGE 1 Spend more on the poles than ever before.

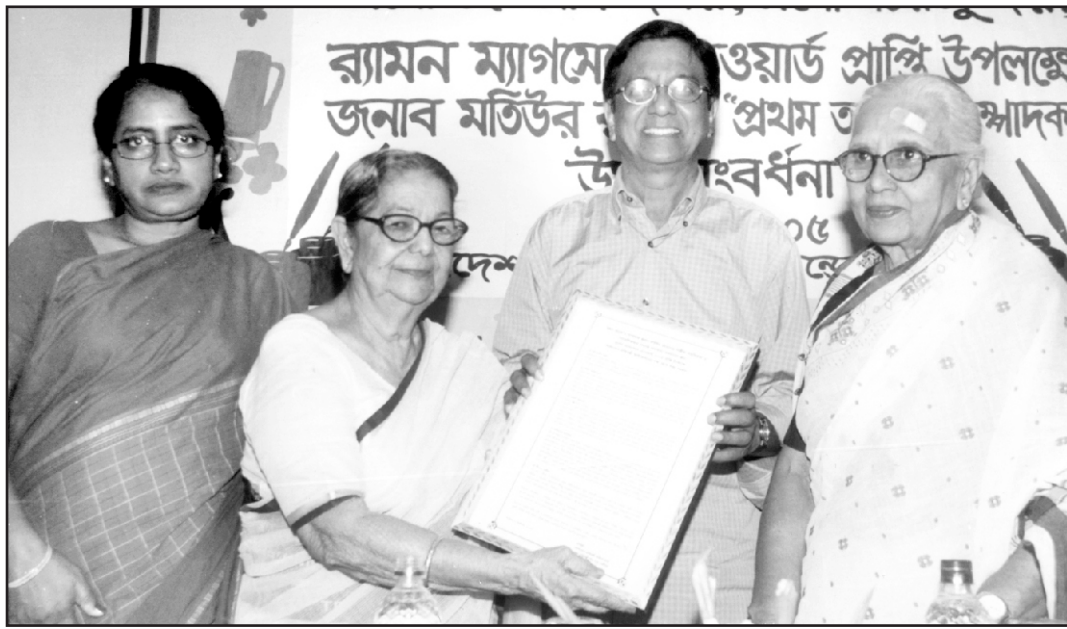
In the last fiscal, the REB spent around Tk 250 crore to buy four lakhs concrete poles for construction of 16,700 km of distribution lines. The same job could have been done with half the number of wooden poles by spending around only Tk 75 crore to Tk 85 crore, competent sources said. Each wooden pole has double the strength of a concrete pole, according to different reports of REB. Only three years ago, the REB purchased two lakh poles both wooden and concrete poles - spending around Tk 100 crore. Before 1994, the REB had not even heard of using concrete poles in electrification. The purchase of concrete poles began after 1996. Till June 2005, the REB installed 192,000 km of power distribution lines, purchasing a total of 17 lakh wooden poles from 1977 till 2003. These can cover 1.70 lakh km of distribution lines. Between 1996-2005, the REB also bought 15 lakh concrete poles covering 75,000 km, official data shows. A part of both these types of poles have not yet been installed. The present trend shows an increasing number of concrete pole coverage, increased spending and comparatively lower power distribution coverage. This has happened because the concrete pole manufacturers have established a monopoly by influencing the REB to change its purchase policy. Both the government and donors fund the REB's pole purchases. When donors fund pole purchases, via international tenders, they insist upon wider participation, which keeps the door open for wooden pole purchases. But the concrete pole manufacturers do not view such international bids as 'cash cows'. Their influence stopped the REB from floating such bids from 2003. All present bids are now locally funded, giving donors no say in these deals. In any international tenders floated till 2003, concrete pole manufacturers would quote their price close to that of wooden poles. In an international bid in 2003, concrete pole makers quoted 100 dollars for a particular size of concrete pole to compete with the wooden poles, which would cost around 100 dollars each. But at the same time, when REB floated a local restricted tender (which barred wooden poles), the concrete pole manufacturers quoted 300 dollars for each pole. The REB never had any requirement for concrete poles. But today it timber department and specialists are sitting idle because REB is now buying something it never needed," an official commented. Concrete poles vs. Wooden poles According to a REB expert, the wooden poles have 10 main advantages over both concrete and steel poles. These include: highest shock-proof capability, highest degree of non-corrosiveness, highest strength, easiest and cheapest handling, installation, line construction, replacement, renewability, maintainability etc. These advantages led a REB committee in 2000 to recommend that wooden poles should be installed for 60 to 71 percent of all installed poles. The committee noted that in low lying areas, concrete poles can not be installed because it is costly and difficult to transport or install. "To install power distribution in one kilometre area using the wooden poles, REB needs to spend maximum Tk 4 lakh. The same job needs between Tk 7 lakh to Tk 8 lakhs if concrete poles are used", quips the expert. Performance-wise concrete poles tend to break down for reasons including design flaws and use of low quality materials. On the other hand, most of the wooden poles installed in the late seventies are still serving. In March this year, REB concluded through its own investigation of dozens of damaged concrete poles in Netrokona that the manufacturer had cheated them. Investigators found fewer rods than required inside the broken poles, as well as a lower ratio of cement.

Success in visa suit likely to help 8,000 foreign students in Australia

BSS, Dhaka

A successful suit filed by Bangladeshi student Mohammad Ahsanuddin against the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs for wrongful cancellation of his student visa is expected to help other foreign students whose visas were cancelled on the same grounds. Ahsan went to Australia on March 9, 2005 to continue his tertiary education. Having done some courses, he was enrolled in a diploma course of Hospitality Management and Commercial Cookery in Melbourne on October 6, 2003. Ahsan's visa was cancelled after he failed to attend 50 percent of his classes and then did not attend a meeting with immigration officials. He was apparently sent a letter asking him to attend the meeting. The Federal Magistrate's Court in June decided that the letter, a standard-form notice sent to Ahsan by his school and a copy of the Department, was "defective". It did not fit migration regulations, Magistrate Stephen Scarlett said. Ahsan's lawyers argued, and Scarlett agreed, that the letter did not fit the migration regulations, according to a report published in the Australian papers on September 16. Under the regulations, the form should have asked that Ahsan contact any immigration officer at any office of the Department. "We were just trying to be helpful" in specifying which office was closest to Ahsan, an immi-

gration official was quoted as saying. Ahsan, however, claimed that he had not received the letter. The court verdict in favour of Ahsan forced the Australian government to reverse its decision for up to 8,000 failed or truant foreign students. The department has since received legal advice that the decision regarding Ahsan would apply to all ex-students whose visas were cancelled after they received the letter and did not turn up. The Australian Government will launch a worldwide search for ex-students whose visas were cancelled after they received the letter and then failed to attend a meeting with an immigration officer. Advertisements in the media, including foreign-language publications, would alert former students to the decision to reverse their visa cancellation. And overseas-based immigration officers would be on standby to help those students who had left Australia, the report said. The letter was sent to foreign students who had breached their visa conditions -- attending less than 80 percent of classes or failing to pass a "reasonable standard." It gave students 28 days to attend a meeting. Immigration officials conceded the department could face compensation claims as a result of the decision. The department had spent months since the June verdict whether to appeal. But legal advice suggested the department could not win, the official said.



Sultana Sarwat Ara Zaman, general secretary of the Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation, presents a citation to the Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman at a reception accorded to him in the city yesterday.

US SENATORS' LETTER Saber criticises FM's remark UNB, Dhaka

The Opposition Leader's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury yesterday said the foreign minister's comment on the letter written by 16 US senators and representatives questioned their integrity. "It is said that instead of addressing the grave and legitimate concern of the Senators and Congressmen of high international esteem, the foreign minister has deemed prudent to question their integrity," he told UNB. Saber said shooting the messenger instead of trying to hear and understand the message appears to have become a consistent trait of BNP-Jamaat government. Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at a press briefing on Monday said that the draft of the letter of the US Congressmen was prepared in Dhaka and the signatures of the US Senators and Congressmen were collected through their staffs by the daughter and son-in-law of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria.

Address monga crisis permanently Speakers say at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Monga, a famine-like situation, has to be addressed permanently, rather than giving away relief through Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme every year, said the speakers at a discussion yesterday. They said government's goodwill is imperative to solve this problem in northwestern part of the country. The discussion on 'Finding out permanent solution for monga' was organised by Jubo Karmasangsthan Society (Jubok), an NGO, at Biam Auditorium in the city. The speakers suggested cultivation of banana, sweet potato and other cereals during this period and make best use of around 2.5 trillion cubic feet of stone found in the region to overcome the situation. They laid emphasis on developing communications infrastructure and promoting tourism in the area to create employment opportunities for the locals. The speakers suggested allocation of micro-credits by government and NGOs to form co-operative societies by the poor people to eradicate poverty there. They also called for protecting the poor farmers from the middlemen by ensuring fair price of their agri-products. The other steps suggested by the speakers included setting up of industries based on local farm products, best

use of land ports and alternative food habit to meet monga. Deputy Editor of Prothom Alo Anisul Haque said an amount of Tk 300 crore was allocated last time to face monga, but most of the money was plundered by the politicians for use in the next election. Jatiya Party Lawmaker GM Kader said many projects are taken to eradicate poverty, but most of the project-money is misused. He said politicians are now less committed to people as they can win elections by their black money and muscle power. Left-leaning politician Ruhin Hossain Prince posed a question over the role of NGOs as acute poverty still persists in the area despite their activities. Executive Chairman of Jubo Hossain Al Masum, Director of Power and Participatory Research Centre Ziauddin Ahmed and Editor of Desh Bangla Dr Ferdous Ahmed Quaraeshi also spoke at the function. Ex-chairman of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies Dr Monowar Hossain was the moderator of the discussion. Manga starts in Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartik in eight districts of northwestern region. As people of the area remain jobless during these two months, they don't have money in their hands to buy food and as a result they starve.

'Nat'l Action Plan taken to protect child rights'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken up a five-year-long National Plan of Action from 2005 to 2010 for the protection of child rights and development of children. This was stated by Law Minister Moudud Ahmed while addressing as chief guest at a discussion meeting to mark the International Child Rights Week in the city yesterday. "Special provisions have been incorporated in the action plan to protect the rights of the working children, now engaged in about 400 odd jobs," he said. The minister said existing National Child Policy would be revised to facilitate the implementation of the action plan. The discussion meeting was organ-

ised by the Child Rights Week Celebration Committee at the Institution of Engineers. Over one hundred disadvantaged children also took part in the discussion to voice their rights. They stressed the need for providing all-out support to establish their rights of survival, protection and development. Chaired by Thomas Espey, country director of Plan Bangladesh, the function was also addressed by Zinat Afroj, social development adviser of Plan Bangladesh. Children from Shishu Dal, CDE, Radda, Surobhi, UCEF, DSK and FULKI were present on the occasion. The discussion was followed by a cultural function performed by the children.

Theory of Music certificate presentation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Silverstar Academy held the Trinity College, London (TCL) Theory of Music certificate presentation yesterday at the Russian Cultural Centre. Eighteen students received certificates on music theory for the years 2004 and 2005. Showla Nazneen obtained 92 the highest mark in 2004 and Saibu Shayer secured full 100 marks in 2005. "It is a matter of regret that we do not encourage children to learn or listen to classical music, western or eastern," said Chief Guest Aly Zaker, managing director and CEO, Asiatic Marketing Communications Ltd, urging parents to guide children to appreciate classical music. Silverne de S Shrikanthan, principal The Silverstar Academy and representative TCL said that parents could add a little flavour to their children's lives by encouraging them to get involved in some aspect of the performing arts. S. Prabagar, chief operating officer, Commercial Bank of Ceylon Limited (CBC), sponsor of the programme and Omer Farook, ex-director (music and dance), Shilpakala Academy were special guests.

Karachi-bound Biman flight delayed for 5 hours

BNNEWS, Dhaka

A Biman flight bound for Karachi from Dhaka was delayed for five hours yesterday as the aircraft got damaged by a catering vehicle of the national airlines. Biman sources said the flight (BG-031) was scheduled to take off from Zia International Airport (ZIA) at 12 noon. But the aircraft required repair- ing after the catering service carrier struck its passenger door. Some 138 passengers of the flight had to suffer as the flight departed at 5:00pm, five hours after the schedule. Three more aircraft of the national flag carrier were grounded within a week. A DC-10 was grounded in New

York while another in Brussels due to mechanical faults. Also, an F-28 was grounded at Chittagong. The aircraft grounded in Brussels is yet to be repaired.

Obituary



Shamsun Nahar Begum, mother of politician and businessman a Monir Uddin Babul, passed away due to old age complications at her house in Noakhali yesterday at the age of 85, says a press release. She left behind her husband, four sons and three daughters.

Death anniversary



Today is the 17th death anniversary of M A Rashid, former secretary of Bangladesh Government, says a press release. Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



Recipients of the TCL Theory of Music certificates pose with guests at a function in the city yesterday.