

## PM pledges to root out bomb-terrorism

Regrets failure in detecting bombers in advance; urges opposition to return to JS

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday pledged to root out the latest syndrome of bomb-terrorism from Bangladesh as she claimed that her government has identified the main schemers of the bombings.

"We can understand where their roots lie. Whatever clothing they may wear, it is not difficult for Bangladeshi people to comprehend their motives and the instigators behind them," she said on the eve of stepping into the fifth and final year in office to lead her coalition government.

Delivering a 35-minute speech before the nation over electronic media in the evening, the prime minister devoted most of her time to the recent serial bombings and terrorism as well as her government action to deal with the threatening menace.

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PHOTO: PID

Khaleda Zia addresses the nation on completion of her coalition government's four years in power.

### Khaleda's key points

Regrets failure of administration, intelligence agencies in detecting bombers in advance

Says serial bombings tarnished nation's image, struck at peace and security in public life

Admits little success in anti-graft measures

Pledges to root out bomb-terrorism, says mastermind of bombings have been identified

Stresses regional efforts to combat terrorism

Calls upon opposition to return to parliament

## Stop lighting malls or face cut-off

Decides govt to tackle power crisis

UNB, Dhaka

Power connections to shopping malls will be cut off as an ultimate action if the owners do not stop from illuminating their establishments in the evening, according to one of a number of decisions the government took yesterday to tackle a nagging power crisis.

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## DU will never allow Shibir politics on campus: VC

DU CORRESPONDENT

Different student organisations of Dhaka University yesterday demanded that politics of Islami Chhatra Shibir be banned at educational institutes across the country, and protested against its movement on the campus.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)-led seven student organisations

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## Hasina vows to keep essentials within commoners' reach

Makes a waft of election pledges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday made 16 pledges including the one to keep the prices of essentials within the commoners' reach if her party returns to power in the next general elections.

Addressing the nation on four years of the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition rule, Hasina criticised the alliance government's performance against the pledges it [coalition] made before the last election.

The Awami League (AL) president in her speech at the Diploma Engineers Institute pledged to separate the judiciary in shortest possible time, make education free up to graduation level and frame new laws to rein in rampant corruption.

"We will also ensure the independence of the Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, and



PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Hasina speaks at Diploma Engineers Institute.

Public Service Commission by allowing them to prepare budget and recruit manpower on their own," she said.

She also promised to enact appropriate laws to ensure transparency in the spending of the

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### Hasina's key points

Keeping prices of essentials under control

Free education up to graduation level

Separation of judiciary as early as possible

Full independence of EC, ACC, PSC

Stern laws to punish corrupt, bribe-takers

Recovering assets 'gobbled up by PM's family'

Introduction of full e-governance in admin

Law to ensure transparency in expenses of political parties and poll candidates

## Little of blame, more of soul searching

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time the prime minister yesterday did not blame the opposition for all odd things, rather she admitted failures of her administration in detecting the bombers in advance and the government's 'little success' in fighting corruption.

In her previous addresses to the nation the PM declared her firm commitment to curb corruption and check bomb attacks, and blamed the previous

economic successes and progress, but yesterday she admitted that the country's economy was passing a hard time. She however put the blame on the global economic crisis.

Khaleda said her government could not be alert to the increasing activities of bombers. She regretted the failure of the administration and intelligence agencies in detecting bombers in advance.

"These bombings have tarnished

### Text of PM's speech on page 2

Awami League (AL) government for corruption and patronage of crimes.

But addressing the nation yesterday she shifted her stance.

The PM in her earlier speeches blamed the AL government for "destroying" country's economy. On October 19, 2001, she said the AL government had turned Bangladesh's economy, known as emerging tiger during the BNP rule, into a sick cat.

In her speech a year ago, she said her government had achieved a lot of

the nation's image, struck at peace and security in public life, especially the reputation of Islam, the religion of peace," she said and assured that measures have been taken to overcome the weaknesses of the agencies.

The prime minister in her address pledged to root out the latest syndrome of bomb-terrorism from Bangladesh as she claimed that

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## Militants plan blasts to free arrestees

Harkatul threatens to blow up Khulna installations if Hannan not released

STAR REPORT

Several leaders and activists of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) are out to collect explosives from the frontier areas in a bid to launch bomb attacks to snatch their arrested members from law enforcers.

The Ehsars [bachelors sworn not to return home before completing a mission] and activists aspiring to be shaheeds (martyrs) are training in the chars in Bogra to carry out such operations.

Meanwhile, Harkatul Jihad (Huji) on Sunday called different key installations in Khulna city and threatened to blow up those if Mufti Abdul Hannan was not released unconditionally.

A caller identifying himself as a Huji regional leader warned this time

the attacks will be more devastating than the August 17 bombings.

Moreover, JMB cadre Shahidullah alias Lokman in a confessional statement before a magistrate's court said the bombings were carried out at the directives of JMB chief Abdur Rahman and JMJB operations commander Bangla Bhai.

He named 12 Islam extremist including himself who were directly involved in the August 17 blasts in Khulna.

**BOGRA**  
Our Bogra correspondent reports: The JMB and JMJB have decided to snatch arrested activists on their way to courts and prisons across the country.

A special 'suicide squad' has been formed comprising the bomb squad members of the banned outfits, said a source close to the JMB.

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## Orion grabs 561 acres of forestland

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Orion Trading House, a sister concern of Orion Group, has allegedly grabbed 561 acres of forestland in Valuka under Mymensingh district by producing fake documents.

The forest bit office of Habirbari of Valuka range is situated inside the grabbed land, where the grabbers have started demarcation work by building walls. The forest department has for the last few years been running a social forestry programme on that piece of land in partnership with the local people.

Forest department sources said good stocks of Gazari forest exist on the grabbed land. The department filed a case against the grabbers at the Mymensingh lower court, which is now under hearing.

The grabbed land is worth not less than Tk 300 crore, a forest department source said.

"The grabbers have produced fake documents and bribed some local people, who are saying that the grabbers have purchased the land from the

local people," said a top official of the forest department. "Now they have been making the wall around the forest office and their grabbed land," he added.

When an Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF), Md. Arif, tried to resist the grabbers, hired people of the grabbers beat him up. But the police have so far not taken any action. When the forest department staff went to knock down the wall with the help of local people, the police resisted them, the forest office alleged.

Even the local people also cannot protest the grabbing in fear of the hired musclemen of the grabbers, said forest officials.

Obaidul Karim, the owner of Orion Trading House, put a signboard with the name of his wife, Zobaida Karim, over the area, claiming that they have bought the land.

Local people said 300 hired people of the Orion group have been working there round the clock to complete the wall.

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## COAL MINING, POWER PROJECT Sheer neglect led to Barapukuria disaster

SHARIER KHAN

The deadly saturation of gas that led to closure of the corruption-plagued and highly over-priced \$250 million Barapukuria coal mining project on Wednesday has been caused by 'sheer negligence' of the Barapukuria mining authority and the project's Chinese contractor, sources said.

A part of the mining project is most unlikely to return to production within a year even if remedial measures are taken while partial production can resume in another part in the near future, making the overpriced coal even costlier. This situation could even worsen, either resulting in a massive cost-escalation or abandonment of the project, they pointed out.

In any case, the present situation will jeopardise the operation of the highly-inflated \$220 million coal-fired 250 megawatt power project from December.

On Sunday, the energy ministry

formed a four-member committee headed by the managing director (MD) of Barapukuria Mining Company (BMC), a subsidiary of Petrobangla, to investigate the incident. The committee does not have a single mining engineer in it. It has been asked to submit report within 10 days.

Questions have been raised about this committee since the MD himself is directly responsible for the faulty operation and disaster of the mining project.

Both the mine and power plant are being developed under a flawed Chinese supplier's credit while all the contractors and even consultants are represented by a single businessman close to the ruling BNP -- who made the projects a financial mess for the nation. The mining project is already four years behind schedule because of design flaws that have heavily raised the costs.

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