

Canadian govt falls on no-confidence

AP, Toronto

A corruption scandal forced a vote of no-confidence Monday that toppled Prime Minister Paul Martin's minority government, triggering an unusual election campaign during the Christmas holidays.

Canada's three opposition parties, which control a majority in Parliament, voted against Martin's government, claiming his Liberal Party no longer has the moral authority to lead the nation.

The loss means an election for all 308 seats in the lower House of Commons, likely on Jan. 23. Martin and his Cabinet would continue to govern until then.

Opposition leaders last week called for the no-confidence vote after Martin rejected their demands to dissolve Parliament in January and hold early elections in February. Monday's vote follows a flurry of spending announcements in Ottawa last week, with the government trying to advance its agenda ahead of its demise.

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PM warns tough action against JMB

UNB, Patuakhali

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday warned of dire consequences of the desperate acts of subversion by the banned Islamist outfit JMB.

The militants will be awarded stringent punishment under the law of the land, she said, shocked by deadly bombings in Gazipur and Chittagong.

The prime minister also urged the opposition Awami League (AL) to return to parliament and to sit across the table to discuss their proposal for reforms in the electoral process, shunning the path of violence.

Khaleda issued renewed warnings against the JMB militants and made the appeal to the opposition while addressing a public meeting at the District Sports Association (DSA) ground yesterday.

Referring to the bomb explosions in Gazipur and Chittagong, she said

these elements are enemies of Islam, humanity, nation, and democracy. She said that her government has banned the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) for their terrorist activities and killings.

"They are culprits, terrorists and murderers. They cannot go to heaven by killing man," she told her audience in the southern coastal district amidst strong response and urged the people to help them arrest. She said those who will help catch the bombers will be rewarded.

She also urged people to get united against these extremists and advised the house owners not to rent out houses to strangers.

"We'll crush them; they are enemies of humanity," an irate Khaleda told the rally in the wake of recurrent strike by the bombers.

Inviting the Awami League to parliament and discussion table for resolving the problems they are

raising, the prime minister said the opposition has been boycotting parliament on a lame excuse of election procedure.

Referring to BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's offer for dialogue with the Awami League, Khaleda said: "Today, I again urge you to come to parliament, sit across the table on your demands and resolve the problems."

About the next general elections, Khaleda said her government will hand over power to caretaker government for holding elections in 2007.

She urged people to cast vote for sheaf of paddy in the next elections to continue the current trend of development. "Exercise your franchise judiciously--take the correct decision in the next elections."

Presided over by Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, the meeting was also

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2 killed in 'shootouts' with Rab

STAR REPORT

An outlaw and a top criminal were killed in encounters between their accomplices and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Khulna and Chittagong yesterday.

Shaikh Shariful Islam, member of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddha faction, was killed in an encounter between his accomplices and members of Rab yesterday at Niklapur village in Rupsha upazila in Khulna, our Khulna correspondent reports.

Rab arrested Shariful, 34, on Monday afternoon from Daulatpur Govt BL College area in Khulna city.

According to a press release issued by Rab yesterday, the encounter occurred during an arms recovery operation following his confessional statement.

Two Rab members sustained bullet injuries during the 16-minute encounter. Rab fired 23 rounds from their small machine guns (SMG) and shotguns in their defence, the press release read.

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Niko backs out from supply threat

Fixing of gas price left unresolved

UNB, Dhaka

The high profile meeting between the Niko chief and the advisor to the energy ministry yesterday failed to resolve the gas price issue.

Niko, the Canadian operator of Feni and Tangratila gas fields, will now take their case to International Arbitration Court to settle the price of gas it is selling to Petrobangla from its Feni reserve, Niko officials said.

Sources said the government has offered to set the tariff of per thousand cubic feet (mcd) of gas from the Feni

field at \$1.75. But Niko rejected the offer claiming that the price should be fixed at \$2.35.

However, Niko backed out from its earlier decision to shut down the production of gas from Feni gas field.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Global President of Niko, Edward S Sampson, who led the Niko team at the meeting, said his company will continue to supply gas from the Feni field considering the interest of the country.

But the price of gas offered by the government is unacceptable and unjustified to the company. "That's

why we'll move for the international arbitration," said the Niko chief.

The issue of compensation for the two blowouts at Tangratila gas field was also discussed in the meeting.

Energy Advisor Mahmudur Rahman told the Niko chief that the government would formally place the compensation claim soon.

The Niko chief said his company will decide on the matter after getting the letter in hand.

The meeting may again take place today between the Niko chief and the energy advisor.

Sea ports asked to tighten security

RAFIQ HASAN

The Department of Shipping asked the Chittagong and Mongla seaport authorities to maintain stringent security measures following the suicide bomb blasts in Chittagong and Gazipur yesterday morning.

"We have asked the port authorities to take extra security measures after hearing the news of bomb blasts to prevent any untoward incidents in the shipping sector," Ahsan Ali, acting director general (DG) of shipping told The Daily Star last night.

But the department did not raise the security level according to International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) code followed by shipping

sectors worldwide during a tense situation near the port or in the country concerned.

After the August 17 countrywide blasts, the ISPS security level two was maintained in Chittagong and Mongla seaports for five days when everyone was checked before boarding a ship.

This time too, the security level should have been raised to level two, observe shipping experts.

The acting DG, however, said he did not feel the necessity to raise the ISPS security level in the present situation.

"We have asked the authorities to maintain stringent security

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Email sender to US, UK embassies held

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Police yesterday claimed that they arrested the culprit who sent the emails to the US and UK missions in Dhaka on Sunday threatening to blow up the embassies.

The arrestee, Shahnewaz Chowdhury, 40, is a resident of East Rampura in the city and hails from Trishal upazila in Mymensingh.

Earlier on Monday, members of the Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Delwar Hossain Manik whose name was mentioned as the e-mail sender. Following the confessional statement given by him, the DB personnel were able to arrest Shahnewaz, sources said.

Manik also told police that Shahnewaz is a fraud and a

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PHOTO: STAR

1) Security men cordon off the main entrance to Gazipur Bar office; 2) Lawyers march in protest at Supreme Court; 3) Closed courtrooms in Dhaka after blasts.

80-year old victim seeks his family

DMCH CORRESPONDENT

Ramizuddin, 80, the oldest among the people injured in yesterday's bomb attack on the Gazipur district court premises was in and out of consciousness in ward no 31 of Dhaka Medical College Hospital last evening.

He apparently chose a wrong day to go to the court to meet his lawyer concerning a property-related litigation travelling a long way from Ratura, Kaliganj.

He was talking to his lawyer in hall no 2 on the ground floor of Gazipur Bar Library Bhavan when the suicide

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Militancy won't rock investment plan: Tata

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Top executives of Indian business giant Tata yesterday said the recent rise of militancy in Bangladesh won't discourage them to go ahead with the planned \$ 2.5 billion investment as terrorism is now a global problem.

"Terrorism is now a global problem... London is affected, New York affected, New Delhi too. This problem here will not affect our investment," Alan Rosling, executive director of Tata Sons Ltd., told reporters in the city.

His comment came when journalists drew his attention to the matter shortly after a press conference where he elaborated the findings of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) on economic impact study of Tata's investment in Bangladesh.

Rosling said he is hoping to see one or two key people in the government shortly to sort out a timeframe for resuming fourth round of negotiations on the investment in power, steel and fertiliser sector in next couple of weeks.

He claimed positive outcome in the past meetings, but said the outstanding issues remained to be resolved, including fixing tariff for gas it will purchase and electricity it will sell, gas security, land acquisition, coalmine leasing and fiscal incentive.

He replied in negative when asked if they had any discussion with the opposition on the proposed projects.

"We are discussing with the government and if people of Bangladesh change the government after one year, we believe the successive government will honour the deal. It'll be a deal between Tata and the Bangladesh government," he said.

"This is an unprecedented investment proposal in whole of the South Asia, not only in Bangladesh. Nobody took forward an about \$3b investment proposal before," he said.

Replying to a query on cross-border energy trade, Rosling clarified that they are not here to export electricity or gas. "We are here to purchase your gas for generating electricity and setting up world's largest urea fertiliser factory."

Nizami sees opposition link

UNB, Dhaka

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Maulana Matiar Rahman Nizami condemned yesterday's deadly bombings, saying that the outrageous incidents seem to be linked with the Awami League-led opposition movement designed to prove Bangladesh as a dysfunctional state.

"Target of these bomb blasts is

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List of injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The list of injured found at the register of Gazipur Sadar Hospital: Advocates Jebunnessa Meenu, Anwarul Hoq, 40, Khorshed, 35, Rustam Ali, 40, Abdur Razzak, 55, Anisur Rahman Kajol, 35, Anwar Hossain, 25, Nurul Huda, 42.

Among others, mostly lawyers' assistants and clients, are Ziaul Karim, 30, Shahin, 25, Anwar Hossain, 25, M o k b u l , 30 ,

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