

September 18, 2006

## EC to stop campaign before polls schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Irked by the ongoing election campaign through posters, billboards and wall writings by aspirant candidates, the Election Commission (EC) has planned to stop the campaign before declaring the election schedule.

"These are immoral activities. But we can not take any step at this moment due to legal limitations," Abdur Rashid Sarkar, secretary of the EC Secretariat, yesterday told reporters at his office.

The EC will soon hold meetings with the police administration and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) as they have jurisdictions to stop the unauthorised campaign, he said.

"We will ask the police administration and Dhaka City Corporation

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## PM calls for resisting 'plot' to boycott election

UNB, Barisal

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday cautioned that those who want to foil the upcoming general election will have to bear all the consequences as the people will not allow them to execute that plot.

She said the people of Bangladesh are ready to resist any move to foil the election.

"Whoever doesn't want the election to be held is enemy of the people, country's development and democracy. They (opposition) will have to be resisted," Khaleda, also chairperson of the ruling BNP, told a big public meeting in Barisal.

She noted that a political vacuum would be created in the country if the election didn't take place.

The prime minister said witnessing massive development activities carried out by her government across the country the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Outraged by outage

### Highest-ever 2200MW power shortage as 19 generation units shut down

STAR REPORT

As 19 power generation units remain shut down, the country is reeling under perennial power cuts with daily power supply shortfall exceeding 2200 megawatts (MW) -- the highest power shortage in the country ever.

According to the data from the Power Development Board (PDB), against the 'official' demand of 4,300 MW yesterday, the country's power plants were producing 3,126 MW in the peak hours. But according to the power demand chart of the Rural Electrification Board (REB), Dhaka Electric Supply Authorities (Desa) and its company Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco) and the PDB, the demand for power

was 5,400 MW -- leaving a wide demand supply shortfall.

The PDB officially shows a lower level of load shedding to tone down the government's failure in the power sector, sources said.

However, frequent power disruptions and low quality power supply in the city and elsewhere in the country have reached a new height. All parts of the city regularly undergo power cuts for hours.

"For instance, the power went off in our area at 7:30pm Saturday," a Mirpur section 2 resident said, adding, "It came back at 8:30pm. Then it went off again at 9:30pm and returned at 10:30pm and again went off at 11:30pm and returned at 12:30am."

"But that's not all. The power had

gone off at 8:00am in the morning on Saturday and came back at 9:00am. Then it went off again at 10:00am and came back at 11:00am. It again went off at 2:00pm for another hour. This is not an exceptional incident. This happens every day here," he added.

In Karwan Bazar, no business establishment would spend a single day without running their own power generators for at least three hours. Some days this load shedding can extend to eight hours. The frequency of load shedding is minimum four times and it can be as frequent as eight times.

In Green Road, it has become a routine for everyone to face four to five hours of power cuts a day in at

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Rapid Action Battalion personnel use sniffer dogs to search Paltan Maidan in the capital yesterday ahead of the opposition's grand rally today.

PHOTO: STAR

## Ershad gets fourth acquittal in a month

Judge finds defendant harassed in case filed by BNP 14 years back

SHAKHAWAT LITON and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad was acquitted of graft charges yesterday in yet another case filed against him during the previous BNP government in connection with allotment of plots of land violating government laws. The acquittal is also the fourth for him in a month.

In its verdict, the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court that began the trial in 1998 observed that the former president had been harassed with the case for the last 14 years.

"It has been proven that the case was filed on political grounds to harass the former president," Judge SM Mojibur Rahman said in the verdict referring to a petition filed by

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Ershad in 1999 claiming that the government filed the case on political grounds.

Cheerful Ershad, who was accused of graft charges in cases one after another following the ruling BNP's move to have the deposed dictator on its side in the upcoming parliamentary election in exchange for gradually withdrawing pending cases against him, yesterday said he is getting justice.

"Ershad did not allot any plot to any of his relatives. Those who were allotted plots were not accused in the case," the court observed.

While the court was delivering the verdict Ershad was sitting in a sofa in the courtroom without taking permission from the court, instead of being in the dock.

"Ershad had not been harassed with the case filed by BNP 14 years back," the court observed.

"It has been proven that the case was filed on political grounds to harass the former president," Judge SM Mojibur Rahman said in the verdict referring to a petition filed by

## Sircar fends off move to talk on KM Hasan's visit to Comilla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar yesterday did not allow the members of parliament to speak on points of order when a debate arose on Justice KM Hasan's visit to Comilla with ruling party men on Saturday.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid raised the issue with Maghribi prayers on a point of order and termed Justice Hasan "an activist of a political party".

"KM Hasan visited Comilla and attended several programmes with Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof SMA Faiz, Comilla district BNP Secretary General Jahangir Alam and other BNP and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dalmen," he said.

"KM Hasan proved what we have said before about him—that he is actively working for a political party," Shahid said amidst support from other opposition lawmakers.

The bank had submitted edited minutes of the AGM that was found to have lasted only for five or six minutes. The board of directors did

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## ORIENTAL BANK Top brass fined for violating SEC rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday fined 13 former directors, a former managing director and a company secretary of the Oriental Bank Ltd for breaching securities rules.

The directors and the managing director were fined Tk 500,000 each while the incumbent company secretary Tk 100,000, sources said.

The payments will be made to the stock market regulator by bank draft or pay order within the next 15 days.

The former directors were disciplined for not furnishing the commission with uninterrupted audio-visual records of the 18th annual general meeting (AGM) held on October 16, 2005.

The payments will be made to the stock market regulator by bank draft or pay order within the next 15 days.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

## Bhuiyan feels better, flies to S'pore for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan left Dhaka for Singapore last night to have better medical treatment.

Doctors here, however, said the BNP secretary general was recovering fast. Bhuiyan was admitted to hospital on Thursday following chest pains.

The BNP secretary general, also

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

## EU mission takes views of donors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The visiting European Union (EU) Observation Exploratory Mission yesterday exchanged views with different development partners of Bangladesh.

Separately meeting with the USAID, Cida, Asian Foundation, DFID, NDI, IRD and a few other donor organisations, the EU mission asked them whether it would be useful and feasible to send an election observation team to Bangladesh.

The six-member EU team led by Andrew Bruce came to Dhaka on September 11 on a ten-day visit to assess Bangladesh's pre-poll environment.

For the last few days, the 14-party has been going all out to mobilise more than a million people in the rally with a view to proving the popularity of the demand for reforms.

Many of the opposition leaders and workers from across the country were already bound for Dhaka to join the rally at historic Paltan Maidan.

For the last few days, the 14-party has been going all out to mobilise more than a million people in the rally with a view to proving the popularity of the demand for reforms.

It has instructed its leaders and workers to put up stiff resistance in case of the law enforcers barring

them from joining the rally. It also

has asked them to stage instantane-

ous sit-ins to protest police excesses.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh

Hasina will announce a fresh spell of

programmes aiming to elevate the

reforms movement to a fever pitch.

The government on the other

hand has taken unprecedented

security measures looking to

today's rally. Some 12,000 law

enforcers will be deployed in and

around the venue to maintain law

and order.

The opposition party will take

up even tougher programmes

including an indefinite hartal in

Dhaka and elsewhere in the country

to see off what they said was the

BNP-Jamaat obstinacy regarding

the proposed reforms in the care-

taker government and electoral

systems.

They now look to realise the demand for reforms before tenure of the alliance government expires on October 27. A non-party caretaker government will take over from the ruling coalition to oversee a general election in the next 90 days.

AL and its allies have been campaigning for the reforms since July 15 last year.

14-party Coordinator and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star yesterday, "We are doing everything necessary to pull off tomorrow's [today's] programme."

He said, "We have asked our leaders and workers to stage sit-ins wherever they might face obstructions."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



## GRAND RALLY AT PALTAN Opposition declares 'final' agitation for reforms today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) led 14-party opposition combine at a grand rally in the capital today will announce the final round of agitation seeking to force the ruling alliance to concede the demand for electoral reforms.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh

Hasina will announce a fresh spell of

programmes aiming to elevate the

reforms movement to a fever pitch.

The government on the other

hand has taken unprecedented

security measures looking to

today's rally. Some 12,000 law

enforcers will be deployed in and

around the venue to maintain law

and order.

The opposition party will take

up even tougher programmes

including an indefinite hartal in

Dhaka and elsewhere in the country

to see off what they said was the

BNP-Jamaat obstinacy regarding

the proposed reforms in the care-

taker government and electoral

systems.

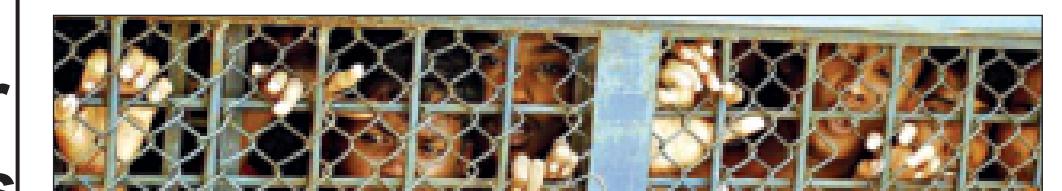
They now look to realise the demand for reforms before tenure of the alliance government expires on October 27. A non-party caretaker government will take over from the ruling coalition to oversee a general election in the next 90 days.

AL and its allies have been campaigning for the reforms since July 15 last year.

14-party Coordinator and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star yesterday, "We are doing everything necessary to pull off tomorrow's [today's] programme."

He said, "We have asked our leaders and workers to stage sit-ins wherever they might face obstructions."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Police conducted wholesale arrests of opposition activists and brought them to court yesterday ahead of the opposition's grand rally in the capital today. The arrestees were picked up from different places in the city.

## Come mass arrest, come sufferings to innocents

SHARIFUL ISLAM

A prison van crammed with arrestees was waiting in front of Pallabi Police Station in the city yesterday afternoon. Among the grim-faced insiders, one continuously sobbing in a corner of the van—looked too innocent to be a victim of mass arrest.

Fighting back tears, the youth, Mohammed Russell, said he is a day labourer and came all the

way from Netrakona to collect some pending bills from a man in Kafrul.

He said Kafrul police picked him from Mirpur Section-13 on his way to Kafrul. "I was supposed to go back home this morning. I do not