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No talks, no polls
without Khaleda,
Hasina

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the BNP secretary general appointed by party chief Khaleda Zia, yesterday hinted at launching a vigorous movement to free the party chief and said the party will not participate in any dialogue or election without Khaleda and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina.

Demanding election without any further delay, the BNP leader also said the people will not accept any 'stage-managed election' intended to satisfy any particular quarter or to legitimise the deeds of the present administration.

"There would be no dialogue, no election without Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina," he told visiting members of a forum named 'Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Leaders of the '80s' as they met him at his Nam apartment.

"Agitation programmes will be...
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Another Tangail tragedy kills 18 bus passengers

Driver of overcrowded vehicle was drowsy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

In yet another fatal road accident, 18 persons were killed and 55 injured when a passenger bus skidded off the road and fell on the railway on Jamuna Bridge Approach Road in Kalihati upazila of Tangail early yesterday.

Injured bus passengers alleged that the driver of the Dhaka-bound bus from Bhurungamari upazila of Kurigram was drowsy and was driving the overcrowded bus at a very high speed.

The accident happened only three days after a passenger bus had been rammed by an intercity train on a level crossing, just 5km away from yesterday's accident spot, killing 17 persons and injuring 25.

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Rescue workers under supervision of the army remove the mutilated bus from rail tracks at Kalihati in Tangail yesterday.

Cop's quick thought saved many lives

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Presence of mind of a constable of Jamuna Bridge East Police Station yesterday saved the lives of many injured passengers trapped inside the wreckage of the bus that was lying upside down across the railway.

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Hasina readmitted to Square Hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina was admitted to the city's Square Hospital yesterday for the second time while in detention.

The jail authorities said they took her to the private hospital on Panthapath for routine checkups in the morning, but later they had her admitted on advice from doctors.

According to hospital sources, the former prime minister was...
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Roads replete with deaths

4,000 die every year

SHARIFUL ISLAM

With official death toll of nearly 4,000 a year, road accidents cause the largest casualties in Bangladesh as neither existing laws nor law enforcement agencies are stringent enough to punish culprit drivers or transport owners.

The Accident Research Centre of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) however claims the real number of casualties is three times the official figure.

Moreover, the accidents inflict a

severe damage -- no less than Tk 5,000 crore annually or about 2 percent of the GDP -- if calculated in financial terms.

Researchers and even Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) say drivers care little for traffic rules or committing an accident due to reckless driving.

"Even if reckless driving causes death to several people, the existing laws allow the driver to get bail easily. And if the driver concerned is convicted, the highest punishment is a mere three-year jail," says BRTA Chairman Sunil Kant Bose.

Soon after an accident, most of the times a section of unscrupulous police investigators take bribe to favour the culprit drivers or transport owners in their investigation reports, BRTA insiders allege.

Unfit vehicles and unskilled drivers also cause a significant number of accidents leading to deaths of many people. Statistics show 20 percent accidents occur due to faults in drivers' part and eight percent due to vehicles' unfitness.

The fine slapped on the drivers...
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POLL REFORMS

EC may wrap up talks if BNP fails to unite

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) may wrap up electoral reform talks with political parties without holding formal talks with BNP if the party fails to unite within the timeframe given to it to join the reform dialogue.

The EC is considering this option to overcome the crisis centring the nagging issue of talks with BNP so that it can proceed with the proposals for electoral reforms, EC sources said.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda wants to remain rigid on the EC's plan to send the reform proposals to the caretaker government at the end of this month no matter talks with BNP are held or not, according to sources close to the CEC.

In a last ditch effort to have a

united BNP at electoral reform talks, the EC on Thursday held informal talks with both factions of the party separately. And it asked them to unite within three days to participate in the dialogue with it. The timeframe expires today.

But the EC move, viewed as unprecedented, saw no headway as of yesterday regarding unification of BNP. Unless a dramatic development takes place, possibility of unity of the party factions by today or even tomorrow is slim, said a senior leader of the pro-reform BNP faction.

Against this backdrop, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday, "We will have to take a decision by Monday or Tuesday if they [BNP] are not united [to participate in reform dialogue]."

On the informal talks held with

both factions of BNP, Sohul said the EC wants a united BNP to attend reform talks with it.

The issue already delayed implementation of the EC's electoral reform roadmap according to which dialogue with political parties was supposed to be completed between September and November last year. And electoral reform proposals were to be made laws in February this year.

The EC began dialogue with political parties on September 12 last year and had talks with 15 parties (except BNP) by November. It even completed the second round of talks with these parties in February.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said the EC does not want to see itself in a controversy again by inviting one faction of BNP to...
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WOMEN DEV POLICY

Ulema body's views go against constitution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ulema committee's recommendations to curb the rights of women are totally unconstitutional since the constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights for women, speakers said at a roundtable in the city yesterday.

They also pointed out that a radical Islamist group, patronised by anti-liberation war elements and war criminals in the country, are creating a noise against the women's development policy to

distract people from the issue of trial of war criminals.

The speakers were addressing a roundtable discussion on the 'National Women Development Policy' organised by the Left Democratic Front at Mukti Bhaban at city's Purana Paltan.

Moderated by Ruhin Hossein Prince, coordinator of the Left Democratic Front, the discussion was addressed by Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Mujahidul Islam Selim, Dilip Barua, Syed Abul Maksud...
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Women, HR

bodies to press for implementation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Various women and human rights organisations in the country yesterday announced launching of a movement so the government implements the Women Development Policy 2008.

As part of the programme, the organisations under the banner of Samajik Protirodh Committee, a network of 42 women and human rights organisations, and Nagarik...
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