

HER FIRST COURT APPEARANCE

Khaleda hits out at govt

Says country not to be run by parasites; wants emergency to go by June, polls by Oct

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In her first appearance at the court since her arrest, former premier Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded withdrawal of the state of emergency by June and general elections by October this year.

She came down heavily on the

Prepare for movement

Khaleda tells Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday asked her party's Secretary General Khandaker

caretaker government, saying it is hatching conspiracy to make the country "dysfunctional" instead of holding the polls, its main task.

The BNP chairperson was hauled before the Special Court-9, set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, on a blue jeep amid tight security.



Clad in a white chiffon saree and black sunglasses, Khaleda looked confident and waved hands to lawyers and journalist as she entered the courtroom at 11:15am.

Eight of the 11 accused were produced before the court of Special Judge Khondker Kamal Uz-Zaman in connection with the Niko graft case.

However, the trial on charge framing against the accused was not held yesterday as the defence appealed for more time to study case documents.

With permission from the judge, Khaleda said: "The situation in the country is very bad. People are starving and committing suicide on failure to feed their children."

"Children are standing in the queues to get rice instead of studying. People are scrambling for water, gas and electricity, but the government is not paying any heed

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Status of cases against her

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is accused in three cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) during the rule of the interim government.

The first case -- Gatco graft case -- was filed on September 2 with Tejgaon Police Station, while the Niko scam case was filed with the same police station on December 9 last year.

The third case -- Barapukuria coalmine graft case -- was filed with Shahbagh Police Station on February 26 this year.

The ACC filed the Gatco graft case against 13 including Khaleda and her son Arafat Rahman Koko on charge of irregularities and abuse of power in awarding Gatco the contract for container handling at depots in Dhaka and Chittagong. Khaleda and Koko were charged

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Members of the joint forces pick up a man and search for arms at Hatirjheel of Madhubagh in the capital during a drive yesterday.

Traffic comes to standstill as Khaleda, Hasina taken to court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Severe traffic congestion choked the city's Farmgate and adjoining areas yesterday as the law enforcers closed the busy thoroughfares leading to parliament area for nearly three hours.

The step was taken on security grounds as AL chief Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia were produced in the special courts set up in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex in separate cases.

From about 9:30am, all sorts of vehicles were barred in the road stretching from the Rokeya Sarani and Bijoy Sarani to Farmgate-Manik Mia Avenue intersection, just in front of the main entrance of the special courts area.

Commuters from Mirpur, Kalyanpur, Mohammadpur and from Gulshan, Nakhalpara and Mohakhali to Dhanmondi had to take alternative routes to reach their destinations. Many were stuck in traffic gridlock for hours.

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Hundreds of vehicles are stuck in gridlock at Mohakhali yesterday. Closure of Rokeya Sarani from Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban end to Bijoy Sarani for a few hours caused traffic jams on several streets in the capital.

1,637 held as crackdown on political men goes on

STAR REPORT

The joint forces and police arrested 1,637 persons, including grassroots level leaders of the Awami League (AL) and BNP, across the country during their 24-hour drives until yesterday morning.

The joint forces arrested 548 persons during their special drives while the police held 1,089 persons. Of those arrested by the police, 87 were arrested by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

According to DMP sources, of the 87 arrestees two are convicts in separate cases and 21 had arrest warrants against them while 46 were arrested in regular cases, six for mugging, two for murder, two in illegal arms cases and eight on other charges.

Meanwhile, different political parties have criticised arresting of their leaders and activists.

But the government in a hand-out yesterday said the joint forces arrested the 548 persons on specific charges and that there is no

"political intention" behind the arrests.

Our correspondent in Kishoreganj reports: The joint forces arrested 44 persons including listed criminals. They also conducted raids on the residences of several AL and BNP leaders.

On Saturday night, the joint forces led by Major Salahuddin Al Murad launched a special drive to arrest 210 most wanted criminals, including activists and leaders of both the AL and BNP who are involved in different criminal acts.

The joint forces also raided the residences of Kishoreganj Municipality Chairman and BNP leader Abu Taher Mia, municipality BNP Secretary Ismail Hossen Modhu, district Sramik League Secretary Sirajul Islam and a few ward commissioners.

Our Bogra correspondent reported that the joint forces arrested Ahle Hadith district unit General Secretary Abdur Rahim and 16 others.

Abdur Rahim, who had been

arrested about one and a half years ago for his involvement with the banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, was arrested again from the jail gate soon after his release on bail yesterday.

A correspondent from Faridpur reports: The joint forces and police arrested 14 persons including Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee Faridpur unit President Mahbubur Rahman Khan.

The other arrestees include Sazzad Hossain, Ali Hyder Lelin, Zulfikar Ali Khan.

Kotwali police in different drives also arrested 10 persons including Miraz, 26, a convict in a case filed in connection with attempting to murder journalist Prabir Sikder. Miraz had been evading arrest for a long time.

Our correspondent from Chandpur reports: At least eight persons, including AL and BNP leaders, were arrested in separate drives.

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AUG 21 ATTACK Rab captures two 'grenade throwers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion has arrested two men who were part of the team that threw grenades on an Awami League (AL) rally in the capital on August 21, 2004.

The two detained men later in a news briefing admitted to journalists that they took part in the grenade attack which was aimed at assassinating AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

Rab arrested Rafiqul Islam alias Sabuj, 28, from Baliakandi of Rajbari, and Uzzal Hossain alias Ratan, 26, from Noahata under

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Hasina's graft case trial to continue

HC rules trial of criminal case within 60 days not mandatory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday rejected a writ petition filed by detained former premier Sheikh Hasina challenging the legality of continuing the trial proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant graft case against her.

Hasina filed the writ petition stating that according to the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1958, trial proceedings of a criminal case must be completed within

60 days of taking the case into cognisance.

She mentioned in the petition that the trial of the case against her became 'functus officio' or null and void, and no court has the jurisdiction anymore to try it now, as the trial court had taken the case into cognisance in January this year, way more than 60 days ago.

An HC bench comprising Justice Mohammad Abdur Rashid and Justice Md Ashfaul Islam

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Govt trying hard to bring AL, BNP to talks

Adviser says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communications Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Quader yesterday said the government is leaving no stones unturned to bring Awami League (AL) and BNP to the ongoing political dialogue with the government.

"It is the political parties that demanded the dialogue. It is they who earlier said no condition can be imposed. You see, the government has not imposed any conditions," the adviser said talking about the government initiatives to bring AL and BNP to the table.

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HIGHWAY WITH MYANMAR

Dhaka-financed works to start by next June

SHAMIM ASHRAF

The construction work of a 25-kilometre direct road between Bangladesh and Myanmar is likely to begin by the middle of next year.

The communications ministry has already started the process of selecting a consulting firm for conducting the feasibility study and making the cost estimation of the highway, which would boost trade and interaction between the peoples of the two neighbouring countries.

"We hope to start the construction works in nine months to one year," Communications Secretary Dr Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that Myanmar is enthusiastic about it as well.

Apart from facilitating trade between the two countries, the road link will also open up the possibility of a greater road network between Bangladesh and China and the South-East Asian countries including Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The efforts for establishing a direct road link began in 1994 and finally, a deal was signed between the two countries on July 27 last year for construction of the 25-km road in the first phase.

At that time the cost was estimated by the communications ministry at Tk 195.85 crore.

Designed to start at Balukhali in Cox's Bazar, the 2-km Bangladesh part will stretch to Gundum and then it will run 23 kilometres from Tambru up to Bawlibazar in the

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Arrests part of bid to maintain law and order

Says home ministry

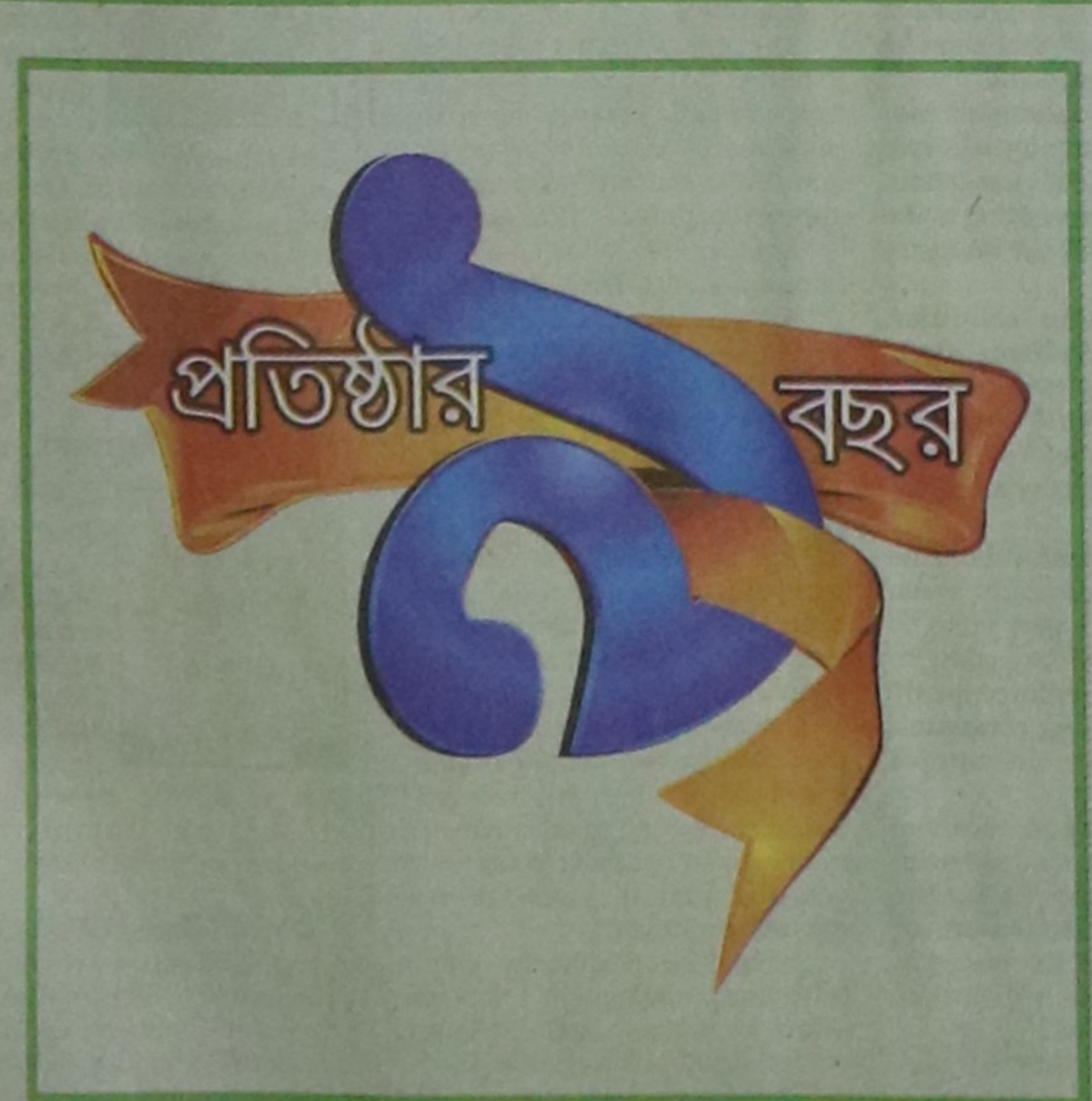
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry said yesterday there is no political motive behind the recent arrests of 584 people across the country but that it was a routine drive to combat the deteriorating law and order situation.

It mentioned a number of incidents across the country as examples of deterioration of law and order including increased 'extremist' activity.

Other incidents cited are attacks on security forces, seizing of guns from policemen and creation of

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