

## Khaleda won't join

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She said they decided on refraining from joining the rally, as a peaceful way of creating moral pressure on the government.

Placing a four-point charter of demands for creating a congenial atmosphere for a national consensus, the opposition leader said in her written speech, "I hope good sense will prevail in the government. A congenial atmosphere must be created, if they sincerely want a national consensus, and our cooperation."

As prerequisites for a congenial atmosphere, she spelled out that the government must establish the rule of law, stop interfering with the judiciary, end repression and the practice of torture on opposition activists during remand, and act as the government of the country instead of a party by putting an end to nepotism and petty partisanship.

"A process of reaching a national consensus on different national issues may start once the government creates the proper environment for that, otherwise the call for eradicating poverty will continue to remain substanceless," she said.

Khaleda, however, thanked Speaker Abdul Hamid for his sincere efforts to make the rally a success and said she also understands that he has limitations too. She also said a letter of regret would be sent to him right after the briefing.

Before addressing the briefing, Khaleda met with senior BNP leaders including the secretary-general.

While talking to The Daily Star after the briefing, a number of BNP leaders expressed their astonishment at the reversal of their chairperson's decision, saying they had not been aware of the reversal even on Thursday night.

When a reporter asked whether her decision for not joining the prime minister at the rally will increase the chasm between the government and the opposition, Khaleda said her party wants to bridge the gap, but they cannot see how it would be possible considering the government's treatment of opposition activists in the last few days.

"It is mainly the government's role to eradicate poverty, the opposition has a little role to play in it. We did not announce any demonstration in the last ten months in an effort not to disturb the development process of the country, rather we gave suggestions to the government regarding the country's development," she said.

Asked what will be the posi-

tion of BNP if the Indian envoy in Dhaka wants to talk to them about allowing transit facilities to that country, the former premier said they are in the dark about the issue as neither the government nor the Indian high commissioner discussed the matter with the opposition.

Lambasting the government for its 'utter failure' to meet its electoral pledges, Khaleda Zia said ruling party leaders including ministers have gotten involved in syndicates of hiking prices of essentials.

Describing 'large scale development activities' during her premiership of two times, the BNP chairperson claimed that during her party's regime the country saw tremendous progress in poverty alleviation.

"The positive economic situation which was created during BNP's five year term turned into negative in the last three years. So the possibility of achieving the millennium development goals by 2015 has become slim, and if that happens the situation will be quite grave," she warned.

"Due to these we are worried and fearful, and considering the situation we supported the initiative for the anti-poverty rally in the capital," she said adding that they wanted to 'provide a sense of direction' to the initiative.

But it has been proven that unilateral efforts of cooperation will not bring any benefit while the government has failed to protect the country's interest, law and order have deteriorated, and the government has forgotten all its electoral pledges, she added.

"The country is losing equilibrium and being thrown into the dark, and under such a circumstance we think providing cooperation to the government will be tantamount to supporting crime, anarchy, and human rights violations," she said.

Khaleda Zia said the Awami League-led government has surpassed the military backed immediate past caretaker government in its tyranny in the last nine months.

She said if the situation continues, the people of the country will not tolerate it for long, and her party will stand by the people when the time comes.

Senior BNP leaders including Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, members of the standing committee, members of the chairperson's advisory council, and party lawmakers were also present among others.

## Rocket attack kills 3 Pak soldiers

AFP, Peshawar

Suspected Taliban militants launched a rocket attack killing three Pakistani soldiers and wounding four at a military camp in a remote tribal area yesterday, officials said.

Militants targeted the Landi Noor army camp in Shakai area of South Waziristan, a Taliban and al-Qaeda stronghold near the Afghan border where the military is said to be planning a ground offensive to flush out extremists.

The rocket strike left three soldiers dead and four wounded, a security official said, requesting anonymity.

Fighter jets pounded suspected militant hideouts in the area but details of casualties were not immediately available, officials and residents said.

Before dawn, a Pakistan drone crashed near Jandola town in South Waziristan.

"The crash was caused by a technical fault and no hostile fire was involved," a senior official said.

Pakistani jets have stepped up bombing of suspected militant hideouts in South Waziristan ahead of an anticipated ground offensive in the region, which the feared Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has turned into its headquarters.

Pressure is building on the military to take action against an escalation of militant attacks this month, including a humiliating hostage siege at Pakistan's army headquarters near Islamabad.

The government in June ordered an operation into the mountainous South Waziristan stronghold of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but so far only air raids and occasional artillery strikes have hit rebel sanctuaries.

Helicopter gunships pounded suspected rebel bases in Bajaur, another tribal area, on Friday killing 10 people, officials said.

"The gunship helicopters raided suspected militant hideouts which left 10 people dead," local administration official Iqbal Khattak said.

Security officials confirmed the attacks but gave no casualty figure.

## Villagers chase

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The villagers later staged angry demonstrations on the road and urged the government to take necessary steps against the illegal activities to save their houses on the riverbank from erosion.

Sources said a number of companies, in connivance with the local administration and some unscrupulous people, have carried out such illegal business in the river Bonshai, presenting a threat to the land and houses along the river.

Some of the villagers of Firingi Kanda, which is one of the places being eroded by the river, alleged that they jointly resisted the criminals to see the reluctance of local police and administration.

When contacted, Savar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nasir Ullah admitted the protest of the villagers against the sand collectors. "As the villagers are conscious people, they resisted the illegal act and drove away the criminals," he added.

South Keraniganj OC Mohammad Asaduzzaman said no one filed any complaint with them in this connection.

## College student

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where he succumbed to his injuries around 11:00pm.

The body was handed over to his family after autopsy.

Students of the college marched in procession yesterday and agitated for arrest of the killers within a time frame of 24 hours. They also threatened to go for a strike and lay siege to police stations in protest at the incident if the culprits are not arrested in the given time.

Rassel's uncle Golam Mostafa lodged a case with Rajpara Police Station accusing three or four persons including Monirul Islam Nimu.

Nimu is son of Moni Begum who runs a restaurant near the dormitory. Nimu hated Rassel as he made comments on Nimu's love affair, alleged M Akramul Hossain, assistant commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

Dr Farida Sultana, principal of the college, told reporters that the college would offer condolences today.

An immediate investigation into the murder should be made to arrest the perpetrators, she said.

## Women repression

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laws, it is really tough to stop violence against women that has become part and parcel of our male partners' behaviour," said the advocate who runs shelter home for the repressed women, children and aged people.

Shamima Akhter (24) with her six-month-old daughter was looking for an official at the Nari Nirjatan Protirodh Cell of Women and Children Affairs Department to get legal support for her daughter's paternal right.

She narrated the sorry tale of her conjugal life. "Within four months of our marriage, my husband Mozammel Haque alias Khokan started to torture me. And finally while I was six-month pregnant, he walked out on me as my poor parents failed to give him the dowry of Tk30,000."

Hailed from city's Lalbagh area, Shamima now visits Nari Nirjatan Protirodh Cell at Eskaton Garden at least four days a week with her daughter. She said, "I have come here on foot. I started at 7:00am and have reached here at 11:00am for the hearing."

Like Shamima, at least 20 others who are victims of violence visit the Nari Nirjatan Protirodh Cell each day, said sources at the department. "We also receive some foreign women victims who got married to Bangladeshi men," said a record keeper officer of the cell who mainly files up complaints.

As per case histories most of the victims filed cases against their husbands, or mother in laws for physical

torture for dowry.

Meanwhile, the human rights-based organisation Odhikar reported that at least 338 women including 158 girls were raped in nine months beginning from January of 2009. Sixty-eight women and 51 girls were gang-raped, 50 women and 22 children were killed after rape during this period.

A total of 247 women were subjected to dowry-related violence. One hundred seventy-six of them died due to the violence and 64 of them were tortured in various ways. Seven of these women allegedly committed suicide, as they couldn't bear the brunt of torture, Odhikar statistics stated.

At least 27 women fell victim to illegal fatwa while 45 women and 12 girls became the victims of acid throwing, it said.

Women and human rights activist, Ayesha Khanam, who works in the area for three decades, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We are concerned about the realities of women who are the worst victim of violence. Doctor or post-graduate females are also now victims of torture and killed by their in-laws' families."

She said the recent victims, a doctor and a student of Dhaka University, could be the wake-up calls to launch movement against domestic violence.

"We have submitted letters to home, women and children affairs ministries and prime minister to take steps in this regard," she said.

## Myanmar border

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country's military authorities about the border situation. He is also likely to have discussions on some other unresolved issues.

"I have proposed a visit to Myanmar by the home ministry to defuse the tension, the directorate general of BDR told The Daily Star.

Asked what actions Bangladesh has taken following the military build-up by Myanmar, the home secretary said the government has no intention to engage in a conflict but put on alert all forces, including the BDR, navy, air force and coastguards.

On the presence of Myanmar military personnel on the border violating international laws, he said Bangladesh objected to the incident urging the country's government not to bring in military on the border.

"Border guards are supposed to be on both sides of the border. But if one country brings in its army on the border it triggers tension," said the home secretary, adding that the Myanmar authorities

informed Bangladesh that their military personnel visited the border to see various activities by Nasaka (border force of Myanmar).

He said the government is also in talks with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Dhaka, requesting her to persuade the Myanmar authorities so that no more refugees are pushed in.

The foreign ministry officials are tight-lipped about the border crisis. Foreign Minister Dipu Moni termed the military movements in Myanmar territory a routine work.

But some foreign ministry officials, seeking anonymity, confirmed the diplomatic manoeuvring to resolve the crisis peacefully. "You can term it silent diplomacy," said one of the officials.

Myanmar has brought in tanks, artillery and warships indicating a large-scale conflict with Bangladesh. Its forces are repeatedly making bids to push in Rohingyaas. Bangladesh forces remained alert in the bordering areas to thwart such attempts.

## Bangladesh leads

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increased safety net programmes, which include partial coverage of nutritional programmes, subsidised food and employment programmes.

In order to reduce the vulnerability of rural poor, the report suggested finding out a permanent solution to the annual monga (near famine situation).

"Bangladesh is trying to address the issue of hunger of its 150 million people with its meagre resources and in the last two decades it has succeeded to improve, to some extent, the health of the under-five children," said ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director Farah Kabir while talking about the issue.

Farah Kabir pointed out hunger as one of the root causes of poverty and underscored the need for increasing investment in sustainable agricultural development to address the two problems, said a press release.

"Any discussion on hunger and intervention must put the poor, marginalised section and women at the core of planning and investment," she added.

She demanded the government ensure equitable distribution of food across the

## Boat capsized

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Beel in Manikganj on Thursday evening.

The dead were identified as Moazzem, 40, of Ujanpara village of the area and Lovely, 5, and Rupashi, 3.

Officer-in-Charge of Harirampur Police Station Shafigur Rahman said the boat had capsized in stormy winds at the beel around 6:00pm.

The victims were returning home from Jhitka by a rented engine boat.

## France asks its nationals to quit Guinea

BBC ONLINE

France has urged its nationals to leave Guinea, amid growing criticism of the military junta.

There are believed to be some 2,500 French nationals, mainly aid workers, businessmen and their families, in the mineral-rich former French colony.

Human rights groups say some 157 people died after troops opened fire on opposition protesters last month.

The African Union has told the military leader to step down by Saturday, amid calls for him to be charged.

A third civilian minister has resigned from the government in protest at the killings, reports the AFP news agency.

On Thursday, the International Criminal Court (ICC) said it had opened a preliminary investigation into the deaths.

Human rights groups say soldiers raped and sexually abused women during the crackdown.

The military government puts the number of dead at 57 and says most were trampled to death and not shot, as opposition activists say.

A statement on the French foreign ministry website says that the security situation has worsened since the 28 September protests.

"Banditry, in particular armed robberies, have increased and there is no short-term prospect that the situation will improve," the statement says.

It says that criminals have been following travellers from the airport and then robbing them when they get home.

A foreign ministry spokesman, however, said that there was no prospect of mass evacuation and French expats were being urged to use commercial flights to leave, reports the Reuters news agency.

## Chief whip

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Khaleda Zia re-confirmed her attendance at the rally but all on a sudden she changed her earlier stance. Thus she proved that she is politically bankrupt," added the chief whip.

It also proved that she does not do what she says, Shahid said.

The chief whip also said that the opposition leader had proved she as well as her party is not willing to work for poverty reduction.

Her refusal not to attend the rally means that she is reluctant to work for strengthening democracy, commented the chief whip.

She seemed very happy when I, on behalf of the speaker, went to invite her to attend the rally but today she had made a u-turn, Shahid said.

She could deliver her speech at the tomorrow's rally what she has said today," he went on to say.

It is the All-party Parliamentary Group that had organised the anti-poverty rally. It is not a programme of a particular political party and such initiative is the first of its kind in the country," he claimed.

In a surprise move BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday evening announced that she would not attend the anti-poverty rally scheduled to be held today with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the occasion of 'International Day for the Eradication of Poverty'.

"Considering the present circumstances it is not possible for us to attend tomorrow's (Saturday) rally as we think unilateral cooperation with the government is tantamount to condoning crimes, anarchy, torture and violation of human rights," she said at a crowded press conference held yesterday at her Gulshan office in the city.

## Assam worried

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a dam on the 1625-km Brahmaputra in the Tibet Autonomous Region would seriously impact the socio-economic condition of the people in Assam where the river flows for 918 km before entering Bangladesh.

He said he would meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Water Resources Minister for taking up the issue with China.

"Earlier, I had taken it up with the prime minister who took it up with his Chinese counterpart. China has denied that the dam would affect Assam or any other part of India", Gogoi said.

The chief minister said the state would set up an expert committee to go into what measures needed to be taken in the eventuality of China constructing the dam.

## Akbar Ali quits RRC

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caretaker government, told The Daily Star yesterday. He said the RRC has become dysfunctional and the government apparently wants its closure.

Dr Akbar also blamed the government for making the commission completely non-functional through withdrawal of manpower from it.

Termining his resignation "immaterial", the former finance adviser said he can't contribute to the commission under the prevailing circumstances.

The 17-member RRC was formed by the military-backed caretaker government on October 30, 2007 to bring reforms to the age-old rules and regulations relating to the country's governance, administration and economy.

The tenure of the commission was set at one year but the caretaker government later extended it to three years.

The commission has so far made 153 recommendations, one-third of which has been implemented fully, said Dr Akbar.

Seven percent of the recommendations were partially

implemented and 38 percent are under the process of implementation. Fifteen percent are under consideration while the remaining six percent have not even been considered, he said.

The present government has so far implemented two of the recommendations, he said.

Dr Akbar said he doesn't wish to rejoin the post but would do so under two conditions - he would not serve as a full-timer and would resign if reforms are not carried out.

He said during the caretaker government's tenure the chief adviser's office monitored RRC activities closely, which remains completely absent under the rule of the present government.

The former finance adviser said he wants the RRC to carry on its activities and function effectively unlike other commissions formed by various governments.

The RRC has published a 131-page book titled "Regulatory Reforms Commission 1st Report" in February 2009 with a compilation of the recommendations and their state of implementation.

## Bombings kill 13

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live, while the man smashed the motorcycle into the car, which exploded into a huge fireball, he said. Police shot at the woman, who detonated explosives she was wearing.

The impact of the blast destroyed part of the police station and the mosque next to it, he said.

"If that woman suicide bomber had not been killed, she might have caused more damage," Khansaid.

Television footage showed the upper part of the wall of the brick mosque shorn off. Security forces swarmed the area as ambulances arrived at the scene. A twisted chunk of metal on the ground was in flames, and a small white car's front section was destroyed.

In nearby Lady Reading Hospital, rescue workers rushed wounded victims through the hallways on stretchers.

The blast killed 11 people, including three police officers, two women and two children, Khan said. Another 15 people were wounded, including a criminal suspect who was detained inside the police station at the time of the attack, officials said.

Insurgents have sent attackers wearing military uniforms to bypass security to carry out some of their recent raids. But the use of a female suicide bomber is extremely rare here and could signal a new tactic by the extremists.

In December 2007, what was believed to be the country's first female bomber blew herself up near a Christian school while apparently aiming for a military post in Peshawar. There were no other casualties.

The newest violence came a day after militants launched coordinated attacks on three law enforcement compounds in the country's second-largest city of Lahore, killing 19 people as well as the nine attackers. Also Thursday, a car bomb in Peshawar killed a small child at a housing complex for government employees.

Two officials said initial investigations into the Lahore attacks showed Taliban from the Afghan border region and militants from Punjab were responsible.

"This was a well-coordinated Taliban operation supported by local groups," Umer Virk, head of the Lahore anti-terrorist police, told The Associated Press.

The violence across the nation has fuelled concerns that the Taliban are forging links with other militant groups in the country, an alliance that would vastly increase the threats to the U.S.-allied government. Many ordinary Pakistanis are anxiously questioning whether the state has the ability to avert the danger.

Observers say Punjab's militant problem is most pervasive in its south. But speaking to reporters in Lahore on Friday, provincial Law Minister Rana Sanaullah played down any such threat.

"The Taliban don't have any authority in southern Punjab, and there is no need for any operation against them," he said.

Sanaullah, who said authorities had arrested some people in connection with the assaults, also defended the performance of security agencies during the standoffs, and said previous intelligence about the possible attacks was too vague to act upon.

The tactics used in Lahore

were similar to previous strikes blamed on the Taliban network in South Waziristan and allied militants from Punjab, the nation's most populous and powerful province. The methods include using teams of gunmen carrying suicide vests.

The government has said the planning for the attacks is often done near the Afghan border, while the foot soldiers are recruited in Punjab. In claiming responsibility for another recent attack, the Taliban said one of their cells in Punjab had carried it out.

Pakistanis have grown less inclined to support the Taliban over the past year, opinion polls have shown, but many are expressing anger and helplessness over how to deal with the strikes.

"The terrorists seem more committed to their cause than the government is to eliminating them," said Saima Ahmed, 33, a bank employee in the southern city of Karachi. "Our inherent weaknesses, corruption, and inability to govern the country are now exposed fully. It's total chaos, all over the country."

The US hopes that a Pakistani army operation in South Waziristan will help break much of the militant network that threatens both Pakistan and American troops across the border in Afghanistan.

In Lahore, retired police officer Mohammad Sadique blamed the US for the problems.

"So long as the American forces are present in Afghanistan, these terrorist attacks in Pakistan will continue," he said, adding that he condemned the strikes because "no Muslim can kill his own brother or sister."

The Pakistani army has given no time frame for the expected offensive in South Waziristan. It has reportedly already sent two divisions totalling 28,000 men and blockaded the area. Analysts say that with winter approaching, any push would likely have to begin soon to be successful.

## 7 JMB men

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chief Abdur Rahim, 30, and Natore district chief Shahabuddin, 35, and JMB ehsar (full-time) members Md Momtaz, 20, Asadul Islam, 30, Rohidul, 35, and Isarul Islam, 22.

On October 10, the militants were taken on a seven-day remand that ended yesterday. A team of Special Branch of police arrested them from four greater Rajshahi districts.

Senior police officials said, the seven militants during interrogation on remand denied their involvement in JMB activities.

Rather they confessed to being the followers of militant kingpin and Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh Chief Asadullah Al Galib, the sources added.

Many of Galib's foreign connections eventually turn into sources of funding for JMB pointing finger at the Ahle Hadith chief's patronisation of the JMB underground, said the investigation sources.

During the seven-day remand in police custody, the militants lived a camp life. As six of them go to sleep, another keeps watch on others, fans them or protects them from mosquito bites. They say their prayers and take meals together.

## Owners protest

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Such land filling is tantamount to violation of Private Housing Land Development Rules of 2004 and Open Space and Wetland Conservation Act of 2000.

"I will sacrifice my life but not my land," said 50-year-old Razia Begum, who owns a five-decimal plot of land at Chunkuta.

"Bashundhara men are approaching my land," she said adding, "I will have nothing left if I lose this small piece of land," said Rosi Akhtar, a 35-year-old woman who owns a two-decimal plot.

Thirty-five year-old widow Nasima Begum owns a six-decimal plot of land but she along with her six children had to leave it and stay away in fear of the land grabbers.

An aggrieved retired government service holder Azizur Rahman said he bought a 10-decimal piece of land with the money he had saved for long 30 years. "Now my land is being filled with earth. I will turn into a street beggar if I lose it."

Affected landowners have so far lodged over 200 general diaries (GD) with South Keraniganj Police Station in this connection but the silence of police on the matter is really mysterious, said Samiti organising secretary Amir Hossain.

Bashundhara bought 25 bighas of land but it has already filled over 400 bighas with earth, said Samiti member Shyamal Saha.

Bashundhara has also grabbed Khas and vested lands. The group is forcing locals to sell their land, he alleged.

The affected locals under the banner of the Samiti also staged a protest rally on the Dhaka-Mawa highway on July 10, 2009 and formed a human