



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia addresses a huge rally, organised by her party-led opposition alliance, in Sylhet yesterday. Inset, the name of Jamaat's student wing Chhatra Shibir in letter cutouts.

PHOTO: COURTESY

# Go all out to resist polls

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Hasina yesterday unveiled the foundation plaque for Rampal power plant, the BNP would not go ahead with the project if it took office.  
“The power project would be scrapped once my party comes to power, because the plant would destroy all animals, and environment of the Sundarbans,” she told several lakhs of people who joined the rally braving torrential downpour.  
“We are not against power plants. We need them but not at Rampal. The plant may be set up somewhere else in the country.”  
Khaleda claimed the people of India had opposed the plan for setting up the plant near the Sundarbans on their part, and so the Indian government was now forcing it upon Bangladesh.  
Turning to the next parliamentary election, the BNP chairperson reiterated that it

has to be overseen by a neutral caretaker government. “The whole world has said a one-sided election will not be acceptable. If they move to hold such an election, you people will form all-party action committees to resist it.”  
She said no election would be allowed under the Awami League or Hasina. She urged people to join the action committees if the government did not concede the opposition's demand by October 24.  
Towards the end of her speech, she said, “See you in the election or on the streets. Quit the Awami League, save the country; quit Hasina, save the country.”  
The BNP and allies have planned grand rallies in seven divisional headquarters to drum up support for the demand for restoration of the caretaker system. Khaleda has so far addressed rallies in Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna

and Sylhet.  
Yesterday's rally venue was crammed with leaders and activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, a key component of the 18-party alliance. Though the BNP is the leading party of the alliance, Shibir men occupied the front rows. They started to throng the venue from 9:30am with banners and festoons demanding the release of the Jamaat top brass, now behind bars on war crimes charges.  
Around 2:30pm, a clash broke out between them and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, pro-BNP student body, when they refused to give JCD men enough room near the stage. The senior leaders of the alliance were seen asking the organisations to stop fighting but to no avail.  
The situation calmed

down after Khaleda got on the stage around 3:00pm.  
Thanking the audience for negotiating rains, she mentioned her family's relations with the city and promised that if elected, she would introduce high-speed Sylhet-Dhaka train service and set up an export-processing zone, a women's university and an engineering university here.  
In her 50-minute speech from 4:50pm, she referred to the May 5 crackdown on Hefajat-e-Islam. According to newspaper reports, she said, about 1.55 lakh rounds of bullet were shot to drive away unarmed Islamists asleep at Motijheel Shapla Chattar in the capital.  
“Are you a human being? How do you claim yourself to be a Muslim?” Khaleda asked the prime minister.  
The BNP chief said the AL did not fulfil any of its election pledges. Soon after the libera-

tion, she alleged, the then government destroyed the jute industry and now this government is destroying the garment industry.  
The former prime minister said BNP leader Ilias Ali, an ex-MP from Sylhet, was kidnapped as he waged a campaign against controversial Tipaimukh dam project of India. “We have repeatedly asked the government to return Ilias Ali.”  
Earlier, Tahsina Rushdir, wife of Ilias, addressed the rally and urged people to wage a movement to oust the government. “We will get back Ilias only with the change of government,” she said.  
The BNP chairperson in her speech asked the alliance activists to lodge anti-government movement and warned the civil administration including law enforcers against any repression on the opposition during the protest programmes.

# None can resist

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you won't be able to save them [war criminals],” said Hasina, also the chief of the ruling Awami League, at a rally at Kushtia Government College ground.  
Thousands of people from different upazilas of the district joined the rally turning it into a human sea. Thousands standing in long queues from Bheramara upazila to Kushtia town welcomed the premier, who came to the district to inaugurate the Bangladesh-India Power Transmission Centre at Bheramara.  
Hasina said some killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been hanged and her government was trying to bring in other convicted killers absconding abroad.  
“If we get them, they will be hanged too,” she said.

Highlighting different success stories of her government including the increased production of power, the AL president sought votes for her party in the next parliamentary election. She said if AL was voted to power again, it would set up a government school, a college and a modern mosque in each upazila.  
“Because peace comes and people get food, safety and security when Awami League assumes power,” she said while seeking votes.  
“On the other hand, BNP turns Bangladesh into a country of militancy and corruption. It made the country champion in corruption for five times when it was in power. If BNP comes again to power, it will turn the country into a safe haven for militancy, terrorism and corruption,” Hasina claimed.  
She alleged killings and

looting of the public money are the main characteristics of BNP.  
She also alleged students would be deprived of education, services from community healthcare centres, free books and government stipends if BNP was voted to power.  
“So, I urge you [people] to vote for Awami League like you voted us to power in the last polls.”  
AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif assured Hasina that people of Kushtia would be with her in the next elections like in the last election.  
Chaired by Kushtia district unit AL acting president Julfikar Ali Arzu, the rally was also addressed by Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu, AL leaders Dipu Moni, BM Mojmammel Haque, Habibur Rahman Siraj, Asgar Ali, and Anwar Ali.

# Kenya mall attackers numbered no more than six: police

AFP, Nairobi

Kenyan police yesterday said that between four and six men conducted a deadly Nairobi mall siege, far fewer than thought, as chilling new footage showed the attackers calmly ambling around with AK-47 rifles in hand.  
Kenya initially said that between 10 and 15 gunmen were involved in the 80-hour siege of a busy upmarket shopping centre that killed at least 67 people.  
“From what we have now that is coming out of the investigation, the number of attackers was between four to six,” police chief David Kimaiyo told Kenyan television station KTN.  
“None of them managed to escape from the building after the attack,” he said, implying that they were killed in the confrontation.  
Witnesses described how the fighters stormed the complex midday on September 21, when it was crowded with Saturday shoppers, firing from the hip and hurling grenades.  
Newly released CCTV camera footage from one part of the mall shows four armed men walking calmly around, apparently searching for new victims.

# The Tube of the future

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Siemens, the company behind the concept, has hinted that next generation Tube trains like Inspiro, which costs a whopping £1million a carriage, could be built in Britain if the mayor placed an order for the new trains.  
The Inspiro is 30 per cent more energy efficient and 20 per cent lighter than similar modern metro trains.  
The carriages are lit with LED lights and are fully air conditioned, as well as doing away with dividing doors separating the carriages, to give 30 per cent more capacity than some of the older carriages in use on the London Underground.  
Siemens said that commuters would also benefit from wider door openings in the carriages to avoid the rush-hour crush of people piling on and off the underground trains.

Controversially the train does not rely on a human driver and if ordered for the capital one day, would not be popular with trade unions.  
The news, reported by The Evening Standard, that the train could potentially be built in Britain, follows the Government's decision to award funding to Transport for London for the Tube specifically, based on its claim that new orders for carriages will be given to firms based on Britain.  
London-based commuters pining for a more spacious and stylish way to travel to work will be able to see the concept model from Tuesday, when it goes on show on the site of The Crystal in Royal Victoria Docks.  
An accompanying exhibition will also highlight technologies built to help travellers find their way more easily, as well as the

latest development in ticketing and passenger information systems, that could make navigating cities easier in the future.  
Steve Scrimshaw, managing director of Siemens Rail Systems UK, said: “London, in common with many large cities around the world, faces significant transport challenges as a result of ongoing population growth and increased capacity demands.  
“Our exhibition highlights some of the innovations that can be considered by cities to help their metro systems tackle these issues and help passengers benefit from an improved travel experience. We wanted people to have a really personal experience, sitting in the seats of a brand new, futuristic train and interacting with the exhibits on display in a way that not only informs but excites at the same time.”



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh speaks from his New Delhi office through a video conference at the inauguration of Bangladesh-India Power Transmission Centre at Bheramara in Kushtia yesterday. The foundation plaque for controversial Rampal power plant was also unveiled at the programme. Seated right to left, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Indian Minister for New and Renewable Energy Dr Farooq Abdullah, Hasina's Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi, and Shubid Ali Bhuiyan, chairman of parliamentary standing committee on power ministry.

PHOTO: BSS

# Ban Jamaat

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the country forward with the spirit of the Liberation War, allow free thinking and resist attempts to turn the country into a Taliban-style state and uphold women's rights.  
Jamaat is a criminal and communal organisation, Dhaka University Prof MM Akash yesterday said.  
The party has many reasons to be banned, he said, and demanded that the government ban Jamaat through an executive order before the next parliamentary elections.  
Imran H Sarker, spokesperson of Gonojagoron Mancha, said subversive activities of Jamaat-Shibir were at its pick now and these activities could not be stopped unless the organisation was banned.  
Gonojagoron Mancha, a platform launched by a group of youths initially at Shahbagh intersection in the capital, has been calling for the capital punishment to all war criminals and a ban on Jamaat-Shibir for their role against the independence of Bangladesh in 1971.  
Renowned litterateur Syed

Shamsul Haque demanded banning of religion-based politics as, according to him, “religion-based politics is the root of all evils.”  
He urged all progressive and pro-liberation forces to come forward to resist these reactionary forces.  
Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandakar, deputy chief of the Liberation forces, said the defeated force of the Liberation War was very much active now and that it should be resisted.  
Eminent rights activist Sultana Kamal, who presided over the national convention, said the political forces of the country had “betrayed” the spirit of the Liberation War and that was why the war crimes trial, which began 40 years after the independence, was facing obstruction.  
“Why we can't give them [political parties] a signal that if you deviate from the spirit of the Liberation War, you won't be allowed in the country,” said Sultana Kamal, a former adviser to a caretaker government.  
Eminent educationist Prof Anisuzzaman, whose written speech was read out by

Liberation War Museum Trustee Ziauddin Tariq Ali, said freedom fighters had aspired for a non-communal Bangladesh, but the present constitution was not consistent with that spirit.  
Former Justice Golam Rabbani, president of Ekattorer Ghatik Dalal Nirmul Committee; Sarwar Ali, Liberation War Museum trustee; cultural activist Kamal Lohani, Ajoy Roy, president of Shamprodayikata O Jangibad Birodhi Mancha; Rana Dasgupta, secretary general of Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad; Nasiruddin Yusuf Bachchu, president of Sammilito Sanskritik Jote; Ayesha Khanam of Samajik Protirodh Committee, and garment workers leader Nazma Akhter, also spoke while Ramendu Majumdar moderated the programme.  
Later, a national committee of the organisation was announced with Prof Anisuzzaman as president and Sultana Kamal as its convener.

# Rampal gets rolling

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“I assure you that India will remain a steadfast and long-term partner in your development efforts ... I want to express my commitment to completing the tasks that we had agreed earlier,” he said.  
In the future, there would be deeper cooperation in the energy sector as well as in other areas, he added.  
In response, Hasina expressed deep gratitude to India for its invaluable contribution to the country's Liberation War in 1971.  
She also talked of her government's interests in hydro-electric projects in India's north-eastern region.  
**NO HARM TO SUNDARBANS**  
Speaking at the inauguration programme later, Hasina asserted that the Rampal power plant would not cause any harm to the Sundarbans or the

livelihood of the people in the surrounding areas.  
Blasting the critics of the Rampal plant, Hasina said people should analyse the motive behind their criticism and opposition to the project.  
“I want to say firmly that Sheikh Hasina will not do anything that will harm the country and its environment,” she said.  
In its efforts to protect the mangrove forest, her government had dredged the Gorai River in Kushtia which has reduced salinity in the Sundarbans, said the prime minister.  
Hasina invited the environmentalists and the critics to visit the coal-based Barapukuria power plant in Dinajpur to assess whether it had harmed the croplands and the environment in the area.  
Claiming that her government would consider the environmental aspect of the mangrove forest

with utmost importance, she said it was her government that took the initiative to put the Sundarbans on the list of world heritage sites.  
Environmentalists, socio-political organisations, and political parties, including the main opposition BNP, have been opposing the government's plan to set up the plant at Rampal of Bagerhat, 14 kilometres away from the Sundarbans. They argue that it would spell disaster for the world's largest mangrove forest.  
Hasina was scheduled to lay the foundation stone of the Rampal plant on October 22 and Manmohan was supposed to join her through a video conference.  
But the schedule had to be changed as the Indian premier will be occupied with some urgent issues on that day.  
Hasina said her govern-

ment would set up several coal-based mega power plants in Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazaar, Banskhali of Chittagong, Barguna, Munshiganj and Ashuganj.  
Three power plants with a capacity of 1,320MW each would also be set up after signing government-to-government contracts with Malaysia, China and Korea, she said.  
The prime minister said agreements would also be inked with Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar to import more electricity.  
Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Information Minister Hasanul Haque Inu, Prime Minister's Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, State Minister for power and energy Enamul Haque, and Prime Minister's Special Assistant Mahbubul Alam Hanif spoke at the programme.  
Shubid Ali Bhuiyan,

chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on power ministry, Abul Kalam Azad, secretary of Economic Relations Division, Monowar Islam, secretary of Power Division, also addressed the programme.  
Indian Minister for New and Renewable Energy Dr Farooq Abdullah, Power Secretary PK Sinha and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pankaj Saran also spoke.  
They said the highest standard of environmental protection would be maintained for the implementation of the Rampal power plant.  
Dr Abdullah promised that his country would do everything to help Bangladesh make steady progress.  
He said India and Bangladesh need to work harder to root out terrorism and militancy from the region.