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March to Dhaka

Khaleda asks people to say 'yes' to democracy, 'no' to one-sided polls thru' Dec 29 programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday urged people from every corner of the country to march towards the capital on Sunday to force the government to postpone the January 5 polls.

She asked opposition leaders and activists to form a resistance committee for each polling station to foil the "farfical" election and committees for "preservation of democracy and sovereignty" at district and upazila levels.

"To give our movement greater momentum and take it to the next level, I call upon all of you, irrespective of your political beliefs and opinions, to march to Dhaka on Sunday, the 29th of December," said the opposition leader.

This march is to say "no" to the farfical election and to say "yes" to democracy, she said during a crowded press conference at her Gulshan office.

"This historic march will be to express your support for credible elections under a neutral non-party election time government."

She called it the "March for Democracy".

"I call upon you all to converge on Dhaka in this month of our victory waving our red and green national flag," said the former prime minister in her address.

"Come by road, by bus, by rail, by river routes and converge on the nation's capital."

Khaleda also requested all to gather in front of the party
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Do not involve army in farfical polls

Form resistance committee for each polling centre

Dialogue was a drama to kill time for one-sided polls

Pak resolution on Mollah execution 'hurt us'



The charred body of a cop lies next to a burning bus at Banglamotor in the capital last night while fire fighters try to douse the blaze. The vehicle, requisitioned by police, was set afire by unidentified people. *Inset*, another policeman and the civilian driver, both injured in the arson, are admitted to DMCH.

PHOTO: STAR/COURTESY



Protect witnesses

HRW spurs govt on war crimes trials

STAR REPORT

International watchdog Human Rights Watch yesterday urged Bangladesh to urgently set up an effective mechanism to protect witnesses in war crimes trials.

The rights body also suggested establishing a neutral office under the International Crimes Tribunal registrar for protection of and support services to witnesses during pre-trial, trial, and post-trial stages.

The office can follow models established by other tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, said HRW in a report 14 days after the killing of a prosecution witness in the war crimes case against Jamaat leader Sayedee.

To ensure its effective role, the office must be adequately resourced and officers working in the unit should be properly trained in assessing protection concerns of witnesses referred to them by any party to the trial or the bench.

The New York-based rights body mentioned that local police were assigned to protect Mostafa Howlader, the victim, as he had been receiving death threats from unknown callers.

However, according to his son, the police officers expected the family to
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Youth killed in restive Satkhira

Blockaders clash with joint forces

A CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A rickshaw-van puller was killed and a bicycle mechanic injured when members of the joint forces came under attack from blockaders and retaliated with gunshots in Satkhira sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Hafizul Islam, 21, who hailed from the upazila's Gobindakati village, was a supporter of Jamaat, said police.

Haran Pal, who was hit by a stray bullet, lives in Murarikathi village in Kolarowa upazila. He was taken to Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

Cop killed in arson attack on bus

2 others injured; AL MP among 15 hurt in clash; cattle-laden truck set ablaze

STAR REPORT

A policeman was killed and another burned as arsonists set fire to a police bus at Bangla Motor in the capital last night.

Driver of the requisitioned bus, a civilian, also suffered burn in the attack around 11:20pm, hours after the opposition alliance's 83-hour blockade ended.

The dead is Ferdous, a traffic constable. The injured are Faizul Islam, also a constable, and driver Bayzid.

Meanwhile, two people burned earlier in arson attacks died early hours today at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The victims are truck driver Nazrul Islam, who was burned when his vehicle was set afire in Gazipur on Monday, and truck helper Mazidul, who suffered burns when his vehicle was set ablaze in Sirajganj on Saturday.

Constable Faizul told The Daily Star they were on duty at Bangla Motor until 11:00pm
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UN seeks more Bangladeshi troops for peacekeeping

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon yesterday requested Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to send more troops to UN peacekeeping missions urgently.

Diplomatic sources said the Bangladeshi troops might be deployed in South Sudan for reinforcing the UN peacekeeping force there to stem a conflict increasingly marked by ethnically targeted killings.

The UN chief phoned the prime minister in the evening and requested her to send "an army battalion with necessary equipment," prime minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told The Daily Star.

AK Abdul Momen, ambassador and permanent representative of Bangladesh to the UN, also confirmed the UN request.

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Relatives of Rana Plaza victims and some victims themselves demonstrate for compensation at the disaster site in Savar yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

RANA PLAZA TRAGEDY

Tk 310 crore fund created

Families of 1,130 dead to get Tk 20 lakh each

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four prominent retailers and a number of labour groups have joined hands to create a \$40 million (Tk 310 crore) compensation fund to aid the victims' families of Rana Plaza building collapse.

Retailers Bon Marché, El Corte Inglés, Loblaw and Primark have pledged to contribute to the fund, which is intended to compensate the families of those who died in April 24 in what was the deadliest industrial disaster in Bangladesh.

The fund will aim to aid the families of more than 1,130 workers killed and also hundred of others who were seriously injured or maimed.

The new fund is considered a landmark in compensating families of garment industry victims, in terms of both the amount to be paid and the sophistication of the arrangements.

The families of the dead would receive, on average, more than \$25,000 (Tk 20 lakh) each, while hundreds of workers who were injured or maimed would also receive compensation, according to the New York Times.

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Milk Vita MD removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Milk Vita management yesterday removed its Managing Director Mohammad Munir Chowdhury, who fought corruption and anomalies in the state-run cooperative dairy.

At a meeting in the evening, the management committee also promoted General Manager (planning) Sirajul Islam to replace Munir.

Talking to The Daily Star, Munir said he received a letter from the management
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Munir Chowdhury

EC says no to AL

States it is legally bound to disclose wealth info of candidates in polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has rejected the ruling Awami League's demand to stop publishing the eight-point information including wealth statements of the contestants in parliamentary polls.

In a statement yesterday, the EC said it is legally bound to make the particulars public.

"So, the commission has not made any effort to find out any legal loopholes to stop making the information public," said the statement.

The EC dismissed press reports that it was trying to hide the candidates' particulars in line with the

AL's demand, and said it did not make any effort in this regard.

Embarrassed by the revelation that many AL candidates have amassed huge wealth in the last five years, a delegation of the ruling party led by former home minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir on Sunday met the chief election commissioner (CEC) and asked for stopping publication of the candidates' particulars on the commission's website.

Contacted, Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz said yesterday, "It is not possible to stop making these information public because there is a court
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Ensure security

Foreign diplomats in Dhaka worried about demos in diplomatic zone

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign diplomats in Dhaka are deeply worried about the security of the diplomatic enclave, and the safety of their staff and foreign citizens, students and volunteers residing in Bangladesh.

They conveyed their concerns to the government yesterday when Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali briefed two groups of diplomats at state guesthouse Padma on recent political programmes, such as demon-

strations and processions in the diplomatic enclave, said meeting sources.

Mahmood Ali assured the envoys that the government was pledge-bound by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 to ensure the safety and security of all diplomatic missions, foreign cultural centres, residences and schools during this critical period preceding the election in Bangladesh, according to a foreign ministry press release.

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