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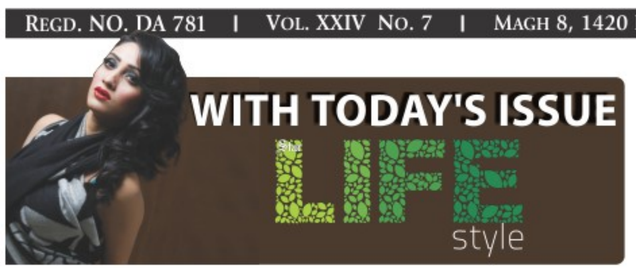

IMRUL IN FOR SL TESTS

The opening batsman returns to the national fold after over two years

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MLK DAY OBSERVED

The US remembers Martin Luther King Jr with marches and service projects

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Govt illegal, isolated

Says Khaleda at rally; asks for fresh polls quickly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the present government illegal and isolated, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded a fresh election under a neutral administration as soon as possible.

"There is still time. I call upon this shameless government to leave its lust for power and prove its popularity in fresh polls," she told a BNP rally in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan.

"It cannot be a government of the people because people didn't vote for it. We want to tell the government it doesn't have any public support ... Arrange immediately an election under a non-party administration."

She said the government was isolated and weak and trying to stay in power by using muscle.

Khaleda spoke for about an hour in the rally organised by her party to "thank people for rejecting the January 5 election".

The gathering was to take place under the banner of the BNP-led 18-party alliance, but the BNP finally held it alone leaving out its key ally Jamaat-e-Islami in the face of strong criticism at home and abroad for its ties with the Islamist party that was involved in recent political violence.

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A section of the crowd that gathered at the BNP rally in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday to listen to party chief Khaleda Zia's first speech since the January 5 elections that her 18-party alliance had boycotted.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Dangerous insinuation, distortion of facts

INAM AHMED *and* SHAKHAWAT LITON

NEWS ANALYSIS

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has made a very dangerous insinuation that "unknown faces" were seen in the joint forces during the recent operation against Jamaat men in Satkhira, without bothering to give any proof in her speech.

She made a similar allusion to the operation in last May against Hefajat activists in Dhaka, saying Bangladeshi forces could never have carried out such "inhuman torture" on Alems and madrasa students.

In view of her past stance on security issues, one can interpret that she actually meant foreign security personnel were involved in the operation. This is a dangerous game. Such

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JAMAAT KEPT AWAY FROM RALLY

Khaleda slams jt force actions

RASHIDUL HASAN *and* PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

Yesterday's rally at Suhrawardy Udyan was all set to be organised under the banner of the BNP-led 18-party alliance. But the night before, the BNP thought better of it.

Following a series of meetings and phone conversations with its key ally Jamaat-e-Islami, the BNP high-ups preferred to hold the rally all by itself.

The decision was apparently part of a strategy in the wake of huge criticism at home and abroad for Jamaat's involvement in violence before and after the January 5 polls, sources in the BNP and the alliance say.

Three other Islamist parties -- Islami Oikya Jote, Khelafat Majlish and Jamiate Ulamaye Islam -- were also requested not to attend the rally for their links with Hefajat-e Islam, according to BNP insiders.

Lately, the international community and diplomats have been piling pressure on the BNP to sever ties with the Jamaat as well as the Hefajat, a Qawmi madrasa-based organisation which drew flak for the mayhem in the capital May last year.

With this new stance of the BNP, Jamaat and other Islamist allies were left with broken hearts as they had taken all-out preparation to participate in the rally, alliance sources say.

In the recent times, the activists of

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ATTACK ON NOOR

Another accused found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

A second accused in the case filed for attacking the convoy of Awami League lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor was found dead in Saidpur upazila of Nilphamari yesterday.

The dead, Atiqur Rahman Atiq, 30, was a leader pro-BNP student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

Earlier on Saturday, Golam Rabbani, the prime accused in the case, was found dead in the district's Arazi Itakhola village.

Atiq's body was found by the Rangpur-Dinajpur highway in Dhalagachh Nariakhamba around 7:00am, said Firoz Kabir, officer-in-charge of Saidpur Police Station.

His face bore several injury marks, the OC said, adding that they filed an unnatural death case in this connection.

Atiq's mother Amena

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Sayedee unrest leader killed in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Saiful Islam

The assistant secretary general of Meherpur unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, who was in police custody, was killed during a "gunfight" between Jamaat-Shibir men and law enforcers early yesterday.

Tarique Mohammad Saiful Islam, 35, allegedly played a leading role in the violence right after war criminal and Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee had been sentenced to death in February last year.

Police arrested Saiful near Islami Bank in the town around 3:00pm on Sunday in three cases filed in connection with attacks on police and illegal tree felling.

Reazul Islam, officer-in-charge of Meherpur Police Station, claimed before The Daily Star that based on Saiful's information a police team had taken him to Bandar area in the town to recover firearms around 3:00am yesterday.

He said activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir had opened fire on the police team

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Three Pakistanis held

Police says they belong to banned militant outfit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives arrested three Pakistanis of Myanmar origin Sunday night on suspicion of having links with the banned militant outfit Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan.

Mehmud, 26, Osman, 23, and Fakhrul Hasan, 50, were arrested at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy around 10:30pm in possession of a laptop containing manuals for making bombs and using firearms.

They were produced before a court yesterday which placed them on 13 days' remand for each.

Monirul Islam, joint commissioner of Detective Branch of Police, at a press briefing at Dhaka Metropolitan Police media centre in the capital yesterday claimed that the trio had links with militant groups in Bangladesh as well.

He did not disclose the names of the groups for the sake of investigation.

"Their key aim was to revitalise the weakened militant groups and their movements in Bangladesh," said the DB official.

Mehmud and Osman were experts in making 12 types of bombs, including car bombs and grenades, Monirul said, adding that they had come to Bangladesh a year ago.

Monirul said Mehmud and Osman had been arrested and released two months ago but he did not reveal why they were arrested then.

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7 BNP leaders get HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted bail to seven top BNP leaders, including its acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, in nine cases for different periods.

The six others are Mirza Abbas, Aman Ullah Aman, Goyeswar Chandra Roy, AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, Abdus Salam and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury.

The HC bench of Justice Borhanuddin and Justice KM Kamrul Kader passed the bail orders after hearing bail petitions filed by the accused.

The HC granted anticipatory bail to Mirza Fakhrul Islam for eight weeks in a case filed with Ramna Police Station on January 7 on charge of provoking terrorism during the opposition's anti-government agitations, Sagir Hossain Leon, a lawyer for the petitioners, told The Daily Star.

On Thursday, the HC directed the law enforcers not to arrest or harass Mirza Fakhrul in three cases filed with Shahbagh and Ramna police stations in connection with arson attacks on buses in the capital's Bangla Motor, Shahbagh and Malibagh areas in November and December last year. Those attacks left several people dead and some others injured.

Six other leaders are accused in most of these four cases, Sagir said, adding that Mirza Abbas and Goyeswar Chandra Roy got anticipatory bail in all the four cases for eight weeks and four weeks respectively.

Aman Ullah Aman and Abdus Salam secured anticipatory bail in the four cases for eight weeks. Aman also got anticipatory bail in five other cases

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