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They can't oust govt by killing people: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said BNP cannot oust her government by resorting to killings and destructive activities.

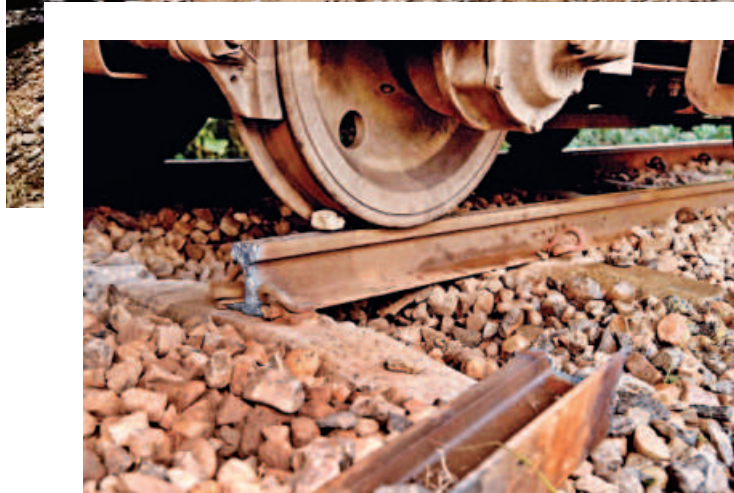
"They can't oust the government by killing people. What kind of politics do they do?" she said, slamming the BNP for their subversive activities.

The premier was exchanging views with the newly elected committee of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) at her official residence, Gono Bhaban.

Talking about the train accident in Gazipur, she said some 20ft rail track was cut by a gas cutter machine at Sreepur upazila around 4:30am yesterday.

BNP terrorists did the same thing on several occasions in the past, she said, adding that eight bogies of the Mohanganj Express coming from Netrakona got

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



The derailed carriages of Mohanganj Express near Bhawalgarh Railway Station of Gazipur when it was heading for Dhaka from Netrakona. The incident occurred early yesterday as criminals severed a portion of rail line, inset.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF A CORRESPONDENT

Saboteurs derail express train; 1 killed

Officials point finger at blockade supporters

STAR REPORT

A 20-foot stretch of rail line was cut off by unidentified criminals, leading to the derailment of Mohanganj Express in Gazipur early yesterday.

Six carriages and the locomotive of the Dhaka-bound train from Netrakona's Mohanganj derailed near Bhawalgarh station to the north of Joydebpur junction around 4:00am.

One person was killed and at least 11 others were injured, said police and the district administration. Deceased Aslam, 35, was a poultry trader from Mymensingh's Galargaon upazila.

"It is a subversive act carried out to harm train passengers and damage government property. We think pro-blockade supporters did it," Anwar Hossain, superintendent of Dhaka Railway Police, told reporters at the scene.

Police and district administration officials said they recovered two gas cylinders that were used to power a blowtorch to sever the section of the rail.

Obaidul Quader, Awami League general secretary and also road transport and bridges minister, at a press conference in the AL president's Dhanmondi political office said the sabotage was the part of an anti-election conspiracy.

Describing it as an act of sabotage, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, however, said the incident was done in a planned way to shift the blame on the opposition.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

JP 'assures' AL it'll run

Chunnu says Raushan 'nobody in party', her post ornamental

RASHIDUL HASAN

Amid doubts that Jatiya Party may withdraw from the electoral race, the main opposition party has assured the ruling Awami League of running.

In a meeting with an AL delegation on Tuesday night, the JP reaffirmed that it is carrying out electoral activities to participate in the polls, a co-chairman of the JP told The Daily Star yesterday.

The meeting discussed seat-sharing between the two parties, he said wishing anonymity.

JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnu and Senior Co-chairman Anisul Islam Mahmud represented the party at the meeting at a house in Dhaka's Gulshan. The AL team was led by its General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

In the meeting, AL Office Secretary Biplob Barua conveyed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's doubt about JP's participation in the polls as JP chief GM Quader has been maintaining silence since the announcement of the polls schedule on November 15.

Hasina, also the AL president, on Tuesday expressed doubts that JP may pull out. During her meeting with JP chief patron Raushan Ershad at the Gono Bhaban, the premier hinted that her party may not share any seat with JP, meeting sources said.

She expressed annoyance over JP Chairman GM Quader not making any public statement that his party will run.

A senior JP leader close to a participant of Tuesday's meeting told this correspondent that the JP delegation was able to convince AL of the party's participation in the polls.

"Awami League will not be able to ignore the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Police raid Khaleda's office: BNP

Cops say they only went to see party activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police raided BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan political office last night, claimed the party.

A police team led by Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station, entered the office around 10:40pm and conducted a search, said Shamsuddin Didar, an official of the BNP chairperson's press wing.

In a press statement, Shamsuddin also claimed that police took away a wreath which was supposed to be used for paying homage to martyred intellectuals. The policemen asked them not to go to the office today; otherwise they would be arrested, he claimed.

During their 15-minute raid, police took footage of different rooms of the office, the statement said.

The statement said the BNP was supposed to go to the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial in Mirpur from

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Reserves can hit \$24.3b this fiscal

Greater exchange rate flexibility holds key, IMF says

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh's gross foreign reserves can top up to \$24.3 billion by the end of the fiscal year if greater exchange rate flexibility is allowed and a tighter monetary policy is pursued, the IMF said.

As of December 6, gross foreign reserves stood at \$19.1 billion, as per the latest published data from the Bangladesh Bank.

A calibrated monetary policy tightening, supported by a neutral fiscal stance, and greater exchange rate flexibility would alleviate foreign exchange pressures and rebuild buffers, said Antoinette Sayeh, deputy managing director of IMF.

"Gradually transitioning to a more flexible exchange rate regime and strengthening FX reserve management would enhance external resilience," she said in an IMF press statement yesterday.

If the measures are carried out sincerely, gross foreign reserves are projected to hit \$30.6 billion at the end of the next fiscal year and \$39.2 billion in fiscal 2025-26.

"Near-term policies should continue to focus on containing inflation and rebuilding external resilience," said Sayeh, who is also the acting chair of the IMF executive board that authorised the second tranche of \$689 million of the \$4.7 billion loan yesterday.

The approval for the second tranche came despite the government's inability to meet two of the six conditions: minimum net international reserves and tax collection.

"Bangladesh's economy is navigating multi-faceted economic challenges. Despite a difficult external environment, programme performance has been broadly on track, reflecting the authorities' strong commitment," she said.

Ongoing reforms to modernise the monetary policy framework will improve policy transmission and foster macroeconomic stability, she said in the press statement.

Subsequently, inflation is expected to decelerate to 7.2 percent at the end of the fiscal year. Inflation is projected to average 7.9 percent in fiscal 2023-24, which is above the government's inflation target of 7.5 percent for the year.

The IMF board also emphasised the need for creating fiscal space for social spending and growth enhancing investment.

They stressed the need to raise tax revenues by implementing concerted tax policy and administration measures. Directors also called for rationalising subsidies, improving expenditure efficiency, and better managing fiscal risks.

"Continued efforts to enhance public

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



COP28 SUMMIT Deal struck to transition away from fossil fuels

Small island states say deal does not do enough

REUTERS, Dubai

Representatives from nearly 200 countries yesterday agreed at the COP28 climate summit to begin reducing global consumption of fossil fuels to avert the worst of climate change, a first of its kind deal signalling the eventual end of the oil age.

The deal struck in Dubai after two weeks of hard-fought negotiations was meant to send a powerful signal to investors and policy-makers that the world is united in its desire to break with fossil fuels, something scientists say is the last best hope to stave off climate catastrophe.

COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber called the deal "historic" but added that its true success would be in its implementation.

"We are what we do, not what we say," he told the crowded plenary at the summit. "We must take the steps necessary to turn this agreement into tangible actions."

Several countries cheered the deal for accomplishing something elusive in decades of climate talks. "It is the first time that the world unites around such a clear text on the need to transition away from fossil fuels," said Norway Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide.

Ancient Roman home found with 'unparalleled' mosaic

AFP, ROME

Italian archaeologists have uncovered a luxurious Roman home near the Colosseum, boasting an "unparalleled" mosaic featuring shells, marble and precious glass, the culture ministry said Tuesday.

Three large ships ride waves in the mosaic towards a coastal city, its walls dotted with small towers and porticoes in a scene suggesting the owner of the more than 2,000-year-old home, or domus, had been victorious in battle.

The building, which dates to between the second half of the 2nd century BC and the end of the 1st century BC, is "an authentic treasure", Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano said in a statement.



Palestinian children warm up around a fire outside their makeshift tent at a camp set up on a schoolyard in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, where most civilians have taken refuge, yesterday, as battles continue between Israel and Hamas.

PHOTO: AFP

Allies press Israel over Gaza ceasefire

Biden warns Netanyahu risks losing international support; 50 more Palestinians killed in air strikes

AGENCIES

Israel came under pressure from its allies over its war in Gaza yesterday, as US President Joe Biden told the long time ally that its "indiscriminate" bombing of civilians was hurting its international support.

The calls came as the UN yesterday again demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

After dire warnings from UN officials about a deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the 193-member UN General Assembly on Tuesday passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire with three-quarters of member states voting in favour.

The Palestinian Authority welcomed the resolution and urged countries to pressure Israel to comply.

"The price of defeating Hamas cannot be the continuous suffering of all Palestinian civilians," the leaders of Canada, Australia and New Zealand said separately in a joint statement calling for a ceasefire.

The Hamas-run health ministry said the war has killed at least 18,608 people, with 50,594 injured. The conflict has also led to starvation, displaced 85 percent of the population from their homes and caused diseases to spread, according to the UN and Gaza health ministry.