

# Thai junta picks retired general as new PM

US cuts off millions of dollars in military aid



Surayud Chulanont

AFP, Bangkok/ Washington

Thailand's ruling junta has picked a former army chief to be the new prime minister, local media and a government official said yesterday, more than a week after the coup that ousted Thaksin Shinawatra. At the same time, the military -- which refused to confirm or deny the name of their reported pick -- said it was reserving the right to sack the premier under an interim constitution due to be published this weekend. General Surayud Chulanont, 63, now a royal advisor, had been chosen as the successor to Thaksin, state-run Radio Thailand reported on its website citing auditor general Jaruvan Maintaka.

The choice was "quite certain," it quoted her as saying, adding that he "is the most suitable for the job, given his qualification and his seniority." Surayud's name was also splashed across the Thai media, although a military source, speaking under condition of anonymity, said he had in fact turned the offer down. The junta's secretary general threw his support behind Surayud and said he figured "on the list" but that no names had been sent for royal approval. "If it is General Surayud, I like him and I respect him," Winai Phattiyakul added. "He may be my choice, but I do not have the power to choose the prime minister."

Winai indicated that Surayud's army past would not be a bar to getting the post of premier. "We really consider that a retired general is a civilian," he said. Thailand's new military leaders pledged after taking power on September 19 to appoint a new premier within two weeks to guide Thailand towards elections in October 2007. An announcement is expected this weekend. The other main candidate for the premiership has been former World Trade Organisation chief Supachai Panitchpakdi, who has refused to comment. Whoever their choice, the generals have reserved the right in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

A car sees on its own the way through the darkened road near Kazir Deuri intersection in port city Chittagong while roadside lights are off due to load-shedding.

# US House approves Iran sanctions bill

Tehran rules out suspending nuke activities

AFP, Washington/ Tehran

The House of Representatives on Thursday approved legislation to ramp up economic pressure on Iran, in an effort to convince Tehran to abandon its nuclear programme. Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, author of the Iran Freedom Support Act, which was approved by voice vote, said the bill would deny Iran "the technical assistance, financial resources, and political legitimacy to develop

nuclear weapons and support terrorism." Representative Tom Lantos, the top Democrat on the House International Affairs Committee, was another leading backer of the bill. "If we fail to use the economic and diplomatic tools available to us, the world will face a nightmare that knows no end: a despotic, fundamentalist regime wedded both to terrorism and to the most terrifying weapons known to man," he said. "In the meantime, we cannot

shirk our responsibility to employ every peaceful means possible to defeat Iran's reckless nuclear military ambitions," said Lantos. Iran already ignored an August 31 deadline set by the UN Security Council for it to suspend uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities that Washington and others believe is a cover for developing nuclear weapons.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

# Aziz retires as judge today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz, who is also a sitting judge of the Appellate Division, retires from the Supreme Court (SC) today. Aziz was appointed the CEC on May 23, 2005 for five years while already holding the constitutional post of an SC judge. Holding of two constitutional posts simultaneously is unprecedented in the country. Aziz was appointed a High Court judge on June 1, 1966. There has been strong demand for Aziz's removal from the Election Commission from all quarters except the BNP-led four-party coalition government.



# British minister due today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British Chief Secretary to the treasury Stephen Timms MP arrives in Dhaka today on a three-day visit. During his visit, Timms is likely to meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Finance

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

# Prospects for free, fair polls in Bangladesh bleak

Avebury tells seminar in London

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group said the prospect for free and fair general elections in Bangladesh is looking bleak with only a month to go before the caretaker government takes office. Lord Avebury, vice-chair of the group, made the comment while chairing a seminar on "Bangladesh: Logjam on the Road to Free and Fair Elections" in the House of Lords on September 27. "The US National Democratic Institute (NDI) has already referred to the incompetence and bias of the Election Commission (EC), all four of whose members were previously activists of parties belonging to the coalition government," a House of Lords press release from London said. Referring to the manipulation in preparing the recent voters list, Lord Avebury said, "This is mass-produced fraud which must be exposed and corrected. The NDI commented on the 'rampant and escalating violence' of recent times, including the assassination of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, the attempt on the life of British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury; the multiple grenade attack on the Leader of the

# BCL leader murdered in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A local leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was killed by a gang of miscreants in front of his house at Fulbari in Bogra town early yesterday. It is alleged that the gang led by Chhatra Dal activists Suman and Jitu swooped on Rabiul Islam, 22, president of BCL ward no-2, at around 1:30am. As Rabiul tried to flee, the gang opened fire and hit him with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured. The BCL leader was rushed to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries soon after admission. Chhatra League district unit brought out a procession in the town with the body of Rabiul. Meanwhile, police recovered the bodies of two youths--Imran and Tutul--from two places in Shajahanpur upazila yesterday morning. The body of Imran, a transport worker, was found in a ditch in Sugabad area, while Tutul's in Dhahapar area of the upazila. Tutul was a resident of Lotifpur Colony of Bogra town.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Devotees receive prasadam from the priest at a puja mandap in Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University on Mahasaptami yesterday, the second day of the five-day Durga Puja celebrations.

# BSF kills youth in Satkhira

UNB, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) killed a Bangladeshi youth near Hardona border on Thursday night. Locals said the Indian border guards of Soldana camp ran a speedboat over Amir Hossain, 25, while he was crossing the Ichhamoti River with cattle, leaving him seriously injured. Bangladeshi fishermen rescued Amir in a critical condition. He was first admitted to Satkhira Sadar Hospital and later shifted to the Khuina 250-bed Hospital where he died yesterday afternoon. BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) confirmed the incident. UNB Thakurgaon correspondent reported that the BSF fired gunshots at Haripur frontier on Thursday night, creating panic among the residents at Dangaon and Dahagaon villages. BDR sources said the BSF troops of Khurka camp fired on Dangaon village from near pillar no 358 at about 9:00pm. BSF members of Borra camp also fired on Dahagaon village at about 11:00pm on Wednesday night. The company commander at Haripur BDR camp said the BSF opened fire without any provocation, but BDR did not retaliate.

# Cops beaten up in Ctg for extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mob beat up four cops and damaged their vehicle reportedly for extorting money from innocent people in the city's Ambagan area early yesterday. Sources said, a patrol team led by Assistant Sub Inspector Salim of Khulshi Police Station picked up seven people, including five rickshawpullers, from the area at around 1:30am in a bid to extort money from them. As the police van reached near Zhaotala Bazar, the seven cried for help. Locals stopped the vehicle, beat up the policemen and damaged the van. Later, local ward commissioner Mohammad Hossain Hiron rescued the policemen and took them

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7