

Talks possibility inspires new hope

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Civil society members and diplomats yesterday expressed hope that the planned dialogue between the secretaries-general of BNP and Awami League (AL) will resolve the current political dispute for a free and fair election to be held in time.
US Ambassador in Dhaka
SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Brazil plane crashes over Amazon with 155 aboard

REUTERS, Sao Paulo
A Brazilian airline passenger plane with 155 people on board disappeared over the Amazon jungle and was believed to have crashed, local officials and news reports said.
The brand-new Boeing 737-800
SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Brac expands programmes in Africa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
After its successful operations in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, Bangladesh's first international non-government organisation (NGO) Brac is now expanding its programmes to Africa.
The largest NGO of the world, Brac, however, will not transfer any money from Bangladesh earned
SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Oct	Sehri	Iftar
7	1		5-49
8	2	4-31	5-48
9	3	4-31	5-47

Prayer Timing

October 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-31	4-42
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-49	6-05
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDEX
Graft, poor infrastructure pull country down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Corruption and poor infrastructure are the number one and two factors that pulled down Bangladesh in the global competitiveness index (GCI) in 2006.
On the other hand, inefficient bureaucracy, policy instability, lack of access to finance, inadequately educated workforce and inflation are still 'lead determining factors' in business environment.
These were revealed in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) 2006-2007 and the Centre for Policy Dialogue's (CPD) Bangladesh Business Environment Study 2006 launched in Dhaka yesterday.
Crime and theft that was the fifth determining factor in 2005 became eighth in 2006.
"In 2006, corruption is the most important determining factor affecting the business environment," said CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya at the launching ceremony at CPD office.
Poor infrastructure came out as the second most important factor for business environment, followed by inefficient bureaucracy and policy instability, he said.
Bangladesh ranked 99th out of 125 countries in the GCI 2006-07 while it was 98th among 117 countries in 2005. If the same set of countries as in 2005 is considered, Bangladesh's position remains unchanged (two countries have gone up and one country has come down).
The country's major progress was in macroeconomic management and health and primary education but these could not help improve the GCI ranking because of major weaknesses in public institutions and infrastructure.
The CPD in collaboration with the WEF has been assessing business competitiveness environment in Bangladesh since 2001, and the assessment this year is the sixth in the series.
Public trust about financial honesty of politicians was found to be very low as less than one percent responded positively, Debapriya said. There is no improvement in the graft situation. Firms very often make extra payments or bribe
SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

PM is responsible for power crisis: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka
Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for power crisis across the country as she holds the portfolio of the power ministry.
"Two state ministers for power have so far been removed. How could they be blamed for the mess in the power sector when the prime minister herself is in charge of the power ministry?" she questioned.
Hasina was addressing a meeting organised to welcome two former bureaucrats and two others to the Awami League (AL) at its Dhanmondi office.
Former secretary Azharul Islam, former tax commissioner Chowdhury Khalequzzaman, former MP from Barisal's Mehendiganj constituency Maidul Islam, and President of Feni District Welfare Association in Dhaka Mustafizur Rahman joined the AL at the meeting.
Describing the ongoing power crisis as the outcome of the government's unbridled corruption, Hasina said the blame for the power crisis goes on the prime minister.
The opposition leader recalled that AL government had run the power sector with specific plans and strategies.
"In 1996, we had inherited the power sector shattered by the then BNP government. But we increased power generation to 4400MW. But
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Talukder skips PM's visit to his district

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Removed state minister for power Anwar Kabir Talukder was absent during the prime minister's visit to his district Jamalpur yesterday.
Talukder will visit his constituency to clear his position regarding
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR
Garment workers clash with police at Uttara in the capital yesterday after the workers tried to barricade a road protesting assault on two of their colleagues allegedly by employees loyal to the factory owners.

A six-year-old girl, sitting next to the idol of goddess Durga, being worshipped at Ramkrishna Mission in the capital during Kumari Puja yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

INCOME TAX RETURN
Time limit for submission extended to Oct 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday extended time limit for submitting income tax return for individual category from September 30 to October 19, responding to the demand of different occupational groups.
The time limit for submitting income tax would not be extended again under any circumstances,
SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

ISI, Lashkar behind Mumbai blasts

Claim Indian cops; Pakistan asks for evidence

REUTERS, Mumbai/ Islamabad
Indian police said yesterday they had found evidence that Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba carried out the July 11 serial blasts in Mumbai and Pakistan's military spy agency was behind the plot.
"We have solved the July 11 bombings case. The whole attack was planned by Pakistan's ISI and carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba and their operatives in India," AN Roy, Mumbai's police chief, told a news conference.
ISI or the Inter-Services Intelligence agency is Pakistan's military spy agency.
The announcement came a day after Mumbai police said they had
SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Kumari Puja observed

Mahanabami today
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Hindu devotees across the country will observe the Mahanabami at Puja Mandaps today amid due religious fervour and festivity.
Bhog (offering) of delicious food and fruits will be made to Devi Durga, the goddess of supreme power, and later distributed among the devotees.
Meanwhile, thousands of ardent believers performed Kumari Puja yesterday on the Mahaastami of the five-day
SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

16 Satkhira villages flooded

Over 30,000 marooned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira
Three days of downpour coupled with the overflowing Kapotakkha river have left over 30,000 people in 16 villages of Tala upazila marooned for two weeks.
The road link between Satkhira and Khulna snapped yesterday as the Satkhira-Khulna highway in Noapara of Tala upazila went under two to four feet of water.
People living in the area continue to suffer as 1436 dwellings were either destroyed or partially damaged by rising water. Around 354 families have taken shelter either on the sides of high roads or educational institutions in the area.
The water remains stagnant as the silted Kapotakkha cannot deal with the heavy rush of upstream water. The water-logging in the area is becoming worse every year
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

New US sanction bill targets Iran allies

AFP, Washington
The US Congress early yesterday gave its final approval to a new set of sanctions targeting foreign countries that continue nuclear cooperation with Iran and sell it advanced weaponry.
But mindful of the situation in Iraq, lawmakers warned that nothing in this document should be construed as authorising the use of force against Iran.
Although it does not name any countries by name, the measure is seen as a clear warning to Russia and China, two key members of the UN Security Council that have been resisting calls for new international sanctions against Tehran in response to its refusal to halt uranium enrichment.
Russia has been involved in a 800-million-dollar project to help Iran build a nuclear power plant in Bushehr and has been selling it modern weaponry, while China has been accused of supplying the Islamic republic with advanced
SEE PAGE 15 COL 7