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NEWS BRIEFS

National Youth Day Nov 1

The National Youth Day will be observed in the country on November 1 with an objective to integrate the youth community in the country's development process. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the day at a function at the Osmani Memorial hall, reports BSS.

Kidnapped trader rescued

CHITTAGONG, Oct 29: Kotwali and Boalkhali police today rescued Serajul Islam, owner of a jewellery shop, after continuous 48 hours search. Serajul Islam was kidnapped at gunpoint by some miscreants on October 25 from Masterpol area to realise ransom, police said, reports BSS.

Turkish envoy hosts reception

The Turkish Ambassador in Bangladesh, Ahmet Ermisoglu, hosted a reception at his Gulshan residence last night on the occasion of the National Day of Turkey, reports BSS.

Copies of Holy Quran burnt : 50 injured Ahmadiyya Masjid complex set ablaze

By Staff Correspondent

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh (AMJ, B) complex in the capital's Bakshi Bazar area has been vandalized in an unprecedented sectarian violence in the country.

At least 50 were injured when hundreds of slogan shouting people swooped on the 15-bigha complex Thursday afternoon, ransacked the rooms and burned several hundred books including copies of the Holy Quran, witnesses said.

A total of 12 people were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with grievous wounds while the rest were released after first aid.

Officials of the AMJ, B held the activists of the Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir responsible for the attack. No Jamaat comment was, however, available.

Witnesses said that a procession of more than 1200 people came out of the neighbouring Ala Madrassa and attacked the complex at about 3-55.

The marchers carrying sawed-off rifles, pistols and rods broke open the main entrance of the complex when some 60 devotees were preparing for the Asr prayers inside.

The processionists also blasted at least 35 crude bombs to terrorise the people around, they said.

During the one-and-a-half hour attack, the main prayer hall, and 25 other rooms including the printing press, library, conference hall, the main office and residence of six families within the complex were ransacked.

A microbus parked in the complex premises was also burnt by the attackers.

Leaders of the AMJ, B alleged that copies of Holy Quran in 153 languages, which were put on display at the Exhibition Room of the complex, were damaged while hundreds of copies, fresh from the press, were set ablaze.

They estimate the loss of property Taka 1.5 crore and two crore.

When this correspondent visited the walled complex, the whole area was a smouldering heap of burnt out furniture with pools of blood here and there. The compound was also strewn with shredded leaves of the Holy Quran and shattered window panes of blood here and there.

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Fire fighters battling to extinguish fire at Ahmadiyya Masjid Mission complex yesterday. —Star photo

Clinton's lead falls further Six days to victory: Bush

WASHINGTON, Oct 29: President George Bush says new voter polls show the campaign momentum is swinging his way, but Democrat Bill Clinton insists he will still win the election on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

They were responding to a Cable News Network/USA Today/gallup poll on Wednesday that had Clinton only two points ahead of Bush at 40 per cent to 38 per cent. Just last week, Clinton had a double digit lead over Bush.

Two other polls by the NBC and ABC networks gave Clinton a seven point lead. Independent Ross Perot remained in third place in all three polls with support of 15 to 20 per cent.

A poll in today's edition of the Washington Post had Clinton leading with 44 per cent to 34 per cent over Bush and 19 per cent for Perot.

"Six days to victory — believe me, we are going to win this election," Bush said in Toledo, Ohio, on Wednesday.

"These guys (Clinton supporters) feel it slipping away from them. They know we're on the move. They know we're going forward. I feel sorry for them," an ebullient Bush said at another campaign stop in Ohio.

Clinton said on Wednesday night on Cable News Network's "Larry King live" that he always knew the race would tighten in the final days of the campaign. I think in the end we will prevail, he said.

Asked about the narrowing poll margins, Clinton said, "There's one that says that, there are three others say from seven to 11. I don't know what it is." The 11 point lead was in a Los Angeles Times poll.

Earlier, Clinton insisted during a campaign swing through the south that Bush's days were numbered.

"Don't pay any attention to them," he told a crowd in Houston as Republican hecklers disrupted his campaign speech.

"We've only got to put up with them six more days."

Today, Bush was scheduled to campaign across Michigan while Clinton was appearing in Ohio, Michigan and New Jersey.

Bush has been attacking Clinton's character and his ability to lead the nation and warning that a Clinton victory would mean higher income taxes for most Americans.

"Bush has virtually turned his campaign into a personal attack on me," Clinton said. "Bush has raised the flag of fear."

Perot, meanwhile, made a rare appearance on Wednesday night at a rally in Denver, Colorado. He has done almost all of his campaigning on television and was scheduled to be on King's programme on Thursday night.

"We can win if we can just keep these other folks from throwing their votes away," Perot told 7,000 supporters. He plans other rallies in Florida, California, Texas and Missouri over the weekend.

Students, police clash in Narayanganj : 25 injured

From Our Correspondent

According to witnesses, about 200 students of Bar Academy High School and IET High School, some of them SSC examinees started marching towards the office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) from the Bar Academy High School premises at about 11 am. They damaged seven Narayanganj-Demra route buses when police obstructed them in front of the New Metro Cinema Hall.

As police chased them the agitated students gathered at the Narayanganj High School ground and regrouped to hold procession anew, this time with other students of this school.

The students of the three schools later clashed with police again at a police barricade near Number 2 Railgate. Police resorted to baton charge on the unruly students who pelted stones at them.

As they failed to reach the DC, the protesting students entered Government Tolaram College, from where the protesters aided by their supporters launched attack on police. At this stage, the chase and counter-chase spread to College Road and Chashara areas. Police mercilessly beat up the students and lobbed teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

Banks empowered to reschedule loans to sick industries

The government has empowered the boards of directors of the public sector banks and financial institutions to take necessary measures for rescheduling the loan and project rehabilitation of those industrial units which are facing closure of problems due to necessary bank loan, reports BSS.

An official handout issued in Dhaka yesterday said the entrepreneurs of those units which would be declared by the boards of directors as disqualified for rehabilitation or for running capital through rescheduling or new financing would be given chance to apply for reconsidering their appeal.

The government has constituted a six-member review committee with executive chairman of the investment board as its convener to consider those applications, it said.

The committee will consider the prayers of those projects or units having the prospects of becoming profitable concerns through financing and rehabilitation or rescheduling.

BNP likely to opt for amendment to anti-terrorism bill

By Nurul Kabir

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is planning to get the controversial anti-terrorism bill passed in the House with certain amendments that include omission of the provision for appellate tribunal.

The policy planners of the ruling party are also actively considering keeping the law effective for 'a certain period'.

An influential BNP leader, also a Cabinet member, told The Daily Star last night on the condition of anonymity that they were planning to do so following criticism that the proposed law was undermining the constitutional authority of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court by means of denying the citizens their right to defend themselves against verdicts of any tribunal in the High Court.

Meanwhile, the Awami League, the Jatiya Party (JP), Ganotantri Party and Shajahan Straj-led Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal reiterated their stance last evening that they would continue to abstain from taking part in the proceedings of the House until the Treasury bench withdrew the bill.

The Opposition leaders, at a press briefing last evening, observed that they could not let a bill passed which would virtually repress more the political opponents than the terrorists in the country.

"We can join Parliament sessions only after the Treasury bench comes out with announcement that it will not try to pass the bill by means of majority in the House", the Deputy Leader of the House Abdus Samad Azad told the newsmen.

Suranjit Sengupta of the Ganotantri Party, however, maintained that the opposition was ready to scrutinise the 'anti terrorism bill' which was brought in the House last April and sent it to the concerned

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US multiple visa for Bangladeshis extended to 5 yrs

Bangladeshi diplomats, officials, students and their immediate dependent family members seeking to visit the United States will now be given multiple entry visas for five years, Bangladesh ambassador to USA said in Washington, reports BSS.

Talking to a group of Bangladeshis staying in Washington Bangladesh ambassador Abul Ahsan Wednesday described the measures as the first step towards further relaxation of travels between the two countries saying that it reflected the growing relations between Bangladesh and USA.

The US citizens of same categories intending to visit Bangladesh will get the same

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Police looking for one Peter Coster: Matin

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury yesterday informed, the Jatiya Sangsad, that police was looking for one Peter Coster, a citizen of the Netherlands to arrest him, reports BSS.

Responding to a query from the Jamaat member Shahjahan Chowdhury, the Home Minister said Peter Coster would be arrested as soon as police found him in Bangladesh.

Earlier, the Jamaat member drew the attention of the chair to a news item published in a local daily yesterday stating that Peter Coster who was sentenced to suffer a long-term imprisonment in 1976 for provoking armed revolution, is now in Bangladesh again.

Quoting the report the Jamaat member said Peter Coster was now moving freely in Dhaka and found on the Dhaka University campus.

50-bed modern hospital to be set up in each thana hqs

The government has a plan to set up a 50-bed modern hospital at each thana headquarters, Deputy Health Minister Serajul Huq told Jatiya Sangsad last night, reports BSS.

Replying to a private member's resolution, the Deputy Minister said the government would welcome private and joint venture initiative in the health sector with a view to providing adequate medicare to the rural people.

The resolution was moved by Treasury Bench member Niamat Ullah from Savar.

Huq told the member that Savar was included in the government's plan to establish a 50-bed hospital.

In response to the request of the Deputy Minister, Niamat Ullah withdrew his resolution.

Every lock has a key

By Staff Correspondent

The lock of Bashir Hossain's flat at Azimpur colony was opened yesterday evening after four days. The inmates of the flat said that some BDR men came to the flat yesterday evening and opened the lock of the flat with their key.

Ten family members of Bashir Hossain, a government officer, remained confined in the flat 60-B when its door was locked allegedly by a group of BDR personnel Sunday Noon. The power line of the flat was also snapped.

The report on locking of Bashir Hossain's flat was published

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BSC incurs Tk 127 cr loss in two years

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) had incurred a loss of Taka 126.94 crore during 1988-89 to 1991-92 financial years. State Minister for Shipping and IWT Harun-al-Rashid told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Replying to a written question from Awami League member Sheikh Harunur Rashid, the State Minister said the BSC had incurred the highest loss of Taka 47.47 crore during the fiscal 1990-91.

Equal facilities for foreign investors

CHITTAGONG, Oct 29: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here today that the government was keen to attract and enhance foreign private investment in the export-oriented industries in the country, reports BSS.

Begum Zia welcome all potential investors urging them to make the best use of the facilities offered by the government for investment in the country.

The Prime Minister was making her opening remarks at a discussion with the foreign investors, local business and industrial entrepreneurs at the Chittagong Export Processing Zone's conference centre.

Begum Zia said, "we need capital and technology for achieving national self-reliance"

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PM tells rally in Chittagong Opposition hindering democratic process

CHITTAGONG, Oct 29: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia blamed the opposition for coming up with 'destructive' programme to oppose the anti-terrorism bill, reports UNB.

They are hindering democratic process and have taken to the street for damaging property of the people," she said addressing a huge rally at AL Khan High School ground at Kalurghat here this afternoon.

"People do not want violence and indiscipline," Begum Zia said explaining the reason for introducing the Anti-terrorism Bill, 1992 in the parliament.

The government introduced the bill in parliament on Tuesday amidst strong protest and walkout by members of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and their allies. Jamaat-e-Islami also opposed the bill through voice vote but did not walkout.

Begum Zia said the Bill is designed for taking action against toll collectors, hijackers, and those who are creating anarchy in national life, terrorism on campuses and violence on the streets.

Those who do not want peace and welfare of the commonman are resisting the bill, the Prime Minister alleged. "They are not friends of the people," she said and accused the opposition of providing

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Absentee voting growing among overseas US citizens

By S Y Bakht

American citizens residing overseas will be able to vote for the presidential candidate of their choice in the upcoming elections on November 3 through absentee ballots.

"Americans residing outside the United States are permitted to vote in general elections through absentee ballots and as voting is not mandatory they are very much encouraged to cast their ballots," said Edward J. Wehrli, counselor for Consular Affairs at the United States Embassy in Bangladesh.

The growing significance of absentee votes was emphasised by the director of the US Federal Voting Assistance Programme, Phyllis Taylor, in a recent interview.

"More elections at all levels of government are being decided by fewer voters," she said "absentee voting is growing, while the percentage of voting participation at the polls has been decreasing, thus"

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India herds 300 on border to push in

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Oct 29: The Indian authorities have herded about 300 people in the no-man's land near Prentali border apparently to push them into Bangladesh as part of the so-called Operation Push Back, BDR sources said here today.

The sources said that the 22nd Battalion of the BDR were keeping vigil to foil any possible attempt to force these people into Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman told Parliament Wednesday that Dhaka and New Delhi were engaged in consultations on the situation arising out of the Indian move.

Rahman said that a total of 177 Indian nationals had so far been "pushed in" since New Delhi began the operation September 11 by sending 132 people through Benapole.

The Jatiya Sangsad last week passed a resolution strongly resenting the Indian action terming it inhuman.

In the latest flag meeting between border officials, the

Protesters go on rampage as CBA leader dies in mishap

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Oct 29: The agitated workers of the Nishat Jute Mills damaged several buses today on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway protesting the death of a CBA leader of the mills in an accident at 9 am.

The communication was disrupted for about three hours following the incident.

Md Kamal Hossain, the CBA leader died on the spot when a Tangail-bound bus hit the rickshaw carrying him. Some other rickshaws were also damaged.

Police seized the body of the Kamal, the Senior Vice-President of the CBA. The driver was also arrested along

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Nishat Jute Mills workers brought out a procession carrying the body of their leader at Tongi. — Star photo