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### NEWS BRIEFS

#### Upaban derails

SYLHET, Oct 16: Sylhet bound Upaban intercity train from Dhaka was derailed near Shamsheernagar early morning today disrupting train communication between Sylhet and rest of the country. Sylhet railway station sources said four passenger bogies of the train were derailed as part of the track was uprooted by dacoits. No casualty was reported, reports UNB.

#### Hasina's press confce Tuesday

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will address a press conference on Tuesday at 29 Minto Road at 11 am. The Awami League Central Working Committee has decided to hold the press conference in view of the situation arising out of terrorism unleashed by the BNP government and the killing of Kaliganj Awami League leader Anisur Rahman, reports UNB.

## Gunbattle with Kashmiri militants : Curfew in Srinagar

# Indian troops lay siege to Hazratbal Mosque

SRINAGAR (India), Oct 16: Indian troops and Muslim guerillas trained rifles and machine guns at each other after a gun battle around Kashmir's holiest mosque killed one person on Saturday, report agencies. Troops mounted heavy calibre guns and cordoned off the Hazratbal Mosque in Srinagar to force rebels holed up inside the shrine to surrender. The siege by 10,000 soldiers and paramilitary troops began late Friday after Muslim gunmen sprayed bullets from inside the shrine, killing a student who was passing by.

Between 50 to 80 rebels were believed inside the Hazratbal Mosque, a complex in Kashmir's capital city of Srinagar that houses a holy relic revered as a hair from Prophet Mohammed, said I Ramamohan Rao, spokesman of the Kashmir government. A curfew was imposed throughout Srinagar. A fire raged inside the complex, but it was not clear how it

started. Rao said militants set fire to a pilgrims' hostel, but reporters in the area said they heard explosions preceding the fire. Rao said the militants have occupied the complex for several weeks and had stockpiled weapons there, but troops had hesitated to attack it because of the sensitivity of the place. Rao had earlier erroneously said troops had stormed the mosque.

Troops sealed off the road leading to sprawling white marble mosque, on the banks of the Dal Lake, that attracted many tourists before a separatist insurrection broke out in 1990. Army officers also used loudspeakers fixed on jeeps, asking the rebels to surrender. Thousands of residents were herded into a nearby school building, as the army cleared homes facing the mosque to mount their machine guns on the rooftops. "We have no intention of

storming the shrine but would try to persuade the militants to lay down arms," said Brig S P S Kanwar, an army commander. "No harm has been caused to the main shrine," Kanwar told Press Trust of India.

In 1963, the relic disappeared, triggering riots in which dozens of people were killed. A week later, it mysteriously reappeared and the trouble ended. Police said they learned on Friday that the locks had been broken on the outer door of shrine where the Prophet's hair is kept, and decided to intervene to protect the relic.

Friday evening, soldiers in full battle gear sealed off the area. Gunfire erupted around midnight and lasted several hours before tapering off. One person was killed, but it was not known if he was a militant or a bystander. Officials allowed a group of reporters inside the complex Saturday to show the broken locks. The complex was quiet.

as the militants remained concealed in some of the 100 residential buildings and pilgrims' hostels. The lake-side complex is seen by India as the seat of the Muslim insurrection. For years, Indian officials have complained that militant sympathisers used the Hazratbal Mosque as a platform for anti-India sermons during prayers on Fridays.

The Kashmir administration reiterated that the blaze did not damage the Hazratbal shrine or the holy relic but engulfed the older section of the complex where Muslim women are permitted to pray. On Saturday, troops shot and killed eight militants statewide. The militants are fighting for separation from India for the predominantly Muslim state of Jammu-Kashmir.

More than 7,500 people have been killed in Kashmir since the army crackdown on militants began in 1990.

## Law for protection of environment soon

By Chapal Bashar

The draft of the Bangladesh Environment Protection Act, 1993 has been prepared and will be placed before the cabinet soon for approval.

Well-placed sources in the government told this correspondent that an inter-ministerial meeting will discuss and finalise the draft before sending it to the cabinet. Relevant ministries, including the ministries of Environment and Forests, Fisheries and Livestock, Agriculture, Industries, Energy, Irrigation, Finance and others will attend the meeting, expected shortly.

The purpose of the Act, drafted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, is to ensure preservation of the environment for sustainable development, as well as to provide legal measures against all kinds of pollutions.

Sources said the law, the first of this kind in the country, will be a covering legislation under which necessary rules and regulations will be framed to make it effective.

Provisions of stiff punitive measures for the violators of the law have also been incorporated in the draft. Possession, transportation or use of any object harmful for the environment will be punishable under the

Act. The maximum sentence would be five years, rigorous imprisonment and a fine upto one lakh taka.

According to the proposed law, a high-level advisory committee comprising experts and officials, will be constituted with the authority to monitor and assess the environmental impacts. The proposed law will empower the authorities concerned to have access to any place and installation for conducting such assessment.

Under the proposed law, any region of the country can be declared an 'Ecologically Critical Area' for adopting special measures and giving attention to protect the environment.

The draft suggests provision to make Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) compulsory before establishing any industrial plant.

Sources said the draft on the proposed law also suggests measures to check and control all kinds of pollutions in the air, the soil and the waterbodies.

Measures for controlling emissions of hazardous black smoke from the transports and industrial plants were advised in the draft while steps for controlling noise pollution have also been recommended.

## Former air chief Momtazuddin jailed for 5 yrs



Former Air Force chief Momtazuddin Ahmed was yesterday convicted of submitting "false and fabricated" accounts of his property and sentenced to 5 years in jail by a special tribunal, reports UNB.

Additional District and Sessions Judge and Judge of the Special Tribunal-2 Dhaka, Zinat Ara found Ahmed guilty of the charges under Section 4(2) (A and B) of the Anti-Corruption Act, 1957, and under Section 5(1) of the Anti-Corruption Act, 1957, and sentenced him to suffer two years' and three years' simple imprisonment respectively. The sentences shall run concurrently.

The court also ordered the 2nd and 3rd floors of his DOHS House No 77 at Road No 6 near

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## Money market turns volatile

By Inam Ahmed

The country's money market turned suddenly volatile last week with fluctuations in the international money market, according to market sources.

During the week, the Deutsche mark and the British pound witnessed a sudden surge because of better cross-economic trends.

The central bank of Germany intervened and purchased a heavy quantity of marks resulting in a surge of the currency.

The pound sterling and other European currencies followed the path of the German currency.

As a sympathetic effect, the exchange rate of the Deutsche mark rose to Taka 24.97 from the earlier average of Tk 24.55 in the country.

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## JU teachers resume duties: Classes from Nov 9

By JU Correspondent

Teachers of the Jahangirnagar University resume duties today ending their month-long work abstention.

Classes of the university, however, will commence on November 9, according to decision of the JU Syndicate taken yesterday at an emergency meeting.

The postponed admission procedure will also resume on

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia witnessing a colourful rally of various traditional vehicles of Bangladesh, organised jointly by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and the Dhaka City Corporation at Abdul Gani Road in the city yesterday. State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan is seen on her right. — PID photo

## Tourism sector will get all investment incentives : PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said in Dhaka yesterday that steps would be taken to increase budgetary allocation for the tourism sector to help earn foreign exchange, alleviate poverty and generate more employment opportunities, reports BSS.

"Like other industrial sectors, this sector (tourism) will now receive all investment incentives.... All necessary ingredients for tourism are available here. These potentials should now be fully utilised," she said while opening the programmes of the "Tourism Month-1993" at the Osmany Memorial Hall in the city.

The Prime Minister urged all concerned quarters to come forward to develop tourism as a medium of recreation, acquisition of knowledge and generation of employment opportunities.

Begum Zia said a ten-year master plan had been prepared with the objective of developing the country's tourism industry in a planned way. The plan incorporates guidelines for gradual expansion of tourist facilities in different regions of the country, the Prime Minister said, adding, it would require about Tk 640 crore to implement this plan.

The Prime Minister said the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation had been playing a leading role in the development and upgradation of tourist facilities.

The government has attached priority to the private

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## AL for alternative local govt model

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League (AL) will soon present an outline of the local governments it thinks fit for institutionalising democracy in the country.

This was decided at an emergency meeting of the party's central working committee held yesterday evening at the official residence of AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

The working committee observed that the local governments sponsored by both the Jatiya Party (JP) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were not democratic in the true sense of the term and felt the need for presenting an alternative model on behalf of the AL soon.

Sheikh Hasina, who presided over yesterday's meeting, was authorised to select 'some people' to prepare the draft of the outline. The outline, containing

the ingredients of the union, thana and district-level governments and their proposed functions, would be placed at the next meeting of the working committee for considerations, sources said.

The meeting also decided to register a strong protest against the killing of Anisur Rahman, a party activist of Lalmonirhat, who allegedly died because of torture by the local police and BNP activists on September 11.

The meeting observed that the government had started using the police administration for the ruling party-sponsored terrorism against its political opponents.

AL chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will address a press conference on the issue and announce a series of agita-

tions protesting the incident tomorrow morning.

The meeting also decided to launch a mass-contact programme with a view to making the sit-in in front of the Bangladesh Secretariat, scheduled for November 10, a success. According to sources, the mass contact will include a tour programme of the party's central leaders, especially in the districts adjacent to the capital, from the 26 of this month.

The meeting also discussed holding of national-level elections under a care-taker government but did not take any decision on the issue.

An influential leader of the party told The Daily Star that the AL working body would discuss the issue again in its next meeting, scheduled to be held in the last week of this month.

## Govt joins hands with opposition to ban religion-based politics: Jamaat

The Jamaat-e-Islami leaders in a meeting yesterday urged the Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad not to allow any bill demanding ban on religion-based politics to avert political unrest in the country, reports UNB.

It will mean a war against the country's 12 crore religious-minded people if the Speaker permits the opposition to table such a bill in the winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad, Jamaat leaders said at a meeting at Baitul Mukarram in the afternoon.

Criticising the role of BNP government, Jamaat Secretary General Maulana Matur Rahman Nizami said the government had joined hands with the opposition to meet their demand for banning religion-based politics.

## 2-hr strike by Prokichi today

Non-administrative government officials and professionals of different cadres will observe a 2-hour strike today as part of their agitation on 17-point demands, including administrative and judicial reforms, reports UNB.

Prokichi — an alliance of engineers, agriculturists and doctors — and the BCS Central Action Council (excluding the administration cadre) have called for the work stoppage from 11 am to 1 pm also to protest 'repression and terrorist attacks on their members.

The salient features of the demands are establishment of a democratic and accountable administration restructuring the age-old bureaucracy and separation of the judiciary in keeping with the parliamentary democracy as well as the country's constitutional provisions.

The Prokichi will go for a full-day strike on October 19 and hold a grand rally at the Central Shaheed Minar at 10 am the same day to press their demands.

## NA elects Speaker today Benazir, Sharif brace for first test of strength

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16: Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif braced today for the first test of their parliamentary strength as the new parliament elects its Speaker tomorrow, reports AFP.

The front-runner, Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), has nominated Yusuf Raza Gilani for the office of Speaker while Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) has fielded Gohar Ayub Khan who held the slot in the outgoing National Assembly also.

There will also be a straight fight between PPP's Zafar Ali Shah and PML's Nawaz Khokar for the post of Deputy Speaker, the assembly secretariat said. Khokar was Deputy Speaker in the previous assembly in which Sharif had enjoyed an absolute majority.

But the October 6 elections returned a hung parliament as neither PPP nor the PML got absolute majority in the house, though Bhutto had an edge with 86 seats against Sharif's 73.

The PPP is also allied with a splinter PML-Junejo faction which bagged six seats, and hating others it claims that Sharif was almost out of the race at the centre.

However, independent members of parliament and candidates of smaller groups are in a position to tilt the balance either way and like Bhutto, Sharif also claims he has garnered enough support to form the government at the centre as well as in the key province of Punjab.

Political hold on the richest and most populous province of Punjab is considered vital for the stability of any federal government.

Observers said the result of Sunday's secret ballot in the assembly should decide the exact party strength of the main contenders.

The House will elect a Prime Minister Tuesday followed by similar exercise in the four provinces. The Punjab Assembly will elect its Speaker and

## Naval blockade clamped on Haiti

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 16: The Security Council clamped a naval blockade on Haiti on Saturday to enforce mandatory sanctions aimed at restoring democracy to the Caribbean nation, reports Reuter.

The vote in the 15-nation council was unanimous. Six United States warships have already been dispatched to Haitian waters and other countries may also join in the naval quarantine.

The council resolution, initiated by the United States and co-sponsored by Canada, France and Venezuela, also holds out the threat of unspecified further measures.

It calls on all UN members to take steps to ensure strict compliance with the sanctions, which include a ban on arms and oil imports, "and in particular to halt inward maritime shipping as necessary" in order

to check their cargoes and destinations.

The sanctions, which also involve a freeze on assets held abroad by Haiti's governing elite, enter into force at a minute to midnight on Monday eastern US time (0359 GMT on Tuesday).

They are intended to force Haiti's military rulers to respect

an agreement signed in July for the return on October 30 of the country's democratically-elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, overthrown in a 1991 coup.

The blockade resolution echoes language used by the council to interdict shipping suspected of violating UN sanctions against Iraq and the rump Yugoslavia.

Meanwhile, the United States has tightened security with extra marine guards at the US embassy in the Haitian capital of Port-Au-Prince because of the threat of violence there. US officials said today.

MEENA, the Dhaka born, South-Asian heroine of the famous Unicef cartoon series, asks us all "Please can I go to school?" The question is the pointer to our task ahead. Read all about MEENA in our two-page special coming out tomorrow, Monday, 18th October 1993

As a contribution to promoting the cause of female children, The Daily Star is proud to organise a Roundtable on "Girl Child: Some priority concerns", to be held today, 17th October '93. Read what the activists in the field said on the subject in our "Girl Child Special" to be published on Thursday, 21st. October '93.

The Daily Star, we strive to serve our readers better.



### Star Computer Special (October Issue)

We are compelled to shift the date of Star Computer Special to Wednesday, 20 October '93, as many forum members are yet to submit their news.

Forum members are once again requested to rush their items immediately.

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