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### NEWS BRIEFS

#### IU extends ban on student politics

**ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY (Kushtia), Oct 9:** The Islamic University authorities have extended ban on student politics on the campus for another three months. The decision was taken at a Syndicate meeting of the University on October 5 with the Vice Chancellor Mohammad Abdul Hamid in the chair. According to the decision, all political activities will remain banned on the campus from October 31 to December, reports UNB.

#### Bangladesh troops reach Puerto Rico

Members of the Bangladesh contingent for multinational force (MNF) for restoration of democracy in Haiti, who left Dhaka on October 5 and 6 reached the MNF staging area at Puerto Rico, in due time. They are now taking preparations for their destination in Haiti, according to a ISPR press release issued in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

#### Durga Puja holiday

The government has sanctioned additional optional holiday on October 11 for the officers and employees of the Hindu community on the occasion of Durga Puja, said an official announcement yesterday, reports UNB.

#### Dli opens BGMEA Ctg office

**CHITTAGONG, Oct 9:** Communications Minister Oli Ahmad today called upon all to play their part in nation building activities. He was inaugurating the regional office of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) at Agrabad in the port-city, reports BSS.

## US, British forces arrive, Kuwaiti troops at border

**KUWAIT, Oct 9:** US and British forces arrived in the northern Gulf today to counter the deployment of over 60,000 Iraqi troops near Kuwait, reports Reuters.

Kuwait also moved most of its 18,000 member military to its northern border.

Iraq has threatened unspecified action within days unless the United Nations promises to ease the Gulf war trade sanctions strangling its economy. Kuwait's allies fear a new conflict three and a half years after the Gulf war.

Four US navy ships carrying 2,000 marines have mostly arrived in the northern Gulf and 4,000 more marines are due in Kuwait in the next day or so, US officials said.

A British frigate steamed

into Kuwaiti waters carrying anti-ship missiles, anti-aircraft and anti-missile missiles, torpedoes and a helicopter armed with anti-ship missiles.

Iraq conquered Kuwait, which owns a 10th of the world's oil reserves, in a lightning assault in August 1990.

Crippling UN trade sanctions, imposed within days, are still in force after a US led alliance routed the Iraqi army and restored the Emir's government in February 1991.

'Kuwait today is highly confident and it is supported by a solid international coalition and it has never been as powerful as it is now,' said the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Seyas-

sah. But many Kuwaitis stocked up on essentials such as flour, rice, sugar. Some supermarkets sold out of bottled water.

The dinar was steady, although residents said some bank branches ran out of dollars. Bankers said they were promised adequate supplies by the authorities.

Traffic was slightly lighter than normal in the morning rush-hour and some people said they were staying home from work to prepare for any crisis.

Iraq, which recently cut food rations for its hard-pressed people, remained defiant.

The ruling Baath Party newspaper Al-Thawra said that unless Baghdad was guaranteed

a favourable review on sanctions 'that will definitely take Iraq to the doors leading to the barns of the world.'

Iraq has also told the world to mind its own business about troop movements, saying it can do as it likes within its own borders.

It has set a deadline of Monday, when Rolf Ekeus, the UN official supervising the reduction of Iraqi armaments under Gulf War ceasefire terms, is due to report to the Security Council.

Baghdad also threatened last week to prevent the UN arms inspectors from checking on its weapons and military industries.

At the Iraq-Kuwait border, UN observers were keeping



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina joined party leaders and workers in a *padajatra* or long march to the city from Tongi yesterday. — Stat photo

## Opposition *padajatras* held Hasina repeats call for caretaker govt

By Staff Correspondent

Thousands of people led by the Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday marched from the industrial town of Tongi to Mahakhali in the capital, a distance of 15 kms, to drum up support for a non-party caretaker government for holding national elections.

The militant but disciplined *padajatra* or long march of the Awami League began from the Tongi stadium at 4:15 pm and converged at the Mahakhali crossing at 9:15 pm. The five-hour march which stopped several times to enable Sheikh Hasina to address wayside

gatherings, ended with a public meeting at Mahakhali. Hasina's march was also marked by slogans, cheers, clappings and shouts by her supporters who participated in the march and also by those who lined the both sides of the road to have a glimpse of and listen to her.

Wearing a red-bordered cotton-print saree, that AL chief waved to the crowds on both sides of the highway. 'My demand is clear. I want to realise the people's rights to vote, choose their government and live in peace,' she told the wayside gatherings.

Accompanied by the central leaders of her party, Hasina crossed the long distance on foot and rode a rickshaw when she got tired.

Enthusiastic AL workers and supporters wore red and yellow bands on their heads and carried banners, festoons and portraits of Hasina and her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. They also danced, sang songs in chorus and chanted slogans in favour of the Opposition demand for elections under a caretaker administration.

The *padajatra* was organised as part of the 40-day agitation programme of the mainstream opposition parties — the AL, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — launched on October 1 to realise the de-

## SAMS Kibria made political adviser to Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday appointed Shah AMS Kibria, a former bureaucrat, her political adviser, a party press release said.

Kibria, 63, will continue to serve, in addition to the new designation, as a member of the party's advisory council, the press release added.

According to AL insiders, Kibria has been given the new status ahead of the proposed Commonwealth-mediated dialogue between the ruling party and the Opposition specifically to assist Hasina during her talks with the Commonwealth representative Sir Ninian.

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## Jamaat to agitate for ouster of govt

The Jamaat-e-Islami leaders yesterday at a long march warned that they would wage a greater agitation to unseat the government if it failed to fulfil their demands for a caretaker government and blasphemy Bill, reports UNB.

The Jamaat arranged the march (*Padajatra*) from Aminbazar in Savar as the part of its 40-days programme to force the government to accept the demands.

Senior Nayeb-e-Ameer of Jamaat, Abbas Ali Khan opened the *Padajatra* at Aminbazar

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## Gen Cedras resigns today

**PORT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 9:** Lt Gen Raoul Cedras will resign tomorrow and his No 2 commander will take over as army chief under an agreement worked out by his representatives in Washington, sources close to the Haitian military said Saturday reports AP.

Also going in a shuffle of the army high command will be Brig Gen Philippe Biamby, the sources said on condition of anonymity.

The information could not be immediately confirmed by US sources. However, although a State Department official in Washington who spoke on condition of anonymity said a "small group" of Haitian soldiers travelled to Washington

at the request of exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide for a meeting with him or his representatives. The group returned to Haiti on Saturday night.

Another US official in Port-au-Prince said the agreement "makes sense" as does the report of a list given by Haitian sources of a new command lineup for the Haitian military.

US officials at the State Department in Washington could not immediately be reached for comment.

whose power had widely been eclipsed by Biamby, the No 3 in command.

Replacing Biamby would be Col Herbert Valmond. Another anti-US member of the high command not listed in the new command was Col. Carl Dorelien, who lambasted American soldiers during funeral services Thursday for 10 soldiers killed in a firefight with American troops in Cap-Haitien on September 24.

Other members of the new leadership would be Brig Gen Max Mayard and Cola, Alex Rene and Eddy Louis.

## Dhaka closely watching Gulf situation

Bangladesh is closely watching the present Iraq-Kuwait border situation. Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman said yesterday.

He was talking to UNB at Zia International Airport on his return from New York where he led the Bangladesh delegation to the on-going session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Mostafiz refused to make any specific comments on the development in the Gulf on the basis of the newspaper reports. Iraq has massed troops at its border with Kuwait, posing a threat to invade the oil-rich tiny state again.

The foreign minister lauded the role of the world body in combatting different regional and international issues. 'The UN looks stronger in tackling the problems,' he said.

During his stay in New York

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## Newly-married doctor drowns at Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent

**COX'S BAZAR, Oct 9:** For new bride Shirin Akhter Dilruba it was a honeymoon in hell. Married only nine days ago, Dilruba's hands were still hennaed when cruel fate rendered her a widow.

Her husband, Mohamimad Shahabuddin Chowdhury, drowned in the Bay of Bengal here near Laboni point this morning when the couple went to the beach for an early morning swim today.

The tragedy happened at around 7:30 am when Shahabuddin, who had waded some distance into the water during low tide, was suddenly swept off his feet and temporarily disappeared under the waves.

Shahabuddin, a doctor

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## SM Sultan's condition unchanged

By Staff Correspondent

Noted painter S M Sultan who has hospitalised Friday has been shifted to the intensive care unit of the Jessore Combined Military Hospital in serious condition.

A press release yesterday said, the resident artist of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy became seriously ill for respiratory congestion Thursday night.

Doctors at the Jessore CMH said his condition remained unchanged till yesterday.

## Blaze kills one, destroys 24 shops in Savar

**SAVAR, Oct 9:** At least one person was killed and some 24 shops were destroyed at Nabinagar Cantonment Market in Savar thana in a devastating fire that broke out Saturday midnight, reports UNB.

Local people said the charred body of an unidentified person was found in the debris.

Police sources said the fire originated from a short circuit at a grocery shop at about 1:15 am and soon engulfed the other shops of the market.

## Cell soon to oversee power sector reform

By Special Correspondent

A special cell will be set up soon to bring about reforms in the country's power sector and necessary work in this regard has been completed.

According to a well-placed official source, the project proposal for the creation of a Power Cell has been forwarded to the Planning Commission for approval.

Soon after the approval, the government will constitute the cell comprising experts from both the public and the private sectors.

'However, the core people of the proposed cell will come from the government,' said the source. 'If everything goes well, the power cell will be formed within a couple of months.'

Initially, the Power Cell will operate as an attached body to the Ministry of Energy and

Mineral Resources. But it would be gradually converted into an autonomous statutory organisation.

The formation of such a cell was recommended in the report on power sector reforms prepared by an inter-ministerial working group headed by the Secretary of energy ministry. The proposal and recommendations of the report received approval of the Cabinet last month.

The main task of the cell would be to formulate a strategy for implementing the various power sector reform proposals. The cell will also prepare plans and guidelines for private participation and investment in the power sector.

In the long run, this cell will act as a regulatory body to coordinate the activities of the

## Loan classification & provisioning Many banks yet to fall in step

By Sohel Manzur

The country's commercial banks are yet to adjust to the loan classification and provisioning system, which itself is far below the international standards, according to sources.

The central bank has, in the meantime, given two to three years' time to some banks, all belonging to the private sector, for fulfilling the provisioning need against their bad, doubtful and sub-standard loans.

According to banking sources, small profit margins made from a less strong capital base of the private commercial banks (PCBs) has made it difficult for them to build up necessary reserves against their bad debts. At the same time,

loan provisioning did not seem to be a problem for the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) due to their strong capital base built through repeated injection of funds by the government.

According to an official estimate, the amount of bad debt of the commercial banks is about 32 per cent of the total disbursement of over Tk 24,000 crore. This amount would be much higher than the estimated figure if loans were to be classified as per international standards.

According to the standard followed in Bangladesh, a loan overdue for more than 12 months is considered a sub-standard loan, one overdue for

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## Durga Puja begins today

Durga Puja, the greatest and the most auspicious festival of the Hindu community, begins throughout the country today, reports BSS.

The five-day Durga Puja or the 'shradhya utsav' (latter festival) symbolises the victory of good over evil. It also marks the return of the Goddess Durga (from heaven) to her father's home on earth.

Final touches are being given to idols at Shakhari Bazar, Rayerbazar, Tantubazar and other areas while last minute work for the decoration of the Puja mandaps are going on in full swing.

Bangladesh Puja Uddayan Parishad (BPUP), in a statement issued last week said the festival will be celebrated throughout the country in a befitting manner. According to BPUP sources, Durga Puja will be celebrated in about 100

## Tk 25 lakh PM's grant for Durga Puja

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday granted Taka 25 lakh for the development of various puja mandir in the country and puja festival on the occasion of the forthcoming Durga Puja, reports BSS.

The grant money will be distributed through the Hindu Dharma Kalyan Trust.

This cheque of Taka 25 lakh was received by trust Vice-Chairman and State Minister for Environment and Forest Gayeshwar Chandra Roy from the Prime Minister at the Prime Minister's office.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman and State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman were also present on the occasion.

## Govt teachers to go on indefinite strike Nov 12

By Staff Correspondent

Teachers belonging to the BCS General Education cadre will go on an indefinite strike from Nov 12 to press home their 16 point charter of demands.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting of the BCS General Education Association in Dhaka.

The members of the association at the meeting resented the non-fulfillment of the decisions taken by the Education Ministry on the basis of the 16 point demands in January last year.

## Trial in Humayun Zahir murder case begins

The trial in the sensational murder case of industrialist Humayun Zahir began yesterday, reports UNB.

On the first day of the trial, Additional District and Sessions Judge M Akhlakur Rahman Chowdhury examined prosecution witness Alhaj Zahuril Huq, father-in-law of late Humayun Zahir, who was the complainant in the case.

Responding to a question, the witness told the court that Akhteruzzaman, the principal accused in the case, had "marked" Humayun Zahir as his enemy and threatened several times to kill him.

Advocate Humayun Zahir, 45, an industrialist and a Director of the United Commercial Bank Ltd, was shot dead in the frontyard of

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## Injunction on Sylhet FFs' command polls

From Staff Correspondent

**SYLHET, Oct 9:** Senior assistant judge of Sylhet Sadar Humayun Kabir has issued an interim injunction against the Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet and II Thana Nirbahi Officers of the district restraining them from holding the elections of the Bangladesh Muk-tijoddha Sangsad, Sylhet district unit command, scheduled for October 15.

Enamul Haque Chowdhury, a reputed freedom fighter, in his petition has alleged large-scale irregularities in the preparation of the voters' list for the election.

The court, after hearing the petition, issued the injunction. Khazir Ahmed Chowdhury, Malay Paul and M A Quddus moved the case.

## Video caught Diana-Hewitt in the act?

**LONDON, Oct 9:** Security services videotaped Princess Diana making love to army officer Maj James Hewitt in his back garden in 1988, the News of the World reported Sunday, reports AP.

The tabloid quoted a former Royal Marines commander as saying he was ordered to mount the surveillance operation, apparently for security, when Diana secretly visited Hewitt's home in Ebford, a



Princess Diana

southwest English village. Hewitt, 36, sold for a book published this week his story that he had a five-year affair with the wife of Prince Charles. Hewitt maintains the affair started in 1986 and petered out when he got back from the Gulf War in 1991.

Diana, now 33, and Charles, 45, formally separated in December 1992 after 11 years of marriage.

The News of the World quoted the ex-sergeant, Glyn Jones, as saying he coordinated a five-member surveillance team which set up two observation posts with videos in a ditch and a hedge at the Hewitt cottage one night in the fall of 1988. They also sneaked a microphone into the back garden.

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Maj Hewitt

## No plague deaths in India in last 5 days

**NEW DELHI, Oct 9:** Like many other Indians, Smriti Rudra, a 70-year-old grandmother, offered a special prayer to Vishnu, the Hindu god of protection, on Sunday to ward off the plague, reports AP.

No deaths have been reported in the epidemic for five days, and the government and the World Health Organisation both predict it will soon end. But that hasn't reassured everyone.

Thousands of other people in the Indian capital spent the day collecting and destroying garbage because fleas that have

bitten infected rats can spread the pneumonic plague.

Three weeks after pneumonic plague hit India, prompting many nations to close their borders to Indians, fear still haunts this nation of 900 million people. Many of them feel it is simply to early to say that the bad, ugly days are over.

'It is god's grace that the plague has stopped killing people, but I still think we should pray more,' said Rudra, who came to New Delhi to celebrate Durga Puja, a major Hindu festival that begins to

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