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## 200 polling centres in Khulna 'vulnerable'

**From Staff Correspondent**  
**KHULNA, Nov 8:** Two hundred out of a total of 600 polling centres in Khulna district have been identified as 'vulnerable', according to officials here.  
 Police will begin operation in those areas from Monday to nab alleged terrorists. Top priority will be given on recovery of unauthorised firearms, the sources said.  
 Arrangements are being made to ensure a free and fair Union Parishad elections. According to sources in the office of DIG, Khulna Range, a total of 4,695 police, BDR, APBN, RRF  
 See Page 12 Col 2

## Khaleda begins 16-day tour today

**By Staff Correspondent**  
**BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia** today begins a 16-day tour of different areas of the country with the "purpose of integrating the people with the current democratic agitation."  
 According to the schedule of her tour, the leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad leaves for Barisal today. She is due to visit Chittagong on November 11, Kushtia on 13, Natore on 14, Joypurhat on 15, Dinajpur on 16, Munshiganj on 18, Mymensingh on 22, Kishoreganj on 23 and Bagerhat on November 24.  
 During her visit, Begum Zia will address public rallies "to reiterate BNP's political commitment" to the people, said a party press release.

## BNP, 6 other parties discuss agitation programmes

**BNP and some other opposition groups** at a meeting in the city yesterday discussed the latest political situation as well as identical programmes for an anti-government agitation, reports UNB.  
 Jamaat-e-Islami, JP (Z-M), JAGPA, DL, NDA and PNP joined the meeting that condemned the government's 'policy of repression and tyranny'.  
 Expressing concern and resentment over various 'undemocratic' actions of the government, the meeting observed that the government had virtually  
 See Page 12 Col 8

## Election of BNP MP in Chuadanga declared void

**From Staff Correspondent**  
**KHULNA, Nov 8:** Election of BNP MP Md Mozammel Huq has been declared void by the Khulna Divisional Election Tribunal.  
 The Tribunal has ordered re-election in two polling centres and counting of votes in another centre in Chuadanga 2 constituency.  
 The verdict was given on Thursday upon a case filed by Mirza Sultan Raja of Awami League who had contested in the Jatiya Sangsad elections held on June 12, 1996.  
 The AL candidate who had alleged rigging in the polls was defeated by a margin of 1023 votes.

**The Daily Star**  
 on the internet  
<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

## Inside Today Article

**Outcome of Bangladesh Aid Group Meeting**  
 Column: Insight  
 by Kabir U Ahmad  
 Page 4

## International

**US warns Iraq of possible military action**  
 Page 8

## Business

**Bangladesh asks the US government to sanction an advanced quota allotment in two different garment categories to continue exports**  
**DSE index continues to decline**  
 Pages 6, 7

## Cyclonic storm turns into deep depression

**By Special Correspondent**  
 The remains of Typhoon Linda brewing into a cyclonic storm on Wednesday turned into a deep depression yesterday, bringing temporary relief to the weathermen wearily watching it.  
 "We are yet to be out of the woods," a senior meteorologist told The Daily Star last night. "The cyclonic storm changed into a deep depression, losing most of its punches but retaining some bites, moving on a north-westerly direction."  
 As the storm petered out, meteorologists advised lowering of danger signal number three at the maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla and hoisting of distant warning signal number two.  
 The fallout from Linda that rained the coasts of Vietnam, Cambodia and parts of Thailand on Tuesday "regrouped in the warmth of Andaman Sea".  
 It headed north-west then changed course towards north-east, eyeing the Myanmar's Arakan coast on Thursday. But it again shifted gears and steered slightly north-westward, moving north towards Bangladesh, triggering an alarm, the meteorologist said.  
 But the storm remained idle yesterday and began fizzling out before releasing some showers from its advanced elements on the south-eastern coast, specially in Cox's Bazar on Friday and in Chittagong yesterday.  
 The deep depression was far from posing a threat to Bangladesh but required close watch on its movement, he said.  
 The maximum sustained wind within 48-km of the depression centre is about 50 kph, rising to 60 kph in gusts squalls. The Bay will remain moderate, the Met Office said in a bulletin at 10:45 pm.  
 The cyclonic storm over the East Central Bay remained practically stationary and weakened into a deep depression, centred at 9 pm yesterday about 750 km south-southwest of Chittagong Port and 670-km south-southwest of Cox's Bazar port. It is likely to move slowly in a north westerly direction.  
 If it maintains its course and gain strength once again, it may lash the south-western coast of Bangladesh before heading towards India.  
 The Met Office warned the fishing boats and trawlers in the North Bay in stay of the shore and sail with caution till further notice.  
 A BBC TV weather bulletin yesterday showed change in the course of the storm, turning into a deep depression, retaining some of its fangs.  
 The bulletin said it would require a couple of days' watch as it was practically stationary, moving slowly towards north-west.

## JS session resumes today Backstage parleys between ruling party, Opposition

**By Staff Correspondent**  
 After a six-day recess, the Jatiya Sangsad resumes its session this afternoon amid backstage parleys to resolve the political stalemate arising out of the major opposition party's sticking to its decision not to return to the House.  
 No substantial progress has so far been made to resolve the crisis, according to sources in the Opposition political camp.  
 The Seventh Jatiya Sangsad went into its seventh session on November 2 with BNP legislators remaining outside the House. Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury had adjourned the sitting on the same day until today.  
 The major opposition party in Jatiya Sangsad, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has been abstaining from attending parliament proceedings since the second sitting of the last session.  
 While coming out of the House a little more than two months back, the opposition party had put forward a 14-point charter of demand and said that they would not return to the House unless the demands were met by the government.  
 The demands include stopping of "political persecution" against the opposition parties, distribution of membership on the JS standing bodies in accordance with the parliamentary strengths of the parties concerned and withdrawal of "false" cases against opposition leaders and activists.  
 Meanwhile, some leaders of the ruling and opposition parties are learnt to have backstage dialogue to create a "congenial atmosphere" for an official meeting to fix terms for the BNP to come back to the House.  
 According to sources close to the BNP high command, the party is ready to resolve the political stalemate through official dialogue, but the government has to create a congenial atmosphere for the dialogue.  
 A BNP leader who is reportedly involved in the negotiation process said some government steps such as replacement of the pontoon bridge on the lake connecting the mazar of late Advocate M Rahamat Ali in the chair, reports UNB.  
 The committee scrutinised the bills: The Speaker and Deputy Speaker (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 1997; The Bangladesh (Whips) (Amendment) Bill.  
 See Page 12 Col 7



**LUNCHTIME FOR THE 'TOKAIS'**: The street children take a break at the city's Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday. Be it a biscuit or a bread, they are not unhappy, living for the day and leaving the future for the bickering politicians to decide.  
 — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

## WB project to study origin of arsenic contamination

**By Naimul Haq**  
 Babar N Kabir, Chief of WB's Water and Sanitation Programme at its Dhaka office.  
 There are two phases of the research project. The first one would involve a six-month initial assessment of the cause and extent of the problem and would help the government and the WB in formulating auxiliary projects for the second year of the 60 million dollar 'umbrella investment programme'.  
 The second phase would provide additional information to verify the source and mechanism of mobilisation of arsenic.  
 The studies will help determine the feasibility of certain possible long-term mitigation measures such as use of deep tubewells and the effect of continued use of uncontaminated wells.  
 The field level data collection will involve drilling of wells in 30 districts up to a depth of about 300 metres for sediment analysis. Accordingly, evaluation map would be prepared to give first-hand information for any reference during the implementation of the proposed project.  
 "An engineer from UK is already in the city to evaluate the  
 See Page 12 Col 8

## 'Refugee repatriation to be completed in next phase'

**From Staff Correspondent**  
**CHITTAGONG, Nov 8:** Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Convenor of the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts said here today that the remaining tribal refugees encamped in Tripura, India, would come back in the next phase of repatriation, scheduled to begin on November 21.  
 "This time, the repatriation will continue unhindered," Abdullah, also Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad, told newsmen after a meeting of the Task Force Committee on Tribal Refugees, held at Chittagong Circuit House.  
 Abdullah attended the meeting as chief guest.  
 He said that as per decision of the meeting, a team headed by the Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari Md. Ismail would go to Tripura shortly to finalise with the authorities there the modalities of repatriation as well as to receive the list of refugees to be repatriated.  
 Abdullah said today's meeting reviewed the overall situation in the CHT relating to repatriation.  
 But he declined to elaborate the preparations for the repatriation.  
 Emerging from the closed door meeting, Abdullah first refused to tell anything, being pressed by newsmen. Abdullah talked to them briefly.  
 However, Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Md. Shawkat Hossain, informed that the Task Force meeting reviews rehabilitation of the tribal refugees who were repatriated earlier.  
 Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation Mohiuddin  
 See Page 12 Col 3

## 10 killed, 32 hurt in Jhenidah bus plunge

**From Our Correspondent**  
**JHENIDAH, Nov 8:** At least 10 passengers were killed and 32 others injured when a passenger bus fell into Kumar river in Shailakupa thana on Jhenidah-Kushtia highway today.  
 According to witnesses and police, the accident occurred when the Kushtia bound bus crashed the railing of a bridge over river Kumar and plunged into the river at 2 pm. The driver lost control over the vehicle as he tried to save to buffaloes on the bridge.  
 Four passengers died on the spot, one succumbed to injuries at Shailakupa thana health complex and five others at Jessore hospital.  
 Of the dead, two were identified as Kulsum, 18, and Haji Rezaul 55. The identities of others could not be known.  
 The injured passengers were admitted to Shailakupa health complex, Jessore sadar hospital and Kushtia general hospital.  
 Deputy commissioner and police super visited the spot soon after the accident.  
 UNB adds: A motor-cyclist was killed and two other riders were wounded in a road accident at Sirajganj today, police and hospital sources said.  
 Eye witnesses said the accident occurred when the motorcycle overturned and fell into a ditch near Sirajganj pourasava in the early hours of today.  
 Seriously injured Selim, 32, a Jubo League worker, was rushed to District General Hospital. He succumbed to his injuries on way to Dhaka. Two others are now under treatment at Sirajganj general hospital.  
 In Pabna, a trader was killed and his assistant sustained serious injury when a truck hit a rickshaw-van on Pabna-Iswardi highway at Amtali today.  
 Police and witnesses said the speeding truck knocked the three-wheeler carrying goods, leaving Narayan, 40, dead on the spot in the morning. The driver of the truck fled the scene.  
 Critically injured Sukumar, 45, was admitted to Sadar hospital. A case was filed in this connection.

## Old power plant rehabilitation Allowing foreign cos being examined

**By Sharier Khan and Inam Ahmed**  
 The government is looking into the possibility of allowing foreign firms to rehabilitate, maintain and own (ROM) and rehabilitate, own, operate, and transfer (ROOT) of the country's age-old power plants, official sources said.  
 There are several plants in the country which are not under optimum utilisation now and by rehabilitating those uninterrupted generation of some 600 mw of electricity could be ensured, the sources said. These plants are performing poorly now and the government has already undertaken a project to rehabilitate plants having 360 mw capacity.  
 The current rehabilitation programme undertaken by the Power Development Board (PDB) "lingers unnecessarily" and the rehabilitation schemes for plants in Kaptai, Shikabaha and a barge-mounted plant in Khulna which were supposed to be completed by August this year could not be completed yet, the sources said.  
 The Board of Investment (BOI) in a recent meeting suggested that the energy ministry should formulate a policy regarding ROM and ROOT of old power plants.  
 Based on the ROM and ROOT idea, a British firm, Panda, submitted a proposal to the government for rehabilitation of two power plants in Khulna — one having 60 mw and another 110 mw capacity — a year ago, according to the sources.  
 But so far, this proposal has been ignored.  
 The rehabilitation schemes by private parties could be an easy way of bringing the ramshackle power plants to their feet, said a ministry source.  
 The World Bank recently urged the energy ministry to implement the idea of rehabilitation through private sector.  
 Experts said that the current load shedding could be solved to a great extent simply by bringing the old plants to their full generation capacity.  
 But a major constraint in rehabilitating these plants is shortage of funds. Donors did not release any substantial amount of funds for this purpose in the last seven years.  
 However, a recent World Bank mission assured the government that a 250 million US dollar credit for the power sector could be released under "tough conditionalities," the source said.  
 Ministry officials now find that using this ROM and ROOT strategy, this fund shortage could be easily overcome without putting any budgetary strain.

## DMK threatens to quit UF govt

**MADRAS, Nov 8:** A member of India's fragile coalition government has threatened to pull out of the administration for the second time in five months, officials said today, reports AFP.  
 The DMK, a party from the southern state of Tamil Nadu with three cabinet ministers, made the threat after accusing New Delhi of failing to deal with the concerns of state governments.  
 DMK leader Muthuvel Karunanidhi said the United Front minority coalition, organised by Sammillito Sangskritik Jote.  
 The hoodlums attacked him in front of National Museum on November 5.  
 Meanwhile, 22 drama and cultural organisations, including Dhaka Padatik, Loknatyadal, Dhaka Padatik, Saraswati, Dhaka University Debating Society and Dhaka University Film Society in a joint statement condemned the attack on the artiste.  
 NEW DELHI, Nov 8: An Indian regional party has been indicated by prosecutors of aiding Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas, widely blamed for premier Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, the United News of India said today.  
 which is made up of more than a dozen left-wing and centrist parties, showed "apathy" towards regional problems.  
 The DMK, which has 18 of the Front's 180 members of parliament in the 545-seat lower house, had also threatened to withdraw from the coalition in July claiming it was tired of fighting between the alliance partners. The party later withdrew the threat.  
 Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's coalition came to power in April replacing an earlier United Front alliance which collapsed after 11 months.  
 Karunanidhi, who is also the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, said he was frustrated that New Delhi did not seem committed to solving a controversial dispute between the state and neighbouring Karnataka over water rights from the Cauvery river.  
 He said Gujral had been "evasive" over the issue.  
 See Page 12 Col 1

## US Secy of State Albright due Nov 19

**By Staff Correspondent**  
 US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will arrive in Dhaka on November 19 on a brief visit to Bangladesh, according to diplomatic sources.  
 The Secretary of State will arrive by a special aircraft at 9 pm. She will spend the night in Dhaka and leave the following day at 2 pm.  
 The sources indicated that she is likely to stay at the US embassy or at the Sonargaon Hotel.  
 Madeleine Albright's pro-  
 See Page 12 Col 2

## Launch sinks in Meghna: passengers rescued

**From Our Correspondent**  
**CHANDPUR, Nov 8:** All 500 passengers were rescued before the launch in which they were travelling sank in the river Meghna near Ghanipur char, 12 km north of Chandpur town, in the early hours of today.  
 Two vessels sent by district administration carried the passengers to the shore. However, about 15 of them were injured when the panicked passengers rushed to get off the sinking launch.  
 District Additional Superintendent of Police said the launch 'MV Salahuddin', bound for Lalmoan thana of Bhola district from Dhaka with 500  
 See Page 12 Col 2

## Bangladeshi gets life term in US for attempted murder

**NEW YORK, Nov 8:** A young Bangladeshi man has been sentenced to life in prison by a court in California for attempted murder, reports UNB.  
 Misbah Kazi, 27, a naturalised American citizen, was convicted by a jury in San Jose on October 2 of trying to beat a Jamaican woman to death in a bid to collect her life insurance money.  
 His sentencing took place on Thursday last. Under Californian law, the prosecutor's office now has 120 days to ask for reduced sentence.  
 According to Friday's Palm  
 See Page 12 Col 7

## Body found in Dhanmondi lake

**By Staff Correspondent**  
 Fishermen netted the body of a man identified as Mazharul Islam Mehedul, aged about 35, from the northern part of Dhanmondi lake, behind Dhanmondi Government Girls School in the city yesterday at around 10 am.  
 Mehedul was a driver of the Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) office at Agargaon. He used to drive LGED's Additional Chief Engineer Monwar Hossain Chowdhury's car.  
 At the site, Chowdhury told this correspondent that Mehedul had gone to his (Chowdhury's) house at Road 16 to keep the car at around 7-45 pm on  
 See Page 12 Col 1

## 45 garment shops gutted in Ctg

**CHITTAGONG, Nov 8:** At least 45 garment shops were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in Jawahar Hawkers Market here in the early hours of today, reports BSS.  
 Three persons, including the Deputy Director of the Fire Service, were injured in the fire. The fire originated from one shop at around 2.30 am and soon engulfed the others. All the shops were packed with clothes.  
 Eleven fire units have struggled for more than two hours to bring the fire under control. Deputy Director of the Fire Service, Mohammad Ali, was injured while leading the operation.  
 See Page 12 Col 3