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President hosts reception on the occasion of Durga Puja

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Begum Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted a reception on the occasion of Durga Puja at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Parliamentary Adviser to the Prime Minister Suranjit Sengupta, State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam, Justice Bimalendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury, Indian High Commissioner Dev Mukherjee, Charge d'Affaires of Nepal Rambhakt Prasad Thakur and Srimati Chitra Bhattacharya MP were present on the occasion.

Besides, Justice Debesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Principal of Ramkrishna Mission, Swami Akharrananda, political personality Adv Sudhangsu Shekhar Haldar, secretaries and high officials of the government, educationists, doctors, religious personalities, recipients of national awards, political leaders, senior advocates, poets, writers, journalists and leaders of Bangladesh Pujas Udyan Parishad and Hindu Welfare Trust were present on the occasion.

Earlier, President Shahabuddin and Begum Shahabuddin welcomed the guests and exchanged greetings with them.

AL activist killed in clash with BNP in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Oct 1: An Awami League worker was killed and 30 others were injured in a clash between the ruling party and opposition BNP activists at Puthia today, reports APB.

The Awami League activist identified as Taser Uddin, 52, succumbed to his injuries at a local hospital, police said.

Witnesses said a group of BNP supporters attacked Taser Uddin while he was going to Maizpara this morning.

Being informed, AL activists rushed to the spot and locked in clash with BNP men which soon spread to Naypara, Maizpara, Uraikalia and some other areas in Puthia thana.

Both the groups went on rampage and set several houses and shops on fire during the day-long clash. Police lobbed tear gas shells and fired rubber bullets to disperse the clashing groups.

Of the injured, 11 were admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital and the rest treated at different local clinics.

Jubo League leader shot dead at Natore

NATORE, Oct 1: A Jubo League leader was shot dead allegedly by his rival partymen in Chakrampur area in the town today, reports UNB.

Police said, supporters of a faction of Jubo League, youth front of the ruling party, suddenly attacked Abdur Rahman Kochi, 20, at 10 am while he was returning home from a hotel.

The assailants shot Kochi, leader of another faction, at point blank range leaving him dead on the spot. Previous enmity might be the cause of the killing, police said.

Police nabbed four youths — Ziaul, Siddique, Awar and Bablu — from the spot in connection with the killing and recovered arms from their possessions.

Police have been deployed in the area to avert any untoward situation.

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Alleged food pilferage High-level teams to act as watchdog

By Reaz Ahmad

Disturbed by news of irregularities in distribution of foodgrains among the flood-affected people, the government has taken up special measures to stop pilferage of food before it goes in a bigger way with the VGF programme.

The government yesterday named some 15 deputy secretary level officers who would be sent out to different districts, thanas and unions to act as watchdog, sources said.

According to official sources, all press clippings regarding reports of alleged pilferage in food distribution were sent to deputy commissioners concerned for immediate verification.

The food ministry has already sanctioned 71,000 tonnes

of foodgrains for distribution in October among some 40 lakh families, who are supposed to be provided with one VGF (vulnerable group feeding) card each by October 7.

Foodgrains for the purpose would be allotted at union level from the nearest government silo and the stock would be later replenished with food aid.

In many areas, press reports say, relief committees headed by union parishad chairmen are giving less than the stipulated 16 kilograms of foodgrains against each VGF card holder.

Sources in the food and relief ministries confirmed it to The Daily Star yesterday that a circular had been issued recently alerting all field-level of-

ficials to keep vigil against pilferage at distribution level.

According to the circular, union parishad chairmen and thana level officials concerned would be made responsible for any sort of food-related irregularities in their respective command areas.

Prior to distribution, allotted foodgrains cannot also be stored at the residences of the chairmen or members instead of the union parishad office premises.

The union parishad office bearers will have to produce the allotment letter issued by the DC's office when they receive their respective share for each union from the nearest government store.

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7-party demands release of 3 political leaders

The BNP led 7-part alliance has strongly condemned Tuesday's arrest of three political leaders and demanded their immediate release, reports UNB.

The alliance at a meeting yesterday refrained from taking the course of street agitation in view of the devastating situation caused by the flood.

Presided over by Abdus Salam Talukdar of BNP, the meeting viewed that the arrest was intended to divert people's attention from government's failure in tackling the post-flood situation.

BNP standing committee member K M Obaidur Rahman MP, and Barisal district leader Nurul Islam Manzur and Jatiya Party leader Shah Moazzem Hossain were arrested on Tuesday in connection with the Jail Killing Case.

Sources close to the meeting told the news agency that the leaders of seven-party combine discussed various course of action to seek release of the opposition leaders and activists.

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Petrobangla-Cairn discord over pricing of gas sold to govt

By Sharier Khan

Petrobangla and British oil and gas company Cairn Energy are in disagreement over interpreting the method of calculating the price of gas sold from the Sangu Gas field to the government.

Sources said, the Ministry of Finance has already paid Cairn for the Sangu gas supplied in July and August. The bill, submitted in dollars, amounts to over 3 million US dollars.

During this period, Cairn supplied Sangu's gas to Bakhrabad Gas System's pipeline (a subsidiary of Petrobangla) for 22 days in July and nearly a month in August. Cairn has supplied about 60 million cubic feet of gas per day (mcmd) during this period.

The Sangu gas tariff is fixed under a formula taking the price of High Sulphur Fuel Oil (HSFO) sold in Singapore market as the benchmark. As per the Gas Purchase Sales Agree-

ment (GPSA) signed between Cairn and Petrobangla, the Sangu gas price would be fixed on quarterly basis and the quarterly average price would be 92.5 per cent of three month's average price of HSFO.

Accordingly, Cairn submitted its first bill of 1.6 million dollars to Petrobangla a couple of months ago. It calculated the price at 2.25 dollars per unit of gas.

Petrobangla verified the price in its own method and the price turned out to be a little lower than Cairn's price. The government paid Cairn's bill as per Petrobangla's calculation.

Cairn objected to this calculation by Petrobangla, the sources said.

Besides, Petrobangla deducted 8 per cent of the gas price as royalty for using Bakhrabad's gas pipeline from Chhillimpur Gas Processing Plant of the Sangu Gas field.

Contractually, Cairn was supposed to supply gas to Bakhrabad pipeline from Chhillimpur city gate point. But as Cairn has not finished setting up pipeline between Chhillimpur city gate and Chhillimpur station it is currently using Bakhrabad's system on rental basis.

Again, Cairn objected to such deduction. It argued that 8 per cent of 60 mcmd gas supplied from Sangu was too high a price which was fixed unilaterally by Petrobangla.

This dispute is expected to end very soon and Petrobangla is holding a series of meeting with Cairn regularly, the sources said.

But the main dispute is over determining the gas price. Cairn has made the gas price calculation as per its own interpretation and Petrobangla its own. Both feel that they are

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GOING BACK TO THEIR ROOTS. Thousands of them came to towns and cities for succour and shelter as floods washed away their homes and belongings in rural areas. The photo, taken yesterday on the Buriganga near Kaliganj, shows a group of families from the low-lying outskirts of the city on a boat ride back home. — Star photo

AJM: Guns and goons glow as workers groan

By Nazmul Ashraf and Ehsanul Haque

Terrorism and bad management go hand in hand at the state-owned Adamjee Jute Mills (AJM), Asia's largest jute manufacturing outfit. Chronic losses over the decades have already crippled it, but piles of firearms possessed by its workers pose the biggest threat.

The mills premises have become a safe haven for armed goons who now use sophisticated firearms like AK-47 rifle when they fight each other.

But the authorities' move is only confined to deployment of police at the trouble-torn AJM, where the conflicting labour groups fought yet another fierce battle on Monday. The clash

left one killed and some 150 injured, mostly bullet-hit. Huge contingents of police, posted at the tensed area, were not seen in action to nab the culprits or recover the unauthorised arms until yesterday.

Apparently concerned by the grave situation, the jute ministry, which owns the AJM, is learnt to have requested the home ministry for a special drive to free the mills from all unauthorised arms.

But the superintendent of police at Narayanganj, HM Nooruddin, told The Daily Star last night that he did not receive any directive from the ministry for any such opera-

tion.

Russian Automatic Kalashnikov-47 or AK-47 rifle and Chinese rifles were among the sophisticated guns reportedly used during Monday's battle. AK-47 guns have a 500-yard range and spray 34 bullets at a time, according to experts.

The SP further said he was not aware of existence of such sophisticated firearms at AJM while ASP Emadul Haque disclosed in this paper that police were investigating into the matter. "We've employed sources to know all about the AK-47 rifle and its users at the AJM. We may raid the hideouts of the

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Jail killing Three arrested politicians divulge 'vital' information

The three politicians arrested in connection with the jail killings, during interrogation yesterday, divulged some 'vital information' regarding the plot that led to the murder of four national leaders inside the Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975, reports APB.

CID officials were convinced that more than 20 politicians and army officers were involved in the plot, sources said.

"We are just cross-checking the evidence against the accused in the jail killing case," a CID official said adding that the three politicians, arrested on Tuesday, would be interrogated further.

BNP Standing Committee member K M Obaidur Rahman MP, Jatiya Party (Z-M) Co-Chairman Shah Moazzem Hossain and Barisal BNP leader Nurul Islam Monjur are now under a four-day remand.

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'Judicial body had no sitting after jail killings'

By Staff Correspondent

The judicial commission that was formed in connection with the jail killings in November 1975 "had no sitting," Justice KM Sobhan, one of the members of the commission said yesterday.

The three-member commission with Justice Ahsanuddin Chowdhury as its head was formed on November 5, 1975, two days after the incident.

The whole scenario had changed when a counter coup was staged on November 6, during which Khaled Mosharraf and others were also killed," Justice Sobhan said while talking to The Daily Star.

"I am not sure whether the government made any gazette notification for dissolving the commission," Justice Sobhan said in reply to a question.

Asked whether they had asked the law ministry any-

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Implement East Baridhara, Purbachal housing projects without delay: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the officials concerned for the speedy implementation of the 'Purbachal and the east Baridhara' residential projects of Rajdhani Uannayan Katri-pakkhya (Rajuk), reports BSS.

She gave the directives while presiding over the meeting on progress and development of various projects under the Ministry of Works at her official residence at Ganobhaban in the city.

Sheikh Hasina also directed the officials to restore original canals while formulating any development plans. She called for preparing three categories of shelter plans for normal areas, cyclone-prone and flood-prone areas of the country considering the geo-physical conditions.

She also directed them to keep highlands reserved for providing shelters to the people and the cattle during the time of

natural calamities. She also emphasised the need for river dredging for navigation facilities and rapid recession of flood waters.

The Purbachal Project having 6,150 acres of land will be distributed in the form of plots while the East Baridhara Project with 5,950 acres of land will be given both as plots and residential flats, the meeting was told.

There will be special plots earmarked for the diplomatic missions at East Baridhara Project.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the officials to provide modern civic amenities in those projects such as schools, playground, hospital, mosques, police outposts, fire service stations and post office and shopping complex.

She also directed them to give priority to the affected per-

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8 Comilla Board staff charged with SSC Exam irregularities

COMILLA, Oct 1: Eight people, including an assistant controller of the Comilla Education Board, have been charged with involvement in malpractice concerning the 1993 SSC examinations, reports APB.

The permission for framing the charges against the concerned was granted by the office of the Prime Minister.

The persons have allegedly used false registration numbers, released false SSC number sheets and PPCs.

The accused are: Assistant Controller of Examinations Abdul Hamid, union division assistants AKM Rezaul Karim Bhuiyan and Abdul Mannan, section officers Ayat Ali and Abdul Latif-1, typist Shamsher Ali, headmaster of Debidwar Khalipur High School Deen Mohammad and assistant headmaster of the school Shafigur Rahman.

According to the allegations, the Debidwar High School authorities, in tandem with the

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Donors pledged \$ 210m flood aid till Sept 30

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday said Bangladesh received commitments of 209.77 million US dollars in cash and kind as flood aid from donor countries and agencies till September 30, reports UNB.

Of the pledged amount, 141.05 million dollars are food aid, 58.57 million dollars in cash and 10.15 million dollars in kind.

Talking to newsmen on his return from New York where he led the Bangladesh delegation to the 53rd UN General Assembly session, Azad said, so far 27 countries pledged their full support to the government's efforts in overcoming the impact of flood and in launching the post-flood rehabilitation plan.

He said the United States has committed to give three lakh metric tons of food grains in addition to the previously committed four lakh metric

Azad said he had separate meetings with the Foreign Ministers of as many as 17 countries on the sidelines of the UNGA session.

During the meetings, Azad reiterated the appeal for immediate assistance for flood victims and the need for intensive post-flood reconstruction and rehabilitation works.

Referring to his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, he said he had stressed the need for conducting a scientific survey to find out the causes of such prolonged floods.

He said Vajpayee agreed that such scientific survey would indeed be very helpful.

He also met UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and thanked him for the support being extended to Bangladesh by UN system. Annan assured continued UN support. He also accepted an invitation to visit Bangladesh.

'US to cooperate in sending back alleged killers'

Washington has assured Dhaka that it would cooperate in extraditing the persons accused in Bangabandhu Murder Case who were reportedly hiding in the United States.

This was stated by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad on his return yesterday from New York where he held talks with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on bilateral matters, reports APB.

"I had detailed discussions with Albright on sending the killers of Bangabandhu back to Bangladesh. She has given assurance of cooperation," Azad told a questioner at the Zia International Airport.

Talking to overseas correspondents here on Wednesday on the same issue, US Ambassador to Bangladesh John C Holzman said that his country had no extradition treaty with Bangladesh.

When his attention was

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'Life on earth is killing us'

WASHINGTON Oct 1: Forty per cent of deaths worldwide are caused by pollution and other environmental factors and climate change will make matters worse, Cornell University scientists found in a study released yesterday, reports Reuters.

They predicted the millions of people would become environmental refugees forced to flee their home areas in a desperate search for food.

Pimentel concluded "life on earth is killing us."

Increased temperatures caused by global climate change will further encourage growth of human diseases and prod development of new illnesses, they wrote in the October 1998 journal Bioscience.

They predicted the millions of people would become environmental refugees forced to flee their home areas in a desperate search for food.

More and more of us are liv-

ing in crowded urban ecosystems that are ideal for the resurgence of old diseases and the development of new diseases, wrote the author of the report.

We humans are further stressed the disease prevalence is worsened by widespread malnutrition and the unprecedented increase in air water and soil pollutants, he wrote.

To help address the problem policymakers should adopt fair

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Rain due to low over Bay

By Special Correspondent

A low, lying virtually stationary in the west central and adjoining south Bay near the Andhra coast of India, induced rains and drizzles in most parts of the country yesterday.

As it trough stretched to the north and southwestern Bay, it influenced rains in a number of places.

Rains were reported from Patuakhali-11 mm, Khulna-2 mm, Mongla-3 mm, Satkhira-71 mm, Jessore-23 mm, Ishurdi-2 mm, Rajshahi-25 mm, Bogra-8 mm, Dinajpur-1

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