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## Coalition force allowed to use airspace and ports

### Dhaka decides at Advisory Council meeting

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has decided to permit multinational forces to use its airspace, seaports and airports for any possible joint action to combat terrorism in the region.

The government took the decisions last night following consultations with major political parties and a conclave of foreign policy strategists.

Facilities of overflight through Bangladesh territory and refuelling at sea and airfields will be provided to the forces that may be cobbled together under an international coalition for possible anti-terrorist operations at the initiative of the United Nations.

Modalities for use of the country's strategic facilities will be worked out later.

The permission will be applicable only for a multinational coalition force to combat terrorism and not for permanent bases.

The decisions were taken at the request of the United States, and in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 1909 and 1368 of September 12.

The request was made and the UN decision was taken in the wake of terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. At least 5000 people including 70 Bangladeshis were feared killed in the incidents that rocked the two major US cities.

Special Assistant to the Chief Advisor on Foreign Affairs, C M Shafi Sami, announced the government decisions at a crowded press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at 10:30 pm. Foreign Secretary Mohsin Ali Khan and all director generals of different desks of the ministry were present.

Sami said the decisions were approved at a special meeting of the Council of Advisors with Chief Advisor

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## Army deployed in four trouble-torn districts

UNB, Dhaka

Armed forces have been deployed in trouble-torn Feni, Munshiganj, Bhola and Narayanganj districts to improve law-and-order situation ahead of national elections.

Contingents of the armed forces were first deployed in Bhola on Sunday while the troops reached Feni, Munshiganj and Narayanganj yesterday.

The local people, tormented by political violence, "welcomed the soldiers on their arrival by clapping

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PHOTO: STAR

Two soldiers carry a signboard to its designated position as army set up a camp at the under-construction Narayanganj DC's office yesterday.

## Move on to tame 'rebels' Both AL & BNP at risk of losing some 'sure' seats

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Confronted by nearly 50 rebel candidates, both Awami League and BNP are facing the risk of losing some of the seats they are "sure" to win in the coming parliamentary election.

Realising their strength, both the parties are trying to tame some of the rebels. Some of the rebels are former members of parliament.

Sources in the two parties said they have succeeded in convincing some of them to keep away from the election race.

At the same time, decisions have been taken to "oust" from the parties the rebels who would ultimately contest against nominees of the parties, the sources said.

Nominees in many constituencies are facing problems in election campaign due to the rebels. The party high commands are worried that the election results would be affected if supporters of the rebels refrain from casting votes for party candidates.

AL chief Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia are holding meetings with rebel candidates during their election campaigns, and are putting pressure on them to withdraw their candidature.

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## Election campaign almost absent in Feni town

ROVING CORRESPONDENT, from Feni

With Awami League candidate from Feni-2 constituency for the coming parliamentary polls Joynal Hazari absconding, election campaign in Feni town both by Awami League (AL) and BNP is almost absent.

Local people said activists of the two parties are hardly seen on the streets of Feni as they fear reprisal.

So far the people of Feni witnessed very limited campaigns which included colourful rallies and processions by activists of the two major parties during the visit of AL Chief Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia recently. Public meetings of both the leaders were held on the main road at the centre of the district town and attended by thousands of people chanting slogans in favour of their respective parties and candidates.

## US drive for anti-terror coalition

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday accelerated its diplomatic drive to build a global anti-terrorism coalition as President George W Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell began a flurry of face-to-face meetings here with top foreign officials.

Bush was to receive French President Jacques Chirac, the first foreign head of state to visit the United States since last week's terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, later in the day.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri are to meet with Bush later in the week as a parade of foreign ministers and other senior officials passes through Washington.

Powell has scheduled meetings with 10 European, Asian and Arab foreign ministers between Tuesday and Friday and ahead of the Bush-Chirac talks was to kick off the week

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## National Bank had to act as per wish of Hazari's men

ROVING CORRESPONDENT From Feni

Having refurbished the new office at a cost of Tk 8 lakh, the National Bank branch at Feni has withdrawn its plan to shift the office from Trank Road to Zohura Market as cadres of local Awami League leader Joynal Hazari disapproved it.

Now, the bank branch is asking the owner of the market, a waqf estate, to reimburse the money.

The bank manager, Mohammad Nizamuddin, informed the estate's constitutional chairman, the Deputy Commissioner of Feni, that the bank's head office in Dhaka has decided to act according to the wish of Hazari's men.

"We do not want to take risk by upsetting those people. So we have decided not to shift the bank to the new premises," Nizamuddin told this correspondent.

He said the bank expects that the estate's chairman would refund the money paid as advance.

The chairman said he will have to

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## FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

MURDER OF U.S. NATIONALS OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES; CONSPIRACY TO MURDER U.S. NATIONALS OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES; ATTACK ON A FEDERAL FACILITY RESULTING IN DEATH

USAMA BIN LADEN



Date of Photograph Unknown

Aliases: Usama Bin Muhammad Bin Ladin, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, the Prince, the Emir, Abu Abdallah, Mujahid Shaykh, Hajj, the Director

A general view of Nicosia taken yesterday shows in the foreground the Central Bank of Cyprus (right). Former CIA chief James Woosley said that Cyprus, candidate for European Union membership, was a major centre of financial activity of Osama bin Laden, whose name is on the Ten Most Wanted list of the FBI (left).



## Defiant Taliban hit back as clerics stand by Laden

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban yesterday told their people to be ready for a holy war as Islamic scholars gathering to decide Osama bin Laden's fate made it clear they would not hand over the man wanted "dead or alive" by the United States.

The Islamic regime's army also unleashed a fierce offensive against their last opponents within the country in a bid to pre-empt US moves to strengthen them.

The display of defiance from the Taliban came as their supporters in Pakistan mounted the biggest anti-American demonstration yet, heightening fears that any US attack on Afghanistan will have devastating implications for the stability of its neighbour.

"Of course if there is an invasion of an Islamic country, there will be jihad against the invaders," a senior

Taliban official told AFP as hundreds of Islamic clerics, or ulema, streamed into Kabul. "After the invasion jihad will be the only alternative and that is the obligation of Muslims."

The ulema are expected to begin a meeting today, which will consider whether to extradite bin Laden, who is suspected of orchestrating last week's terror attacks on New York and Washington and has been indicted in New York for the 1998 bombing of two US embassies in Africa.

The Taliban have previously hinted they might give bin Laden up for trial in a neutral, preferably Muslim, country.

But the clerics arriving yesterday were in no mood for compromise.

"Even if the whole of Afghanistan is devastated we won't hand him over until there is a solid proof against him," Mullah Mohammad Hassan, a representative of Paktika province told AFP.

Another scholar, Mawlawi Abdul Zahir from the Bagram district of Kabul, added: "We are ready to defend ourselves if the Americans attack us."

"We have already defeated and taught a lesson to their British grand-

fathers and their Russian brothers," he said.

In their biggest offensive in months, Taliban forces launched an attack in the northeastern province of Takhar in a bid to cut their opponents' key supply lines from neighbouring Tajikistan.

Fierce fighting was still raging yesterday, an opposition spokesman told AFP.

The onslaught represents an attempt by the Taliban army to exploit last week's death of the opposition's charismatic commander Ahmad Shah Masood and cut their supply lines before the mountainous region's harsh winter sets in.

If they succeed, the opposition forces could be eliminated before they have time to reap the benefit of

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## AL backs US fight against terrorism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League Chief Election Coordinator Shah AMS Kibria yesterday alleged that the four-party alliance was using religious sentiment of the people against his party in its bid to win the coming national polls.

Awami League was the only secular party, which could unite people of all religions, Kibria told American investors at a luncheon meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Bangladesh, held at a city hotel.

Awami League will support any

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## China's condition for backing Laden hunt US attack should be based on 'concrete evidence'

AFP, Beijing

Any US retaliation against the terrorists who carried out last week's devastating attacks should be based on "concrete evidence" and not hurt innocent people, China stressed yesterday.

If these principles were followed, China would cooperate in the fight against terrorism and would not seek to link its commitment to other issues such as Taiwan, foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said.

"The attack on terrorists should be based on concrete evidence and the act should have a clear orientation that should not hurt innocent people," he said.

China was willing "to discuss any proposal at the UN Security Council against terrorism," including expected US plans to retaliate against terrorist bases of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, he said.

"We made it clear that we oppose and condemn all sorts of terrorism,"

he told reporters at the ministry's regular briefing. "We believe that all terrorists should be punished."

In what could be a Chinese bid to keep at the forefront of international anti-terror efforts, President Jiang Zemin today had a telephone conversation with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

"(Any retaliatory strike) must conform with the principles of the United Nations Charter and international norms, and the UN Security Council must be involved," Jiang told Blair according to state TV.

Jiang reportedly had two telephone conversations with US President George W Bush last week in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon near Washington DC.

At the foreign ministry briefing, Zhu said China would not demand reduced US arms sales to Taiwan in return for a pledge to help the United States in its war against terrorism.

"We urge the United States to act prudently on the Taiwan issues and

observe its commitments, that's our consistent policy," Zhu said.

"The issue of the fight against terrorism is another question. It doesn't mean that we are making any bargain here," he said.

However, Zhu still urged US support for China's own efforts against "terrorism and separatists," without specifying exactly whom he considered these to be.

"The United States has asked China to provide assistance and help in the fight against terrorism,"

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## AL to 'rethink' about concept of caretaker govt if re-elected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League Chief Election Coordinator Shah AMS Kibria has said if voted to power, his party may 'rethink' about the concept of caretaker government as the present one has become "controversial".

Kibria made the statement in his reply to a question from a businessman at a luncheon meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham), held at a city hotel. Kibria attended the gathering as a guest of honour to speak on 'Bangladesh Economy in the next five years'.

Kibria however spoke mostly on political issues in the country.

He said the concept of caretaker government was a brainchild of Awami League. This came up in the wake of coming to power of a

political party "through rigging the polls", he said.

"The electorate put trust on a party to run a government for five years. We had put trust on the caretaker government to hold a free and a fair election. But this one (caretaker government) has made itself controversial. So, it will be the electorate who will decide," Kibria said.

"The caretaker government will certainly face criticism and if fundamental flaws are found, things will be changed".

He said, "Rigging polls had taken an institutional shape in Bangladesh as army dictators needed two thirds majority to legitimise their rule by amending the Constitution".

He said the present caretaker government has come under criticism as "it is tilting in favour of the four-party alliance from the very

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