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BNP govt to review a number of 'controversial' projects

STAR REPORT

With the objective of undertaking corrective measures, the BNP government will review a number of "controversial" projects including some power and infrastructure projects, approved by the immediate past Awami League government.

At the same time, BNP intends to continue the development programmes initiated by Awami League.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said, "It is the duty of the government to continue the development works in the interest of the country. But we might not carry out the programmes which were approved against the interest of the country."

He observed that the AL government had taken up a number of controversial projects which might not bring any positive results for the people. "We will definitely review the controversial projects and take appropriate steps." Immediately after the AL government transferred power, the caretaker government—faced with a severe foreign currency reserve crisis—decided to review a number of power and infrastructure projects that were hurriedly approved at the fag end of the AL government's tenure.

Sources said, the country could save around 100 million US dollars while approving seven public sector power projects involving 580 million dollars if

those were properly negotiated.

Approval of the projects, in some of the cases, was based on political consideration. Those who benefited from this include a minister in the immediate past government and some party lobbyists including Abdul Awal Minto who formally joined BNP recently.

Of the projects, the most exorbitantly expensive one is the 250 MW Barapukuria coal fired power project that was approved at 220 million dollars. Experts say, power projects of similar size should not cost more than 150 million dollars. Former state minister for LGRD in the AL government Syed Abul Hossain is the agent of the consortium of Chinese companies which is building the project.

The Siddhirganj 120 MW project was approved at 54 million dollars, which is eight million dollars more than another bid submitted for the project. Again, Syed Abul Hossain is the agent of the project's builder.

Lobbied by Abdul Awal Minto, the 90 MW second phase Fenchuganj power project was approved at around 40 million dollars.

The Bhola 20 MW power project is backed by former AL MP Liton Chowdhury, approved at 15 million dollars. Sources said the cost should have been set at 12 million dollars.

Besides, the AL government approved the 210 MW Siddhirganj phase-2

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Naripakkha activists display posters and placards, condemning acts of terrorism both on national and international fronts, during a rally at Mukta Mancha in the city's Dhanmondi area yesterday.

Hindus to celebrate Durga Puja without festivity

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Puja Uddjan Committee has decided to celebrate the Durga Puja, beginning October 22, without any festivity protesting repression on the religious minorities across the country.

To protest brutal attacks on the community members across the country and non-responsive attitude of the government, the committee decided to observe the Puja without lighting and cultural functions at mandaps.

Hindu Community leaders from all over the country who met Friday at Dhakeswari Mandir first decided not to celebrate the Puja, but later took soft line deciding to observe it in a most ordinary way.

Their programmes include submission of memorandum to the Prime Minister and local administration on the Shaptami (Oct 23), dawn-to-dusk token hunger strike

BNP firm to ensure unhindered Durga Puja celebration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has urged the Hindu community to celebrate the forthcoming Durga puja in a joyous and festive atmosphere.

In a statement yesterday, he said Bangladesh is the shining example of communal harmony, and the people in this territory from all spheres of life and irrespective of castes and religions have been struggling for prosperity, improvement and justice for centuries.

Minister for the LGRD and

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Now comes son of new minister

UNB, Kusthia

The associates of son of a newly appointed state minister allegedly picked up the brother of a journalist and beat him up.

Nuruzzaman, brother of Daulatpur correspondent to the Dainik Jugantor Zahurul Islam, was freed after he signed a paper that he would take his brother to the minister's son within five days.

The aggrieved family complained that henchmen of Reza Ahmed alias Bachchu Mollah, son of State Minister for Post and Telecommunications Ahsanul Haq Mollah, damaged the house of the journalist and took away 300 pieces of bamboo.

Local people said "cadres" of Bachchu Mollah stormed into the house of Zahurul Islam at Taragonia under Daulatpur upazila of the district on Wednesday.

"The attackers were looking for journalist Islam. As he was not at home, the cadres dragged his brother out at gunpoint and took him to Bachchu Mollah," said one of them.

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INSIDE TODAY

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The new government and a 'rights agenda' for action; and Deporting terrorist suspects is easier said than done

From frying pan into fire

New breed of hoodlums & outsiders under JCD banner rules DU halls

ABUL KALAM AZAD

Resident students of Dhaka University face a fresh spate of repression following the emergence of a new breed of hoodlums and outsiders on the campus under the banner of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student front of the ruling BNP.

Campus sources say hundreds of criminals and outsiders from various parts of the city stormed the halls of residence along with JCD leaders and activists in the small hours of October 2, as results of the parliamentary polls indicated a

landslide victory for the four-party alliance.

At present, the JCD has control of all the 13 halls of residence, including the three for female students. Harassment of general students there has already begun.

Forced occupation of seats and confiscation of valuables aside, the JCD armed cadres take on the general students on one pretext or the other. Several students have already been roughed up for "secretly" keeping in touch with leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the Awami League.

"They are not only beating up the students but also forcing them out of the halls at gunpoint," said a student, who had himself been ousted from his dormitory.

The student, who preferred not to be named for obvious reasons, said that on his return to the Kabi Jasim Uddin Hall on Thursday (October 11) night, he came to know that some JCD men had visited his room and were looking for him. As he prepared to leave, some unknown faces obstructed his way and said, "You harassed us a lot in the last five years and now take it back."

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Khaleda & Fahd talk bilateral cooperation in a new perspective

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia called on Saudi King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz at the Royal Palace in Riyadh yesterday evening when the two sides discussed matters of bilateral cooperation in a changed perspective.

Reports reaching here said the PM's audience with the Saudi monarch lasted about 45 minutes.

Khaleda was warmly welcomed by the King himself at the courtyard of the palace. Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz was also present.

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Shahabuddin likely to be asked to 'stay on'

Khaleda may request on return from KSA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The new government is likely to request President Shahabuddin Ahmed to continue for another term as the head of the state.

Top leaders of the ruling party have already informally "sounded out" the 71-year-old president, whose term expired on October 8. His response is learnt to have been guarded.

According to sources close to the Bangabhaban, President Shahabuddin desires to retire in due course of time, unless the highest political quarter makes any specific request.

Well placed sources indicated that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia upon her return from Saudi Arabia on Monday would meet the president and is likely to make a formal request to him to "stay on" for a second term.

There was news in a section of the media that the president would be requested to stay on just for a few months, instead of a full tenure. However, it was learnt that the news was based on speculation.

Initially, the new government had discussed tentatively some names for

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Trouble-mongers warned of stern action

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday warned of stern action against trouble monger.

An official handout said the administration is determined to take stringent measures against any party, group or individual for resorting to chaotic activities.

It also asked for dialing the police control room in Dhaka at 999 and the home ministry at 7125956 or contacting the nearest police station if anyone tries to create troubles in any part of the country.

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Afghan girls sit on the debris of their home destroyed by a bomb dropped early yesterday on Qala-e-Wakil in Afghan capital Kabul (left), and away in Ismailiya, US aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt crossing the Suez Canal yesterday on its way to the Indian Ocean. The carrier will join the fleet taking part in the strikes against Afghanistan.



US ground forces may move into Afghanistan soon

Taliban reject Bush's offer, vow to continue Jihad

AFF, Washington

As US jets and missiles pounded Afghanistan yesterday, the United States appeared to be preparing to shift its war against terrorism from the air to the ground in Afghanistan.

US Vice President Dick Cheney alluded for the first time Friday to the possible use of ground troops as the air war against Afghanistan entered its seventh day.

Talking broadly about options ahead of the seventh day of the US-led campaign to force the Taliban to

hand over terror suspect Osama bin Laden, Cheney said that the mission could involve "boots on the ground."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said earlier Friday that he felt it was appropriate that ground forces should move into areas where US bombs and war planes had destroyed Taliban and al Qaeda military targets.

General Richard Myers, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff also hinted Friday that the war was about to enter a new stage that might include crack special forces troops.

Meanwhile, the US aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt crossed the Suez canal yesterday on its way to the Indian Ocean, where it will join the fleet taking part in the strikes against Afghanistan.

Three other US aircraft carriers are already in the Indian Ocean: the Carl Vinson, the Enterprise and the Kitty Hawk.

Reuters from Kabul adds: Taliban yesterday rejected an offer by President Bush to halt air strikes if they handed over Laden, saying they would fight until their last

breath.

The defiance was voiced as the country counted the cost as bombings resumed after a brief respite for the Friday Muslim holy day and enraged authorities searched for more bodies in the rubble of a remote village flattened by a direct strike.

"We once again want to say that their (the US) intention is a war against Muslims and Afghans," Taliban information Minister Mullah Qudratullah Jamal told the

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Bid to kill Aamir Khan

Four hitmen of Dawood Ibrahim shot dead

AFF, Mumbai

Police in India have shot dead four men who were planning to kill top Bollywood star Aamir Khan, officials said yesterday.

The four worked in Mumbai for Abu Salem, an aide of the Pakistan-based gangster Dawood Ibrahim, a senior police officer said.

"The sharp shooters of Salem's gang had hatched a conspiracy to gun down Aamir and some others," the home minister of the western Indian state of Maharashtra, Chhagan Bhujbal, told reporters.

They had also planned to kill Ashutosh Gowariker — director of Khan's recent blockbuster "Lagaan"

(Tax), movie financier Jamu Sughand and a city-based land developer as part of an extortion threat, the police officer said.

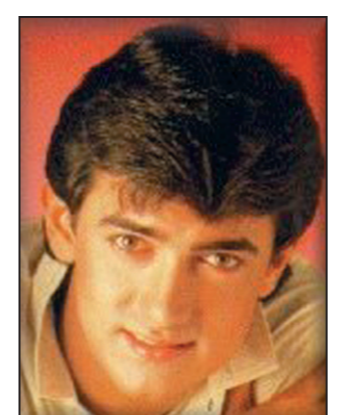
"Lagaan"—a sweeping, multi-million-dollar epic portraying a village's struggle under British rule—was one of the top grossing films of this year. Khan produced and starred in the movie.

At 250 million rupees (5.3 million dollars), the film's budget was more than double that of a normal Bollywood production.

The gangsters were shot in an operation late Friday, the officer said.

"We were alerted by a call that

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Aamir Khan

Private container terminal in Ctg not acceptable, says Khasru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said an appropriate policy is needed to make Chittagong a 'commercial capital' in the real sense.

Khasru said this while talking to journalists at his residence here yesterday afternoon.

The much-talked-about move and process initiated by the immediate-past government to install a private container terminal on the estuary of the Karnaphuli can not be accepted because it lacks transparency and smells of corruption, he said.

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