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Water treaty with India to be revised in December

UNB, Dhaka

Water Resources Minister LK Siddiqui yesterday said the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India would be revised in December next to ensure country's due share in the river waters.

"A guaranty clause will be incorporated in the treaty to protect national interests," he said addressing a number of gatherings at Darogahat, Munachhara, Rahmatnagar and Barabkunda in his Sitakunda constituency, said an official handout.

The Awami League government had signed the 30-year treaty on December 12, 1996 on sharing the

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37 ministers to get residences in first phase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has started allocating official residences to the new ministers with 37 out of 59 getting in the first phase.

However, a few ministers, including Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman and Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed, have preferred to stay back at their personal residences in the city.

Sources said Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas yesterday prepared a list of 27 houses located at Hare Road, Minto Road and Baily Road and ten apartments at Gulshan and Banani.

Foreign Minister Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury has been allocated the house at 37 Eskaton Garden Road, LGRD and

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EC preparing for presidential polls in Nov

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) prepares for holding the presidential election likely to take place in the first week of next month.

The EC has published 500 nomination forms for the election and will prepare the voters' roll once the eighth parliament goes into its first session.

Members of Parliament will exercise their franchise to elect a new president for a five-year term.

Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed is likely to discuss the matter with the new Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad to be elected on October 28 during the opening session of the eighth parliament. He will announce the election schedule after the discussion, EC sources said.

The tenure of President Shahabuddin Ahmed expired on October 8, but he will continue until his successor takes office, according to the constitutional provisions.

Khaleda addresses nation Oct 19

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will address the nation over television and radio at 8-30 PM on October 19, it was officially announced here last night.

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

How many countries can you bomb, George Bush?
Column: Byline
MJ Akbar

Focus 5

NAM summit - no more necessity; and Terrorism barges its way into Commonwealth

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 17		5-31 pm
Oct 18	5-57 am	

Prayer Timings		
Oct 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-10	4-25
Maghrib	5-40	5-45
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Directive to deploy BDR at mandaps if needed Ensure smooth celebration of Durga Puja, security of minorities: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has instructed the administration to take all-out measures for smooth celebration of Durga Puja and provide highest security to all minorities.

In addition to ordering deployment of additional police force in all areas including Durga Puja venues for ensuring security of the devotees, she also gave special instructions to deploy paramilitary BDR at the Puja venues if necessary.

The prime minister's directives came during a nearly one-and-a-half-hour meeting with Cabinet Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan at her office yesterday morning.

Dr Khan gave the PM an account of the country's

latest situation including reports received from the district administration, and apprised her of the present administrative set-ups and other relevant matters.

The prime minister told Dr Khan that the government stood ready to provide more donations to the Hindu Community if necessary for celebration of the upcoming Durga Puja with festivity.

The Cabinet secretary would relay the PM's instructions to all DCs and SPs, meeting sources said. He was also asked by the PM to convey to all levels of the civil and police administration the message that her government would not tolerate any terrorism, anarchy or oppression of innocent people.

BNP secretary general and LGRD and Cooperatives

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia listens to Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Harun-ar-Rashid (L) during a meeting with the chiefs of three services at her office yesterday. Rear Admiral A Taher (2nd L) and Air Vice Marshal Mohammad Rafiqul Islam look on.

Gas export only after ensuring reserves for 30 yrs: Saifur

STAR REPORT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman has backtracked from his earlier stand on the gas export issue by saying that the country would export gas after ensuring adequate reserves for 25 to 30 years.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had earlier made it clear that Bangladesh would export gas only after assessing the local demand and ensuring adequate reserves, the finance minister said.

"I'm not against the export of gas, but the decision would be taken after assessing gas reserves and local demand for 25 to 30 years. A cabinet meeting will take the decision on this," Saifur told reporters yesterday.

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Pipeline export of gas Petrobangla men do homework anticipating govt pressure

SHARIER KHAN

Sensing heavy pressure in favour of pipeline export of gas immediately after takeover by the new government, Petrobangla experts have been individually doing homework to understand the various dimensions of gas export and its actual implications for Bangladesh.

According to their homework, gas export does not appear as simple or profitable as international oil companies like Unocal or Shell are promoting. On the contrary, the issue appears to be very complicated and profit would totally depend on the policy, terms and conditions at which Bangladesh

might allow gas export.

"We would still argue that Bangladesh does not have adequate gas reserves to justify pipeline gas export. What we have now is very inadequate to meet the domestic demand," said an expert requesting anonymity.

"But there is also a lull in the local gas market expansion due to shortage of investment and oil companies might be given some incentives to continue their investment in exploration for the benefit of the country," he added.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman already hinted that the issue of gas export would be dealt with by the cabinet. It would be

decided on economic considerations, not on political considerations, he added.

Two leading oil companies working in Bangladesh-- Shell with Cairn now has an active gas reserve of around 1 tcf in Sangu while Unocal has 1.5 tcf in Jalalabad. In addition, Unocal has discovered 2.6 tcf gas reserve in Bibiyana which is not developing due to lack of market.

"Even the prospect of adding an additional 500 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas which is half the current consumption in 2005 is not looked upon enthusiastically by the International Oil Companies (IOCs) as they believe that after 2008, the

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Feni to be made terrorism-free by Apr 14: DC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A FM Solaiman Chowdhury, Deputy Commissioner of Feni, has said that the entire district would be made free from terrorism by April 14 next year.

He said this while addressing a meeting on law and order at his office yesterday.

Newly elected MP from Feni-2 Joyal Abidin alias VP Joyal, AL District president Aziz Ahmed Chowdhury, journalist Tipu Sultan Advocate Proyrjan Datta, SP Feni Helal Uddin Bodori, journalist Mir Hossain Miru, Bokter-Islam Munna and Auran Chandra Das addressed the meeting.

Deputy Commissioner Solaiman urged political parties, minority groups and local journalists to help make Feni terrorism-free.

BNP, allies killing AL men, torturing minorities

Foreign diplomats told

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Top leaders of Awami League yesterday accused the ruling BNP and its alliance partner Jamaat-e-Islami of engaging in mayhem and carnage, creating a violent and chaotic post-election situation incompatible with a democratic dispensation.

They stressed that incidents of terrorism, killing and rape should be put to an end immediately, otherwise it could lead to worst consequences.

Briefing some 40 diplomats from various missions in Dhaka and resident representatives of international financial institutions, the AL leaders said terrorism and violence have been unleashed against leaders and workers of their party, minorities and women.

Leaders of the immediate past ruling party alleged killing of hundreds of AL workers, torture on minorities and rape of women and girls across the country. A "reign of terror" has been created, they said.

The briefing held at Sheraton Hotel was addressed by former finance

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Body to prepare report on new ministry

BSS, Dhaka

The Cabinet has formed a three-member committee, headed by Foreign Minister Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury to prepare a report in a bid to set up the Ministry of Overseas Welfare for Bangladesh expatriates.

"The government took the initiative to set up the ministry in its first Cabinet meeting as per election pledges of BNP," a senior minister of the Cabinet said here yesterday.

The committee will propose the area of operation and subjects of the proposed ministry to ensure better service and facilities to Bangladeshis living abroad, he said.

The committee will also put forward proposals of coordination and cooperation between the

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New faces of terrorists-1

Old gangsters run for cover as new ones emerge

MORSHED ALI KHAN

As soon as the election results became clear on October 2, Awami League (AL) leaders and activists, in almost all the places, went into hiding fearing reprisal. AL activists were intimidated, assaulted and forced out of their respective localities, where they had reigned for five years without giving any space to the opposition. In fact, they were driven away from their respective localities and brutally repressed.

But the Awami League's defeat and the BNP's victory did not usher in any democracy but simply a change of guards. A new culture of intimidation, vengeance and hatred has now gripped the country.

The deserted spots for illegal toll collection, such as bus and launch terminals, ghats, markets and their makeshift offices, once occupied by the AL soon became targets of BNP activists. Worse, vicious gangs of hoodlums quickly seized the opportunity and targeted the Hindu community with intimidation and terror. Their only 'fault' was that they were

believed to have voted for the AL. At around 10-30pm on October 8, we saw a group of young men, claiming to be BNP activists, walk into the Bagerhat bus terminal. Their leader, a man in his late-20s, hurled abuses at a shopkeeper nearby, threatening to "chop off his hands if any resistance was put up". The young men ransacked the furniture of an office in the terminal and established their control over the area. The shopkeeper stood there silently before disappearing from the scene.

"The bus terminal has been taken over by BNP men," whispered a bus conductor. "The new bosses will collect money from us now."

As the small crowd dispersed, the new occupiers sat in the office and discussed strategies. Two armed policemen walked passed the terminal, completely oblivious to what had just happened.

Sekandar Mallik of Ranobijoypur area of Bagerhat, a bus driver, said after seeing the scene that he regretted voting for the sheaf of paddy. "Within hours of the election results we were asked to pay tolls to a new group belonging to the BNP. If we did not co-operate, they said, they would torch our vehicles. The same people also unleashed a reign of terror on Hindus and forced them to pay toll," Mallik said.

Jobed Mia and his 18-year-old son Khokan, who run a small grocery shop at Agailjhara on the road to Morrelganj from Bagerhat, blamed AL leaders and activists for the post-election incidents. He said local AL activists had systematically

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Meherpur Jubo Dal leader sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Meherpur District Jubo Dal president and his friend, arrested for their alleged involvement in an attack on a police out post in sadar thana, were sent to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

The arrested Maruf Ahmed Bijon, brother of ruling party MP Masud Arun from Meherpur-1 constituency and his friend Kamrul Hasan were produced before the CMM's Court with a prayer for placing them under Meherpur police custody.

After hearing both sides, the court gave order to send them to Dhaka Central Jail and take necessary steps for placing them subsequently under Meherpur police custody.

Tejgaon police arrested Bijon and Hasan from the MP hostel on Monday morning.

Two policemen including officer-in-charge of Meherpur thana, Ekram Ullah were injured when several BNP activists attacked the police outpost on Friday night to free their arrested leader Faruk Hossain.

Two separate cases, one under the Public Safety Act (PSA), and another for assaulting the policemen were filed with Meherpur police station in this connection.

A team of Meherpur police arrived in the capital on Monday to take the accused into their custody.

'Govt won't use police to serve party interests'

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday said that terrorism was increasing becoming associated with politics and needed to be curbed to establish a civil society.

"Nowadays terrorism, a social malaise, is gradually turning into a political malaise which has to be resisted by combined efforts in national interest," said Chowdhury at the metropolitan police conference at Razarbag Police Lines.

The newly appointed home minister, who has been explaining his government's aims and objectives to the police in the introductory meetings, said it was the goal of the present government to establish civil society by curbing terrorism.

Referring to the reported "repression on minority people," the home minister said a vested group was trying to trigger unrest to desta

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Powell calls for Indo-Pak dialogue on Kashmir

REUTERS, Islamabad

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said yesterday that a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute was central to ending hostility between nuclear rivals India and Pakistan and urged the two to begin a dialogue.

Powell was speaking on a 'whistle-stop visit' to Islamabad that marked a new phase in US-Pakistan relations strained for several years. He was going on to New Delhi yesterday evening, the second of the world's newest nuclear powers, both of which lie on the edge of the battle in Afghanistan.

"We discussed ways to promote stability in South Asia, which as you all know is a critically important part of the world," Powell said at a joint news conference with Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf.

Powell spoke just hours after Indian and Pakistani troops fought a fierce gunbattle across the disputed border in Kashmir, the first hostilities in 10 months between the long-time

foes. "We, too, believe that the Kashmir issue is central to the relationship and can be resolved if all parties engage with a willingness to address their concerns in mutually acceptable ways," Powell said.

Fighting broke out on Monday along the Indo-Pakistan frontier in the disputed Himalayan region just as Powell was touching down in Islamabad.

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Colin Powell (L) shares a smile with General Pervez Musharraf during a joint press conference in Islamabad yesterday.

AL for reforms in party but undecided on timing

REAZ AHMAD

The Awami League leadership is unanimous on bringing some sort of reforms within the party but split over the timing, party sources said.

The crucial issue of reform has come to the fore following the immediate past ruling party's debacle in the October 1 parliamentary election.

As AL is preparing for its second working committee meeting after the election, reformists in the party

are trying changes in party leadership at various levels.

The next meeting of the AL Central Working Committee is scheduled for October 22.

A section of party leaders, however, favour maintaining a status quo at least for the time being on the plea of mobilising all out support for the coming days' street agitation.

They fear that major shake-ups in the party hierarchy might lead to fresh problems at a time when the party needed total unity to launch

movement against a new government that included 'anti-liberation forces,' party insiders said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an AL presidium member told The Daily Star yesterday that it is being widely felt within the party that it should go for reforms, but party chief Sheikh Hasina is going through various cross currents right at the moment.

"It (AL) needs reforms, re-manning, re-programming as well as rethinking. It has to be a forward-looking party. The party chief must rise to the occasion and break shackles," he asserted.

She (Hasina) would welcome 'opinions' and 'self-analysis' when she meets senior party colleagues next week in the city.

Another presidium member of the party noted that reform is a continuous process and this time it would begin from grassroots level of the party. He hinted at 'some changes for the better' at different unit levels but could not confirm any immediate shake-up at the upper levels.

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