

Help Hindus celebrate puja, AL workers instructed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has instructed her party activists to extend all out cooperation to members of the Hindu community in celebrating the ensuing Durga Puja in a peaceful atmosphere.

In a statement last night, the AL chief blamed 'BNP-Jamaat alliance' for post-polls violence including 'attacks' on political opponents and religious minorities.

The immediate past prime minister asked the new government to stop such violence immediately, allowing people to live in peace. Otherwise, she warned, the government would have to bear the responsibility of any consequences.

"In less than a fortnight after takeover, the government of Khaleda Zia has already set records in killings, terrorist activities, rape,

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We left economy strong & healthy, says Kibria

UNB, Dhaka

Shah AMS Kibria rejected outright the recent comments by Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman that Awami League government left the economy in a precarious state and claimed it was flourishing under their rule.

"We left the economy strong and healthy. Indeed it was a blooming economy that was enjoying both high growth and low rate of inflation," the former finance minister said, furnishing data to support his claims.

Just after taking oath, Saifur commented that the Awami League left the economy in dire straits when it left power, triggering the old debate between the two arch rival financial planners of opponent camps.

Giving the salient features of the economy left by the previous government, Kibria said growth rate in 2000-01 was 6.6 per cent (as per 84-85 base year) while growth rate averaged 5.83 per cent in AL's five-year period, against the Asian eco-

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Rickshawpuller allegedly strangles his wife, son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rickshaw-puller allegedly strangled his wife and son at their Palashbagh house in the city's Khilgaon area on Thursday night, police said.

The victims, identified as Moni Begum, 25, and her son Sumon, 7, were found dead at their house yesterday morning.

Being informed by the landlord, Khilgaon police went to the spot and recovered the bodies.

Police suspected that husband Shah Alam might have strangled them following a family feud. He has been missing since then.

Both the bodies were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

The landlord has filed a murder case with Khilgaon police station in this regard.

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

World economy in recession: will global depression follow?

Haider A Khan

Literature 9&10

Nobel Prize: The enigma of VS Naipaul; and Book review: Transcending tongues, translating poetry: A labour of love and friendship

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 20		5-28 pm
Oct 21	5-59 am	

Prayer Timings		
Oct 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-38	5-42
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Prime Minister outlines 100-day programme

Two battles ahead--curbing terrorism, rebuilding economy

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday announced her new government's agenda of action for first 100 days, including curbing terrorism and corruption, aiming to infuse impetus into her administration and the economy, as well.

In her first address to the nation since she took office, the prime

minister spelled out her government's two battles ahead one for curbing terrorism and the other for economic emancipation.

"We have to win these battles. Economic emancipation is linked to fighting out terrorism," Khaleda said in her address over radio and television.

Detailing her government's immediate tasks, she said efforts

would be taken to recover illegal arms, and arrest and try the identified terrorists.

She said a national convention would be organised in Dhaka where the victims and the relatives of those killed in political terrorism during the last five years will be invited.

The prime minister said steps would be taken to repeal the black

laws, including the Public Safety Act and the Special Powers Act. She assured that legal process would start for the release of individual and political prisoners detained without trial.

As part of the 100-day programme, "all unjust orders in the administration would be scrapped," she declared.

She said a judicial probe would be initiated into the much-discussed deadly bomb explosions.

She also assured the nation that efforts would be made to remove indiscipline and irregularities from the Chittagong and Mongla seaports as well as the airports of the country as part of the purge.

The cause of the 1996 share-market scam would be investigated and the offenders identified in a bid to restore confidence of both local and foreign investors in the stock markets.

The PM urged all, especially leaders and workers of political parties including those of the Awami League, to join her coalition government in the race for economic freedom and checking terrorism.

Khaleda, also the BNP chief, warned her ministers, MPs, leaders and workers and their relatives of dire consequences if anybody resorted to terrorism and oppression.

She said the state and the government will not harbour any terrorists. "Tough steps would be taken so that no politician can harbour the terrorists."

Khaleda directed the law-enforcement agencies to discharge their duties without fear and according to rules and regulations. She cautioned that no weakness against the terrors would be tolerated.

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addressing the nation last night.

White Paper on AL corruption within 3 months

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia last night announced that a white paper would be published within three months on the corruption committed during the last five years of Awami League rule.

"Thereafter we'll identify the corrupt people and ensure their speedy punishment as per verdicts of the trial," she said in her televised speech to the nation.

Khaleda Zia warned all the lawmakers of BNP and its allies, saying that she would take stern and exemplary action if any allegation of corruption comes against them.

"Due to unabated corruption in last five years people have become habituated in corruption practices. They should have to be freed from this habit, though it's very difficult," she said.

The prime minister sought cooperation from the countrymen in ensuring good governance and removing the bad image of Bangladesh as the "most corrupt country" in the world.

200 acres of CPA land illegally occupied for decades

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Over 200 acres of land worth about Tk 1,000 crore owned by Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) has remained illegally occupied for decades.

Sources said most attempts to recover these encroached lands were frustrated due to political pressure, threat from dock labour leaders and connivance of corrupt port employees and officials.

Different government organisations, dock labour organisations and their leaders, and, various private parties have illegally occupied these lands, they said.

An eviction drive scheduled for Sunday to recover 20 kathas of CPA

land illegally occupied by ruling party labour organisation Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal of Chittagong port was postponed till November 7 following pressure allegedly from a minister.

CPA Chairman Commodore Golam Rabbani however denied any political pressure to stop the planned eviction.

Rabbani said the eviction was postponed at the 'request' of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal leaders. "I did not get any call from any minister in this regard," he said.

Sources said the eviction drive was dropped at the eleventh hour after labour leaders threatened to halt port activities if the illegal struc-

tures raised by Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal were demolished.

A CPA official seeking anonymity said, "We had the police and the bulldozers ready for carrying out the demolition, but it was postponed fearing a law and order situation."

He said however that 34 acres of the port's lands worth Tk 200 crore were recovered in the last 11 months through eviction.

About 1800 illegal structures were demolished from encroached lands. Some of these lands had remained illegally occupied for 50 long years, he added.

The demolished structures included residential hotels, go-

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Bangladesh to launch biggest nutrition programme

NAIMUL HAQ

Bangladesh would soon launch a Tk 706.80 crore community-based nutrition programme, the biggest of its kind in the world, to address malnutrition problem in the country, official sources said.

The objective of the World Bank aided four-year National Nutrition Project (NNP) is to reduce malnutrition among children under two years of age to less than five per cent, promote breast feeding, reduce iron and iodine deficiency, improve pregnancy weight gain among girls and women and to ensure that 15 per cent of newly married girls delay their first pregnancy by at least one year and change food habit.

Extensive community mobilisation programme would be carried out in the first year by community nutrition promoters supervised by community nutrition organisers, to

achieve the targets.

The NNP is a follow-up of Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Programme (BINP), which was implemented in 40 upazilas.

The new programme would cover 139 upazilas and would be implemented in phases from the second year.

There will be two main components of the services under it area-based community nutrition and national level nutrition services.

Children, pregnant and lactating mothers, newly married couples and adolescent girls are the target people of the programme.

Meanwhile, about 58 per cent of children under five in the country are underweight, 51 per cent are stunted (undersized) and nearly half of the women in the country suffer from chronic energy deficit, all of which are signs of malnutrition.

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Joining JS Hasina continues hearing views

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina continues to hear the views of different sections of the society before taking a final decision as regards her party's stance on joining the new parliament.

Hasina had informal but important talks with a group of civil society members yesterday following her earlier meetings with senior party colleagues and leaders of the party's student front.

AL sources already hinted that the party at its working committee meeting on Monday might revise its earlier decision that MP-elects from the party would neither take oath nor join the parliament.

Those who met the immediate past prime minister at her Dhanmondi residence yesterday included Justice KM Sobhan, eminent exponent of Tagore songs Kalim Sharafi, Prof Momtazuddin Ahmed and journalist M R Akhtar Mukul, party sources said.

When contacted, some participants in the meeting declined to say anything, terming it a 'confidential one.'

US ground forces enter Afghanistan

Taliban confirm death of Laden aide

AGENCIES, Washington

The United States said yesterday that special forces were on the ground in Afghanistan to help flush out Osama bin Laden and US planes broadcast messages urging ordinary Afghans to stay out of their way. Ignoring the Muslim holy day, US warplanes struck Afghanistan yesterday, dropping four bombs on the capital and attacking the stronghold of the ruling Taliban, the southern city of Kandahar at dawn, witnesses said.

The Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan returned from a visit to Afghanistan, saying he had brought back a plan to try to resolve the Afghan crisis that he would discuss with Islamabad. Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef said he would disclose its contents later.

Meanwhile, Taliban officials have confirmed the death of a veteran comrade of Laden in Afghanistan, saying he was killed by a grenade that accidentally exploded in his

hands, a Pakistan-based news agency reported yesterday.

Abu Baseer al-Masri died Oct 13 at a hospital in Jalalabad, in eastern Afghanistan, two days after the grenade blast left him with critical chest wounds, the private Afghan Islamic Press said.

Al-Masri, a longtime member of the Egyptian radical group al-Gamaa al-Islamiya, had been in Afghanistan for at least 10 years, much of the time in al-Qaida camps, according to former fighters in Afghanistan.

He was reportedly close to bin Laden's chief lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahiri, also an Egyptian.

The US-led campaign to flush out bin Laden, the man Washington says masterminded the September 11 suicide hijack attacks on the United States, began on the night of October 7 with air and missile strikes against his Taliban protectors.

The campaign entered a new phase when Washington acknowledged that its special forces were on

the ground in Afghanistan after nearly two weeks of devastating air raids.

US fighter planes pounded targets in Afghanistan again yesterday after Taliban officials said that between 600 and 900 people were dead or missing.

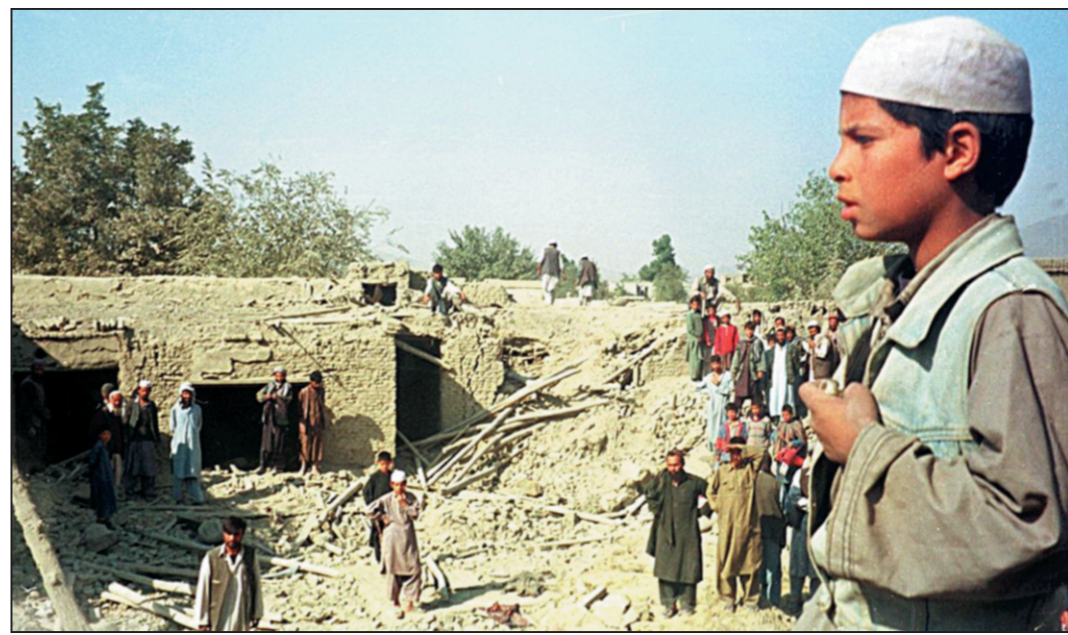
US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dismissed talk of high civilian casualties. There was no independent confirmation of the toll but witnesses speak of civilian deaths.

A US defence official said the small force of ground troops could herald a larger presence in the war. "It is at the very, very, very earliest stage," the official added.

The Washington Post reported that the troops were in southern Afghanistan to expand CIA efforts to encourage ethnic Pashtun leaders to break away from the Taliban.

According to a pro-Taliban Islamic religious party leader, Pakistan was allowing US forces to

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Afghans go around the debris of civilian houses in Qala-e-Zaman Khan area in the southeast of Kabul on Thursday. Six civilians including five members of a family were killed as an US plane pounded the area in the morning.

Bush, Jiang now partners in war on terrorism

AP, Shanghai

US President George W Bush and Chinese President Jiang Zemin declared themselves partners in the war on terrorism yesterday, although Jiang cautioned that the

US air war in Afghanistan must be aimed at clearly defined targets to "avoid innocent casualties."

"President Jiang and the government stand side by side with the American people as we fight this evil force," Bush said after his first

meeting with his Chinese counterpart.

Bush came here at a time when the sometimes volatile Sino-American relations are on the upswing, but both leaders alluded in a joint news conference to lingering differences.

"The war on terrorism must never be an excuse to persecute minorities," Bush said, an apparent reference to China's treatment of the restive Uighur population in China's northwest Xinjiang region.

Bush said he also stressed the need "to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology." On Sept 1, the State Department imposed sanctions on a Chinese arms producer for allegedly selling missile technology to Pakistan in violation of a US-Chinese agreement signed last November.

Jiang predicted a "bright future" for US-Chinese relations so long as the United States sticks to bilateral agreements on Taiwan, an issue that has bedeviled ties between Washington and Beijing, off and on, for more than 50 years.

Bush began his first full day in China in 26 years by heading in

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Chinese President Jiang Zemin making a point during the joint press conference with his US counterpart George W Bush (L) in Shanghai yesterday.

'Urea quota system discriminatory'

Simplify distribution: BFA

RAFIQ HASAN

Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA) has said the urea distribution system is 'complex' and that it should be simplified.

The national body of fertiliser dealers also came down heavily on the quota system designated for districts, saying that it is 'discriminatory'. They suggested that every dealer is allocated a minimum of 50 tonnes of urea.

The additional amount should be supplied to those areas where the urea demand is high, it said in a set of recommendations submitted to the government recently.

Industries Secretary Al Amin Chowdhury, however, did not see any problem with the distribution system or the urea fertiliser itself. "Everything is alright and there is no problem regarding urea fertiliser in the country," he said. Only some additional amount of fertiliser would have to be imported this year due to production shut down in August this year at the Jamalpur Fertiliser factory at Jamalpur, which is unlikely to resume production before March

2002, he observed.

The shut down at the factory would cost the government US\$ 34 million in additional expenditure for importing three lakh tonnes of urea this year.

Regarding the distribution system, Chowdhury said, "We did not see any problem with the current distribution system and there was no crisis of fertiliser in any area of the country in the recent past."

When asked about the BFA demand, the industries secretary said they may raise the issue at the next meeting of the national committee on fertiliser distribution, as the association is also a member of the committee.

"We will discuss all the problems at the national committee meeting and sort it out amicably," he said.

In its 10-point recommendations, the BFA urged the government to eliminate administrative harassment on the dealers, including by income tax officials, and interference in fixing retail price at field level, relax control on fertiliser sale and reduce deposit money for deal

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FEMA reports violence against minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) has said there have been a number of incidents of violence against the minorities, mostly members of the Hindu community.

They have been subjected to beating and attack and their belongings have been looted, FEMA said in a report on its post-election observation.

It said most of the violence was reported to have been committed by activists of the party that won the election. In some cases, criminal elements were doing these in the name of political party.

In Munshibazar, Tengrabazar, Panchgaon, Kamarchak areas of Rajanagar union in Moulvibazar-3 constituency, BNP activists attacked members of the Hindu community, looted their houses and took away their cows as they voted for Awami League, the report mentioned.

Fishermen in Sarikait union in Sandwip in Chittagong-3 constituency are passing their days under continued pressure and threat from

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