

All CHT dev schemes suspended

UNB, Bandarban

All development schemes of the three Hill District Councils and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board have been suspended because of allegations of corruption and nepotism.

The decision was taken in view of widespread allegations, said Deputy Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan at meeting with local elite at the Circuit House yesterday.

He said the principle of equality would be followed in allocation of funds for development activities in the hill districts. Priority would be attached to the projects that will yield maximum benefits to the people.

The minister further said the administration would keep in view various aspects in the hill tracts for maintaining law and order and harmony among the ethnic groups.

Biman won't be privatised, says minister

BSS, Chittagong

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Muhammad Nasiruddin yesterday said the new government would not privatise Bangladesh Biman.

"Though Biman has plunged into an abyss of problems including the debt of over Tk 1 thousand crore and an annual loss of over Tk 250 crore, they could be minimised if we could be able to execute some financial and managerial reshuffle," he said while talking with local journalists at the local circuit house here yesterday.

Civil Aviation Minister blamed the immediate-past Awami League government for widespread corruption and sinking interest of the country in the deals for taking lease of four aircraft for the Bangladesh Biman saying even "termination clause" was not incorporated in the leasing agreement.

To improve the services to the passengers, complaint boxes would

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Tk 12 lakh looted from money changer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers looted Tk. 12 lakh including US dollar from a money exchange office in the city's Purana Pallan area yesterday afternoon.

A gang of four armed men entered the Himalay Money exchange office at Darus Salam Arched Market at about 1:30 p.m. when the owner was out for Jhor prayer.

Police said the gang went to the office as customer and at one stage they tied up Manager Motin and the other employee and looted the money at gunpoint.

According to the FIR, the gang took away Tk. 6 lakh in cash and US \$10,000 from the iron safe of the office.

A case was filed with Motijheel police station in this regard.

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B Chy files to Washington in Nov with free RMG access agenda

APEC calls for launching new world trade talks at Nov meet

DSE, CSE price quotations

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 22		5-27 pm
Oct 23	6-00 am	

Prayer Timings

Oct 22	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-38	5-42
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Law & order top priority, say business leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The business community has said that people have given mandate to the new government in the wake of deteriorating law and order in the country and warned that if it fails to improve the situation people will not forgive them.

The business leaders held the politicians responsible for the situation now prevailing in the country by patronising and using terrorists to get to power. They demanded that the home minister make a commitment that his government would arrest ruling-party terrorists first before arresting others.

They also set forth a 12-point recommendation for improvement of the country law and order.

Their views and recommendations came at a discussion meeting on post-election law and order situation, organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI). Home Minister Air-Vice Marshal (ret.) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury was chief guest at the meeting and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutuzzaman Babar a special guest.

Both the guests assured business leaders that law-enforcement agencies would be allowed to act independently and there would be no political interference. Besides, they promised more logistic support to the law enforcers.

The home minister reiterated the new government's resolve to bring the culprits to justice, irrespective of their political affiliation. "I give assurance to you all that no one, however powerful he may be, will be spared."

The government has already declared a war against terrorism, Chowdhury said. "We must win the war."

The home minister claimed that the government had been successful in containing the post-election turbulence. In this regard, he pointed out that there had been some distortion of facts with political motive to discredit the government.

Speaking on the occasion, FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun gave a brief description of the nature of terrorism the business community faced and recommended 12 specific steps to improve the situation.

The recommendations include establishing of rule of law, ensuring freedom of law-enforcement agencies from political interference, introducing accountability and transparency in administration, modernising police, reforming old laws and setting up special police force for the industrial sector.

Harun also recommended that an FBCCI representative be included in the national committee on law and order and a cell be set up at the FBCCI as a

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Treat repression on minority as a national crisis

Civil society body urges political forces

UNB, Dhaka

After visiting the affected areas, some leading citizens yesterday said an exodus of minority people from the country might be inevitable if confidence could not be brought back in them.

"Repression on minority people started in different parts of the country after the election is not a local problem, rather it's a national crisis," said a declaration of Sachetan Nagorik Samaj, previously known as Sammilita Samajik Andolon.

The civil society body at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday called upon the elected representatives and political forces

to be active from the grassroots level so that the minority people do not feel insecure.

Prof. Anisuzzaman, Prof. Syed Anwar Hossain, Ajoy Roy, Khushi Kabir, economist Prof. Mosharruf Hossain, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Prof. Mesbah Kamal and freedom fighter Ziauddin Tarek Ali were present at the press conference to urge all conscious citizens to raise their voice.

"The statements of ministers that news of repression on the minorities is exaggerated is not true. Either they know that they are lying or they didn't want to know the truth or reality is being hidden from them," said their declaration.

They bitterly criticised the care-

taker government of Justice Latifur Rahman for what they said his failure to protect the religious minority despite his administration having been cautioned much before the election that the minority people might fall prey.

The Sachetan Nagorik Samaj leaders complained that Hindu people are being compelled to celebrate the Durga Puja although images of the goddess were damaged in different areas, people were tortured and evicted from homes and women raped.

"We strongly condemn any bid to compel them to go for the puja as we condemn refraining them from so," the citizens' body said apprehend

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By-election 26 candidates submit nomination papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 26 candidates have filed nomination papers in six constituencies vacated by three BNP leaders, who won more than one seat in the parliamentary polls, to contest the November 12 by-elections.

The ruling BNP filed candidates in all the six seats while the main opposition in the parliament, Awami League, did not file any candidates for the by-polls alleging that the current atmosphere is not conducive to any election.

According to Election Commission officials, two candidates filed nomination papers for

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Taliban front line positions near Kabul bombed

AP, Qalai Dashi(Kabul)

US war planes bombarded Taliban positions just behind the front line yesterday, an opposition fighter said. Several jets roared high in the skies north of the Afghan capital of Kabul.

There had been limited US bombing of areas behind Taliban

front lines near Kabul in recent days, but Sunday's bombardment appeared to be the heaviest and closest to the front line.

The bombing could be the start of a more aggressive American campaign to help the northern-based alliance fighting the ruling Taliban militia.

The US bombs hit about two

kilometers behind the front line in the district of Kohesafie, 25 miles north of Kabul, Abdul Ghafur, an opposition fighter who was in radio contact with front line commanders, told The Associated Press.

As the screaming planes flew above the opposition-controlled Pajshir Valley north of Kabul, residents stopped their daily activities

and stared overhead.

Northern alliance officials had been asking the United States to bomb the front line north of Kabul so that they could advance on the capital. But until now US bombing of front line positions has mostly taken place around the strategic northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, not Kabul, apparently because of reservations about the northern alliance taking northern power.

At this position near the front line north of Kabul, opposition fighters said they were hoping the United States would soon bombard Taliban forward positions.

Reuters said, US war planes began a third week of strikes against Afghan cities early yesterday, bombing the capital, Kabul, where fighters of the ruling Taliban militia had moved through the streets in the night.

Responding to the first commando strikes on Afghan soil of Operation Enduring Freedom, the Taliban were defiant, saying they had made gains on the ground by repulsing the elite force of Army Rangers near their southern stronghold of Kandahar the previous night.

US-led bombardment hit two homes in Kabul's north Sunday,

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This US Department of Defence video photographed from CNN shows a US military aircraft dropping US special operations ground forces with parachutes into an undisclosed location inside Taliban-controlled Afghanistan on Saturday.

Bangladesh faces IMO ire

Global distress & safety system yet to be put in place

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The country faces an International Maritime Organisation (IMO) ban on its seaport for sustained maritime security failures over the last seven years.

The highest governing body on global maritime affairs has already marked Bangladesh as having the second most dangerous seaport in the world after the Philippines.

Should there be a ban, not only the foreign seafaring vessels would stop coming to the country, but also the Bangladeshi ones would not be allowed to anchor at the seaports of other IMO member-states.

The Bangladeshi mariners may also miss out on lucrative jobs on board international shipping lines.

What's worse, the country is yet to put in place the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS) the IMO has made mandatory for its

member-states for shipping operations.

The GMDSS is a combination of systems that enables ships to communicate with ports and their positioning so that prompt search and rescue operation can initiated should emergency arise. As per the IMO directive, the member-states were required to make the GMDSS operative by February 1999.

Bangladesh did undertake a Tk 76.76 crore project in 1999 to complete installation of the system by December last year.

In this regard, the government

secured Tk 50.30 crore in loan at 0.08 per cent interest from its Spanish counterpart under a Spain-Bangladesh financial programme, repayable in 30 years with a five-year grace period. The rest was supposed to come from the public exchequer.

The Spanish government also attached the condition that the equipment required for the project would have to be procured from Spanish firms. It also provided a list of potential vendors.

The Ministry of Shipping initiated the project, which was later trans

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Rule on govt for allowing use of airspace, ports to coalition force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued rule nisi upon the government asking it why the decision of the caretaker government to provide airspace, and sea ports to the International Coalition force should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority.

A HC division bench comprising Justice Hamidul Huq and Justice Mohammad Imran Ali issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Ruhul Quddus Babu, an advocate of Supreme Court and a former student leader, said a press release.

Senior advocate MI Farooqui, who appeared for the petitioner, informed the bench that the decision was taken by the advisory council of the caretaker govern

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Puja begins today on subdued note

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Durga Puja, the greatest religious celebration by Hindus, begins today with low-key festivity in the country, despite the government's assurance of support and security.

The morale of Hindus was shattered by the attacks on them and demolition of deities in some areas of the country, which came as fallout of the October 1 general election. A large number of Hindus, forced to leave their houses, took shelter elsewhere.

However, many returned home and became busy preparing for the puja, even if haunted by anxiety all

along. Puja mandaps were constructed at temples and on open spaces to observe the weeklong celebration.

According to reports from different parts of the country, the fear of untoward incidents has created a psychological hindrance among them.

President of Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Parishad Prem Ranjan Dev in a statement called upon Hindus to celebrate the Durga Puja.

He, however, observed that Hindus would celebrate the festival

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Image of Durga at a puja mandap in the city. The biggest festival for the country's Hindu community begins today.

Help Hindus celebrate puja, urges city BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City BNP has sought cooperation from all for smooth and peaceful celebration of Durga Puja by the Hindus.

The call was made in a statement by City BNP President and Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka and General Secretary Abdus Salam in the capital yesterday.

They said it is the duty of all to extend full cooperation to the Hindu community so that they can celebrate their Durga Puja with enthusiasm and festivity.

The leaders instructed their workers and supporters to remain present at the puja mandaps to guard against any untoward incident.

The city BNP leaders also warned that stern action will be taken if anyone tries to disrupt the communal harmony.

They said BNP believes in equal rights of all religions and as such no one will be allowed to create hindrances in performing their religious rites.

Khulna Jamaat to help ensure peaceful Puja

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami have assured the district administration of all cooperation in ensuring peaceful celebration of Durga Puja by the Hindus.

The assurance was given to the Deputy Commissioner on Saturday. Jamaat will also deploy party volunteers at the Puja Mandaps to assist the law enforcers, sources said.

Meanwhile, tight security mea

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AL will publish white paper on corruption during '91-'96

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League will publish a white paper on corruption committed during the tenure of the previous BNP government from 1991 to 1996.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina announced the move at a crowded press conference at a city hotel yesterday. She was refuting allegations brought against her immediate past government by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the latter's maiden address to the nation.

The AL chief's announcement to publish a white paper came just two days after a similar announcement by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Saturday that a white paper would be published within three months on the corruption committed during the last five years of the AL rule.

"In the past, we refrained from publishing any white paper as we do not believe in politics of vengeance. But we will now publish a white paper," said Hasina. She added that her party would publish another white paper soon depicting the documentary evidences of 'rigging' in the October 1 parliamentary polls.

The AL president, however, fell short of giving any specific



Sheikh Hasina

timeframe for publications of the two white papers.

"The prime minister's speech was designed to sweep wrongdoing to be committed in future under the carpet and cover up the inevitable failure of the four-party alliance government by spreading falsehood in advance against the Awami League," she said.

Hasina was flanked by senior party leaders Abdus Samad Azad,

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AL to decide on oath-taking today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League would decide today whether its MPs-elect would take oath and join the Eighth parliament.

AL President Sheikh Hasina told this at a press conference in the city yesterday.

"The Awami League Central Working Committee meeting tomorrow will decide on the issue," said Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to chair today's Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 pm.

Sheikh Hasina earlier declared that AL MPs-elect would not take oath as lawmakers and join the parliament following an earlier ALCWC meeting on October 3.

Rejecting the October 1 election results on the allegation of "crude rigging", AL also demanded scrapping the poll by October 10. Otherwise, it threatened of launching a 'non-cooperation' movement from the following day.

Meanwhile, sources in AL told The Daily Star yesterday that there is a strong possibility that today's party meeting would change the earlier decision of not taking oath in the 8th parliament.

Sources further hinted that MPs-elect from AL might take oath on

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