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## More changes in army on the cards

DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

Top level changes involving major generals are being made in Bangladesh Army, sources said.

Major General Jalal Uddin, Military Secretary to the President, is being appointed Adjutant General of the Army.

Major General A M Mansur Ahmed, Director General of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), is being made Military Secretary to the President.

Major General Tareq Ahmed Siddique, Adjutant General of the Army, would take over as Engineer-in-Chief of the Army.

Major General Sikder Shahabuddin, who was chief of the Special Security Force (SSF), is taking over as DG of BISS.

Major General Mahmud-uz-Zaman, Commandant of the Ordnance Factory at Gazipur, is being appointed PSO in the Armed Forces Division.

Major General Sayeed Ahmed, now PSO in the Armed Forces Division, would take over as Commandant of the Ordnance Factory.

More changes are likely to take place shortly, the sources said.

## Shab-e-Barat tonight

BSS, Dhaka

Millions of Muslims across the country will observe the holy Shab-e-Barat tonight.

Devout Muslims will observe the holy occasion offering night-long prayers seeking divine blessings for long life, peace, progress and happiness.

Other programmes on the occasion include distribution of foods and sweets among neighbours and destitutes, milad mahfils, special prayers at mosques and visit to the graveyards.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

Bangladesh Islamic Foundation and many socio-religious organisations will observe the occasion with various programmes. Special programmes will be aired by state-run Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television and the private Ekushey Television and other electronic media.

# Petrobangla to form body to scrutinise Unocal proposal

## Energy ministry wants report within two weeks

SHARIER KHAN

The energy ministry has asked the Petrobangla to form a committee to scrutinise the pipeline gas export proposal Unocal submitted to the government on Monday.

The committee, to be headed by the director, operations of the Petrobangla, will examine the proposal and send its observations and recommendations about pipeline export of gas, sources said.

A report on this will have to be submitted within two weeks.

"The first problem we are facing in the context of the Unocal proposal is that the country does not have a policy for pipeline export of gas," said a well-placed Petrobangla source. "We have policy on energy export in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG), but not on

pipeline export."

Moreover, the provision of pipeline gas export might have to be discussed at the Jatiya Sangsad for constitutional amendment, the Petrobangla source added.

Article 143 of the constitution says, "There shall vest in the republic, in addition to any other land or property lawfully vested - a, all minerals and other things of value underlying any land of Bangladesh; b, all lands, minerals and other things of value underlying the ocean within territorial waters, or the ocean over continental shelf...."

A constitution expert told The Daily Star that this article might raise the question whether any government could decide to export what belongs to the public

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## COMMENTARY

# President under fire, unfairly

MAHFUZ ANAM

President Shahabuddin Ahmed's inaugural address to the eighth Jatiya Sangsad has disappointed many of his admirers, including this writer. It was an extremely partisan speech, unsuitable, undesirable and unbecoming of the President, especially one of Justice Shahabuddin's stature. However, to be fair to him we must delve a little into the background as to how such a thing could happen.

Our Constitution has made the President as titular as you can get. Only two powers vest with him - that of appointing the Chief Justice and of appointing the Prime Minister. However neither of these functions are autonomous. In the case of Chief Justice there are well laid-out norms, and in the case of the Prime Minister it is even more so. Only in the case of a parliamentary majority not being clear does the President have discretion as to who to call first to prove his or her majority to form the government. The point we are trying to make here is that there is virtually no freedom for the President to act in



Shahabuddin Ahmed

Rahman Biswas worked.

After the Awami League came to power in June 1996 the problem arose about the inaugural address of the President to the new AL-led parliament. Abdur Rahman Biswas was not only a BNP-nominated head of state but also an active party leader with controversial record during the Liberation War. He, of course, could not be allowed the freedom to give his own speech and so a draft was sent to the Bangabhaban. Biswas stuck to the draft only to the extent he wished. The controversy centred on portions dealing with Bangabandhu being referred to as the Father of the Nation and other related paragraphs, which Biswas deleted from his version of the speech. Severe press criticism of Biswas's conduct followed in the press and the AL government soon added a clause to the existing rules of business making it obligatory that all speeches and messages of the President to the parliament be prepared and approved by the cabinet.

Thus since 1997 every single address and message of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

any manner other than what is laid out, including in the two cases where he is the chief actor.

Let us come to the practice connected with the President's address or messages to the parliament and to the controversial speech itself. The norm was that a draft speech would be sent from the cabinet, which the President would amend in a limited sense before reading out in the House. That is how President Abdur



Smoke billows from another American missile attack on in the early hours yesterday (left) while people gather in a destroyed government building that was hit by US warplanes (centre) and a Taliban militia fires his machine gun into the air in a demonstration to foreign journalists in Kandahar yesterday.

# Taliban positions under intense wave of US bombing

## "1,500 innocent men, women and children" killed, claim ruling militia in Afghanistan

AFP, Islamabad

Afghan cities and Taliban militiamen suffered under an intense wave of US bombing yesterday as US officials scrambled to head off the danger of a renewed terrorist onslaught on their homeland.

Washington banned planes from flying near US nuclear power stations as a manhunt was launched for six "Middle Eastern" men seen with maps of a power plant and box-cutters and as another US citizen died of anthrax.

US warplanes pursued the relentless battering of Taliban strongholds and frontline positions, preparing the ground for a threatened offensive but also increasing the misery of Afghanistan's long-suffering civilians.

In the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, which was struck again early yesterday, Doctor Syed Abbas told AFP that earlier this week, US strikes killed 13 civilians and destroyed a clinic operated by the Afghan Red Crescent.

Bombs also flattened the homes of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and his Arab ally Osama bin Laden as well as the "House of Vice and Virtue", from where the regime's strict moral code is enforced, residents said.

While one resident said that the loss of the Vice and Virtue base had been an occasion for some celebration, most locals told reporters brought to the city by Taliban fighters that civilians had borne the brunt of the strikes.

Suhail Shaheen, the deputy Taliban ambassador to Islamabad, told reporters in Islamabad that "1,500 innocent men, women and children" had been killed by the US strikes.

Washington has hotly denied previous Taliban civilian casualty figures.

Meanwhile, the Taliban leadership rejected contacts with the UN special envoy on Afghanistan, accusing the world body of being "a tool" of the United States.

Tensions between the two sides emerged over whether the Taliban's ambassador to Islamabad, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, should meet UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

UN spokesman Eric Falt said Brahimi "had no time" to meet Zaeef to discuss the US-led air strikes against the Islamic militia.

But Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar was reported to have ordered the ambassador not to meet the special representative of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## US bans flights near NY, nuclear power stations

AFP, Washington

US aviation authorities on Tuesday introduced new restrictions on flights near nuclear power installations, and baseball's Yankee stadium in New York, following a FBI warning that new terror attacks may be imminent.

The Federal Aviation Administration slapped restrictions on airspace around 86 sensitive nuclear sites and ratcheted up security in New York, where President George W Bush was due to throw out the first pitch in game three of baseball's World Series.

"All general aviation flying is prohibited within a radius of 10 nautical miles and below 18,000 feet (5,400 metres) of the 86 sites," the FAA said in an advisory known as a "Notice to Airmen".

The restrictions will remain in force until midnight eastern time on Tuesday, November 6, FAA said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



Students chase a vehicle on the Dhaka University campus while students of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) stage a sit-in in front of the Jatiya Press Club, demanding ban on movement of heavy vehicles inside the campus, yesterday.



## Traffic jams as DU, BUET students agitate

DU CORRESPONDENT

Heavy traffic snarl-ups were created on the roads adjacent to Dhaka University (DU) and the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) yesterday, as police blocked entrance to all kinds of motor vehicles through the campuses.

Sources said police put up roadblocks at different entry points to the DU and the BUET, as the students were on a violent demonstration protesting the killing of a female DU student in a road accident near Palashi Bazaar in the city on Tuesday.

The agitated students also damaged about 30 vehicles in the morning and in the afternoon, the sources said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

# Who will succeed Shahabuddin?

## B Chowdhury leads the pack

NAZMUL ASHRAF

Speculation is rife about who is going to become the new president of the republic now that the schedule for the presidential election has already been announced.

In a parliamentary democracy, the president is the titular head of state. However, the impending presidential election has generated a great deal of public interest since outgoing President Shahabuddin Ahmad's recent performance had sparked off a political controversy.

Elected by the Awami League, President Shahabuddin is now in the centre of a political debate thanks to the "highly politicised" speech he delivered at the maiden sitting of the new parliament. The scripted address, dictated by the BNP-led coalition government, launched a scathing criticism of the past AL regime and was full of praises for the new government's policies and programmes.

This has virtually put at stake Shahabuddin's long-standing image as a non-party president who stepped beyond the constitutional limitations to discharge his responsibilities to remain acceptable to all.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## FM goes to Washington Saturday

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury is leading a high-powered delegation to Washington on Saturday to discuss issues of bilateral interest.

The foreign minister will have talks with US Secretary of State Colin Powell on November 6 at the State Department.

He will also carry a letter from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for President George Bush, sources said.

Badruddoza Chowdhury will be accompanied by, among others, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Ahmed and Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury.

The foreign minister is also

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

How much money does an election need?

Column: Straight from the Heart  
Afsan Choudhury

Supplement 10

One page supplement on 'World Maritime Day 2001'

## Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of holy Shab-e-Barat.

Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow (Friday).

|       | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|-------|-----------|----------|
| Nov 1 |           | 5-19 pm  |
| Nov 2 | 6-05 am   |          |

## Prayer Timings

| Nov 1   |       |        |
|---------|-------|--------|
|         | Azan  | Jamaat |
| Fajr    | 5-00  | 5-30   |
| Zohr    | 12-45 | 1-15   |
| Asr     | 4-00  | 4-15   |
| Maghrib | 5-29  | 5-34   |
| Esha    | 7-15  | 7-45   |

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Tk 19.84cr edn ministry project JCD men let no one buy tender schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday usurped the selling of tender schedules for the works worth about Tk 19.84 crore in the facilities department of the education ministry at the Shikha Bhaban.

The same situation prevailed at the department's zonal office at Uttara sector No. 1 where over 100 JCD leaders and activists allowed only two firms to purchase 12 schedules, witnesses said.

The schedules were supposed to be sold at four different offices: the Shikha Bhaban, the Uttara zonal office, the education ministry in the Secretariat and the commissioner's office at Segunbagicha.

A large number of JCD leaders and cadres have been guarding the Uttara zonal office, the Segunbagicha commissioner's office and the Shikha Bhaban for the last few days.

The authorities started issuing the schedules from the Shikha Bhaban and the Uttara zonal office yesterday afternoon, while the deadline for purchase runs out today. Normally, the sale is supposed to start at least ten days before the deadline.

At the Shikha Bhaban, none of the firms -- not fewer than 25 -- managed to collect the schedule, although they paid for it.

The JCD leaders and activists occupied two tables in the office of the facilities department at the Shikha Bhaban, and kept all sched

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Spl Pak envoy misses flight, comes today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan President's Special Envoy Shaheda Jamil is now due to arrive in Dhaka today.

She was scheduled to arrive yesterday but she could not avail of the PIA flight due to inclement weather in Karachi.

Shaheda Jamil, Law Minister in President Pervez Musharraf's cabinet, will carry a message for Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, sources said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Cox's Bazar-3 polls today

UNB, Dhaka

Six candidates are contesting the election in Cox's Bazar-3 constituency today.

The prospect of BNP candidate Mohammad Shahiduzzaman is bright as Awami League stayed away from the race.

Others in the field are Ameer Mohammad Bachchu, Mohammad Sadek, Mostaque Ahmed Chowdhury, Mohammad Omar

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7