

AL-BNP clash in Pabna: 30 hurt

UNB, Pabna

At least 30 people were injured when supporters of BNP and Awami League clashed in Hariabari village of Sadar upazila yesterday.

Bullet-hit Sohel Hasan, 25, Anwar Khatun, 40, Aslam, 23, Liton, 22, Newton, 26, and Sabura Khatun, 23, were admitted to Pabna General Hospital while Nurul Islam, 36, and Noor Islam, 22, in Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Police rushed to the spot and arrested Kaves, Abul Kalam, Kaisar, Taslim Malik, Rani Malik, Abul Kalam Azad, Monirul, Natu Malik and Zahurul and recovered three firearms and ammunition from them.

The house of Abdur Rashid was ransacked and looted during the 3-hour clash when both sides used

BCL threatens fresh agitation at SUST

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Bangladesh Chhatra League unit of Shahjalal University of Science & Technology yesterday threatened to go on a fresh agitation programme after tomorrow if their demands are not met by that day.

The BCL declaration came at a press conference held at the Sylhet Press Club yesterday afternoon. At the conference they alleged that JCD activists in connivance with outsiders had already ruined the academic atmosphere on the campus. The JCD activists are also involved in extortion and other crimes on the campus. A number of development projects of the varsity have also been lying suspended due to the JCD men's pressure for tolls.

BJP to take up

FROM PAGE 1

edly driven out of their homes.

The report alleges assaults on Hindus, destruction of their properties and temples and atrocities against Hindu women in Bangladesh and charges that these incidents have gone up since the government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia took over.

Meanwhile, the Trinamool Congress, a constituent of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), has decided to send a delegation of party leaders to meet Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani and demand that the Indian government take up the issue of "atrocities" against Hindus in Bangladesh with Dhaka.

The Trinamool Congress delegation, likely to be led by its member of parliament Sudip Bandopadhyaya, is expected to meet Advani soon, party chief Mamata Banerjee said.

Meanwhile, the Committee for the Protection of Minorities in Bangladesh yesterday demonstrated outside Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi demanding an end to "widespread atrocities" on Hindus in that country.

The demonstrators shouted slogans against Bangladesh government's "failure" to protect the minorities and demanded an end to "harassment" of Hindus in that country.

Addressing the protestors, the

firearms and lethal weapons.

Witnesses and police said rival groups led by Abul Kalam of Awami League and Abdul Majid of BNP fought as sequel to previous enmity and to establish supremacy in the village.

Habibur Rahman Tota, general secretary of Pabna district BNP, told UNB that it was fought between two brothers and has no political relevance.

BNP MP accuses

FROM PAGE 12

heads". A case has been filed with Gulshan police accusing Manju as a suspect in the attack.

"Despite being a ruling party MP, I fled my village home along with my family members and I could not go back there since the general election," said Manju, seeking protection from the Chair for his life and property.

Manju also informed Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and senior BNP leaders about this. He also called upon the former minister to give up such activities.

He drew attention of the Chair to make his point as 'notice of question of his privilege' in the House when it was about to go for discussion on thanks motion on the presidential address.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar first refused to allow Manju to speak but on request from Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, he finally agreed.

But the Speaker found the notice not in conformity with the privilege motion as prescribed in the Rules of Procedure and asked the lawmaker to notify later on. However, he took note of the notice and directed the home ministry to ensure security of Manju's life and property.

Anwar Hossain Manju was not the House this time.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 12

party alliance.

She said despite Awami League's repeated complaints the caretaker government, CEC and the president did not take any steps to stop pre- and post-election terrorism against Awami League, common people and the minorities.

"I like to ask why you have collaborated with the alliance to rig the vote and in exchange of what?" Hasina questioned.

Referring to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's vow to eliminate terrorism and corruption, she blamed the alliance leader for uttering good words on one hand and letting loose her terrorists on the other.

Hasina denounced both the caretaker and present coalition government for instigating terrorism against innocent people. She also questioned why the human rights organisations that are champions of humanity kept mum at this terrible situation.

Awami League leader Matia Chowdhury, Gopalganj AL president Mohammad Ali Khan Habu Mia, Kotalipara thana AL president Hemanta Kumar Adhikari and on behalf of the victims Shefali Sarkar and UP chairman Gias Khan addressed the meeting.

Earlier, a heart-rending scene occurred at the Ramshil College ground where several thousand people mostly victimised women and children burst into tears when Sheikh Hasina came to this remote village by boat from Kotalipara.

Many told their nightmarish tales they experienced in Gouradi and Agoljehara after the election. Hasina consoled them and assured full cooperation from Awami League for their safety.

Korea Week

FROM PAGE 12

into a wall (Melodrama) at 18:50

Art Show
An exhibition of Korean painting by Prof. Loo Doo-shik is now being held at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The show remains open from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. till November 13.

Merchandise Show
The Korean merchandise exhibition is now being held at The Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel Ballroom I, II, III. The exhibition runs till November 8.

SEE ALSO CULTURE PAGE

Saifur

FROM PAGE 1

development objectives and reforms plan.

The donor community also pinpointed some steps needed to bring down fiscal deficit, accelerate privatisation process and initiate reform measures in the financial sector.

They also focussed on reform measures on the telecom, power and other sectors and address the structural problem of the country's economy, sources said.

The deteriorating foreign exchange reserve was also discussed in the meeting. The donors, according to meeting sources, mentioned that the declining foreign exchange reserve was a reflection of the fundamental weaknesses in the economy.

In this context, they suggested that the government undertake structural adjustment programme to remove infrastructure bottlenecks, improve governance and strengthen the financial sector.

The minister briefed them about the government's commitment to curb corruption and wipe out terrorism. Rahman also told them in details the measures the government has taken so far to bolster the economy, which include lowering bank rate, cut in export credit interest, lowering interest rate on different savings instruments and other measures.

Shady telecom business

FROM PAGE 1

crores of taka every month. Inexplicable inertia by the ministry and influence of a vested group within the BTB have let some shady software export firms to carry on with the illegal call-termination business unhindered. Some of these firms are known to have connection with BTB insiders and the former post and telecommunications minister.

According to a BTB estimate, this grey telecom market robs the country of Tk 27.1 crore a month as calls are being diverted through these firms, which openly advertise of low-rate international calls. And yet, the government has done little to effectively fight the illegal activities.

By sticking to exorbitant overseas call rates, way too high by any international standard, the BTB created the breeding ground for the vice. And when the VSAT market was opened up for Internet Service Providers (ISPs), it also created the scope for illegal call diversion at cheaper rates taking advantage of the BTB's high tariff charges.

The BTB tariff rate is dependent on total accounting rate (TAR), which is currently one of the highest in the world at 0.50 standard drawing rate (SDR) a minute. TAR is the amount that is shared equally by the BTB and the foreign telecom firm through which the call is routed. As TAR is kept high, call tariffs also remain high. While the world went for lowering TAR to make international calls cheaper to the benefit of both the clients and the telecom firms in terms of higher user charges, Bangladesh refused to do so.

The BTB have long been proposing to the ministry to lower TAR to 0.20 SDR per minute to lower international call rates that would be more attractive. So far as records go, the latest proposal that the BTB sent to its chairman and the ministry was on October 16.



A sequence from the dance drama, Mahua, staged at the Shishu Academy auditorium yesterday to mark the National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

PM: Local industries

FROM PAGE 1

dent Afsar Karim Chowdhury.

During the meeting the prime minister once again called on the opposition Awami League to join parliament to strengthen the democratic process for the welfare of the people.

She reminded all that the government and the opposition has equal role in parliamentary system, and that they should play their due role by coming to the House.

Khaleda Zia stressed on building public awareness against smuggling and said that the people themselves can play a vital role in checking this menace that is deterrent to development of the country's industries.

The Prime Minister informed the delegation that the government will set up growth centres based on the growth potentialities in different parts of the country to assist the marketing of local products.

She emphasised on setting up of more agro-based industries to reduce the dependence on readymade garment sector.

Revolution & Solidarity Day

FROM PAGE 1

functions.

President Shahabuddin Ahmad and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia issued separate messages on the occasion yesterday.

In his message, the President highlighted the importance of the day and said the people of the country firmly established the ideals of independence on that day being imbued with the spirit of the War of Liberation in 1971.

On the occasion, the President thanked the members of the armed forces and people of the country and wished success of the day.

In her message, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said sepy-janata had set a rare example of patriotism by foiling all conspiracies against the independence and sovereignty of the country on that day in 1975. Congratulating the members of the armed forces and people on the

In this regard, Khaleda Zia assured that the government will encourage food-processing and jute-based industries.

Dwelling on environmental pollution, the prime minister reminded all that the government has decided to convert all government vehicles to CNG system. She stressed optimum utilisation of the country's natural resource, gas, and said that more gas-based industries will be set up.

During the discussion on the economy the business leaders hoped that the present government with its pragmatic steps will be able to overcome the situation in the present scenario of global recession, staggering domestic economy and decline in foreign-exchange earnings.

They praised government decisions as the reduction of bank interest rate and central depository system and said the steps so far taken would help rejuvenate the capital market.

They also hoped that the government's quick decision of sending high-powered delegations like the one sent to US led by the for-

eign minister and another headed by the commerce minister will be quite beneficial in the wake of the future introduction of WTO regulations.

The business delegation pointed out various problems, particularly those related to infrastructure facilities like power and gas to the prime minister.

They also demanded a piece of land to build a permanent infrastructure that can be used as the proposed Human Resource Entrepreneurs Development Institute with a hall room for regular trade fairs.

Representation of the DCCI in the Board of Directors of different nationalised banks was also sought in the meeting.

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and State Minister for Commerce Barkatullah Bulu were present in the meeting.

Among the members who spoke on the occasion were Nurul Alam, Salahuddin Abdullah, Monzurur Rahman Raskin, Motiur Rahman, Zainul Abedeen, Kamaluddin Malik and Giasuddin Ahmed.

Al Qaida: Nuke

FROM PAGE 1

The Pakistan-based AIP quoted residents of Chaghi district, some 30 kilometres south of the border, as saying the helicopter went down overnight Sunday.

"It is a helicopter which was shot by the Taliban but it managed to reach Baluchistan where it crashed," a resident was quoted as saying.

AP adds: Afghan opposition forces claimed the capture of several towns yesterday near the strategic northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, after US warplanes cleared the way with intensive bombing.

Meanwhile, US jets resumed strikes on Taliban front line positions yesterday north of the capital Kabul, swooping down to drop more than a dozen bombs near an air base the opposition northern alliance has long been trying to secure.

The alliance, which launched a three-pronged attack Sunday toward Mazar-e-Sharif, seized Ogopruk and two other towns in a dawn assault, said Ashraf Nadeem, an opposition spokesman. The area is 70 kilometres south of Mazar-e-Sharif.

"We attacked while the Americans were bombing," Nadeem said in a satellite telephone interview. "It was not only us who killed. It was mostly the American."

He claimed 300 Taliban defenders died and 300 defected to the opposition, and said five opposition fighters were killed and nine wounded. His account could not be independently verified.

The seizure allowed opposition forces to push yesterday toward Shol Ghar, and heavy fighting was reported about 45 kilometres southeast of Mazar-e-Sharif, Nadeem said.

There was no comment from the Taliban on Nadeem's claims.

Despite the latest apparent opposition successes, they have not been able to make major advances toward Mazar-e-Sharif, and remain well south of the city with winter closing in. The opposition, which is outgunned by the Taliban, has received ammunition and other military supplies from the United States.

In the capital Kabul yesterday

S Asian

FROM PAGE 12

Conference."

"The idea of the consultation was to formulate a document (strategy). This will be presented at the Yokohama Conference," Hasan said adding that many countries in the region have formed legislation to eliminate sexual exploitation of children and child abuse.

Shahida Azfar, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh, KM Ehsanul Haq, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Naseem-Ur-Rahman, Chief of Information and Advocacy of UNICEF, among others, were present at the press conference.

Jail Killing

FROM PAGE 12

The witness further said, at about 8 am on November 4, 1975 he went to his office and came to know from his colleagues that four people at the new cell were murdered.

Rouf told the court that on November 4, 1975 he came to know from jailer and his another colleague that following the directive of Bangabhaban, the four leaders were murdered under the leadership of Captain Moslehuddin.

Test against Zimbabwe

FROM PAGE 1

tain Naimur Rahman during a press briefing at the Sonargaon Hotel on Tuesday.

"Our training sessions went very well this time and the players are mentally and physically prepared to put up a good fight over five days," said Naimur, who led Bangladesh to their five predictable defeats since earning Test status last June.

His side will contain two new faces in Khaled Mahmud and young fast bowler Masrafe-bin-Murtaza Kowshik. Neither has played in any of Bangladesh's previous five Tests.

Bangladesh will field six specialist batsmen, two all-rounders and three bowlers.

Al-Shahriar will open the innings with the regular Javed Omar. Habibur Bashar, Aminul Islam and young sensation Mohammad Ashraf, Khaled Mahmud and Naimur Rahman will form the middle-order.

The return of Mahmud, the discarded former Bangladesh vice-captain, means that Akram Khan will have to sit out the first Test.

On the other hand, Kowshik's introduction will certainly give bite to the limited Bangladesh bowling attack.

"He is fairly fast. He is certainly faster than anybody I've seen bowl in Bangladesh, and is the only bowler capable of putting any batsman on the back foot which is important at this level," said Bangladesh's Australian coach Trevor Chappell while talking about the 19-year tearaway from Narail.

Chappell also said that Bangladesh would do better this time than they did in Zimbabwe last April when they lost both Test

Taliban gunners opened fire at what appeared to be a small US spy plane that cruised over the city at mid-afternoon.

Later, puffs of black smoke could be seen in the southern outskirts of the city. Taliban gunners fired repeated bursts of anti-aircraft rounds, but it was unclear whether they hit anything. There was no immediate statement from the authorities about the incident.

US jets have been pounding Taliban positions defending Mazar-e-Sharif throughout the air campaign, now in its fifth week.

The United States has more than doubled the number of its special forces troops on the ground in Afghanistan in the past week, Defence Secretary Donald H Rumsfeld said in Washington.

The airstrikes also have unleashed one of the biggest weapons in the American arsenal and the United States has stepped up its psychological war against Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia.

The 6,750 kilogram "daisy cutter" bomb creates a huge fireball that incinerates everything within 600 meters. New American leaflets being dropped in Afghanistan proclaim, "We are watching" and show pictures of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and a license plate military officials say belongs to a vehicle he uses.

The Pentagon yesterday flatly denied a report that a US helicopter crashed Sunday in southwest Pakistan near Afghanistan's southern border. "There was no helicopter crash," said Defense Department spokesman Bryan Whitman.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder offered up to 3,900 troops to the campaign but said there are no immediate plans to deploy ground forces.

The United States requested help in combatting nuclear, biological and chemical weapons; medical services; special forces; air transport and naval forces to protect shipping lanes, Schroeder said. Parliament will make specific decisions on deployment, he told a news conference.

Rumsfeld, returning Monday from a visit to five countries near Afghanistan, said the number of special forces troops there had risen by 2 1/2 times since last week. He offered no numbers, but Pentagon officials said the total remained below 100.

Security guard

FROM PAGE 12

Police Limited.

The incident occurred after an altercation between Afsar and Halim over their duty roster. At one stage of the altercation Halim became agitated and shot Afsar, hitting him in the right eye. Afsar died on the spot, sources said.

Halim tried to flee the spot but the other guards and other local people caught him and handed him over to Dhannondipolice.

Police seized the rifle that was used to kill the victim and recovered cartridges from the spot after the incident.

Afsar's body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy yesterday morning.

Ali Akber, another guard of the house, filed a case with Dhannondipolice that arrested Halim for his alleged involvement in the killing.

Zia second Grand Master

FROM PAGE 1

GM. Niaz had achieved the feat back in 1986.

Zia had received his first norm at the British Open in London in August 1999 and his second at the Goodrich tournament in Kolkata earlier this year.

The newest sports hero of Bangladesh is expected to fly home today from Paris at 9:30 am.

Meanwhile, Zia's parents were brimming with pride after the news reached them.

UZ Parishad polls

FROM PAGE 12

Upazila Parishad elections were first held on May 16 and May 20, 1985 to elect chairmen of the 460 Parishads for a period of five years. The next election was held over a period of 10 days from March 14, 1990. After coming to power next year, the BNP repealed the Upazila Act.

The Awami League government revived the law in November 25, 1998. According to the revived Act, the elections must be held within 180 days after the law is gazetted.

The EC accordingly took repeated initiatives to hold upazila elections. But due to non-cooperation and resistance from the then Opposition party against holding of any election under the then CEC and the AL government, elections could not be held.

Syed, after taking charge as CEC in May last year, also said that the atmosphere was not congenial for upazila elections and he started preparations for the general elections first.

At a stage, as the 180-day time limit was nearing its expiry, the AL government took a fresh initiative to extend the time. As per the amended law, the government would have to hold the election within 180 days or in case of 'force-majeure', it could hold the same at a convenient time made known through gazette notification.

Minorities

FROM PAGE 1

Daspara village at around 12:30 am and started looting and ransacking houses.

They dragged some of the family members out of their houses and beat them. At one stage, the gang chopped Sunil to death.

Police arrested 12 persons among their for their alleged involvement in the attack.

District police superintendent A K M Shahidul Haq visited the same village yesterday morning.

A tense situation was prevailing in the area till filing of this report yesterday evening.