

US visa in exchange for information on terrorists!

Attorney General John Ashcroft has announced a new Department of Justice initiative that would give non-US citizens in the United States or persons abroad US immigration benefits if they provide the US government credible information about terrorists, says a US embassy press release. Under the new initiative, "the Department of Justice will provide immigration benefits to non-citizens who furnish information to help us apprehend terrorists or to stop terrorist attacks," Ashcroft said at a Department of Justice news conference November 29.

Sewerage network

COVERS PAGE 1 covers only a handful of localities in the city. The sewage through this 63km network is treated at Pagla and then dumped into the river Buriganga. At the moment, the city needs nearly 3,000 kilometres of sewer network. A lot of these existing sewers are over 50 years old and are in a dilapidated state giving rise to fear that the system might crumble any moment, inundating a vast area with untreated sewage or 'night soil', experts said. "Now every underground or even surface drains irrespective of its specific function is burdened with sewage and a host of toxic wastes," said an official source. "As a result, huge bacteria and deadly wastes are spreading all around the atmosphere."

Mockbul arrested

COVERS PAGE 1 Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Court, Dhaka at about noon. As per law, any arrested person is to be produced before the magistrate during hearing but police did not produce Mockbul before the magistrate. Mockbul's lawyers said they could not submit any petition for his bail as the prosecution side took the file to the chamber of Magistrate Biman Bihari Barua without their knowledge. After hearing the prosecution side, the court gave Mockbul one month's detention and sent him to the Central Jail. Mockbul was shown arrested under Section 54 of CrPc. No specific case was framed against him. Meanwhile, a document for detaining him under the Special Powers Act, 1974 was forwarded to the court. Police in its forwarding report said the accused, with the help of his party leaders and activists, made an attempt to commit offences during yesterday's hartal in the city. It said the accused and his "accomplices" had long been involved in land grabbing in his area. It also said Mockbul was involved in crimes like killing and had a plan to make attacks on government, semi-government and non-government organisations during the hartal, which could create a law and order situation in the country. UNB adds: Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman condemned the arrest of Sechchasebak League (volunteers' league) convener Alhaj Mockbul Hossain. In a statement last night Zillur said the arrest of Mockbul without warrant manifests the fascist character of the BNP government. He demanded immediate release of Mockbul and other AL leaders and activists arrested during yesterday's hartal.

Police beat AL MP

COVERS PAGE 1 random arrest of party activists, some policemen including a ranking officer caught him by the collar and beat him even after he showed his identity card. Police tore his clothing, witnesses said. Earlier, at about nine in the morning, AL leaders and former ministers Abdur Razzak, Motia Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya along with a handful of party activists tried to gather outside the party office to bring out a procession. Police beat them indiscriminately, forcing the senior AL leaders to get inside the party office. At around 10:20 am Motia Chowdhury along with a handful of female party activists tried to bring out a procession towards the Zero Point. But the tough-looking police officers stopped them at two points before they reached the Zero Point. Motia asked the policemen whether the government had imposed Section 144 in the area. The policemen replied in the negative and could not say anything to justify their action. Policemen and women police encircled Motia along with the group as they sat on the street in protest. Later, Abdur Razzak and Mohammad Nasim came out of the AL office to join the group at the Zero Point. A scuffle between them and police ensued. Abdur Razzak fell on

PBCP cadre held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sonadanga police yesterday arrested Ayub Ali Shaikh alias Arif, 32, an armed cadre of outlawed PBCP from Banargati area. A dagger was recovered from his possession. Sonadanga thana OC said Arif is wanted in several murder cases and a close associate of Abdur Rashid, a ring leader of Rupsha-Terokhedha-Digholia based unit of Puro Banglar Communist Party (PBCP). At least 24 armed cadres of PBCP were arrested in last six months only from Banargati area where law and order situation has taken an alarming turn with frequent murders, muggings, rapes and toll collection.

Two injured terrorists escape from hospital in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two alleged terrorists escaped from General Hospital with severe injuries two hours after admission on Saturday. They were identified as Hemayet, 28, and Rafique, 25, of village Barasat under Terokhedha thana of Khulna district. They escaped from the hospital as there was no policeman to guard them, a doctor on duty in the emergency ward said. Hemayet and Rafique were severely injured in an armed attack by their rivals on Saturday morning, Terokhedha police said.

DU authorities

COVERS PAGE 12 of the university were disrupted due to AL sponsored half-day hartal yesterday. The scheduled examinations were postponed. Although the Central Library remained open, the attendance of students was very thin. Besides, the JCD brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus in protest against the hartal. No untoward incident was, however, reported during the hartal hour on the campus.

Winter

COVERS PAGE 12 pressure in the Bay of Bengal and delayed arrival of the continental ridge. "The ridge brings the winter laced with cool air from the frosty Tundra in Siberia down Pakistan and India into Bangladesh," he mentioned. As the cool air blew across the country for the last three days, many people started to use warm clothes, blankets and quilts. Quilt makers were also having good business. People who live in the open or in slums in the city were seen warming themselves huddling around fire.

Road accidents

COVERS PAGE 12 about 45 succumbed to her injuries on way to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. Those admitted to the MMCH are Chandra Banu, 40, Motalab, 35, Joinuddin, 60, Rabiul, 35, Bakul, 22, Rashida Begum, Saiful Islam, Aklima, 30, Rupa, 20, Jalal, 32, Rasel, 20, Saiful Islam, 25, Javed Ali, 50, Farida Yesmin, 18, and Abdul Khaleque, 50. Our correspondent from Magura adds: Two persons were killed and another was injured in a road accident at Hoolingnagar on Magura-Dhaka highway yesterday. Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Jessor-bound truck collided head on with a Rajbari-bound private car at around 10:30 am. The dead were identified as Akter Hossain, BTB Engineer, Magura, and Khokon, driver of the car. The injured Kazi Sohel Ahmed is a sub assistant engineer of BTB, Magura.

Suicide blasts

COVERS PAGE 1 Palestinian cities Palestinian police were ordered to evacuate their stations. Meanwhile Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was due to rush home from Washington after a meeting with US President George W. Bush was brought forward to allow him to return and oversee Israel's response to the devastating bombing. Washington led an unequivocal chorus of international calls on Arafat to finally use his large, armed security services to jail extremists dismantle their organisations and live up to his promises to make 100 per cent effort against groups opposed to any peace with Israel. Zinni said he had spoken with the Palestinian leader immediately after the suicide blasts and "made absolutely clear that those responsible for planning and carrying out these attacks must be found and brought to justice." "This is an urgent task and there can be no delay nor excuses found for not acting decisively," said the retired Marine Corps general. Secretary of State Colin Powell, who dispatched Zinni and Assistant Secretary of State William Burns to the region Monday to break the cycle of bloodshed, also called Arafat and demanded "immediate action."



The Gulistan area during hartal hours yesterday morning.

PHOTO: STAR

PM's statement a blatant lie: Hasina

COVERS PAGE 1 various development works during AL rule, said there was upward trend in all the indicators of the economy and other sectors. "My question to her (prime minister) is, can she support her statement with proper statistics?"

She evaded repeated questions from newsmen about scrapping of the law providing for state security to family members of the Father of the Nation. She did not say anything also about yesterday's hartal called by her party protesting scrapping of the security law. Asked about assault of an AL lawmaker by the law enforcers yesterday, Hasina said, "Even before the four-party alliance took over power, their activists went for widespread terrorist activities, tortured opponents and members of the minority community. What they are doing is totally fascist." She went on, "The signs are not good in the first 50 days of the four-party alliance government."

However, the Opposition Leader thanked the prime minister for slapping a moratorium on the activities of the central committee of JCD, student front of the ruling BNP. "Although she (Khaleda) was forced to take the step as she couldn't control her (party's) student front's widespread terrorist activities, I thank her for realising the fact." When her attention was drawn to the Khaleda Zia's statement that if necessary, the government would frame laws to ban student politics, the AL chief said, "This is like cutting one's head for headache." About Khaleda's statement that

no one would be spared if found creating chaos in the name of politics, Hasina said "Such threats won't work. They (the government) won't be able to save themselves from public wrath. People don't care such threats."

BNP denies anti-hartal programmes

UNB, Dhaka

The ruling party made it clear that neither BNP nor any of its front organisations had any programme in the capital during yesterday's hartal called by Awami League. "But we came to know that some people chanted slogans near the Awami League central office in Bangabandhu Avenue area against hartal for mysterious reasons," said a press release issued by Emran Saleh Prince, assistant office secretary of BNP. Knowing about the matter, the BNP leaders instructed the authorities concerned to take "legal measure against the mysterious people."

"BNP or any of its front organisations has no relation with those people," said the release steering clear of the allegation of ruling party activists' anti-hartal role. Seeking their immediate arrest for their outlandish behaviour, BNP asked the people to unveil the motives behind the 'mysterious activities'.

Symbolic role for Zahir Shah's tidbits

COVERS PAGE 1 the interim council in Germany, Fawzi said. UN chief envoy Lakhdar Brahimi was prepared to travel immediately to Afghanistan to implement any deal. It was not yet clear when an international security force would be deployed, but Fawzi cautioned that it would take a little time to assemble. Who exactly will have seats on the interim council is unclear, but envoys of Zahir Shah are demanding a strong role for the exiled monarch.

Northern Alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani's role also was unclear, although members of the ex-king's delegation said he would have none. Rabbani is currently recognised by the United Nations as head of state. In Kabul, armored convoys of U.S. Marines patrolled the desert near Kandahar, the Taliban's last stronghold, yesterday as tribal warriors waited for a massive bombing attack to subside before resuming an assault on the city's airport. Refugees who fled Kandahar for neighbouring Pakistan said attacks by U.S. B-52 bombers and other

warplanes were heavy and relentless. "We're not in any rush," said Mohammad Anwar, an ally of Gul Agha, the former governor of Kandahar whose fighters held positions on a strategic road between Kandahar and nearby Spinboldak, another Taliban outpost targeted by airstrikes. Anti-Taliban forces claimed U.S. bombing raids had mistakenly destroyed one of their headquarters in Afghanistan's mountainous east early yesterday killing at least eight people. There was no immediate comment from U.S. officials.

More than 1,000 U.S. Marines are stationed at a desert base about 110 kilometers southwest of Kandahar. A spokesman for the U.S. Marine task force said the patrols had had no direct encounters with Taliban troops. As well as hitting positions around Kandahar in Afghanistan's south, air strikes pounded sites near Jalalabad. U.S. officials say both locations are possible hiding spots for prime terrorist suspect Osama bin Laden and members of his al-Qaida network.

The northern alliance's foreign minister, Abdullah, told reporters in Kabul he believed bin Laden was hiding in one of three provinces around Kandahar: Uruzgan, Zabul or Helmand. Sources said Taliban forces, as well as an undetermined number of Arab and other foreign Muslim fighters loyal to bin Laden, were moving from place to place around Kandahar to avoid airstrikes. "The Arabs want to fight to the death," said one man who identified himself only as Aminullah.

AFP from Paris adds: A group of 40 French troops arrived in Afghanistan Saturday, landing at the airport in the northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif, the French Defence Ministry announced. The group is the advanced party for a French force whose mission is "to secure the airport perimeter during work to repair the runway," the ministry said in a statement. Last month the full 60-strong French contingent arrived in southern Uzbekistan, which borders Afghanistan ahead of the deployment in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Under the existing laws and by administrative orders," Moudud told the House. He referred to a letter from the leader of the opposition informing the government about her scheduled trip to the United States between December 6 and January 3 next year. She also informed the House that the trip would cost the government Tk 78 lakh for her security purposes. The annulment of the law would save the national exchequer the additional expenditure, he added. The minister was also critical about yesterday's opposition-sponsored hartal in the city, saying that it was a shame to call hartal for an individual cause. Although the House has been facing lingering quorum crisis throughout the maiden session, the parliament yesterday witnessed the highest attendance since the first sitting on October 28. The speaker had to adjourn proceedings on November 29 when the number of lawmakers declined to 25 although presence of a minimum of 60 legislators is required to have quorum in the House.

State security law scrapped

COVERS PAGE 1 his proposal to send the bill to the Select Committee. But, the proposal was not moved as the lawmaker did not turn up at that time and the speaker went on to the next proceeding on the agenda. At one stage, the law minister rose to his feet and said, "Mr. Speaker, what's it?" showing his frustration at not being invited to speak on the bill. A visibly stunned speaker then repeated the procedure. However, Moudud was allowed to speak on the bill at the final stage of the passage of the bill. Describing the provisions of the Special Security Forces Ordinance, 1986, the law minister said the Act was designed only to provide security to the president and the prime minister, not to any individual. "By enacting a special law, the immediate past Awami League government abused the SSF Ordinance," he observed. Terming the law as ultra vires the constitution, Moudud said it was designed to manipulate the election process as the Awami League had sensed their defeat well ahead of the October 1 general election. "After repeal of the special law, the leader of the opposition would be provided with adequate security

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Shun anarchy: Khaleda

COVERS PAGE 1 providing state security to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana.

"Stop anarchy, join the parliament and discuss your problems here. We will extend all kinds of support to you," Khaleda, also the leader of the House, said. The prime minister also warned the ruling party members of stern action if they were engaged in creating law and order. "We have got the mandate to serve the people and not any individual. We will take action against the troublemakers irrespective of their political affiliations," said Khaleda, reiterating her pledge to free the country of terrorism.

In her 36-minute valedictory speech on the presidential address to the House before the new parliament's maiden session was pro-rogued, the prime minister announced that a bill seeking restoration of women's reserved seats in the House would be placed in the parliament's next session. However, the PM would not elaborate on the planned bill. If needs be, she told the House amidst cheers, her party would ban student politics in consultation with the lawmakers and people. The BNP chief referred to the suspension of activities of her party's student front Jatayatabadi Chhatra Dal following allegation of terrorism against it.

The prime minister assured the House of setting up special tribunals to try the acid throwers and providing employment opportunities to the acid victims. She also promised to restrict the sale of acid to check its abuse. Alleging misrule, unbridled corruption, nepotism and plundering of public wealth by the AL government, the prime minister commented: "The Awami League should have come to the parliament at least to make up for what they had done in the past five years. Instead, they called a hartal in the month of Ramadan although there was no real issue whatsoever."

Khaleda alleged the AL betrayed with the nation once again by calling yesterday's hartal in complete reversal of its earlier commitment that it would never go for such kind of agitation. "They talk tall but never act accordingly. That's why, people no more trust them."

She also accused the opposition party of betraying with the nation twice more earlier-- by contesting the national election in 1986 and by not keeping its election pledges while in power. Khaleda also accused the AL government of failing to address pressing national problems like poverty and unemployment, which

she said, worsened during its rule. "Prices of essentials had shot up and industrial production came to a halt. Price of electricity was raised nine times in the past five years," she said and promised developments in all sectors.

Dismissing criticism that the 60-member council of ministers she is heading would cost the government hugely, the prime minister said so many ministers were needed to serve the people better and ensure development. "Expenditure can be substantially reduced if corruption is checked. Besides, there is nothing wrong with having 60 ministers in a coalition government. Similar number of ministers was also there in the past," she said. A large council of ministers could be a burden only for a corrupt government, she added.

She was in favour of more recruitment in the police, BDR and the civil administration to ensure good governance.

The BNP chief repeated her allegations that the AL had ruined the economy, politicised the administration and victimised the qualified civil servants while promoting its own people. The AL government borrowed heavily leaving the commercial banks bankrupt.

"We don't want to do what the Awami League has done," she said and thanked former president Shahabuddin Ahmad for touching on some of the misdeeds of the AL in his address to the parliament. "They should have thanked the president for not highlighting all their misdeeds. Had he done so, the Awami League would have no ground to go back to the people."

She also came down heavily on it for making allegation of massive rigging in the October 1 general election only after losing it. The AL chief did not accept the people's verdict despite the fact that she had promised to do so on many occasions earlier.

The prime minister also censured the AL for "persecuting the Hindus and damaging temples as they vote for the four-party alliance".

Train derais

COVERS PAGE 12 Sadarpur and Rajapur on Chittagong-Sylhet and Dhaka-Chittagong sections caused disruption of train communications on these routes for long eleven and a half hours. Later, the communication was restored after two relief trains from Laksam and Akhaura removed the derailed compartments at around 12.15pm.

The cause of derailment could not be known as no high official of the railway was available for immediate comment.

asking him to shorten his speech. When Patal asked how much time he has been given, the speaker replied rather peculiarly, "Your time will be over whenever the light (on your microphone) will go off."

Speaking on the presidential address to parliament, the state minister termed former home minister Mohammad Nasim a thoroughly corrupt person. "But he would appear to be the greatest angel while speaking on the floor of the House."

Forest and Environment Minister Shahjahan Siraj found himself in an embarrassing position yesterday. He said 'no' while other members of the treasury bench had shouted 'yes' during the voice vote for passage of the bill seeking repeal of the law providing state security to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana. Acknowledging the only 'no' vote, the speaker announced 'yes' vote had won. But a roaring treasury bench insisted that the Chair had better not acknowledge the 'no' vote and that the bill was passed unanimously. But the Chair declined to accept the treasury bench contention saying he had heard someone saying 'no'.

At this stage, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda jumped to his feet, gestured at Siraj and said something, which was not audible in a noisy House. Siraj, who had probably said 'no' by mistake, refused to have done so. The speaker, however, was forced to ignore the 'no' vote and say that the bill was passed unanimously.

In a rather awkward attempt to have fun, Speaker Siraj called Land Minister M. Shamsul Islam a feudal lord. "You are the feudal lord of Bangladesh, Mr. Shamsul Islam," he said while giving him the floor.

Shafiqul

COVERS PAGE 1 secretary was vacant since November 19 following retirement of Syed Marghub Mursheed. Since the retirement of Marghub Mursheed, some senior secretaries started hectic lobbying for the post but the government did not appoint any of those for their alleged controversial role during the tenure of the immediate past Awami League government. Sources in ruling BNP said the government felt embarrassed when some top bureaucrats who will go on retirement soon started lobbying for the post. Moreover, the government found none of them "reliable".