

'Restoration of law & order needed before UZ polls'

UNB, Dhaka

Underlining the importance of peaceful holding of upazila election, delegations of Krishak Sramik Janata League and left-leaning 11-party alliance yesterday told the Election Commission that restoration of law and order is needed before the election.

Exchanging views in separate meetings with the delegations, Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed apprised the leaders about the commission's preparation to hold the upazila polls.

The Krishak Sramik Janata League delegation, led by Bangabir Quader Siddiqui MP, told the CEC that the Election Commission did not need to be hasty in holding the election.

They suggested deployment of army ahead of the upazila election to ensure maximum participation of voters.

The delegation members also included party general secretary Adv Fazlur Rahman and central leaders Anwar Hossain Pahari Bir Pratik, Biswajit Nandi and Kamaluddin Ahmed.

The 11-party leaders, who met the CEC later in the afternoon, suggested quick holding of the upazila election which, they said, would ensure real representation of the people in local tiers of the government.

They were also of the view that the present law and order situation needed to be improved for holding the local-body election in a peaceful manner.

Voicing concern over violence against the minorities after the October 1 election, the 11-party leaders said peaceful holding of

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Taliban vow

FROM PAGE 1

Northern Alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani, in Kabul, has appeared at odds with even his own faction's delegation in Bonn in recent days, but yesterday said he would accept any one of four possible nominees to lead an interim administration.

Rabbani's spokesman named the candidates as Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun royalist, former President Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, former Justice Minister Abdul Sattar Sirat, who is an ethnic Uzbek, and Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, a Pashtun spiritual leader.

Rabbani, whose forces recaptured Kabul last month after being driven out by the Taliban in 1996, has come under intense international pressure not to block the efforts of the Bonn conference to agree a power-sharing deal.

Western diplomats, always in the wings to remind the Afghans billions of dollars in reconstruction aid rest on a deal, said haggling over posts could take several more days.

"There is going to be a big fight about all this," one Western envoy said. "Quite a lot of people are digging in now. It could even be Thursday or Friday."

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 4		5-11 pm
Dec 5	6-27 am	

Prayer Timings		
Dec 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-01	5-07
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-20
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

HIV/AIDS infection

Ctg most vulnerable but no facilities for tests

ATAUL GANI SUMON, Ctg

Though people of the port city of Chittagong are 'most vulnerable to HIV infection', there are no facilities in any of the hospitals or clinics in the city for HIV/AIDS tests.

Being the premier port city and commercial capital of the country, Chittagong is considered as the most 'danger-prone area' of the country as far as spread of HIV/AIDS is concerned due to access of foreigners who come here for trade and business purposes from different countries by air and waterways.

About 34 'full blown' AIDS patients have so far been detected in the city, seven of whom are foreign fishermen who were arrested. Twelve of them including four foreigners have died so far, medical sources said.

The first AIDS case in Chittagong was detected in 1992. In an audit manual, Mohammad Nasirul Haq, co-ordinator of the Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum, recently said being a port city, Chittagong is most vulnerable to spread of HIV.

About 1500 vessels come to the Chittagong port every year and with them also come about 75,000 foreign crew. Moreover, many people come back to the city from the Middle East, Myanmar and India through the border at the end of their stay abroad. When they come back to the country they do not go through any test for HIV in the border. India and Myanmar have the highest rate of HIV infection after Thailand and

Cambodia in the southeast Asian region. There are about 30 to 35 lakh HIV/AIDS patients in India and over two per cent of the pregnant women there have AIDS.

Prof. AQM Sirajul Islam, head of the department of skin and sex diseases at Chittagong Medical College Hospital, at a seminar here recently said most of the HIV/AIDS patients in Bangladesh live aboard and mostly hail from Sylhet and Chittagong districts.

There are 182 people 'full blown' AIDS patients in the country at present while 21,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS, according to a health ministry sources. The demographic information on the 41 per cent of HIV/AIDS patients is not available. Most of the HIV positive cases are sex workers, people who have contracted sexually transmitted diseases, transport workers, housewives and children.

According to a national HIV surveillance report prepared in 1998-99, the most vulnerable groups are sex workers in brothels, floating prostitutes, transport drivers and males having sex-related diseases.

The rate of HIV infection is on the increase among persons addicted to drugs, especially those who take drugs using syringe and sex workers at the brothels. City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury recently announced at a seminar to set up a modern diagnostic centre for HIV/AIDS test.



A delegation of US-Bangladesh Business Council met former PM and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence yesterday.

Printing of census questionnaires Probe into alleged BBS corruption begins

STAR REPORT

The Bureau of Anti Corruption (BAC) has started investigation into allegations of corruption and irregularities in Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in printing questionnaires for the Economic Census 2001.

Sources said BAC has sent a letter to the Secretary of Statistics Division of BBS asking him to supply within 10 days documents relating to printing of the Economic Census, a part of the Fourth Population Census.

It is alleged that work order for printing of one crore questionnaires for the economic census was given to a private printing press against a requirement of only 12 lakh questionnaires. It caused a loss of about Tk 2 crore 94 lakh to the government, sources claimed.

A section of BBS officials in connivance with a press owner arranged a tender bidding in which

only one press was found "responsive" and the rate was fixed at Tk 2.38 per questionnaire. Three other presses which participated in the bidding were "disqualified" though one of those had quoted a price as low as Tk 1.10 per questionnaires, it was alleged.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Planning has also ordered formation of a three-member committee to investigate alleged corruption and irregularities in BBS, sources in the ministry said.

They said the committee will be formed with AKM Fazlul Karim, Director General of IMED, as convenor. Two other members will be Asad Ahmed, Deputy Secretary (Administration), Statistical Division and MAbul Kasem.

The committee will be given 30 days to submit its report.

The committee will also probe alleged embezzlement of funds for the printing work, the sources said. The BBS had procured a modern

wave printing press, five Optical Mark Reader (OMR) and four Optical Character Reader (OCR) machines and imported 300 tonnes of paper for printing the questionnaires.

But the facilities were not utilised. Instead, the printing job was given to a private firm.

It is alleged that the questionnaires printed by the press were not appropriate and so could not be run through the OCR and OMR machines. This and other alleged irregularities delayed publication of the census report by over six months, the sources claimed.

The delay also raised questions about the transparency and authenticity of the census report.

The census was done in January and the report was due to be published in March. But it was published in mid-September and there were inconsistencies in it, the sources said.

Businessman shot by extortionists dies at hospital

STAR REPORT

Md Ramzan Ali, who was shot by extortionists at his shop at Sukrabadin the city, died yesterday after fighting for life for 14 days.

The 35-year-old businessman, one of the owners of Bikrampur Mishtanno Bhandar, was on artificial respiration at the Intensive Care Unit at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital at Dhanmondi.

On November 19, Elin and Monir, two associates of Abdul Latif, Ward Commissioner and President of Dhanmondi thana unit of BNP, went to Ramzan's shop at about 2:30 pm.

They demanded Tk 20,000 immediately and also wanted to know when another Tk 10 lakh would be given as toll, Ramzan's brother Asgar Ali told The Daily Star earlier.

Ramzan was sitting at the cash counter of the shop. As he could not

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Special Security Act OC suspended for accepting GD

UNB, Gazipur

The Officer-in-Charge of Sreepur thana has been suspended following filing of a general diary by Awami League leader Adv Rahmat Ali, MP, and the hartal and anarchy that followed there.

Police sources said OC Shaha Alam Bakaul was suspended for accepting the GD without consulting police super Makbul Hossain Bhuiyan. They said the suspension order came after the SP visited the thana yesterday.

Ruling BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal observed hartal and pelted brickbats at Sreepur thana Sunday after the filing of the GD against the withdrawal of lifelong state security for Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana.

In Kapsasia, local JCD ransacked the UNO office on Sunday following filing of a similar GD by AL leader Tanjim Ahmed Sohel, MP.

Toll collection: 3 policemen closed in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three police sergeants were 'closed' yesterday for alleged toll extortion and punitive action would be taken against them if the allegation is proved, sources said.

The traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police took this step against sergeants Belayet, Mokbul and Quamrul following allegations of toll extortion and harassment of people by them at New Ispahani intersection in Khulshi thana on Sunday.

The three police officials, allegedly in a bid to extort toll, abruptly stopped a Chittagong bound truck at the busy intersection. As a result, a microbus coming from behind hit it.

The driver and some passengers of the microbus were injured.

This made local people agitated and they beat the three sergeants and set ablaze the motorbike of one of them.

The incident embarrassed the police administration and it formed a one-member probe body comprising Assistant Commissioner (Traffic) Anwar Hossain to investigate the matter.

The sources mentioned that Sergeant Belayet, who was one of the 33 police personnel transferred from the port city about two years ago for toll extortion and various irregularities, recently managed to come back.

Meanwhile, illegal toll collection from vehicles at almost all entry points to the city by a section of traffic police personnel is going on unabated. This evil practice greatly increases before the Eids.



President Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday made a courtesy call on former president Shahabuddin Ahmed at the latter's Lalmatia residence in the city yesterday.

JS roundup

A throwback to the end of the preceding one

NAZMUL ASHRAF

The start of the eighth Jatiya Sangsad has been a throwback to the end of the preceding one as far as attendance of the lawmakers and nature of business are concerned. Absence of quorum coupled with protracted proceedings that characterised the last days of the seventh parliament dogged the just-concluded maiden session of the new parliament.

There has been an unfortunate reversal of role by the opposition in the two consecutive parliaments. The last parliament had gone about its business without the main opposition BNP for two years into its expiry. The present one has begun its journey with the largest opposi-

tion Awami League (AL) boycotting the proceedings from the very first day.

However, the role of Jatiya Party (JP) remained unchanged although there has been a qualitative change in the status of the party. The Anwar Hossain Manju-led faction of JP had continued being loyal to the AL government while the pro-Ershad JP followed the BNP's suit and stayed out of the House in the last two years of the seventh parliament. But the incumbent parliament saw the third faction of JP in the treasury bench while the two other factions that attended the last session are still loyal to the government.

And, the lone Krishak Sramik Janata Dal lawmaker and six independent ones sitting in the opposi-

tion bench were no exception. They, too, appeared to be obedient to the ruling coalition.

Members of the 216-strong treasury bench seemed to have lost interests in the business transacted during the new parliament's opening session that had 19 working days. In all but the first two sittings, the House suffered heavily due to lack of quorum.

The quorum crisis delayed the scheduled start of the sittings up to more than an hour. Once started, the sittings continued even without quorum, as the lawmakers preferred to close their eyes to the crisis. Only once did a deputy minister bring the quorum crisis to the notice of the

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Clash over waqf estate: Several hurt in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several people were injured yesterday after a clash between two groups of people at Eskaton in the city's Ramna area over the Faizunnesa Waqf estate of Dalipara in Pallabi.

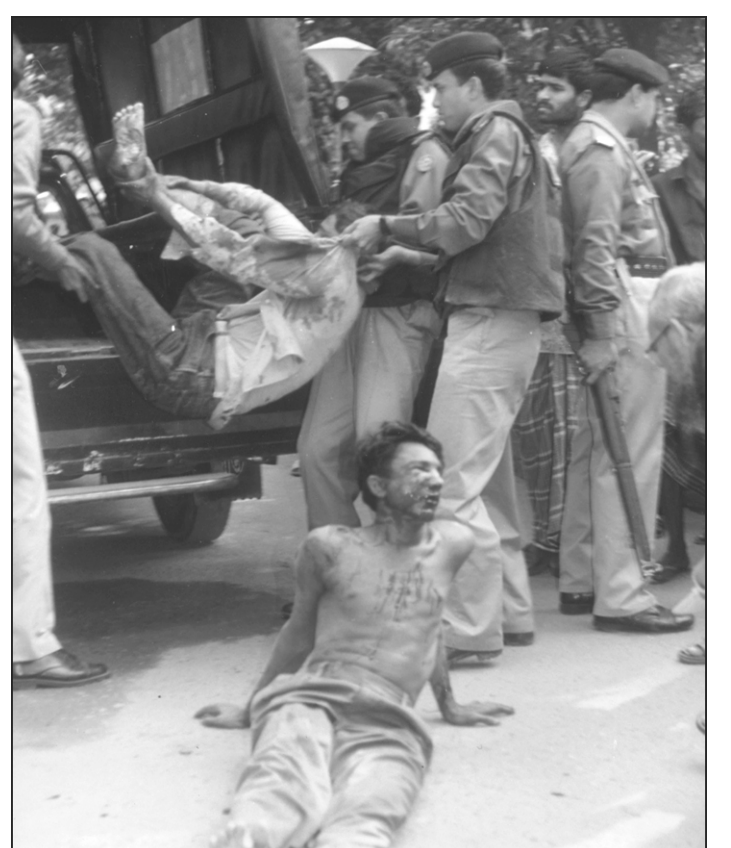
Two of the injured were identified as Mohammad Ali and Selim Haider. Police arrested Selim, who sustained bullet injuries, and ten others for their alleged involvement in the clash that took place at about 12:40 p.m.

Sources said, the head office of Faizunnesa Waqf estate was scheduled to settle down some disputes among Azad Mollah and Abul Kalam Ansari, motaali (caretaker) of the estate yesterday.

Ansari arrived at the Eskaton office with several hundred hired people at noon and locked into an altercation with Mollah's group. The Ansari group then started chasing the Mollah group and at one stage Selim Haider (of Ansari group) took out his gun and opened fire.

Police arrived at the scene and

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Police arrested 11 persons from the spot after two rival groups clashed at Eskaton over a Waqf estate in the city's Pallabi area.

Mob beats up four muggers in Ramna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of four alleged muggers was seriously beaten up by a mob after they attempted to snatch valuables from rickshaw passengers at Dilu Road in city's Ramna area yesterday morning.

Police later arrested the gang. The arrested four are Mohammad Hasan, 20, Nasir Hossain, 20, Shajahan Ali, 22, and Shorab Hossain, 22.

The incident took place as they gang attempted to snatch valuables from rickshaw passengers. The passengers raised a hue and cry and local people came to their rescue, police and hospital sources said.

One of them hurled crackers at the mob as they chased the gangsters, injuring Hasan in the cracker blast. The mob caught all four, who had two bombs and a revolver in their possession, and beat them up.

Police sent the injured to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). A case was filed with Ramna police station.

Public and private vessels Insurance coverage to passengers may be made mandatory

RAFIQ HASAN

The government is planning to make it mandatory for all public and private bodies operating passenger vessels to provide insurance coverage to passengers.

When enacted, a proposed law in this regard would ensure compensation for family members of passengers in the event of their death in an accident.

Unlike passengers travelling by road, who are insured against risk of accident, those travelling by river do not have any such coverage.

Several hundred people die every year in launch accidents and their family members hardly receive any compensation from the government or the company due to absence of insurance laws.

The government initiative followed the demand by Bangladesh Insurance Association (BIA) for a separate law for ensuring passenger safety on various vessels plying the vast waterways of the country.

The directorate of shipping forwarded a proposal in this regard to the ministry of shipping in September this year. The ministry is currently examining the pros and cons of the proposal, sources said.

A seven-member committee headed by Masud Ahmed, a deputy secretary of the ministry, was also formed to make recommendations in this regard after consulting all quarters concerned.

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Police yesterday did not allow opposition Awami League to hold a protest rally. Photos show police cordon the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday. They also dispersed the activists when they tried to stage rally there.