

The Daily Star

COMMITTED TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XI No. 44

DHAKA WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 5, 2001

FALGUN 16, 1407 BS

ZELHAJ 3, 1421 HJRI

16 PAGES PRICE: Tk 6.00

www.dailystarnews.com

Bill to ban student politics and hartal likely in next JS session

Curbing trade union activities also under review

REZAUL KARIM

The government is examining the legal aspects of banning both hartal and student politics and will soon open dialogues with political parties, student bodies, civil society members and other quarters concerned to reach a broader consensus on the issue.

Necessary bills are expected to be placed in the second session of the Jatiya Sangsad on completion of the dialogues, competent sources said.

The government is also examining ways of controlling militant trade union activities.

The policymakers and lawmakers of the BNP and the four-party alliance

have already reached a consensus about banning hartal and student politics and are determined to implement the decision within a couple of months.

Sources said the government believes that such bans would increase its popularity as well as help the ruling party run the country smoothly, bring stability, improve law and order and restore normal academic atmosphere in the educational institutions.

BNP insiders said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is keen on banning hartal and student politics.

Both Khaleda and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Arafat escapes missile attack

Israeli air strikes on: 4 Palestinians killed

AP, Ramallah

Israel unleashed air strikes yesterday in retaliation for Palestinian suicide bombings, and three missiles hit 50 metres from Yasser Arafat's office as the Palestinian leader worked inside. Arafat was not injured, and Israel said he was not the target of the strike.

In the Gaza Strip, two Palestinians, a 15-year-old boy and a member of the security forces were killed in an Israeli missile attack on a security installation, doctors said.

The rockets sent hundreds of school children running for cover, and doctors said more than 100 people were injured, many of them youngsters.

The air strikes against eight security installations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip came just

hours after Israel's Cabinet branded Arafat's government a supporter of terrorism and singled out two organisations affiliated with the Palestinian leader as terror groups -- the Tanzim militia and Force 17, a branch of the Palestinian security forces. Three Force 17 buildings, two in Gaza and one in the West Bank, were among the offices hit by Israeli missiles.

The decision prompted ministers from the moderate Labor Party to walk out of the Cabinet meeting in protest, and some Labor leaders hinted that the party might quit the coalition government.

Arafat, speaking to CNN after the air strike on his compound, accused Israel of trying to undermine his efforts to combat terrorism. The Palestinian Authority has rounded up some 130 members of the militant Islamic Jihad and Hamas

groups in response to weekend suicide bombings and shootings on Israelis that killed 26 people.

"They (the Israelis) don't want me to succeed and for this he (Sharon) is escalating his military activities against our people, against our towns, against our cities, against our establishments," Arafat said. "He doesn't want a peace process to start."

Sharon on Monday declared a "war on terror" in response to the recent attacks by Islamic militants. Israel's reprisals have been largely aimed at symbols of Arafat's rule and have effectively grounded the Palestinian leader in Ramallah.

On Monday, Israeli missiles damaged Arafat's three helicopters parked near his seaside office in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 5		5-11 pm
Dec 6	6-28 am	

Prayer Timings

Dec 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-02	5-08
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-20
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

Why gas export is not a viable option for Bangladesh
Badrul Imam

Culture 16

Costume jewellery to win you over

BNP may invite AL to join JS session

NAZRUL ISLAM

Despite the growing political tension apparently triggered by the government's "hard attitude" towards the Opposition, the ruling BNP is likely to formally invite the main opposition Awami League to join the New Year Session of the Jatiya Sangsad, expected to begin in mid-January.

But the AL that was reportedly willing to join the parliament's second session has "hardened its position" owing to "rising acts of repression on its leaders and workers", party insiders said.

"We now prefer tougher street agitation against the coalition government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia," a senior AL leader told this correspondent yesterday.

"Opposition's participation in parliament sitting is subject to the ruling party's attitude towards us," Abdul Hamid Advocate, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in parliament said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Anniversary of Suhrawardy's death today

UNB, Dhaka

The 38th anniversary of death of Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy will be observed today.

President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia issued separate mes

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Conspiracy against intellectuals alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some frontline cultural activists have alleged that a conspiracy was out there against the country's intellectuals and cultural activists who are involved in upholding the spirit of Liberation War and democracy.

They protested the propaganda allegedly spread by The Daily Inqilab, a Bangla daily, at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) auditorium yesterday.

At the press conference, Prof. Muntasir Mamun of the Dhaka University read out a written statement in which the daily was termed "a trader of religion".

Since the arrest of Shahriar Kabir (a noted writer and columnist), the daily has been involved in tarnishing our reputation and expressing hatred to us in the reports published almost everyday.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Palestinians flee Israeli air strikes on security headquarters (background) north of Gaza City yesterday. Two Palestinians, a member of security forces and a student, were killed and more than 100 were wounded in the attacks.

Stop migration of Hindus to India: Vajpayee

Restore faith of minorities, Saifur told

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee yesterday said the faith of minority Hindus in Bangladesh has been "shaken" by "atrocities" on them in that country and asked the BNP-led government to stop the migration of Hindus to India.

Vajpayee raised the issue of attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh during a 45-minute meeting with the visiting Finance Minister Saifur Rahman at the Prime Minister's official residence in New Delhi yesterday afternoon, diplomatic sources said.

Referring to the attacks, Vajpayee told Saifur that "the minorities' faith has been shaken and it has to be restored and action has to be taken against those responsible for

the atrocities as otherwise the whole lot of minorities will migrate to India," according to the sources.

Responding to the Indian Prime Minister's concern, Saifur Rahman conceded that there were some "sporadic incidents" of attacks against minorities but alleged the "whole thing was contrived by Awami League against BNP."

Saifur told Vajpayee that Bangladesh government has set up a high-powered committee to probe the incidents and its report would be made public. The Bangladesh Finance Minister conveyed to Vajpayee the greetings of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her desire to meet him during the SAARC summit in Kathmandu early

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Ministry reviews BTTB's extra phone installation

STAR REPORT

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications is reviewing Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board's (BTTB) bargain with a Canadian firm to get additional telephone lines.

The BTTB floated a tender in August 2000 to install 50,000 telephones in five divisional headquarters. While finalising this deal with Nortel Networks of Canada two months ago, the BTTB demanded 66,000 additional telephones at no

extra cost by reconfiguring the bid costs.

After a successful negotiation in October, Nortel agreed to install 116,000 telephones without increasing its total price of US\$ 15 million for 50,000 telephones. The BTTB issued a Letter of Intent to the company which was the lowest bidder for the work. But the project suddenly came to a standstill since early last month following instructions from the higher authorities.

When contacted, BTTB Chairman AFMNH Chowdhury told

The Daily Star that the telecommunication minister instructed the board to send contractual documents of all telecom deals signed during the rule of the Awami League government to the ministry for review.

Meanwhile, the secretary to the telecom ministry summoned the BTTB officials Monday and questioned the legality of increasing the phone lines without the government's approval, sources said.

The BTTB officials explained that no such approval is required while

increasing the bill of quantity without escalating the project cost. The secretary, however, was not satisfied by the BTTB explanation, sources said.

"The government is sending a wrong signal," said a BTTB official. He said as the project cost was not escalated in adding 66,000 additional telephones from Nortel, the authorities should have appreciated the BTTB's negotiation skill.

Sources in Nortel said they agreed to entertain the BTTB

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

ACI
Iftar

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Dec	Sehri	Iftar
19	5		5-14
20	6	5-03	5-14
21	7	5-04	5-15