

AI urges govt

FROM PAGE 1
in October, the Hindu community was targeted, reportedly by supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for their alleged support for the rival Awami League.

The backlash after the elections was severe and systematic. The press in Bangladesh reported that the attackers ransacked the houses of the Hindus, beat the family members and looted their properties.

"Successive governments have let down the Hindus in Bangladesh and the last two months show exactly how vulnerable they are. The government must live up to its responsibility to protect all of its citizens and it must do it now," Amnesty International said.

On November 5, a gang of about 25 youths reportedly attacked Hindu homes at Daspara village of Mithanala union in Mirirsarai Upazila. Sunil Das Sandhu, 28, was hacked to death and 16 others were injured. The gang ransacked and looted houses, dragged family members out of their homes and beat them up. Police arrested 12 people but it is not known if they have been charged.

AI in its report said more than one hundred Hindu women are believed

to have been raped, some of them in front of their husbands or fathers. A number of girls have been abducted. One girl was reportedly abducted from her home at Razarchor, Barisal, after the attackers demanded a large sum of money which her family could not pay. They also molested the girl's mother and aunt.

Hundreds of Hindu families have fled across the border into India in fear of their lives. A prominent journalist, Shahrir Kabir, went to India to speak with Hindu families who had fled, but was arrested on his return, the report added.

The authorities claimed that his videos contained "objectionable and misleading statements that are detrimental to communal harmony and subversive of the state" and he was involved in "furnishing the image of Bangladesh and of the government in the outside world". These grounds however do not relate to any specific penal charges, it said.

The government has reportedly set up a committee to investigate the attacks on the Hindu community but Amnesty International is not aware of any progress it has made, the report observed.

BAC seeks PM's signal

FROM PAGE 1
under the pressure of high officials of the Bureau just to make the Prime Minister's Office happy," he said.

He added that because of pressure to complete investigation in a short time, the task forces could not pay attention to all the aspects of the allegations.

Meanwhile, sources said the defence department is not providing necessary support to the Bureau in the investigation and filing of case on corruption charges in the Mig-29 purchase.

One source said that the Bureau did not take statements of the accused at the level of former AL ministers but took statements of bureaucrats linked with the issues.

The Bureau is likely to file a dozen more corruption cases against prominent AL leaders.

It has completed primary investigation against Sheikh Hasina and former AL ministers who include Amir Hossain Amu, Shah AMS Kibria, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir and Prof Rafiqul Islam.

In its investigation, BAC found the basis of some allegations against seven or eight ministers of the immediate past Awami League government. The investigation was mainly limited to scrutiny of files concerned. Upon getting approval for secondary level investigation, BAC took statements of the persons involved in corruption charges. On the basis of preliminary findings and statements of the accused, it has completed the First Information Report (FIR).

The source said that the Bureau did not take statements of the accused at the level of former AL ministers but took statements of bureaucrats linked with the issues.

The Bureau is likely to file a dozen more corruption cases against prominent AL leaders.

It has completed primary investigation against Sheikh Hasina and former AL ministers who include Amir Hossain Amu, Shah AMS Kibria, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir and Prof Rafiqul Islam.

Major election pledges

FROM PAGE 12
of the two electronic media is likely to be given by next two years, he added.

The BNP sources said the government is determined to scrap the SPA and PSA, and necessary bills will be placed in the second session of the Jatiya Sangsad. The PSA will be scrapped completely, while some essential articles of the SPA will be kept alive under a new law, the sources added.

The government has planned to introduce a new law to hold on to some of the essential articles of the SPA (1974), like smuggling and extortion, but there will be no repressive article in the new law, the sources said.

Official sources said the law and the home ministries and other offices concerned are working towards scrapping the two "controversial and repressive" laws.

The law ministry is also examining the task left unfinished by the immediate past caretaker government on separation of the judiciary from the executive. A bill on this will also be placed in the next parliamentary session.

The government will soon hold talks with political parties, professional bodies, the civil society and women's organisations on the modality of restoration of women's

reserved seats in the Jatiya Sangsad. The number of reserved seats is likely to double.

An acceptable modality of the reserved seats will be placed and passed in the second session of the JS, said a senior minister.

The government will take up massive socioeconomic development programmes in rural areas across the country in a bid to restore the economic activity up at the village level.

Government policymakers said that the government would take up a series of development programmes and invest in the social sectors within a month to revamp the country's economy now in tatters.

About the information technology (IT) sector, he said the government would set IT institutes and training centres in each district and at divisional headquarters before long.

Besides, he said computers will be given to two high schools in each thana sooner, gradually followed by other schools. One teacher from each school will be trained up under a government initiative. The government is planning to make computer education compulsory in college and school curricula.

Meanwhile, the government, which has already instructed the education ministry to introduce free

BAC primarily investigated the purchase of frigate, different power projects approved under suppliers' credit schemes and different projects under the ministries of food, shipping and telecom.

The Bureau is also seeking the PM's approval to begin secondary level investigation against former LGRD minister Zillur Rahman, state minister for shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, state minister for jute AK Faizul Haq and deputy minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

Garment unit

FROM PAGE 12
chemicals worth Tk. 4.5 crore, and 159 Australian cows in the dairy farm.

The terrorists were in the factory till filing of the report at about 1:30 pm as police failed to drive them out.

Four of the injured ANS member Nazim, 28, Ashraf, 22, Rafiqul Islam, 28, and Shahidul Islam, 25, were admitted to a local hospital. A case was filed.

Dhaka-Ctg phone link disrupted as fibre-optic cable damaged

UNB, Dhaka

Direct telephone link between the capital and the port city has been disrupted following damage to the Dhaka-Chittagong fiber-optic cable on Tuesday afternoon.

As an alternative, a limited number of circuits of Chittagong Trunk Exchange have been kept operative with the help of microwave linkage.

The Comilla Trunk Exchange, however, remained completely inoperative. "Steps have been taken to make some circuits in Comilla operative with the help of microwave linkage," said a T&T news release yesterday.

Contractors of Roads and Highways Department damaged the cable while working at Baushia in Gazaria upazila, it said.

Engineers and technicians of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board have started repairing the cable.

Taheruddin

FROM PAGE 1
(Retd) Rashid, Col (Retd) Syed Farukur Rahman, Lt Col (Retd) Sultan Shahrir Rashid Khan, Maj (Retd) Dalim, Maj (Retd) Badar Chowdhury, Maj (Retd) Bazul Huda, Maj (Retd) Ahmad, Maj (Retd) Sharful Hossain, Col (Retd) Aziz Pasha, Cap (Retd) Abdul Majed, Maj (Retd) Mohiuddin, Lt (Retd) Kismat, Lt (Retd) Nazmul Ansar, Lt (Retd) Halim and Risaldar (Retd) Moslem. Taheruddin Thakur is also an accused in the Jail Killing Case.

Laden

FROM PAGE 12
Karzai, the man named at talks in Bonn to head a post-Taliban government, told Reuters his men were on the outskirts of Kandahar, the southern birthplace of the headline Islamic movement which swept to power in Kabul in 1996.

"We are continuing our movement towards Kandahar and let's hope we can be there as soon as possible," he added.

Karzai said he was negotiating with some of the city's defenders. "Some Taliban officials are calling us. We're trying to give them as much time as possible. We want to prevent bloodshed," he said. "Civilians should not suffer."

The envoy explained in details the formation of the US legislative assembly and its function, and judiciary system in the US.

They laid emphasis on improvement of relationship between the two countries.

Parliamentary Secretary Kazi Raquibuddin Ahmed was present during the meeting.

AL to resist

FROM PAGE 1
hartal. "No matter whether we call hartal or not, we would protect the right to call hartal," he said.

Meanwhile, the left-leaning parties are also disturbed by the government move.

Talking to The Daily Star, leader of the 11-Party Alliance Mujahidul Islam Selim yesterday said the 'leftists' would resist such a move.

He recalled that both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia spoke for and against hartal in the past, depending on which side of the bench they were in.

"I think they've (AL and BNP) expired their respective quotas of hartal. If necessary, hartal may be banned for them, but not for the toiling mass," Selim said in a lighter vein.

"They have called so many hartals in the past that this has lost its effectiveness as a weapon for waging democratic movement," said Selim.

Selim, also the general-secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and a leader of the Left Democratic Front (LDF), blamed the AL and the BNP for abusing this mode of movement.

UZ polls

FROM PAGE 1
insiders, the government is now keen to hold the overdue elections to the three city corporations once the legal complexities are over. After the city corporation elections, the government would go for upazilla polls, they added.

The EC invited 10 political parties to discuss the Upazilla Parishad elections. The ruling BNP and its coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh opted for elections some time in March next year. They, however, informed the EC that they would give their final opinion later.

Opposition Awami League has ruled out elections at this moment as it said its leaders and activists were being attacked and harassed by the ruling party across the country.

Two factions of the Jatiya Party led by former president HM Ershad and former minister Anwar Hossain Manju also suggested an improvement of the election atmosphere by restoring the law and order situation. The left leaning 11-party alliance opposed elections at this moment while the Islami Okiya Jote felt that these could be held late next year.

Former President HM Ershad introduced the Upazilla Parishad in 1985 for administrative decentralisation. But it was repealed by the BNP government in 1991. After assumption of power, the Awami League revived the local government body in 1997.

Since the revival of the Upazilla system, elections to the vital local government bodies could not be held.

Gas export

FROM PAGE 12

resources, they added.
Prof. Nurul Islam in his paper said the use of indigenous natural gas must be ensured for long-term energy security of Bangladesh before considering export.

Dispelling the 'propaganda' about Bangladesh having huge mineral resources, he said the country has hardly any surplus gas for export after meeting domestic requirement.

Dr. Aftab Alam said the country has only 11.04 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of recoverable gas reserve, which is not enough to meet the domestic demand if the aim is to reach power to every citizen.

"Only 17 per cent people are now getting power supply and we need at least 15 TCF of gas to reach power

to all," he pointed out.

Prof. Abul Barakat said the main purpose of the IOCs is to 'loot our mineral resources, depriving millions of people of the benefit of the natural gift'. He said those who suggest gas export always show lower domestic demand.

Prof. Khalilur Rahman also criticised a section of bureaucrats, intellectuals, politicians and economists for fanning the idea of gas export.

He said these vested quarters have launched a propaganda with distorted information about the gas reserve and domestic requirement.
Prof. Abdur Rouf said there is no scope for gas export right now. He demanded a referendum before taking such a decision on gas export.

Abul Bashar said the initiative to gas export should be resisted at any cost.

Haji Selim

FROM PAGE 1
phone set, chair, wall clock, charger light, ceiling fan and Tk 16,000 in cash. Later the complainant went to Tejgaon thana to file a case in this connection but police refused to register it due to an unidentified reason.

The complainant also alleged that he could not try to take legal action against the accused as Haji Selim was the MP of the then ruling party.

The magistrate Abdus Salam Miah directed the officer-in-charge (OC) of Tejgaon thana to take the complaint as a regular case after an investigation into the matter.

Haji flights

FROM PAGE 1
thing is happening in the case of maintaining engines.

Now one leasing company has threatened to take legal action and another has said it would impound the aircraft if it has leased to Biman.

If they go ahead with their threats and the engine servicing company also takes action for delayed payment, Biman faces serious dislocation in running its international flights.

That would have its effect also on Hajj flights making it uncertain, sources said.

"It also means that foreign airlines would have a bonanza, carrying the Hajj pilgrims , leaving the national carrier to lose its planned profit of Tk 23 crore from Hajj flights," one source pointed out.

PM: public safety

FROM PAGE 12
shopping plazas to ensure safety of shoppers and shopkeepers.

Khaleda Zia ordered appropriate measures so homebound people don't face any kind of harassment in ticketing or by snatchers and extortionists at bus and launch terminals and railway stations and could go to their homes in a festive mood.

She also asked the police to increase patrol on the highways for ensuring safe journey of the people.

The meeting reviewed overall law and order situation of the country.

Home Secretary Sadaat Hussain and IGP Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury told the meeting that the country's law and order situation improved in the last couple of days with lesser incidence of crimes committed.

After the meeting the prime minister discussed with the ministers and secretaries about the city's menacing traffic jam.

The meeting was informed that DMP has made some recommendations in removing traffic congestion which are being examined by the authorities concerned.

The prime minister underscored the need for making some city roads one-way and suggested that market owners arrange parking facilities to avoid congestion in front of shopping centers.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar, Cabinet Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan, Principal Secretary to the PM Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui and Law Secretary Afzal Hossain Ahmed were present.

Bodo faction

FROM PAGE 12
under the provisions of the constitution if the Assam state cabinet endorses such a proposition.

We are soon going to give the cabinet nod for creating the council that could help usher in an era of peace and hope in the Bodo-dominated areas," said one state minister who declined to be identified.

Democracy Day

FROM PAGE 1
hundreds of people embraced martyrdom across the country.

President Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in separate messages paid glowing tributes to the martyrs.

On this auspicious occasion, they greeted the countrymen and urged all to work for welfare of the people by strengthening democracy achieved through blood and tears.

Political parties, socio-cultural organisations and student bodies have chalked out elaborate programmes to mark the day. The programs include rallies, discussions, processions and cultural soires.

President A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury in a message ahead of the day said it's the duty of all to ensure welfare of the people by making democracy, achieved through immeasurable sacrifice and struggle, effective and stronger.

"The day has great significance in the struggle for democracy. On this day in 1990, the then govern-

ment in the face of vigorous movement by democracy-loving people handed over power to the non-party caretaker government formed in line with the modalities of three alliances," he said.

On this auspicious occasion, the President greeted the country's democracy-loving people.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon all to work together for consolidating democracy, accelerating national development and ensuring people's welfare and prosperity.

"Our concerted efforts will uphold the country's independence and consolidate democracy," she said in her message.

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the 1990 democratic movement.

"Let democracy take permanent shape and Bengali nation be freed from the defeated forces of 1971," she said in a message on the occasion.

Faulty vehicles

FROM PAGE 12
responsible for the air pollution in the city was banned in 1992 also, but that did not yield any result, the sources said.

By imposing such a ban again, the BRTA has not only admitted existence of thousands of faulty vehicles, they said.

When contacted, some transport workers said they fail to understand how such unauthorised vehicles could ply the city roads and why BRTA remained inactive so long before issuance of the circular on November 15.

Owners and drivers of such old and defective vehicles are liable to legal action under Article 162 of the Transport Ordinance 1983 for violating such a ban, they said. But a section of police officials, mainly traffic sergeants, are indiscriminately stopping all kinds of vehicles and realising bribes showing the circular, they alleged.

Owners of such vehicles are now flocking to the BRTA office to obtain fitness certificates. BRTA officials are issuing fitness certificates and road permits for these faulty vehicles allegedly in exchange for money.

If a deal is reached, the BRTA official concerned asks the owner to

'modify the vehicle a little' and return to him. Fitness certificates are then issued after the 'so-called modification', the sources alleged.

Organising Secretary of Bangladesh Truck Owners' Association (BTOA) Mahub Chowdhury Shantu told The Daily Star that if the circular is implemented strictly, 80 per cent of the trucks will go off the roads, which will affect transportation of goods to the capital from districts.

He claimed that issuance of the new circular is nothing but an attempt to hide the failure of BRTA to contain environment pollution and ease the traffic jam in the city.

He mentioned that the immediate past government banned plying of trucks in the city during daytime but that did not help improve the situation.

When contacted, Abdus Sattar, Director (Admin) of BRTA, said about 10 per cent of the vehicles now plying the city roads will go off the roads if the circular is implementation.

Asked why such a circular was not issued earlier, he said another such order was issued by the then government in 1992.

Afghan interim govt

FROM PAGE 1
Nowhere is the feeling of hope greater than among the people of Afghanistan, who during 23 years of tragedy and loss have maintained the hope that peace and stability could be restored one day in their country, Brahimi told the conference's closing session.

Applause rang out as delegates signed the accord in a brief ceremony attended by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. The German leaders shook hands with the Afghan envoys and Brahimi embraced them after they all signed.

After intense haggling over posts, the northern alliance controls more than half of the 30 ministries, including the powerful defense, foreign and interior portfolios. The delegation of Rome-based exiles loyal to the former king received at least eight ministries, including the finance, education and reconstruction posts.

Two women were named to posts, Sima Samar, one of five deputy premiers as minister of women's affairs, and Suhaila Seddiqi as health minister.

The final Cabinet list was not yet complete by the time the agreement was signed, Brahimi said.

Brahimi won the accord after a final 10 hours of marathon negotiations over the composition of the interim authority, which will govern Afghanistan for six months until the former king convenes a traditional tribal council, or loya jirga.

With ethnic balance as the primary criterion, Brahimi shuttled among the four factions through the night to cull 30 names from 150 candidates.

Agreement on who will run Afghanistan was at least as contentious as the framework deal achieved Tuesday under international pressure on northern alliance leaders in Kabul to remove obstacles that threatened to derail the talks.

The four factions negotiating Afghanistan's political future sought to achieve a balance representing Afghanistan's main Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara ethnic groups and also women, who have been virtually excluded from public life under the Taliban.

In Kabul, northern alliance foreign minister Abdullah, who

retains his ministry under the interim administration, said Karzai is an acceptable candidate.

He's an educated, intelligent person who will put the interest of the Afghan national above everything else, said Abdullah, who uses only one name.

Karzai, 44, was headquartered in neighboring Pakistan during the Soviet occupation. He later served under then-President Burhanuddin Rabbani as deputy foreign minister, but quit disillusioned by relentless bickering.

He returned to Afghanistan in mid-October and is now leading a force of some 4,000 men toward Kandahar.

Two murdered

FROM PAGE 12
The reason behind the killing could not be known.

Police sent his body to DMCH morgue for autopsy and filed a General Diary (GD) in this regard.

Mohammad Yusuf alias Pintu alias Mintu, 25, son of Easamuddin, succumbed to his injuries at DMCH in the early hours of yesterday, hospital sources said.

Jayalalitha's colour Hasina explains reasons

FROM PAGE 12
In fact, Jayalalitha herself announced recently that her party would give issue-based support to Vajpayee government. AIADMK is the only opposition party which supported to controversial Vajpayee government's anti-terrorism ordinance opposed tooth and nail by almost all other major opposition parties.

Significantly, the BJP Tamil Nadu unit has distanced itself from a general strike called by its ally DMK on December 7 to protest the decision of the AIADMK government in the state to hike bus fare.

The opinion in BJP in Tamil Nadu is divided whether the party should keep its doors open for alliance with Jayalalitha. One view in the party is that BJP should not slam its doors on AIADMK which has 11 members in Lok Sabha, lower house of Indian parliament - the same number as DMK.

The BJP high command may not shut out the option of aligning with AIADMK in the event of possible realignment of forces that could be thrown up if the saffron party were to lose coming assembly poll in Uttar Pradesh. The outcome of elections in Uttar Pradesh will definitely have an impact on the Vajpayee government's stability.

The coalition politics in India is most of the time on knife's edge and even the support of AIADMK's

eleven members of parliament may, at the hour of need, come handy.

A section of BJP in Tamil Nadu complained of "lack of cooperation" from DMK in recently held civic bodies polls in the state. But there is another section in BJP which wants to keep away from Jayalalitha given the unpredictable nature of her support in the past.

The BJP and DMK took opposing stands on the recent strike by bus employees unions in Tamil Nadu demanding higher bonus. After all, it was Jayalalitha who had withheld letter of support to Vajpayee when he wanted to form a coalition government after 1998 general elections giving three days of deep anxiety to BJP.

In 1999, it was again Jayalalitha which withdrew support to Vajpayee ministry leading its ultimate fall in a parliamentary trial of strength by the barest minimum margin.

But alliance between BJP and AIADMK can materialise only if DMK-BJP tie-up is broken. The two Dravida parties in Tamil Nadu cannot possibly be on the same side of the fence.

On its part, DMK, which has already lost power in Tamil Nadu, may not like to snap ties with BJP and pull out of Vajpayee government and lose whatever leverage it has vis-a-vis its battle against AIADMK.

FROM PAGE 1
restraint after the four-party alliance came to power. The coalition, instead, resorted to provocative remarks and threats. There had been threats to kill me," the AL chief noted.

"When I had said that my party would not call hartal I thought those who are opposed to it would be able to persuade our opponents to follow suit. I created an opportunity for them to get the message across to our political rivals. But they failed," Hasina pointed out.

She said hartal is an appropriate weapon to put the political opponent in a tight corner on any issue. It had proved effective during the 1990 anti-autocracy movement. But in four years till 2000, the nature of hartals was very violent and scores of people were killed.

"The terrible circumstances prompted me to call upon the opposition to exercise restraint and stop killing the innocent people."

"At one stage, we said we would not call any hartal. We appealed to the opposition to reciprocate our gesture and agree to work together in national development. Unfortunately, BNP did not agree to our suggestion," she noted. "It was our great desire to stop the politics of bloodshed and witch hunting."

Accusing the four-party alliance of vote rigging in the October 1 election, the AL chief observed that immediately after taking office, the

alliance unleashed a horrible reign of terror and torture on religious minorities. Innumerable journalists have been attacked by the terrorists for reporting the attacks on the minorities.

Giving a detailed picture of atrocities on minorities, Hasina wondered, "How can I stop protesting the injustice? I know I had promised not to call hartal. But can I remain silent without doing anything against violence?"

Continued Hasina: "How come the cries of those battered people do not reach those who claim to have conscience? What is then the way of remedy? The victims come to me and tell me to protect them from the terrorists. They ask me to call hartal so they could survive."

"Is it fair to remain silent and do nothing in the face of such gross violation of human rights. Our political opponents did not