Mahajan won't quit, BJP terms it conspiracy

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA New Delhi

India's ruling BJP yesterday ruled out resignation of its senior leader and a key Federal Minister Pramod Mahaian who finds himself at the centre of a controversial twist to the probe into the murder of a lady journalist more than three years

Giving a sensational turn to the case relating to the murder of leading national newspaper "Indian Express" correspondent Shivani Bhatnagar at her apartment here, Madhu Sharma, the wife of a senior Indian Police Service officer Ravi Kant Sharma, alleged in front of television news channels late Thursday night that Mahajan was "involved" in the murder.

Mahajan, Parliamentary Affairs and Information Technology Minister, stoutly denied Madhu Sharma's charge describing it as "baseless" and said he was ready to face any probe including one by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Ravi Kant Sharma, an officer of inspector general rank, is the prime suspect in the Shivani murder case and is absconding since August 2 even as Delhi police raided several nlaces in the Indian capital and some neighbouring states to trace

Madhu Sharma's allegations

Death toll in

rises to 14

AFP, Dresden, Germany

Saxony said yesterday.

in road accidents

The death toll in record flooding in

Germany has risen to 14, the interior

The latest victim drowned in the

Wild Aus river near Dresden, the

baroque state capital that has seen

the level of the river Elbe rise to more

residents attempted to save their

property from the surging water,

during emergency evacuations and

people living in and around Dresden

were being evacuated early today

as the Elbe and Danube rivers

surged toward record levels, with

central Europe's worst floods in

memory creating chaos and causing

German city. in Pirna and Heidenau.

30,000 people were ordered out of

the Elbe's way as the river neared

levels not seen since 1845, while in

Slovakia the Danube was approach-

Around 90 people have died since

[Details on page 5]

the weekend as the worst floods in

more than a century cascaded across

central Europe. The latest was a

Czech man killed Thursday in the

Bomb explodes

outside Afghan

A bomb exploded outside the com-

overnight but it caused no casual-

ties, a spokesman for International

Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

"At 10:40 pm local time, an

explosion occurred outside the

Ministry for Communications, Major Steve Odell said. "We believe

that the device may have been

thrown from a passing car. There

to the front of the building, he said.

bomb contained explosives equal in

power to about one kilogram of TNT,

Defense Secretary Donald

Rumsfeld and US commander for

Afghanistan Gen. Tommy Franks

acknowledged on Thursday that

American troops could be in

Afghanistan for years to keep it from

reverting to " a terrorist training

military relationships in a great

many countries around the world so

it does not surprise me that some-

one would say," "Oh gosh, the

military's going to be in Afghanistan

for a long, long, time," Franks told

reporters at the Pentagon. "Sure we

"We are engaged in military-to-

camp.

The blast caused limited damage

Investigations revealed the

Reuters from Washington adds:

were no casualties," he said.

ministry

AFP, Kabul

said yesterday.

South of this historic east

billions of euros (dollars) in damage

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of

Other casualties resulted when

than four times its normal level.

against Mahaian came during her hysterical outburst in front of television cameras at her residence in Panchkula, a township in northern state of Haryana

She alleged her husband was being framed in the case. She also charged that Mahajan had a relationship with Shivani and was in regular contact with her. Delhi police had been investigating the case for the last three years but had not revealed the names of those politicians with whom Shivani was keeping in touch, Madhu Sharma

"Why is my husband being singled out ?" she said alleging Pramod Mahajan had spoken to Shivani on telephone for 45 minutes on the day of her murder on January 23, 1999 and police should make public details of the calls the Minister had made to the deceased journalist. Mahajan denied he had spoken to Shivani on the day of her nurder or even for months prior to

Mahajan said he had purely professional relationship with Shivani as she was covering BJP beat. He said the allegations against him were being made by a person whose husband is on the run from police. The Minister said he was at a loss to know why Madhu Sharma

was making such allegations against him.

The Shivani Bhatnagar murder case had remained out of media focus for nearly three years till July this year when it hogged limelight again with the arrest of two persons who are known to Ravi Kant Sharma. One of them is alleged to have confessed to police that he had killed Shivani.

The arrests of the two persons and the non-bailable warrant of arrest against Ravi Kant Sharma has brought the Shivani murder case back into front pages of national dailies. Two courts have rejected anticipatory bail plea of Ravi Kant Sharma.

Indian Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, who is in charge of Home portfolio, told newspersons vesterday that the allegations against Mahajan are part of a "malicious campaign" by vested interests to "derail" the investigations into the Shivani murder case which was proceeding on right course.

BJP General Secretary and spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said there was no question of Mahajan resigning from the ministry because if ministers start quitting following "baseless" charges and "conspiracies" the stability of a government would be threatened.

On her arrival at Tungipara, Hasina

along with party central leaders visited the mazar of Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, placed

wreaths and offered fateha at

Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Ámu,

Suranjit Sengupta, Tofail Ahmed,

Abdul Jalil. Mohammad Nasim

Matia Chowdhury, Prof Abu Sayeed, Sheikh Selim, Abdul Matin

Khosru, Sheikh Helal and others

held at the complex of the leader's

ised by Tungipara Awami League.

Abdus Samad Azad, Amir Hossain

Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Mohammad

Nasim. Sheikh Selim and Barrister

Amirul Islam addressed the meeting

presided over by AL's local unit

very high. "We need financial sector

reforms because question is being

raised about our credibility for this

has become difficult to move forward

without necessary reforms in the

gave crest to its 22 good borrowers.

The central bank governor said it

The BSB accorded reception and

Rokia Rahman, former advisor in

the caretaker government and a

borrower of the BSB, mentioned that

timely repayment of loans helped her

gain financial credibility. However,

some business colleagues did not

former advisor in the caretaker

government and a borrower of the

BSB, said in some cases he did not

go to the managing directors of

banks for loans. "Rather, they came

to me for giving loans because I did

not ask any of them for interest

waiver or rescheduling as many

that the BSB should sanction work-

ing capital with seven per cent inter-

est for export-oriented industries and

10 per cent for local industries.

M Mozammel Haque suggested

Sved Manzur Elahi, another

take it positively, she added.

president Liakat Ali Biswas.

Depositors

type of banking.

nancial sector.

others did."

Hasina attended a milad-mehfil

Later, a discussion was organ-

Abdus Samad Azad, Sajeda

Hasına

around 1:00pm.

tomb.

FROM PAGE 12

German floods in Algeria

26 people in the early hours of yesterday in the Algerian province of Chlef, 200 km west of the capital,

The victims, from three families who lived in the isolated village of Bokaat Laakakcha, had their throats slit by the extremists, inhabitants of

target Algerian civilians since 38 people were killed in a bomb blast on July 5 -- Algeria's independence day -- at the busy marketplace in Larbaa, 20 km south of the capital.

Poisonous gas FROM PAGE 12

Rajuara Begum, three sons Zahid Hasan Jewel, Babu and Bappi, and daughter Rumi Begum died in sleep at their Aminour house on the night of

Police at first lodged a UD case but Ramzan Mia, younger brother of Abbas Ali, filed a murder case accusing 12 people including Humayun

Police arrested Humayun Kabir and interrogated him but failed to find out any clue. A court sent him to jail hajat Wednesday. Police are on the hunt for other accused.

JU irregularities

He also alleged misappropriation

of Tk three lakh from funds for publimunications ministry in Kabul cation of university diary, answer scripts for admission test and other

> bodies to start investigation soon, but did not fix the time limit for submitting their reports.

FROM PAGE 1

Uddin, rushed to the spot, hearing the incident and requested the policemen to release him.

Instead of releasing, the policemen bundled him into a police van and drove the van to the nearby Mukti Private Clinic on an instruction by the sub-inspector who led the police team. The on-duty doctor at the clinic

suggested an immediate transfer to the DMCH upon arrival. The policemen rushed him to the DMCH at 11:55pm and left the hospital in a

hurry.
Pappu died at the intensive care The duty officer of the Motijheel

Police Station said a general diary was filed in this regard. The officer refuted the allegation and said the police took him to the hospital.

Four persons were tortured to death by police in May this year --Mohammad Sohel, a fish trader, and Mohammad Alam, a rickshawpuller, in the capital; and Mohammad Badal, a butcher, and Fazlul Haq Bhuiyan, an Awami League leader of Rupganj, in Narayanganj.

2 JCD activists

ensued when the Mizan Group

swooped on its rival Shahin Group

between the factions of ruling

party's student front in Sylhet has

resurfaced, although the activities of

Sylhet district JCD have been under

suspension for the past few months.

With the recent clash, the rivalry

to strengthen its position.

FROM PAGE 12

3 criminals

FROM PAGE 12

from the city's Jamboree Field area vesterday.

Police said Jasim was sentenced to 21-year rigorous imprisonment in absentia by a court here for snatching a revolver from a police sergeant

They said he was also involved in a number of crimes, including snatching of Taka 33 lakh from a garment owner last year.

Militants kill 26

AFP, Algiers

Suspected Islamic extremists killed Algiers, the security forces said.

the region said

The attack is the most deadly to

Kabir, a quack of the village.

At Wednesday's meeting, the Syndicate member alleged misap-propriation of Tk one crore in construction of the new arts faculty building. Tk 1083.00 was spent for one square feet against a govern-ment provision of Tk 783.00. Besides, sub-standard construction materials were used in the work, he

The Syndicate asked the two

Men's wear Another victim

FROM PAGE 12

men's punjabi and pajama are located, among other places, at Bangabazaar, the Mirpur-New Elephant Road junction and the shopping complex opposite Dhaka College.

The traditional wedding dress for men has also undergone a change. The sherwani and tight pajama can no longer be seen. Nowadays, the 'prince coat' is more popular, because the groom can continue to wear it on formal occasions after the wedding is over, unlike the sherwani, which practically falls into

disuse after the wedding day.

The formal suit and tie are not suitable for our hot and humid weather, yet bankers, bureaucrats and executives of multinational companies wear them to maintain a formal decorum in dress. The younger generation, however, prefer casual wear like jeans and sports shirts. Jeans sold under different brand names like Levy's and Wrangler's fascinate them very much and such trousers are generally in great demand. The fascination with brand names goes to such extent that unscrupulous businessmen produce almost exact replicas of such imported clothes as well as their labels, and sell them as original

with a big profit margin. Such sartorial changes, as noted above, are the result of the fast changing outlook in a developing country like ours and help the consumer market to grow fast, which is good for a free market economy.



Laws barring polls participation

Pak govt asked to reply to Benazir's petition

REUTERS, Karachi

A Pakistani court instructed the government yesterday to respond to a petition from former prime minister Benazir Bhutto challenging laws barring her from October general elections A court official said the provincial

high court in Karachi would decide on the admissibility of the complaint response on August 21. Yesterday, it heard arguments

from Bhutto's lawyers for accepting the petition, which challenges her convictions for failing to appear in court to answer corruption charges and a law barring convicted persons from contesting elections.

"The issue before the court is the revival of democracy in Pakistan," her lawyer Kamal Azfar told the court. "It's the people and not the government who have the right to decide who is going to represent

Military President Pervez Musharraf, who ousted Nawaz Sharif, Bhutto's successor as prime minister, in a bloodless coup in October 1999, has decreed that premiers who have served twice before cannot run for a third term. The move effectively excludes

both Sharif and Bhutto from running in the October 10 polls and both are also disqualified under a law banning people convicted of crimes. Bhutto has been living in self-

imposed exile in London, while Sharif and his family are in exile in Azfar, a former governor of

Bhutto's native Sindh province, later told reporters the petition marked the start of the legal pro cess for bringing Bhutto back to

Bhutto told Reuters earlier this

her participation in the polls and contest them from a prison cell if necessary In a fallback tactic against the

month she would defy the ban on

ban, Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), has created a new party called the PPP-Parliamentarians and appointed her deputy to head it to contest the

Sharif, in turn, has appointed a new president of his Pakistan Muslim League

go-ahead for the PPP to cooperate with Sharif's league against Musharraf in the elections, even though the parties and the former prime ministers were bitter rivals in

Musharraf formed a poll alliance and said more might join them.

Local traders, influentials

area, T&T authorities acquired the land in the 80s. After a long legal battle between T&T and Fazar Ali. a court order early of this month finally went in favour of T&T.

On Monday, the T&T authorities evicted about a dozen families who lived around the mosque for long. A section of the local people supported the eviction. They had also joined in raising the boundary wall at the entrance to the mosque.

Due to the eviction, some shop owners lost their shops. A garage of a garment factory was also evicted.

Following the eviction, Emdad and some local businessmen ganged up. They instigated madrasah students in Malibagh, Malibagh Chowdhury Para and Rampura areas. The students organised a rally on the road in front of the mosque after Asr prayer on Thursday and went to the spot with other devotees. About an hour into the rally, the participants started pelting brick bats at the people who assembled there from the colony to resist them, the local people said. As clashes started between the deployed there earlier opened fire to resist the students and devotees from entering the mosque by breaking the wall. Some local gangsters also fired shots by taking firearms from the Ansars they said

Sources in the Ansar said they fired 65 rounds of bullets to quell the

Meanwhile bodies of the three masrassah students killed during Thursday's clashes were handed over to fellow students at about 7:30 am yesterday from Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morque amid tight security. Sub-inspector Mohammad

Abdul Karim received the bodies along with the students. The bodies were of Yahiya, 22, son of Maulana Sarfuddin of Baroikandi under Fulpur thana in Mymensing; Rezaul Karim Dhali, 20, son Abdul Awal Dhali of Srinagar under Gojaria thana in Munshiganj and Abul Bashar, 18, son of Hafej Abdus Sattar of Khalishakhali under Pirojpur Sadar thana. The fellow students and rela-

tives of the victims took the bodies

after nazam-e-janaza yesterday morning at the madrassahs.

Feni Associate Professor Dr Mijanur

vesterday afternoon.

cashier of Baitul Azim mosque, yesterday file a case with Ramna police station accusing T&T Director (North) Mohammad Tawfiq for the incident. The government suspended Tawfiq on Thursday for alleged negligence of duty, which caused the incident.

The 19 Ansar personnel who were 'closed' at the Ansar headquarters were being questioned by higher officials yesterday, sources

Malibagh incident

Punishment to killers demanded

Several hundred 'musallis' (devotees) under the banner of different Islamic organisations yesterday took to the street demanding arrest of and exemplary punishment to the killers of madrassah students at the T&T colony in the city's Malibagh area.

One of the components of the alliance government, Islami Oikya Jote, Islami Shashantantra Andolon Bangladesh Khelafat Mailis, and some Islami students organisations paraded the street in Paltan area after Juma' prayers at Baitul Mokarram Mosque. Addressing a rally marking the

11th founding anniversary of Islami Shashantantra Chhatra Andlon (ISCA) at Muktangon, its leaders alleged that the government was taking steps against Islam after coming to power in the name of Islam.

Addressing another rally at the Baitul Mokarram North Gate, Mufti Fazlul Haq Amini MP demanded of the government to reconstruct the

mosque at Malibagh T&T Colony.

He said the name of the mosque would be "Shaheedi Masjid" as four people, including three Madrassah students, were killed in protecting the mosque

Mufti Amini demanded immediate arrest of T&T Director Mohammad Toufik, who has already been suspended for negligence of duty over the T&T mosque issue as well as compensation for the families of the Several thousand 'musallis'

yesterday offered Juma prayers at the place of damaged T&T mosque. After the prayers, they raised slogans against those responsible for the killing of four people. IOJ Vice Chairman Moulana Mohiuddin Khan attended at the Juma' prayers there. Despite the killing of four people

on Thursday afternoon, no case was filed and police did not arrest any body in this connection.

Jatya Party president HM Ershad vesterday visited the mosque and expressed his solidarity with the

Laden personally ordered killing of Massood?

AP, Kabu

A former Taliban official says Osama bin Laden personally ordered the assassination of Afghan opposition leader Ahmed Shah Massood in an attempt to cripple the northern alliance days before the Sept. 11 attacks.

Massood, military chief of the northern alliance and the most charismatic figure in the anti-Taliban movement, was mortally wounded Sept. 9 when two suicide attackers posing as television reporters exploded a bomb during an interview in the northern Afghan town of Khodja Bahauddin. Mullah Mohammed Khaksar.

one of the founders of the Taliban and the Islamic militia's one-time intelligence chief, told The Associated Press that bin Laden had ordered two suicide bombers diverted from a trip to Indonesia to carry out the mission.

Khaksar said that on the day of the attack on Massood, he had gone to the home of Taliban Interior Minister Abdul Razzak to pay respects on the death of Razzak's father. Two Saudis who Khaksar believed were al-Qaida members were at the wake.

Khaksar, who at the time was eputy interior minister, said the two unidentified Saudis told him of bin Laden's role and assured him that Massood was dead, even though the northern alliance was insisting that Massood had only been gravely injured. The alliance withheld confirma-

tion of Massood's death for 48 hours until a successor the current Afghan defense minister Mohammed Fahim could be cho-

`They said 'no, believe me he is gone." Khaksar said, referring to Massood, "They also said that he was killed by two Arabs who were supposed to go to Indonesia but were ordered to go to Massood and kill him. The order came from Osama. He canceled their trip to Indonesia.'

The United States has said it believes bin Laden had foreknow-

ledge of the plot to kill Massood, but has not said what level of involvement he had in the plot. The assassins were traveling on

Belgian passports, and in January police in Paris arrested two men for providing false documents to Massood's killers. The French authorities believed

the passports were stolen from the Belgian consulate in Strasbourg France or its embassy in The Hague, Netherlands,

Massood's death was a severe blow to the northern alliance, which had been losing ground to the Taliban in fighting in the north. The alliance was saved from disaster when the United States launched its air campaign against the Taliban on Oct. 7, enabling the factious coalition to seize control of the country by the year's end.

There has been wide speculation that bin Laden may have killed Massood to ingratiate himself further with Taliban leader Mohammed Omar to ensure his protection if the Americans retaliated for the attacks he knew were only days away in the United States. But this is the first time a member of the Taliban has discussed bin Laden's role in the

days away, Khaksar said no one at the wake spoke of anything unusual in the works, and most of the conversation focused on Massood, the Taliban's mortal

'No one talked about Sept. 11 or said that anything was going to happen," Khaksar said in the interview. "I think that it was so secret that no one knew.'

Khaksar, who broke with the Taliban after the fall of Kabul in November, said the Taliban leadership was convinced bin Laden was behind the Sept. 11 attacks. At the time, he said. al-Qaida seemed invincible.

"Their morale was high," Khaksar said. "They believed Osama was strong because the world was afraid of him.

suspended upon an allegation of

Mohsin said the measure was taken

for security reasons. Grains meant

for the Khulna CSD is now being

stockpiled in the Jessore ware-

Food Controller of Khulna Md

Wheatscam: Middlemen

the DU were affected from July to FROM PAGE 12

deprived of the government price support, while the politically powerful men profited hugely from the selling of Indian feed-grade wheat at Tk 9,000 a ton to the government silos, which was bought at Tk 6,000

The secretarial committee, formed on August 10 on a prime ministerial directive, was given a deadline of 15 days to submit its report, while another committee formed by the food ministry on August 3 is yet to submit its report even after the expiry of the deadline.

Chief of the food ministry committee Yakub Ali, a joint secretary, told The Daily Star that though it was asked to submit the report immediately, it would take some time more to get the results of wheat sample tests.

Yet another committee on the wheat scam formed earlier with Additional Director General of the Food Directorate Entajul Hugue had to suspend his work last week. The food ministry issued the suspension order following allegations against However, Huque told The Daily

Star that the committee's work was put off as the food ministry and the prime minister have already formed wo other high-level committees.

Our Khulna Correspondent eports that the fresh stockpiling of wheat in a silo of the Khulna central supply depot (CSD) has been

house, he added.

Hepatitis-B polio in the coming weeks, the

officials apprehend. The new reappearance of wild poliovirus circulation in West Bengal near the Bangladesh border is alarming because of the high risk of wild polio virus importation into Bangladesh," said Dr David

Sniadack, WHO consultant for EPI.

He went on, "This is an alarming

development which reminds us that

Bangladesh must increase vigilance immediately and report any child under 15 suffering from sudden on set of floppy paralysis and immunise every child. The second round of SNIDs programme will be held on

September 14 and for that an additional \$1 million was allocated on an emergency basis for vaccines and operational costs from the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, USA. The programme will target the high-risk areas particularly in the bordering districts, said a WHO official.

VC on DU reopening

FROM PAGE 1

ing the university.

24. It warned of a fresh movement if the demand is not met. However, an influential teacher at the university said the acting VC is waiting for submission of report of the judicial probe commission formed by the government to inves-

"The authorities are now monitoring the campus situation and trying to guess how general students and student bodies would react following the probe commission report. They would wait for at least a week or two after submission of the report," he added seeking

investigation into the incident. It is learnt that many eye wit-

nesses were willing to give statements before the probe commission. But it was not being possible as they left Dhaka due to closure of the DU as well as the residential

Prof Haider took over as acting Chowdhury in the wake of students

(Haider) told newsmen several

times that the university would be reopened very soon. General Secretary of the Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) Sharifullah Bhuiyan said, "We told the authorities to reopen the university shortly." The atmosphere on the campus is favourable

The unscheduled closure has affected about 30,000 students of the DU. Classes and examinations have to be rescheduled after reopening of the university and this would lead to session jam and consequent accommodation problem at the halls, sources pointed

July 28 for an indefinite period in a tense situation following the July 24

October due to strikes called by the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, demanding resignation of the then vice-

31 hurt in Manikganj road accident

UNB, Manikganj

At least 31 people were injured, 16 of them seriously, in a road accident at Uchutia in Sadar upazila on Dhaka-Aricha highway yesterday Police and witnesses said the

accident took place at about 8:30am when a minibus of "Jatriseba Paribahan" plunged into a roadside ditch after its driver lost control over the steering. Nineteen of the injured were identified as Shahjahan, Sargesh

Zahirul Hague, Sahabuddin, Helauddin, Lalan Molla, Rahizuddin, Fazal, Rafique, Kashem, Juboraj, Shibnath, Shah Alam, Mojibur Rahman, Abdul Jabbar, Osman Ghani and Babbina. They were admitted to Dhaka

Ali, Abdul Mannan, Sona Mia,

Medical College Hospital and Pangu Hospital A case was filed.

On Thursday, Bhutto gave the

On Monday, six parties backing

The body of Jainal Abedin, a pedestrian killed in the shooting, was handed over to his relatives who took it to his village home in

Rahman and Lecturer Noor Hossain of DMC did autopsy of the bodies. One bullet each was recovered from two of the bodies, sources at the DMC morgue said. Additional police force were kept deployed at the DMCH morgue till

Hafez Maulana Abbus Sattar.

the university would be reopened this month. Earlier, the acting VC told a group of journalists that he would shortly announce a date for reopen-

Meanwhile, the recently formed Students Against Atrocities on the Dhaka University Campus, which launched the movement leading to exit of vice chancellor Prof Anwarullah Chowdhury, will submit a memorandum to the acting vice chancellor today in demand for reopening the university by August

tigate the police atrocities at the Shamsunnahar Hall on July 24.

Meanwhile, the one-member probe body headed by Justice M Tafazzul Islam on August 12 requested the acting VC to reopen the university for the sake of proper

The probe body is scheduled to submit its report by tomorrow. VC on August 1 following the exit of vice chancellor Prof Anwarullah

movement against him.

for this, he told this correspondent.

The university was closed on

Last year, academic activities at