

Pak NA due, but no coalition in sight

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's law minister said yesterday he expected parliament to be called by the end of the week, but rival parties appeared no closer to agreeing on a coalition to form the country's first civilian government in three years.

The main pro-military party and an alliance of right-wing Islamists were due to hold further talks late today, but their positions appear to have become increasingly entrenched, despite several meetings since the October 10 polls.

Law Minister Khalid Ranjha told Reuters plans to call parliament had not changed. "The government has decided to call the session of the National Assembly immediately -- before the end of this week," he said.

However, asked if there had been any progress towards forming a coalition, Azeem Chudhry, a spokesman for the pro-military Pakistan Muslim League, replied: "There has been no change from day one. There is complete deadlock."

The league secured 118 seats in the election, making it the largest party. But it fell well short of the 172 needed for a simple majority in the 342-seat national assembly, forcing it to attempt to negotiate a coalition with rivals.

It and the Pakistan People's Party of exiled former premier Benazir Bhutto, a bitter rival which

secured 81 seats, have both been trying to woo the hardline Muslim Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) alliance, which holds the balance of power with 60 seats.

MMA official Liaquat Baluch said a deal with the league was possible -- if the alliance's candidate, conservative Islamic cleric Fazal-ur-Rehman, became prime minister, a prospect that has alarmed markets and proponents of the US-led war on terror.

"If someone doesn't want to do it, he's free not to do it," Baluch told Reuters, adding the MMA was willing to be in opposition if a coalition could not be agreed.

Talks between the Islamists and Bhutto's party also bogged down over the demand that Rehman, a supporter of the former Taliban regime in neighbouring Afghanistan, become prime minister.

The MMA campaigned on a strongly anti-US platform, demanding that US forces in Afghanistan be barred from using bases in Pakistan. It also wants to exclude women from parliament and non-Muslims from voting for Muslim candidates in elections.

Parliament was supposed to have convened last Friday, but the deadlock caused President Pervez Musharraf, a key US ally, to announce a delay of about a week, a move critics said was aimed at buying time for pro-military parties.

Govt sanctions open market sale of wheat

UNB, Dhaka

The government has permitted dealers to sell wheat in the open market alongside rice.

According to a Food Ministry handout, the dealers will buy wheat at Tk 7 per kg from godowns and sell it at Tk 7.50.

It said metropolitan, district and upazila committees concerned would be able to appoint dealers as well as raise and reduce the quantum of rice and wheat allocations, if necessary.

The government is selling rice and wheat in the open market to keep their market prices stable during Ramadan. The highest rate of rice is Tk 11 per kg in the open market.

One killed in Ctg oil tanker blast

BSS, Chittagong

A labourer was killed as a crude oil tanker exploded at Kadam Rasul area near Madambirhat in Sitakunda Thana of the district early yesterday.

Fire brigade and police sources said the tanker caught fire and exploded with a big bang when some labourers were repairing a pipe.

Labourer Chand Miah, 50, son of Sikandar Howlader of village Ekuri in Bhandaria upazila of Barisal District, died on the spot.

Firefighters put the fire out, recovered the body from the wreckage and handed it over to the police.

A case was lodged with Sitakunda Police Station in this connection.

Death in jail custody

FROM PAGE 1

So far, the army has arrested 5,274 people and seized 792 firearms from across the country since the anti-crime crackdown started on October 17. Of them 1,356 are listed criminals. The army also seized 22,851 rounds of ammunition during the drive.

Our Khulna correspondent reports a joint force of army, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, police and Bangladesh Ansars raided the residences of ward commissioners Imammul Hossain Moina and Habibul Haq Babla.

An official of the Khulna City Corporation was also arrested. The reason for his arrest could not be confirmed.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reports that three persons were arrested yesterday.

Earlier on Sunday night, the army seized 215 cocktails from the Adamjee Jute Mills area and arrested one person in this connection before handing him to the Fatullah police yesterday.

Our Bogra correspondent reports that the army arrested four people including the district joint secretary of the Bangladesh Samik League. The troops recovered a submachine gun, a revolver and 20 packs of heroin.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested 11 listed criminals and extortionists in different parts of the district.

Fake certificates

FROM PAGE 12

The counterfeit certificates. They arrested two persons, Abdullah al-Mamun alias Kochi and Alam Miah, and recovered the certificates from their possession.

Then, on their information, the CID team raided a house at North Musundi and arrested one Salahuddin.

Finally, CID officials raided a shop at Mughaltuli and recovered huge non-judicial stamps. The CID team also arrested one Jahangir Alam and seized his computer.

"We have retrieved scanned certificates and stamps from the computer," a CID inspector said.

Separate cases will be filed with the police stations concerned, CID officials said.

"We are yet to ascertain the amount of counterfeit stamps of Tk 5,000, 1,000, 500 denomination," they said.

Iraqi parliament

FROM PAGE 12

This suggested that Iraq was amenable to cooperating with the latest resolution, the 60th issued by the council on Iraq since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

A senior member of the ruling Baath Party gave another indication that Baghdad would end up accepting Resolution 1441 by saying he expected the administration of US President George W. Bush to try to use UN inspectors to contrive crises and consequently carry out plans to attack Iraq.

"Having been forced to drop (a provision stipulating) automatic recourse to force (if Iraq does not comply with disarmament obligations), Washington will undoubtedly try to contrive a crisis through the UN inspectors to implement its aggressive plan to strike Iraq," Saad Qassem Hammudi told AFP.

He urged the inspectors to behave professionally and not resort to "provocation" once they are back in Iraq after a four-year break.

Hammudi also said it was in Baghdad's interest to cooperate

with the arms experts "as it did in the past" in order to win relief from 12-year-old UN sanctions, "as it is entitled to under paragraph 22 of Resolution 687."

The embargo in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait is to be lifted under Resolution 687 once Baghdad's illegal weapons programmes are certified to have been eliminated.

A Baghdad-based Western diplomat also told AFP on condition of anonymity that Iraq was liable to end up accepting Resolution 1441 despite its harsh terms.

"All of Iraq's friends who had opposed the initial UN draft providing for automatic recourse to force have advised Baghdad to cooperate with the Security Council in order to deny Washington a chance to take military action," the diplomat said.

A second diplomat said that should Iraq agree to accept the resolution, it would come in the form of a letter from Foreign Minister Najib Sabri to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, as was the case when Baghdad accepted return of inspectors on September 16.



A schoolgirl passes by a power transformer on a road in the city's Mohammadpur yesterday. The transformer, set up without any precautionary measure, may cause serious accident any time.

PHOTO: STAR

Body of young man recovered in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police recovered the decomposed body of a youth from Gazamatikunda village of Malanchi under Pabna Sadar Upazila yesterday.

Identity of the youth could not be known till the filing of this report yesterday evening.

Alerted by the stench, some farmers discovered the body on digging the paddy field.

Police recovered the body and sent it to morgue.

Police believe that some persons might have murdered and buried the youth there.

Meanwhile, a labourer, Aynul Haq (32) of Parfaridpur village of Faridpur Upazila of Pabna died while cutting a tree branch yesterday morning.

Police sources said, Aynul died when the branch fell on him.

Faruq's death

FROM PAGE 1

regarding the findings. "Investigation is on and we will work more on it" he said.

The government formed the probe body as 'Kala' Faruq's death in police custody created controversies.

The sources said a thorough probe into the criminal's death in police custody is required.

Meanwhile, statements of different police stations about the death have already created confusion. Uttara police claimed that Faquq was in "very good condition" when he was handed over to Kafrul police. But Kafrul police claimed that he was handed over to them in a "critical condition after torture".

After his arrest, Uttara, Kafrul and Tejgaon police stations in the city wanted to take him in custody to recover firearms.

As per police version, he was taken to Tejgaon for recovery of illegal arms as per his statement. At one stage as Kala Faruq attempted to flee, he was shot in the left leg that led to his death, police said.

Kala Faruq, a listed criminal, was arrested from Zia International Airport minutes before his was to fly to Sweden on November 4. He died in police custody within 14 hours of his arrest.

AL election

FROM PAGE 1

members are Abdul Hamid and Sudhangshu Shekhar Halder.

The much-delayed triennial council of the AL, scheduled for December 22 and 23, would now be held on December 26, Jalil said. This is because the Paltan Maidan, the venue chosen for the council, would be restricted to any sort of political activities due to the Bangladesh-West Indies Test match.

The last regular council of the AL was held in May 6-7, 1997. But the party failed to hold its triennial council in 2000. Instead, it opted for a special council session in June, 2000, just to extend the tenure of the 1997 committee by two more years. However, it could not hold the council in June this year and so, further extended the tenure by six more months.

The councils at all thana and district units of the party also did not take place in time. September 30 was the deadline for thana units and October 31 for district units.

Yesterday's ALCWC meeting put down the non-holding of the councils to 'repression on the political opponents by the four-party ruling alliance'.

Now the councils of the district and thana units will follow the central council.

Shooters

FROM PAGE 1

ing the issue. "But we are yet to get any reply from the Home Ministry," a top official of the shooting federation told UNB yesterday.

Officials said the ongoing national shooting camp for the SAF Games would automatically come to a halt if the national shooters deposited their arms as per the government instructions.

In case the camp is suspended, it would result in huge loss of government money besides affecting performances of national shooters, who were continuously bringing laurels for the nation by winning a good number of SAF and Commonwealth gold medals.

Bangladesh Shooting Federation is now spending about 4,500 US dollars per month for its two foreign shooting coaches.

The federation would still have to spend the amount in the event that the shooting camp is closed.

"We will deposit our legal arms and weapons by November 14 if we do not get any positive reply from the authorities concerned," the shooting federation official further said, hoping for an exemption.

Speedy trial

FROM PAGE 1

All the districts belonging to an administrative division is to fall within the range of a tribunal. The president promulgated the "Speedy Trial Tribunal Ordinance, 2002" on October 24.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed placed the bill before the cabinet with minor amendments, which were accepted by the meeting.

Under the amendments, the provision in the ordinance to appoint both retired and serving sessions judges in the tribunal has been abolished. The new provision allows only the appointment of serving district and sessions judges in the tribunal.

The provision allowing the government to transfer any on-trial case to the tribunal has also been revoked. The new provision defined that only the six types of cases would be tried in the tribunal.

As per the new definition, the government can only send those cases to the tribunal that is in public interest, meetings sources said.

The cabinet also okayed the Court Fees (Amendment) Bill, 2002,

Army recovers 599 bags of smuggled boro seeds in Kishoreganj

Army personnel seized a truckload of 599 bags of smuggled boro seeds from the district Sunday night. They also arrested the alleged smuggler and both the driver and helper of the vehicle who were later handed over to police.

Acting on a secret information, the army personnel seized the truck from near Chamrabander under Karimganj upazila of the district Sunday night. According to primary investigation, the seeds were destined for haor areas of the district from Jamalpur for sale in the black market, police said.

The alleged smuggler Ali Akbar hails from Vatajohirkona under Karimganj of the district, while the driver and the helper are from the Jamalpur district town, police said.

Besides, Karimganj Thana police also seized 120 bags of boro seeds from the house of one Lokman Mia of Kiraton Bilpara under Karimganj thana.

Rallies banned

FROM PAGE 1

Road, from west side of Bangla Motor Link Road to SAARC fountain on Sonargaon Road, from east side of Panthapath to Farm Gate via Green Road Crossing and from Shyamoli Cinema on Mirpur Road to Dhanmondi Road No 16 crossing.

Also fall under the restriction area from Rokeya Swarni crossing to Bijoy Swami crossing via old Ninth Division (Aeroplane) crossing, eastern side of Indra Road to the western side of Manik Miah Avenue, the conserved area of the Jatiya Sangsad and all roads and lanes within the area.

The DMP imposed the ban through the authority vested in it under Section 28 and 29 of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, the release said.

Banks

FROM PAGE 1

The central bank yesterday asked the bankers committee to take up the matter with the home ministry. The meeting also discussed and expressed concern at the armed robbery at the Pubali Bank's Tejgaon Shatrasa Branch where Tk 13.42 lakh were looted during officer hours yesterday.

The meeting also decided to form two committees to work out a scheme for large and syndicated loan above Tk 50 crore. One committee composed of managing directors of the banks has been assigned to formulate a policy for lending large loan. And the other one comprising lending banks will look after the implementation.

Should any problem arise in the implementation, the second committee is to refer it to the first committee.

Deputy governors of the central bank and managing directors of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) and private commercial banks (PCBs) attended the meet.

The managing directors suggested that the committees be headed by a Bangladesh Bank deputy governor, an idea the governor rejected.

The meeting also discussed ethical standard in banks. It unanimously agreed that there should be an ethics for the bankers. The central bank recently prepared a 38-point draft code of conduct for the bankers. The code provides for a ban on bankers' indulging in any sort of political activities and direct participation in any political elections, associations and organisations.

Hearing adjourned

FROM PAGE 1

ments recorded by the court and by the investigation officer (IO) of the case earlier.

In response to a question, Rahman told the court that at about 8:00 on the night of the incident, he went to Shazneen's bedroom and found that the TV was on and she was reading a book. He told her to have her dinner and go to bed, and this was recorded by the court and the IO, he said.

"That was the last time I saw her. Then I went upstairs where guests were gathering. The dinner ended shortly after 10:00 pm. After some time, I heard a cry, came out and found our old domestic help Moslem Howlader crying and saying, 'what happened to Chhoto Baby (nick-name of Shazneen)'. I then rushed to Shazneen's room and found her lying on the floor in front of the bathroom. Her body bore a number of injury marks and blood spilled on the floor. On the left side of her neck, there was a deep wound. I then cried out that Chhoto Baby is dead. Hearing this, my wife rushed there.

This was recorded by the IO and by the court," he said.

Latifur Rahman said Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, the prime accused, who worked as a domestic help and an assistant to cook Abdul Mannan, was missing from the house. The cook informed that a kitchen knife was also missing.

Latifur Rahman repeated his statements earlier recorded by the court and the IO that Shahid's disappearance proved his involvement in the incident.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

All the six accused in the rape case -- Shahid, Hassan, Shaniram, Badal, Minu and Parvin now in jail custody -- were produced before the court yesterday.

Special Public Prosecutors (SPPs) Arfan Uddin Khan, ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul and Mahub Ahmed and Assistant PP

Anisur Rahman appeared for the state while advocates Mosharrar Hossain Kajol, Mohammad Hanif, Anwarul Kabir Babul, Mizanur Rahman, Abdus Salam Bhuiyan and MA Kamrul Hasan Khan represented the defendants.

Bank robbery

FROM PAGE 1

packed there," he added. Police were then called in, but they had no clue to the robbery. An army team also visited the bank branch.

Police picked up five persons - Deputy Manager Humayun Rashid, Cashier Abdul Gafur, Senior Cashier Abdur Razzak, Security Guard Abdur Rashid and Cash Officer Sridas Chandra - for interrogation. They were at the Tejgaon Police Station till filing of this report at 8:00pm.

Usually, a police team patrols the Satrasa crossing area. But during the robbery, there was no patrol team in the area, Tejgaon police said.

Robbers loot night coaches trucks

A CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Highway robbers looted cash and valuables worth about Tk 7 lakh from several vehicles including night coaches and trucks on the Bogra-Rangpur Highway Saturday night.

Sources said about 10 armed robbers disguised as passengers took control of the Dhaka-bound night coach of Agomoni Paribahan (Dhaka-Metro-Ba-11-1135) from Rangpur when it reached Gobindaganj under Gaibandha district at midnight.

They looted cash and valuables worth about Tk 2 lakh and beat up many passengers, including senior staff reporter of the daily Inqilab Abu Rusud, when they raised alarm.

The robbers left the vehicle with their booties when the bus reached Baghopara under Bogra Sadar Upazila.

Dulal Mia, driver of the coach, filed a case in this regard.

Meanwhile, another gang of about 15 robbers blocked the Rangpur-Dhaka highway near Mohasthan under Shibganj upazila by felling trees on the highway.

The robbers looted seven trucks, a night coach and a van carrying milk before fleeing the spot with about Tk 5 lakh in cash and valuables.

Satkhira blast

FROM PAGE 12

men. Progress on the investigation of the cases has not been satisfactory although the home minister and IGP visited the spots on the day after the incident and directed all concerned to unearth the mystery of the blasts.

Army men on the first day of their operation arrested Abdur Rouf, vice-president of district BNP and main suspect in the blast, but other godfathers are yet to be nabbed.

Hasina: Arms

FROM PAGE 12

victed in the Bangabandhu Murder Case are still absconding posing a threat on the life of Sheikh Hasina, the eldest daughter of the father of nation. Such adverse circumstances construe a clear threat on Sheikh Hasina's life."

In view of the situation, the opposition leader's office requested the Home Ministry for a waiver of the orders for depositing licensed firearms in the case of the Leader of the Opposition.

BSCIC estate

FROM PAGE 12

57.58 per cent, Kurigram at 56.82, Thakurgaon at 75.70, Lalmonirhat at 70.20 and Jhenidah at 65.31, although their development work was completed in June 1998.

And 27.03 per cent industrial plots remained unallocated in Rajbari and 16.89 per cent in Munshiganj.

There are six industrial estates in Chittagong and the unused plots in Khadim Nagar have been measured at 25 per cent, Cox's Bazar at 13.64, Nikunja at 49.06, Chandpur at 14.71 and Moulavi Bazaar at 35.79.

The unused plots in Nawabganj are measured at 58.43 per cent, Natore at 27.88, Sirajganj at 29.93, Gaibandha at 36.17 and Thakurgaon at 56.82.

The unused plots in Barisal have been put at 31.21 per cent, Bagerhat at 37.89 and Satkhira at 45.83.

The audit report identified nine causes of low utilisation: lack of security, preference for transport business instead of industries, non-availability of loans at lower interest, lack of gas connection, absence of solvent entrepreneurs, lack of motivation to set up manufacturing

Nurul Islam murder HC stays case proceedings on transfer petition by accused

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday stayed proceedings of the sensational advocate Nurul Islam murder case of Laxmipur upon a petition of accused Awami League leader Abu Taher and others.

The petitioners said they would not get justice in the trial court at Laxmipur where the bar had decided not to defend any of the persons accused of murdering Nurul Islam, who was a member and former president of Laxmipur District Bar Association.

The accused also said the government-appointed defence lawyers are not capable of handling the case and pleaded for shifting the case to any other court.

A division bench comprising Justice Syed Amirul Islam and Justice Mirza Hossain Haider also issued rule upon the government to show cause why the case should not be transferred to any other District and Sessions Judge's court. The rule is returnable in 6 weeks.

Advocate Nurul Islam, a local BNP leader, was kidnapped from his house on September 18, 2000. As his whereabouts remained unknown, it is believed that his abductors killed him and threw the body into the river.

Some 31 persons were arrested in connection with the murder of Nurul Islam and two of them gave details to the magistrate about the kidnap and brutal murder of the BNP leader.

Army role

FROM PAGE 12

The meeting also demanded of the government to take steps to keep the prices of essentials stable during Ramadan.

Expressing concern over the current boro seed crisis, the party suggested that seeds be immediately supplied at a fair price to farmers.

In another resolution, the ALCWC meeting urged countrymen to reject the ruling alliance that, it alleged, had plundered Tk 11,000 crore over the last one year.

In yet another resolution, the AL condemned the government for barring it from holding peaceful rallies and interfering in media freedom.

Abdul Jalil reminded journalists of the recent misbehaviour by the Defence Forces Intelligence (DFI) with the editor of a daily. "We didn't see such behaviour even in Pakistan days."

industries, lack of information about the plots and lack of target.

The state-owned BSCIC established in 1957 has so far set up 78 industrial estates, with 63 completed and 15 under construction.

The audit report suggested that industrial plots, which remained unused for more than five years, be earmarked for alternative use.

The BSCIC undertook 20 industrial estates in the first phase, nine in the second phase and 21 in the third phase and 24 for all districts.

Some estates, however, could allocate all of their industrial plots. They are Tongi, Mymensingh, Joydevpur, Kalurghat, Patia, Sholoshahar, Fouzdarhat, Rajshahi, Jessore and Kushtia.

The BSCIC chairman said there is a huge demand for industrial plots in the areas near Dhaka and Chittagong, unlike the remote areas.

The audit report suggested that compound walls be set up in the estates that are faced with insecurity.

Also, the BSCIC can take some initiatives inspiring some