

Khaleda returns

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday returned home after her 11-day visit to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah.

Ministers, chiefs of the three services, diplomats and high government officials received the prime minister's at the Zia International Airport.

The prime minister left the Jeddah King Abdul Aziz International Airport by a VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines in the early hours of yesterday.

She had left for Madina on November 13 as a royal guest of King Fahad Bin Abdul Aziz.

Khaleda performed Umrah on November 18. She prayed for continued peace, progress and prosperity of Bangladesh and also for global

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



PHOTO: PID

Members of the cabinet and the Saudi Arabian charge d'affaires in Bangladesh welcome Prime Minister Khaleda Zia back to Dhaka after she arrived at Zia International Airport from her trip to Makkah.

Indian minister blames Assam trouble on Bangladesh

BSS, New Delhi

Indian North-East Affairs Minister CP Thakur has blamed Bangladesh for the ongoing violence in Assam, pegging it as part of a big game played by Bangladesh to "destablise India."

A Press Trust of India report from Guwahati front-paged by the Indian Express said Thakur made the accusation after holding a meeting with

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Two Indian smugglers hurt in BDR counter attack

BSS, Dinajpur

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel shot and injured two Indian smugglers at Hakimpur upazila in Dinajpur yesterday.

A group of 60 Indian smugglers allegedly attacked BDR personnel in Basudevpur border area with stones and lethal weapons when Bashudevpur BDR outpost resisted the gang's bid to load smuggled goods on Shimato inter-city train at 6:10am, sources said.

BDR personnel shot the two smugglers and seized Indian sarees and banned Phensidyl syrup worth about Tk2lakh, BDR sources said.

Three die in house fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Fire burnt a house and killed three including a child at Bera upazila Saturday night.

Police sources said the hut of Halima Khatun, 70, built on the flood-control dam, suddenly caught fire and incinerated Halima, her daughter Kamala Begum, 40, and Kamala's son Saddam, 12.

Bera police recovered the dead bodies, and filed a UD (unnatural death) case. They suspect the fire originated from a kerosene lamp.

Sehri, Iftar timings			
Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
28	24		5-14
29	25	4-57	5-14

Prayer Timings		
November 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-55	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-21
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Private operators to get landline phone licence after Eid

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has decided to license the private sector to operate landline phones after the Eid-ul-Fitr in a bid to reduce a huge backlog of unmet demand.

"We will try to keep it as an open licensing regime," BTRC Chairman Syed Marghub Murshed told The Daily Star, adding the telecoms regulator

almost finalised the licensing procedure and would seek expression of interest.

The open licensing regime will help bring a competitive edge to landline telephony, allowing all eligible operators to obtain licences for the service, now provided mainly by the state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB).

The BTRC has since its inception been working to bring private opera-

tors to the service of public switched telephone network (PSTN) or landline telephones to end the monopoly in telecoms service, Marghub said.

Small operators will also feature on the list of private entrepreneurs to be engaged in the PSTN service, he added.

For the benefit of subscribers, new PSTN operators should adopt proper network engineering and service provisioning guidelines to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Slow loris found in Bandarban forest

BSS, Bandarban

Indigenous Bom people found an ash-white and owl-eyed slow loris, believed to be near extinct in Bangladesh, in the forest near Shaillpropat Tourism Centre Saturday.

The monkey weighing about 5kg with big eyes and long black stripes on the back is very shy and keeps its face hid behind paws.

The district administration collected the monkey from the indigenous people and kept it in a cage at the deputy commissioner's residence, attracting a large number of curious people.

Wildlife experts identified

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Georgia plunges into political turmoil

President offers fresh talks; opposition claims control of government; eyes on military

BBC ONLINE

Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze yesterday said he would consider holding fresh elections if protesters occupying parliament leave the building.

"All issues could be discussed including the speeding up of the presidential election, or the repeat of the parliamentary vote," he said.

He was speaking after talks with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, who is mediating in the crisis.

Georgia's defence minister has said the army will not restore order by force.

"The state of emergency doesn't envisage the use of military force to establish order," Defence Minister David Tevzadze told reporters.

President Shevardnadze said the army would take over "later tonight or

tomorrow" if the newly-elected parliament was not allowed to meet to ratify the emergency decree.

He said his offer for dialogue in return for protesters leaving parliament was "an ultimatum"

Sunday also saw Shevardnadze sack his Security Council secretary, Tedo Japaridze, who had expressed sympathy for the opposition demands.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Abducted businessman rescued from DU hall

JCD men involved

DU CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers rescued a businessman from a Dhaka University hall minutes after he was abducted allegedly by a group of leaders and workers of ruling BNP's student chapter for ransom Saturday night.

Up to 20 activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Shahidullah Hall unit, led by Amzad Hossain Jewel, kidnapped the businessman from a

commercial blood bank at Chankhar Pool and demanded Tk 50,000 from him for release in the second such crime in a week.

About 15 minutes later, a Ramna police team led by Nafiul Islam, senior assistant commissioner, patrol (south), raided the hall and rescued the businessman who would not give his name.

But police could not arrest any abductors who snatched Tk 10,000

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

An artist displays her skills at the ongoing mehendi festival being held at the Bengal Gallery in Dhaka. The festival offers free mehendi painting to all visitors on the occasion of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

