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New Iraq PM gets down to work

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraq's prime minister-designate Iyad Allawi has begun the process of forming a government team, meeting US and Iraqi officials, aides say. Confusion that surrounded his surprise nomination by Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council on Friday rippled on Saturday, with one official in the US occupation authority calling him "just a nominee", despite a White House and United Nations endorsement.

A senior US official in Baghdad later insisted, however, that the choice was final and said Iraq's new president and two vice presidents would probably be named on Sunday with the rest of the 26-member cabinet line-up to follow in a day or two.

UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, asked by Washington to help set up

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Next ADP fixed 16pc bigger

No new tax to support biggest ever development plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Economic Council (NEC) yesterday approved the biggest ever Annual Development Programme (ADP) with a Tk 22,000 crore outlay.

The NEC meeting chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday additionally allocated Tk 800 crore from the revenue budget for the ongoing small-scale development projects.

The new ADP is 16 percent higher than the current revised programme

of Tk 19,000 crore.

Fifty three percent of the new ADP will be supported by local resources and 47 percent by foreign aid. The development schemes under the revenue budget will be entirely funded from local resources.

"Governments will come and go. But we should design projects in such a way so that their continuity is not affected by change of government," Prime Minister Khaleda Zia told the NEC meeting.

Her comments came against the

backdrop that when the alliance government took over, it suspended about a hundred ADP projects approved by the previous Awami League government due to their questionable designs. Such elimination of projects still continues, yesterday's meeting observed.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told the meeting that the government does not have any plan to impose new taxes to support a bigger ADP.

"We shall expand the tax net to

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Abducted staff freed, another attempt foiled

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Kidnappers on Friday night freed the government employee of Kushtia while in Daulatpur upazila of the district at least five people were injured in a clash between villagers and gangmen out to kidnap a college student.

Abdus Salam Khan, a veterinary field assistant of livestock department in Kushtia was abducted on Thursday and later taken to Pabna. The kidnappers reportedly demanded Tk 10 lakh for his release.

A family member of Salam said they paid Tk 80,000 in addition to a motorcycle and a cell phone worth about Tk 70,000 in exchange for the release. The abductors let go of Salam on Padma Char near Talbaria after a 'medium' mediated the deal, the source added.

Meanwhile, police arrested one

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It's a fraud, CEC says on appeal

Syed reiterates EC did not give permission to file petition against HC's stay order on by-poll

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) felt deceived as an appeal against the High Court's stay order on Dhaka-10 parliamentary by-polls was filed using its name without permission.

"It is just a fraud as we have neither filed any appeal nor given permission to anybody to file it. The returning officer has to take my permission to file the appeal as his service is now under the Election Commission," an apparently irri-

tated CEC told The Daily Star yesterday.

The CEC, other election commissioners and the returning officer (RO) denied filling the appeal. Court documents show the RO filed the appeal, but he did not sign the vokalatnama.

Some EC officials said the CEC gave written permission to the RO to file the appeal on Wednesday, but they could not substantiate their claim.

Syed said he did not sign any such file. "Nobody came to me with

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Zia's 23rd anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 23rd death anniversary of president Ziaur Rahman will be observed across the country today.

On this day in 1981, president Zia was assassinated by a group of disgruntled army personnel at

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16 killed, 52 hurt in road crashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixteen people were killed and 52 others injured in road accidents in Gazipur, Sirajganj and Comilla yesterday.

Eleven were killed in Gazipur, three in Sirajganj and two in Comilla.

In Gazipur, a bus-truck collision on the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway at Telpara in Sadar upazila left 11 people killed and 32 injured.

Of them, four died on the spot, two on the way to Gazipur Sadar Hospital and five at Dhaka Medical College Hospital soon after admission.

Five of the dead were identified as Sarwar Jahán, 38, of Purana Palitan in Dhaka, driver of the bus Kazimuddin, 34, of Sonaker village

in Siripur upazila, helper of the bus Nazrul, 28, of Muslimpur village in Gazipur sadar upazila and two brothers, Monir, 21, and Sabuj, 11, of Baniachar village in Sadar upazila. Identity of the rest could not be known.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Siripur bound minibus collided with a Gazipur bound brick-laden truck at about 1:00pm.

The injured are now undergoing treatment at Gazipur Sadar Hospital and Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

"Both the vehicles were badly damaged at the front in the collision," said a witness.

In Sirajganj, three people were killed and 20 injured, seven of them

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PHOTO: REUTERS

A video grab from Saudi television shows a destroyed vehicle after an attack by militants in the Saudi city of Khobar yesterday. Al Qaeda-linked militants killed at least 16 people in a string of attacks on Khobar, Saudi security sources said.

al-Qaeda attacks kill 9 Saudis, 7 foreigners

REUTERS, Khobar

al-Qaeda-linked militants killed at least nine Saudis and seven foreigners in a string of attacks in an oil industry city yesterday, then took hostages and fled with security forces in hot pursuit.

Saudi security sources said an American, a Briton, an Egyptian, two Filipinos, an Indian and a Pakistani died in the attacks on foreigners' compounds in the eastern city of Khobar, along with two Saudi civilians and seven security force members.

"I can confirm the death of at

least one American. There may be more," a US embassy official said.

Saudi forces later stormed a housing compound where the militants had taken the hostages, a compound employee told Reuters. He gave no further details. Forces cordoned off the area, evacuated many civilians and shooting could be heard.

A Saudi Interior Ministry statement confirmed four gunmen had stormed an oil company and housing compounds and said security forces were "dealing with them as appropriate."

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Abducted Ctg schoolboy yet to be traced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong police till yesterday evening could not rescue schoolboy Ishraq Rizvi Rushu who was abducted on Tuesday.

Panchlaish police said they were conducting raids in different parts of the city for Rushu, an SSC candidate from Hamzabagh High School. They suspect that the schoolboy might have been kidnapped over a love affair.

A Chittagong court, meanwhile, placed Riyad Mahmud Chowdhury Pavel, Zobaer Hossain, M Mizanur Rahman Ziku, Harunur Rashid and Shakhawat Hossain Rahul, arrested on Friday in connection with the kidnapping, on a two-day remand, yesterday afternoon, sources said.

Unknown criminals abducted Rushu, 17, from Bibirhat in the port city at gunpoint and demanded Tk 10 lakh ransom from his family members for his release.

Rain delays play

RABEED IMAM, from St Lucia

Rain delayed start of play on the second day of the first Test between Bangladesh and the West Indies at the Beausejour Stadium on Saturday.

It has been an on and off kind of rain which never intensified. Still the

trend started from the previous night and the ground has already taken in a lot of water and there were more showers in the morning.

The umpires will have a fourth inspection of the outfield at 12:35pm local time (10:35pm BST) before deciding on when a start

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ANTI-AHMADIYYA AGITATION Minister admits govt's failure, victims sniff Jamaat link

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahmadiyya leaders yesterday said their suspicion were building that Jamaat-e-Islami was behind an international conspiracy to foment anti-Ahmadiyya militancy in Bangladesh and a minister admitted that the government failed to tackle the agitation.

Alarmed by what they termed the government's assistance to fundamentalist forces to seize books and remove signboards from Ahmadiyya mosques across Bangladesh, the leaders observed that the fanatics were threatening to emerge as a strong force to seize state power.

Talking to BBC yesterday, State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shajahan denied the allegation that the government was backing anti-Ahmadiyya demonstrators, but admitted it had failed to tackle them.

"The government is not looking after Ahmadiyyas is untrue. It is doing its best...but failing," he said, adding the government's main challenge was to maintain law and order 'at any cost'.

The minister denied accepting the suggestion that the ban on Ahmadiyya publications was an infringement on the rights of the sect.

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DHAKA-10 BY-POLLS Court hears writ on stay amid newsmen's protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid protests by journalists who were barred from entering the courtroom, the Appellate Division yesterday heard the writ petition on the High Court's stay order on the Dhaka-10 by-election.

The hearing that went on for more than two and a half hours will resume today when the court is likely to issue an order.

The journalists organised a sit-in demonstration in front of the Supreme Court building gate for an hour from 12:30pm. They asked the court authorities to let the press enter the court premises as the restriction is denying not only the

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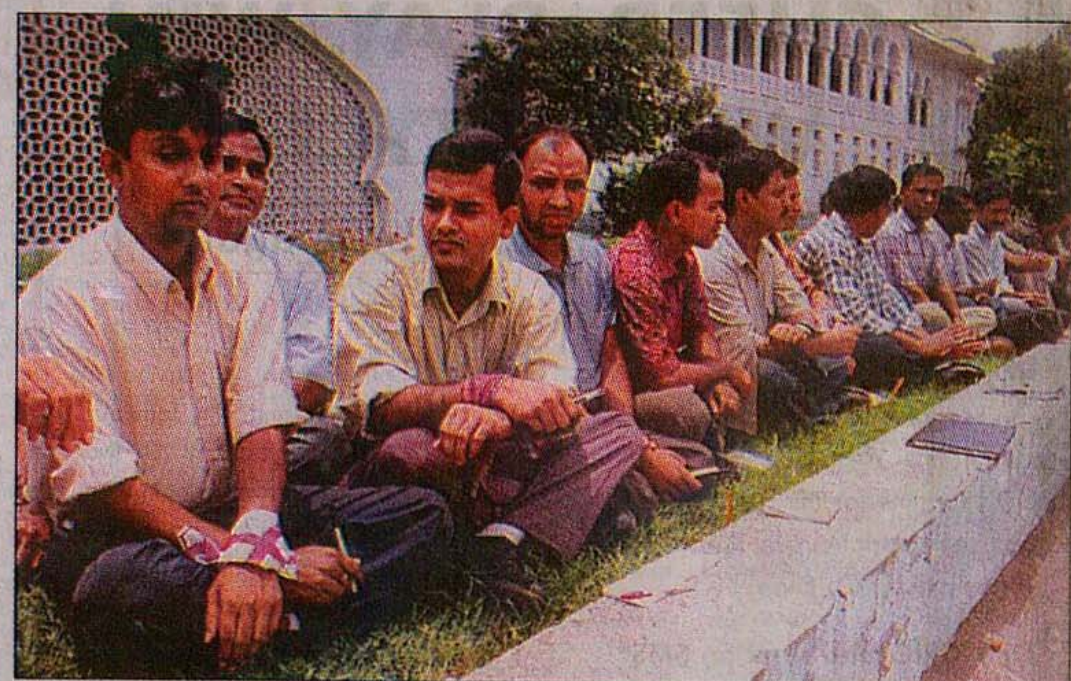


PHOTO: STAR

Journalists squat in front of the Supreme Court entrance with their hands tied during a sit-in yesterday to protest a restriction on them in covering court proceedings on Dhaka-10 by-election.

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