

AL resolute to hold Oct 3 rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) and its front organisations are taking all-out preparations to make the October 3 rally at Paltan Maidan a success, despite mass arrests of party leaders and workers across the country.

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina, now in Singapore for treatment of hearing problem, will address the rally in her first public appearance after the August 21 grenade attacks. She is likely to announce fresh agitation programmes in the out-governments.

Party high command yesterday held a preparatory meeting with the presidents and general secretaries of Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Manikganj, Gazipur, Narsingdi and Tangail and asked them to ensure

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Maoist strike shuts down Kathmandu

Bank bombed; 9 rebels gunned down

AFP, Kathmandu

Nine suspected Maoist rebels were gunned down and a bomb ripped through a bank in the Nepalese capital Kathmandu yesterday as a guerrilla strike shut shops and transport in much of the Himalayan kingdom.

Eight rebels died in four gunbattles with troops, police said. Another Maoist was gunned down as he threatened shopkeepers to enforce the strike in the southeastern Ilam district, police official Krishna Basnet said.

A blast shattered windows of the Nepal-Bangladesh Bank and several houses at Lalitpur on the capi-

tal's outskirts but caused no casualties, police said.

They described the bombing as a scare tactic to enforce the two-day stoppage called by the Maoists, who are fighting to overthrow the monarchy.

"Two Maoists in a taxi stopped at an engineering college outside the bank and left a bag of explosives, which the driver threw out causing the blast. We think the goal was to blow up the taxi," Lalitpur Chief District Officer Thaneswore Devkota said.

"This was an attempt by the Maoists to scare people into observing their strike," Devkota told AFP. Suspected rebels stopped and

set ablaze 10 vehicles in the central Dhading district. They were headed to Kathmandu as part of a month-long tour of Asia by activists lobbying for land rights for peasants.

Police said the attackers did not harm the 19 activists and five journalists on the People's Caravan for Food Sovereignty, who were mostly from other Asian countries.

The Maoists also claim to be fighting for the rural poor but were upset that the activists were defying the strike, a police officer said.

"These activists were fighting for the rights of poor farmers. I am very ashamed they were attacked," said Bamdev Gautam, president of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh chief AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, left, talks to Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain during a joint press conference at the National Press Club yesterday.

Six to die for killing N'ganj BNP leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday sentenced six people to death and eight to life imprisonment for killing BNP leader Habibur Rahman Habib.

Besides, two others were sentenced to different terms of jail while one was acquitted of the murder charge.

Narayanganj District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Abul Mansur delivered the judgment yesterday noon.

Convicts sentenced to death are Mir Mamun alias Kalo Darwala Mamun, Anwar Hossain, Kamal alias Gunda Kamal, Mohammad Ali, Sohel and Delwar Hossain Delu. Each of the six were fined Tk 20, 000 as well. The fines will be realised by selling their moveable properties.

Shahadat Hossain alias Shipon, Noor Uddin, Badal, Jasim Uddin, Golap Hossain Gulu, Mizan, Suruzzaman Rumu and Mota Mamun were given life sentence while Sharif and Anwar were sentenced to seven and five years' imprisonment respectively.

Mostak was acquitted of the charge.

Of the convicted, Mir Mamun, Kamal, Shipon, Noor Uddin, Badal and Jasim Uddin were tried in absentia.

All the convicts except the absconding ones were present in court when the judge passed the sentences.

Relatives of the victim did not

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

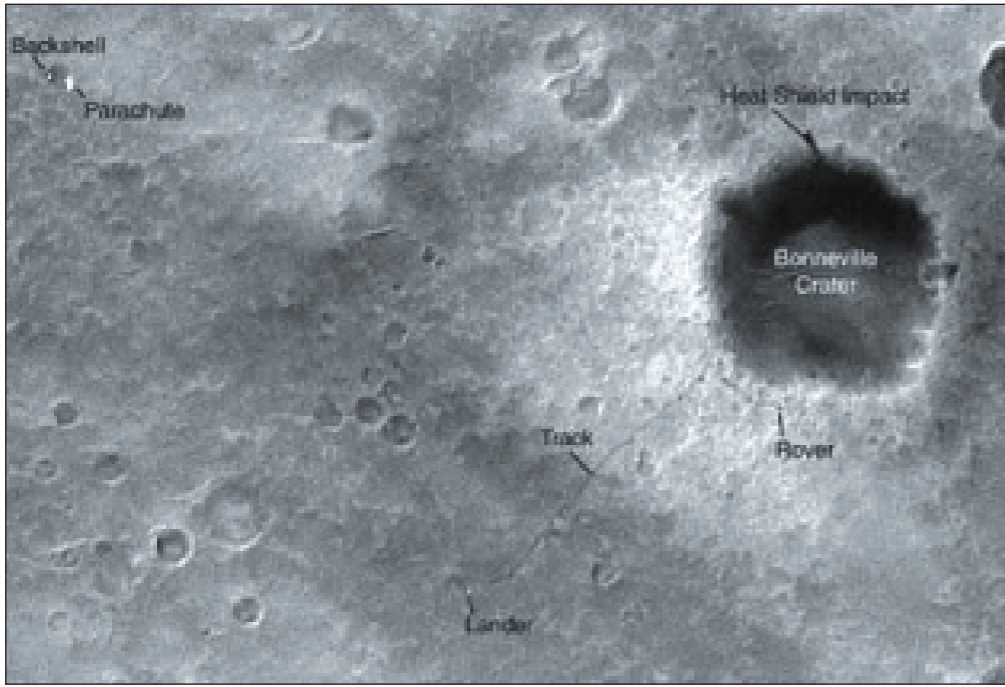


PHOTO: AP

An image, acquired on March 30, 2004 by the Mars Global Surveyor and released Monday, shows a dark dot identified as the rover Spirit next to giant Bonneville Crater and the thin dark line of its tracks leading back to its lander on the planet.

Mars orbiter photographs Rover from space

AP, PASADENA, California

A spacecraft orbiting Mars photographed one of Nasa's rovers and its tracks on the surface, the space agency said yesterday.

The image made by a camera aboard the Mars Global Surveyor shows a dark dot identified as the rover Spirit next to giant Bonneville Crater and the thin dark line of its tracks leading back to its lander.

The picture was made by rolling the entire spacecraft, adjusting its rotation rate to match the ground speed under the camera, a process that produces sharper images.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Southwest farmers to come under agri rehab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to bring under its agriculture rehabilitation programme small and marginal farmers affected by the recent excessive rain and floods in the southwestern region.

A meeting of the agriculture ministry, chaired by Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, yesterday asked the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) to report to it in seven days about the extent of damage to agriculture in the districts of the region and the number of the farmers hit hard.

A DAE preliminary estimate shows 16 percent of the crops in 24 districts have been lost to the rain and floods. Nine more districts have been freshly affected, raising the total number of affected districts to 54.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Trans-boundary issues to rule talks

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Biannual talks between the BSF and the BDR began in New Delhi yesterday as India called for a 'realistic and pragmatic approach' to dealing with the border issues and Bangladesh a 'path of trust and understanding'.

In the inaugural day of the meet, Indian Border Security Force (BSF) Director General Ajai Raj Sharma in his address asked for Bangladesh's cooperation in eliminating terrorism.

He sought Bangladesh Rifles' (BDR) 'earnest cooperation' for early completion of border fencing work along the Indo-Bangladesh border to curb trans-border crimes.

"The trans-national capabilities acquired by the terrorist organisations require that all nation states should come together and join

hands to fight their evil designs so that the phenomenon of terror, extending its tentacles in the region, is defeated," Sharma said.

"We should jointly harness our capabilities to achieve this end," he told the conference.

During the border forces' meeting two sides will deliberate on coordinated patrolling, joint operations against camps of Northeast insurgents in Bangladesh and various other trans-border crimes.

Official sources said BSF will furnish an updated list of '195 terrorist camps in Bangladesh' and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Prayer Timing		
September 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-00	6-05
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Italian hostages released in Iraq

REUTERS, Dubai

Two Italian women aid workers held hostage in Iraq have been released and handed over to the Italian charge d'affaires in Baghdad, Al Jazeera television said yesterday.

The Arab news network gave no further details. There was no immediate independent confirmation of their release.

Charity workers Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, both aged 29, were snatched from their Baghdad office on Sept. 7 and had not been heard of since.

Magura, Satkhira reel from floods

Waterborne diseases spread; two babies die in Shalikh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Flood situation in southwestern Magura and Satkhira districts remained unchanged yesterday with waterborne diseases spreading fast in the affected areas.

Two babies died of diarrhoea and pneumonia in Shalikh upazila of Magura and 35 diarrhoea patients were admitted to Shalikh health

complex and Magura sadar hospital. Besides, hundreds of people have been afflicted with skin diseases.

In Satkhira, more than 50,000 people still remained marooned with no recession of the floodwaters. As waterborne diseases broke out in the affected areas at least eight

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Oil surges to \$50.47 a barrel

REUTERS, Singapore

Oil prices soared to a new record above \$50 yesterday as uncertainties over Nigerian output heightened worries of a severe supply disruption ahead of winter.

US light crude jumped 83 cents to \$50.47 a barrel, the highest level recorded in the 21-year history of crude futures on the New York Mercantile Exchange. At 3:56am EDT, prices eased to \$50.20, marking a gain of 56 cents.

London's Brent crude raced to a new all-time peak at \$46.80 a barrel,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7