

JS SESSION RESUMES TODAY

AL to press for talks on Rab, grenade attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad session resumes today with the main opposition Awami League (AL) set to force the treasury bench to hold discussions on some crucial issues including deaths in the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) custody and the August 21 grenade attack.

demands.

The session will resume at 1:30pm today.

Senior AL lawmakers yesterday met Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and reiterated their demand to hold general discussions also on Monga, a near-famine situation in the north-western region, and the recent incidents on Bangladesh-India border.

The speaker, however, did not assure the opposition lawmakers of meeting their demands in the current 14th session, sources said. "Time is very short. Your demands will be fulfilled in the next session,"

Sircar told the AL delegates.

Opposition Deputy Leader Abdul Hamid after the meeting told The Daily Star that they would continue putting pressure on the ruling party to hold discussion on the issues. "We will also raise our demands in the House," he said.

AL lawmakers joined a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry yesterday and demanded discussion on Rab activities and August 21 grenade attack on the party's Bangabandhu Avenue rally that killed 21 people.

The committee chairman assured the opposition lawmakers

of holding discussion on the issues, but he did not specify the date for the discussion.

On October 28, the main opposition party demanded discussions on the same issues at the Bac meeting but the ruling party agreed to hold discussion on price of essentials only. The speaker will decide when the discussion will take place.

The AL lawmakers yesterday asked the speaker to hold the discussion on price hike in a day or two but the speaker could not specify the date.

The opposition deputy leader

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Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Secretary-General Mahmud Abbas (3rd-L) and Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei (3rd-R) chair the PLO executive meeting in the West Bank yesterday leaving ailing President Yasser Arafat's chair empty.

UZ polls in PM's mind

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said elections to the upazila parishad are under consideration of the government.

"We have heard the points for and against ... let us see what can be done," she told the BNP men at a meeting at the International Conference Center (ICC).

A total of 409 grassroots-level representatives, including union and upazila BNP leaders, from 11 districts of Dhaka division attended the meeting organised to exchange views on political activities of the party.

The prime minister also said the next general election is very crucial for the party and the people in order to maintain the present trend of development initiated by the coalition government.

Listing the development programmes of the BNP-led coalition government, she said, "If we cannot win the next election all

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Morshed flies to Delhi with PM's invitation to Monmohan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan today flies off to Delhi on a three-day visit to convey Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's invitation to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for the upcoming 13th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit in Dhaka.

The visit coincides with Dhaka-Delhi relations going through a rough patch over Delhi's denying Dhaka's allegation that the Border Security Force (BSF) is pushing-in Bangla-speaking Muslim Indian nationals along the Indo-Bangla border.

Morshed will pass on the invitation letter to Singh tomorrow and hold a discussion with him on the

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Scores of rickshaws clog the road in front of the Matshya Bhavan yesterday in a mockery of an ongoing drive against unauthorised three-wheelers in the capital.

Rab seizes arms after fight with outlaws

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized four firearms and ammunition after a gunfight with outlawed cadres at village Kolabari in Mirpur upazila in the district early hours of yesterday.

On a tip-off, a Rab team raided the village at about 4am when a group of criminals allegedly belonging to outlawed Biplobi Communist party (BCP) were in a secret meeting.

As the BCP members reached there, the BCP cadres opened fire on them. Rab returned fire, triggering shootout between them.

After hour-long fight in which ten outlaws were reportedly injured, the cadres fled the scene.

Police seized two foreign made rifles, two LGs, and 12 rounds of bullets from the spot.

Rab, however, could not arrest any of the outlaws.

WFP president due today

UNB, Dhaka

President-designate of the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board Ambassador Poul Skytte Christoffersen arrives in Dhaka today on a five-day visit.

He is coming to familiarise himself with the WFP activities in Bangladesh and to "see how food assistance has helped eradicate poverty and hunger in Bangladesh", said a WFP release yesterday.

Christoffersen, currently the Danish ambassador to Italy, will call on Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf.

He is also permanent representative to the WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). He will meet food-aid beneficiaries, including flood victims. He will also visit activities related to WFP's flood-emergency operation, Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Nutrition for Education

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Planned immunity to WB protested

Alliance of 56 NGOs call it against constitutional rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday strongly protested the government's move to provide immunity to the World Bank for its activities in Bangladesh.

As a public organisation, the World Bank and its auxiliary organisations must remain accountable to the common people for its activities, speakers said at the protest rally in the city organised by Alliance Against World Bank Immunity, an association of 56 NGOs.

"It is the constitutional right of the people of Bangladesh to sue the World Bank and seek justice if and when affected by any of its activities," said the alliance coordinator Aminur Rasul, reading out from a written statement in the rally.

The government is going to table a bill titled The International Finance Organisations (Amendment) Act 2004 in the current session of parliament to provide the WB and its auxiliary financial organisations immunity from any legal action.

According to the International Financial Organisation Order 1972, the World Bank is already enjoying various privileges including tax rebate, the alliance coordinator said. "Once the bill is passed into law, it will deprive any aggrieved citizen or the country itself from seeking legal redress against any of WB activities even if it violates people's fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution," Rasul read out from the statement.

The government must not yield

to any undemocratic pressure of the WB and International Monetary Fund, as it is a 'government of the people and by the people,' said Quazi Faruque, general secretary of Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

No other country in the world has given such immunity to the WB, said advocate Mizanur Rahman, adding that its demand for blanket immunity in Bangladesh goes against its own organisational rules and regulations. Placards carried by the alliance activists read that the WB and IMF exploit the poor in the name of free trade and that Bangladesh should not be the 'springboard of WB and IMF'.

Speakers also demanded immediate review of the immunity enjoyed by the Asian Development Bank.

AL to observe Jail Killing Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) and its different front organisations have chalked out various programmes to observe the Jail Killing Day on November 3 paying homage to the four national leaders who were assassinated inside Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

As part of the day's programme the AL will hoist the national and party flags at half-mast as well as black flag at party offices in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country.

The AL has enforced an eight-hour countrywide hartal from 6:00am to 2:00pm on the day rejecting the verdict of the Jail Killing Case that the party said acquitted all the masterminds of the gruesome killings.

Leaders and workers of the AL and its front organisations will wear black badges to mourn the

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Forests staff killed by illegal loggers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Forest Department staff and a mugger were killed in two separate incidents at Hathazari in the district and Karnaphuli Thana in the city in the last two days.

The victims were identified as Abdul Motalab, 50, a firewatcher of Sarta Forest Beat in Hathazari Range under Chittagong North Forest Department, and Noor Mohammad, 45, the mugger.

On information that some brigands were plundering a remote government forest of the Range area, Motalab along with his nine colleagues immediately went there at around 4.30am yesterday to catch them. But the brigands attacked them with knives, machetes, iron rods and wooden sticks, leaving all injured, sources said.

Critically injured Motalab, who hailed from Kapasia of Gazipur district, died on the way to Chittagong Medical College

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FLOOD CONTROL

Dhaka, Kathmandu to team up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Nepal have decided to form a 'Joint Technical Study Team' and work together on flood mitigation and management programmes.

The 10-member study team will draw up a work plan on different aspects of flood mitigation and management programmes and submit it to the two governments after two years.

The joint technical committee of the two countries took these decisions on the last day of its two-day meeting yesterday in Dhaka, the committee members said at a joint press briefing after the talks.

"Our joint study team will select the places to build some water reservoirs in the upstream in Nepal

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PVT UNIVERSITIES

Strict steps mulled against errant ones

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The education ministry has proposed amendments to the Private University Act 2003 providing for stringent measures like cancellation of government approval of any universities for failure to meet the laid down criteria.

The amendments will specify infrastructure facilities, minimum number of faculties, permanent faculty members, admission and monitoring process and all other related aspects, ministry sources said.

The ministry has already prepared a guideline for private universities containing all these provisions.

Against the backdrop of widespread criticism of a number of private universities for failure to impart quality education and fulfil

"several days" to form a real diagnosis.

Arafat's wife Suha was at his side in the sleek and modern Percy Army Teaching Hospital, which has a strong reputation for treating blood disorders including cancer.

Well-wishers brandishing bouquets and Palestinian flags gathered outside the hospital but were unable to see Arafat.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said he was "pleased that (Arafat) is now in a sophisticated medical facility where his health condition can be more carefully assessed. And I trust he will get the treatment that he needs."

Powell made his comments in an interview with Egyptian television, a

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Judge detained for wayside leak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law-enforcers Friday detained an additional judge of the High Court for a few hours on charges of urinating on the wall of an ambassador's residence in Gulshan.

The judge, one of the 19 whose recent appointment drew sharp criticism from different quarters, was freed following intervention by an official of the office of chief justice.

Caught with his pants down in the evening, the man in disgrace introduced himself as a High Court judge.

The embarrassed law-enforcers then tried to contact the law minister but failed. Officials at the law ministry, however, failed to recognise the judge by name.

When a phone call was made to the residence of the chief justice, an official went over to Gulshan Police Station and police freed the judge on confirmation of his identity.

Both Gulshan police and the ministry remained tight-lipped about the matter.

JANATAR MAHCHA CASE

Accused express no-confidence in judge

COURT CORRESPONDENT

All the seven accused including former state minister for planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in the Janatar Mancha sedition case yesterday expressed no-confidence in a metropolitan sessions judge.

They made the move after Judge Rabiul Hassan of the Court of Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge did not entertain their two time petitions for adjournment of yesterday's hearing.

The accused yesterday informed court that former home secretary and incumbent Election Commissioner Shafiqur Rahman had earlier filed a writ petition with the High Court (HC) challenging legality of Section 124(A) of Bangladesh Penal Code.

After hearing, the HC issued a

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Recruitment of class III, IV staff on hold

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has suspended all recruitment of class three and four employees at district and other lower levels in the wake of allegations of massive political interference, irregularities, nepotism and corruption.

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Table with prayer timing for October 31, including columns for Sehri, Iftar, Azan, and Jamaat.