

## EU team seeks

FROM PAGE 1  
The morning and inquired whether there is any threat on holding the election, particularly from the militants. The home ministry, however, told them that there is no such threat adding that the government has successfully fought off militancy.

"We've assured them that they will receive necessary security if the government allows them to observe the polls," Safar Raj told reporters after the meeting. Upon arrival, the EU observers should contact the home ministry and deputy commissioners concerned and collect pass and stickers while going to the polling centres, he added.

The home secretary said, "We've told them that many foreign election observers, journalists and rights activists came earlier to observe the elections and got necessary security....Although there were movements, the parliamentary elections have been held smoothly since 1991."

Safar Raj also briefed the EU team about the security on the election day saying that police and ansar will be deployed at each polling centre to maintain law and order, while the Armed Police Battalion and Bangladesh Rifles men will act as striking force as per requirement of the EC.

"We've told them that the key militant leaders have been arrested and awarded death penalty in trials and the High Court has upheld the verdict," the home secretary said about the EU mission's inquiry about possible militant threats on election.

Talking to journalists after the meeting, the EU mission leader Bruce said they have been collecting necessary information from authorities concerned in

## Iraq violence kills 28

AFP, Bagdad

At least 28 people were killed across Iraq on Monday, including four members of a Shia family shot dead by gunmen as they attempted to flee their homes north of Baghdad.

After receiving repeated threats in their home in the restive provincial capital of Baquba, the family packed their belongings in a pickup truck and fled, only to be stopped on the road by gunmen who riddled their car with bullets, killing four and wounding five.

Gunmen also killed two other Shias busy packing up their belongings in a small town just to the west of Baquba, while 10 other people, three of them soldiers, were killed elsewhere in Diyala, a province where sectarian violence is still only by that in Baghdad itself.

The violence came even as the Iraqi government gave an optimistic assessment of the impact of a massive security operation in the capital and the return of displaced families to newly pacified neighborhoods.

"We have statistics from the army unit in Ghazaliyah that some families have come back to their neighborhoods," said Iraqi military spokesman Brigadier Qassem al-Musawi, referring to a largely Sunni Arab neighborhood of the capital.

Tens of thousands of Iraqi and US security personnel have deployed on the streets of Baghdad since June in a bid to stem fit-for-far sectarian violence between the ousted sunni Arab elite and the newly empowered Shia majority that has been daily costing dozens of lives.

In the past week, however, the violence has spiked with dozens of bodies turning up everyday, including 14 in the heart of the capital, including on Monday.

"These numbers announced by the media are not accurate," retorted government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh when asked about the worsening death toll.

## S Korea

FROM PAGE 16

exploration opportunities, Seoul's energy ministry said yesterday.

South Korean companies are planning to set up an office with the Bangladesh state-run Petrobangla early next year, said the ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy.

Details of the exploration plan are yet to be discussed.

## High security

FROM PAGE 1  
In contrast to the law enforcers' usual suppressive attitude observed toward agitation programmes of the opposition, especially the siege programmes on September 6 and 12, the government yesterday took all measures to maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the capital.

Except for some stray incidents on the outskirts of the city and in several districts, yesterday's rally ended peacefully with full cooperation from the law enforcers as they led the processions march through the streets towards the rally.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) took charge of the security of Paltan Maidan and the stage area a day ahead of the rally and handed over the charge to the police yesterday noon.

Rab took all preventive measures for the security of the rally except patrolling the sky with choppers.

Around 3,500 elite anti-crime forces from five battalions took over the Paltan Maidan and adjacent strategic points and repeatedly scanned through the area with bomb detectors, bomb sniffing dogs and explosives experts to avert any sort of untoward incident during the rally.

Undercover personnel from Rab intelligence and other law enforcement agencies including detective branch and special branch were deployed in the area to nab any

## RU students

FROM PAGE 1  
Bangladesh about the election and security arrangements. "We met the foreign ministry officials last week and met the home ministry officials to discuss the security issue," he said.

Asked whether it raised minority repression issue in the meeting, the delegation declined to talk on any particular subject saying that they will make their observations in their report to be submitted to the EU headquarters in Brussels.

Bruce, however, replied in the affirmative when asked whether they offered any security assistance and said they have a election security expert in their team who will submit details about the security situation in Bangladesh in his report. But the home secretary replied in the negative when asked about the offer.

Additional Home Secretary Mohammad Mohsin, Joint Secretary (Political) Akther Ahmed and other ministry officials were also present at the meeting.

### Paltan overflows

FROM PAGE 1  
Baitul Mukarram, Rajuk Avenue and Shapla Chattar as thousands of people failing to find any space inside the Paltan Maidan gathered near the loudspeakers set up at different points in about one kilometre area circling the meeting venue.

"There is no alternative to the change of the government. How can poor people like us live when price of essentials is so high?" Shahjahan Khondoker, an elderly farmer of Nilphamari, said as he was listening to the 14-party leaders' speech standing near Golap Shah Mazar at Gulistan.

As thousands of people marched towards the rally venue in processions, volunteers tasked with maintaining discipline found their task too difficult.

Soon the Paltan Maidan was filled and the volunteers instructed the rally-goers to stay in the adjoining areas.

It was the largest opposition gathering during this government's tenure, said a witness.

The whole area was vibrating with frequent anti-government slogans. "Khaleda-Nizami autocrat, leave Bangladesh at this moment," "Mother and son [Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman] together have ruined the country," "Sheikh Hasina march forward, the people are with you" and "We'll not eat rice at Tk 30 and will not vote for paddy sheep" were a few popular ones that rocked the area yesterday.

The area assumed a festive look as processions carried colourful banners, placards and posters with pictures of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Hasina and local leaders, and beat drums and danced.

A large number of police, Armed Police Battalion and Ansar were posted at major intersections around Paltan Maidan.

Unlike September 6 and 12, when they mercilessly clubbed and kicked opposition leaders and workers, this time they were seen trying to maintain discipline in the processions.

Most of the city streets yesterday observed thin traffic as many private and public vehicles did not play.

Traffic came to a halt in the areas around the rally venue and many had to walk a long way to reach other parts of the city.

### Iran threatens

FROM PAGE 16  
involve six world powers and Iran, would "address the international community's concerns about the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program while on the other hand addressing Iran's economic, political and security concerns."

Chirac said: "First we have to find an agenda for negotiation, then engage the negotiation and during that negotiation I propose that on the one hand the six refrain from referring the issue to the Security Council and that Iran renounce during the negotiation the enrichment of uranium."

Suspending uranium enrichment ahead of talks is a formal condition of the six world powers, the permanent Security Council members Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States plus Germany, for negotiations on a package of trade and other benefits for Iran.

## RU students

FROM PAGE 1  
near the Dhaka- Rajshahi highway on the university main entrance demanding uninterrupted power supply in all residential halls on the campus, campus sources said.

Numbers of vehicles were stranded on the highway for about two weeks causing severe traffic congestion, said the sources.

Since 11:00pm, the police and the demonstrating students clashed many times and chase-counter chase lasted for three hours.

Hundreds of resident students from Sher-e-Bangla, Bangabandhu and Motihari halls came out of their dorms infuriated after they had experienced eight power outages since evening on Sunday, sources said.

Mansur Alam, a resident student of Bangabandhu hall, said severe power outages have been going on for about a month that is affecting the students' studies.

The students threatened to launch a greater agitation against the university authorities if smooth power supply is not ensured within 24 hours.

RUVC Prof Altaf Hossain yesterday confirmed the incident and told the Daily Star that a section of student organisations are behind the frequent violence on campus.

"We called a teacher body meeting yesterday night to find the attackers and to solve the existing power crisis."

### Hasina

FROM PAGE 1  
voted to power in the next election.

Hasina, also president of main opposition AL, was addressing a grand rally organised by the 14-party opposition combine at Paltan Maidan in the capital to press home its demand for electoral reforms, and to protest price hike of essentials and rise of militancy.

"If we come to power we will reduce price of everyday essentials, curb militancy totally and increase power production and bring real infrastructure development in roads, schools, mosques and madrasas," she said, adding that their development will be for the people, not for any family.

The AL president blasted the BNP-Jamaat government for price spiral of essentials, rise of militancy, widespread corruption, looting public money through syndication and failure to increase power production and bring infrastructure development in the country.

Hasina said she would return people the money "looted" by the prime minister and her sons if AL is voted to power.

She urged the prime minister to reduce the price of everyday essentials ahead of the holy Ramadan.

### AL, BNP

FROM PAGE 1  
In an unscheduled debate Awami League (AL) lawmaker AKM Jahangir Hossain alleged that the Election Commission (EC) started its activities preparing for the next general election violating the People's Representative Order 1972.

Denying the allegation Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the allegation is absolutely baseless, the EC did not do anything like that but is working for holding the next general election in a free and fair manner in accordance with the laws and constitution.

AL and BNP lawmakers were shouting blames at each other while the law minister was trying to refute the opposition's claim.

After the question answer session AL lawmaker Rohomot Ali took the floor on point of order and brought a condemnation motion regarding the people's remarks on Islam. In reply Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar told the House that he had already received a notice regarding the matter and a decision will be taken later.

Soon after Rohomot Ali, AKM Jahangir Hossain took the floor and said, "The EC started the work of finalising the list of presiding and polling officers for the next election violating rules. It can be done only after announcing the election schedule and the returning officers are supposed to do."

The speaker in his ruling on the subject said, "I cannot make any ruling on it. But if you think that a rule has been violated by the EC then you can go to the High Court."

Rejecting the allegation, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the "Jahangir will not be able to show any document on it. It is absolutely baseless what he has said." He however said, "The EC is doing everything according to the law and constitution. But Awami League tried to make a political controversy out of it." The ruling BNP lawmakers shouted in support of him.

All lawmakers protested when the minister politically attacked the opposition but he continued his speech.

Again taking the floor AKM Jahangir Hossain alleged that the law minister himself violated the rule. Criticising the EC he said, "This is the EC which violated the High Court verdict. It wants to politicise everything before the ninth parliament election."

Again rejecting the allegation Moudud Ahmed said, "We challenge the allegation, if he has any such order or notification against the Election Commission he should place it in the parliament."

Protesting the minister's speech AL lawmaker demanded the floor again but the speaker moved onto other businesses of the day without allowing them to have the floor.

The EU delegation told the journalists that they have been

## Top 4 defaulters

FROM PAGE 1

with the BB back in March. The central bank then identified that default loans from these banks had increased with the top 20 defaulters. The banks are Sonali, Shilpa, Islami, National, City, Southeast, Premier, Dutch-Bangla, Jamuna and Brac.

Of these, Sonali Bank alone has the highest Tk 7,563 crore default loan and Jamuna Bank has the lowest Tk 7,48 crore.

In Sonali Bank, the top 20 defaulters have Tk 3,400 crore loan, which is 45 per cent of the bank's total default loan in March. Of these defaulters, the BPC held Tk 2,500 crore loan, BTMC Tk 143 crore, ASS Tk 83 crore and KNM TK 72 crore.

Again, the BPC's default loan increased to Tk 4,300 crore with this bank in June.

The bank is troubled with the KNM default loan as this state-owned enterprise has remained shut for years. The government however has decided to sell out the KNM property and clear its loans, sources said.

The ASS loan was given a decade back against a government guarantee. But hardly any repayment of the loan was made.

Faced with liquidity crisis, Sonali Bank has requested the central bank to take up with the government repayment of the

defaulted loans.

Out of the Shilpa Bank's total default loan of Tk 426 crore, the top 20 defaulters are holding Tk 356 crore or 83 percent. The bank authorities told the BB that some of the top defaulters have recently regularised their loans through rescheduling.

Of the Tk 366 crore total default loans with the Islami Bank, the top 20 defaulters hold Tk 160 crore or 44 percent of the total.

National Bank has a total default loan of Tk 202 crore, of which top defaulters are holding 64 percent or Tk 130 crore.

City Bank has Tk 152 crore default loan, of which top defaulters hold Tk 133 crore or 87 percent.

Southeast Bank has a total default loan of Tk 145 crore, of which Tk 106 crore or 73 percent with the top defaulters.

Premier Bank's default loan totals Tk 96 crore. Of this, top defaulters are holding Tk 74 crore or 77 percent.

Dutch Bangla Bank has defaulted loan of Tk 38 crore, of which top defaulters hold 34 crore or 89 percent. Brac Bank has Tk 36 crore default loan with Tk 3.5 crore or 11 percent of it held by defaulters. Jamuna Bank has Tk 7.48 crore default loans. Of this, top defaulters hold Tk 6 crore or 85 percent.

## 4 cops hurt in bomb blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Four policemen were injured in a bomb attack in Ralligate area under Daulatpur Police Station in the city last night.

The injured cops are Shah Alam, Wazed Ali, Shafi Ahmed and Shaher Ali. They are undergoing treatment at Police Hospital.

According to the officer-in-charge (OC) of Daulatpur Police Station, unidentified miscreants hurled a powerful bomb at the policemen while they were patrolling the area at 7:40 pm. There was no electricity in the area at that time, the OC said.

Police and Rab members cordoned off the area. Police arrested a man, but did not disclose his name.

All police stations and police outposts have been put on high alert following the bomb attack. Police patrol teams have also been asked to remain on high alert while on duty.

### 2.25kg gold

FROM PAGE 16

Sensing the customers were law enforcers, Nasir fled along with two of his accomplices -- Tota and Zafar, Rab sources said. Rab, however, managed to capture Sekandar in this connection.

### Oli threatens

FROM PAGE 16

Oli was addressing a freshers' reception ceremony at Col Oli Ahmed Bir Bikram College under Bazalia union of Satkania upazila in the district as the chief guest in the morning.

He said that the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) should rather hunt for those who are eating away public money across the country, instead of running after the militants and criminals.

The Rab should make a list of these corrupt elements and bring them under 'cross-fire' before the next government comes to power, otherwise the future of the country would plunge into darkness, the resentful BNP leaders said.

In his speech, Oli also alleged that Prime Minister Kheda Zia had earlier formed alliance with the corrupt and Rajakars (collaborators), and at present she is joining hands with an autocrat.

When he asked whether the people of Satkania would be beside him if he forms a new party, the crowd present at the function voiced their support.

Principal Abdur Rahman of the college presided over the function.

### Power crisis

FROM PAGE 1