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EC to look into BNP constitution to choose right people for talks

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) would examine BNP's constitution to decide which faction of the party would be invited for dialogue.

"This is a sensitive issue and the commission will take special measures to keep it away from any controversy," the CEC told reporters after inaugurating the voter listing project in Gazipur municipal area.

The EC would invite people who will be qualified for talks, the CEC added.

He also exchanged views with local people on preparation of the voter list and national ID cards, next parliament elections and EC reforms.

The CEC said candidates would

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Foreign nationals won't be allowed to work for over 5 yrs

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The Board of Investment (BoI) has decided not to allow any foreign national to work in Bangladesh for over five years in order to encourage transferring technical know-how to local people.

The BoI will also not allow any ordinary workforce from abroad to ensure more jobs to the locals in industries fully owned by foreign nationals or joint venture companies.

"If any industry desires to transfer technical know-how to the local

people, five years is enough for the task," a BoI director told The Daily Star on Thursday. As a least developed and over populated country, Bangladesh is not able to accommodate unskilled work forces in different industries, he added.

The decisions were taken after a taskforce recently identified that a few foreign nationals working here hid their actual income to evade government revenue. Following the revelation, the BoI cancelled around 25 work permits.

The board is also working on other complaints regarding tax

evasion by foreign nationals.

As part of the tightened policy, the BoI is not allowing foreign nationals whose income is shown below \$500 a month.

Meanwhile, many owners of shrimp hatchery plants blamed that the home ministry is objecting to a majority of their work permits without any valid ground.

They said the industry is heavily dependant on Thai experts, but the home ministry has rejected a good number of work permit applications from Thai nationals on

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Dhaka calls for special UN session on maternal health

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh called for a special session of the UN General Assembly on Maternal Health and Subsequent Global Plan of Action to devise effective measures for reducing maternal mortality.

Health and Family Welfare Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Matiar Rahman mooted the proposal at the 'Global Women Deliver Conference' held in London Oct 18-20.

Bangladesh's proposal was unanimously accepted and incorporated in the ministerial declaration of the conference, said a message received here yesterday.

The adviser also called for creation of a global fund for maternal health, involving effective public-private partnership.

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PHOTO: STAR

Rickshaw vans used for carrying various goods lie idle at Gulistan in the capital yesterday as normal business is yet to resume in markets in the area.

Durga Puja ends today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The largest religious festival of the Hindus here, Durga Puja, winds up today with the immersion of the goddess' idols across the country.

Hindus celebrate Vijaya Dashami, the last day of the five-daylong festivities, today.

Durga Puja is the worship of 'shakti' or divine power winning over the dark forces.

Thousands of Hindu devotees yesterday observed 'Mahanbami' with great enthusiasm at puja mandaps in the city and elsewhere in the country.

Devi Durga was offered the 'Nabami Bhog' of food and fruits which was later distributed among the devotees.

Vijaya Dashami is the special ceremony to reaffirm peace and good relations among people. Families visit each other to share sweets during the Dashami festivities. Married Hindu women put vermilion (sindur) on each other's forehead on the eve of the occasion.

Hindus believe that Dashami is the day when goddess Durga accompanied by her children Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesh set off for Kailash, her husband's abode.

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PHOTO: STAR

A city road in a pitiable condition. The photo was taken from Tejgaon Industrial Area.

Malaysia to ensure salary to workers if cheated by employers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Malaysian government will ensure full salaries to the Bangladeshi workers, around 800, who alleged that their employers had cheated them by not paying the salaries promised to them.

The workers, however, are most likely to be sent back home as they refused to resume work at their workplaces and did not opt for alternative jobs either. Instead, they all demanded employment in a single factory, which is a very difficult condition to be met, Bangladesh High Commissioner M Khairuzzaman told The Daily Star.

If the workers' claims are proven true, their salaries will be remitted to them even if they are deported, said Datuk Ismail Abdul Rahim, director general of the country's labour department, adding that the investigation into the workers' claims is to be completed by next week.

Quoting the director general, The New Straits Times, a Malaysian daily, reported on October 19 that the department officials had

obtained the employers' contract documents and were interviewing the workers who were being held by the immigration authorities.

The Bangladeshi workers alleged that since January this year, four textile factories in Batu Pahat of Johor paid only Malaysian ringgit (RM) 200 a month to each worker as opposed to RM 1,200 they had been promised.

To protest and redress the breach of promise, the workers on October 9 headed for the Bangladesh high commission in Kuala Lumpur on 27 chartered buses, but the Malaysian immigration authorities re-directed the buses to a stadium and later sheltered the workers in hostels in Port Dickson.

"We need to get the original contracts the workers had signed in Bangladesh. We are also helping them file a proper statement of claim for us to act on," Datuk Ismail said adding that the employers will have to make up for the balance if there is proof that the workers were cheated out of their salaries.

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Laos wants to import medicines from Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Southeast Asian nation Laos is keen to import medicines from Bangladesh and both sides have agreed in principle to issue on arrival visas to the businessmen to boost the existing paltry trade between the two countries.

"We are very keen to import Bangladeshi pharmaceutical products because of quality and low price," First Vice Foreign Minister of Laos Phongsavath

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Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patna

A member of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party's (PBCP) Red Flag faction was killed yesterday in a "shootout" between his accomplices and Rab at Madhugram.

The dead was identified as Abdu Salam, 35, son of Abul Kalam of Durgapur village.

Acting on a tip-off, members of Rab 12 raided Madhugram of Atakula thana where they had assembled at about 3:05am. Sensing the presence of the law

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DU halls to open Oct 23

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) dormitories will reopen on October 23 after eight weeks of closure following violent incidents on the university campus on August 22.

The decision came after university authorities held meetings with different bodies of the university, the government and law enforcement agencies, Proctor Prof AKA Firoz Ahmed said yesterday.

The academic activities of the university will resume on October 28.

Prayer Timing		
October 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:50	5:25
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:00	4:15
Maghrib	5:36	5:39
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Prof Anwar for release, treatment of all detained teachers, students

DU CORRESPONDENT

The detained general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA), Prof Anwar Hossain, demanded the release and medical treatment of all locked-up teachers and students of public universities before the country's premier university reopens on October 28.

Dr Anwar, also the university's dean of biological sciences faculty, passed on the message through his family members who went to visit him at Dhaka Central Jail on the Eid day.

He and three of his colleagues were arrested on charges of fuelling violent student protests on the campus between August 20 and 22. Eight Rajshahi University teachers and eight DU students were also arrested in this connection.

Ayesha Akhter, Dr Anwar's wife, in a statement to the media, detailed her husband's appeal.

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Local scientists invent environmentally friendly low-cost pesticides

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

The Rural Development Academy (RDA) in Bogra has invented a method of purifying seeds and preparing environment-friendly low-cost pesticides using local plants like neem, berry, tobacco and bish katali.

The government research institute made the invention with the financial assistance of just \$12,200 from UK-based Global Plant Clinic (GPC).

GPC chief Dr Eric Boa and Project Coordinator Paula Kelly are coming to Bangladesh soon to formulate future strategies to spread the technology across the globe.

RDA Deputy Director and Project Coordinator AKM Zakaria said, "Using the new technology, it

is now possible to check crop damage caused by insects and diseases, which is around 25 percent of the total production. The pesticides also do not affect the soil quality and cost one-fourth of the traditional chemical pesticides."

Around 5,000 farmers are now applying the technology in Amrul union of Shahjahanpur upazila of Bogra, Zakaria said.

Farmer Javed Ali, 54, of Maria village of Amrul union said three years ago he had to spend at least Tk 80-90 for pesticides to cultivate vegetables on one bigha land, but now the RDA pesticide costs only Tk 25-30.

Another farmer Nabab Ali, 50, of Bishnupur village said pesticides would cost him Tk 1,000 for producing vegetables on seven bighas of land, but now the cost has

reduced to only Tk 500.

Javed said he is getting similar results by using tobacco leaf powder worth Tk 150-160 to check cutworms in potato and maize fields whereas chemical pesticide Darsban would earlier cost him Tk 1,400.

Use of Darsban destroys the soil quality and it has negative effect on the environment, agriculturist Zakaria said, adding, "Such chemical pesticides exist in the soil at least for four years."

He said traditionally pesticides like Captan or Vitavax are used for purifying vegetable seeds and paddy, but now the juice of berry leaves is being used as an alternative.

"Seeds can be freed of diseases if those are dipped for some time in

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Myanmar under fresh pressure after new US sanctions

AFP, Yangon

Military-run Myanmar was under renewed pressure yesterday after the United States announced a new round of sanctions following the junta's bloody crackdown on dissent here.

US President George W Bush's new penalties targeted the country's military leaders late Friday and also urged China and India, Myanmar's neighbours and main allies, to step up pressure on the

military government.

It is the second time in four weeks that the United States has increased sanctions on the junta following the regime's clampdown on protests.

State media in Yangon has yet to speak about the latest US action, while detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), also declined to comment on the move.

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Iran's top nuke negotiator resigns

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday announced its top nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani has unexpectedly resigned at a time of growing tension with the West over the Islamic republic's controversial nuclear programme.

Government spokesman Gholam Hossein Elham said Larjani had already offered his resignation several times and now President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had chosen to accept it.

Larjani had resigned several times and finally the president

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1st Death Anniversary

Today (21st October, 2007) is the 1st death anniversary of Captain Altaf Uddin Choudhury, ex Biman DC-10 Captain.

On this occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held.

Relative, friends and well wishers are requested to pray for the departed soul.

A supporter of former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto adds tires to a fire during a protest in Karachi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP