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Zillur terms changes in BNP 'midnight coup'

UNB, Dhaka

Acting Awami League President Zillur Rahman yesterday termed the BNP standing committee meeting of Monday night as a "midnight coup."

The meeting at the residence of former finance minister Saifur Rahman in a dramatic move made him acting chairperson and replaced Khandkar Delwar Hossain with Maj (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed as acting secretary general.

"No possibility, no pressure of such coup in Awami League as leaders of the party are solidly united under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina," Zillur said, reacting to the changes in BNP.

He was talking with reporters while leaders of Krishak League met with him at his Gulshan residence.

The Awami League leader demanded ban on political parties that are accused of war crime, militancy, fundamentalism and engaged in misuse of religion in politics.

"Jamaat was engaged in religion based politics and its leaders are war criminals as it had opposed the liberation of Bangladesh," he added.

Responding to a query about his remarks that Awami League will not participate in national election keeping Sheikh Hasina in jail, the acting president said, "It is my personal stand. Working committee of the party will take decision in this regard."

There is no war criminal in Bangladesh

Jamaat renews claim

UNB, Dhaka

Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh yesterday renewed its claim that there is no war criminal in the country now.

"According to an investigation of the Sheikh Mujib government, the number of war criminals was 195...If there was no other war criminals at that time where they come from now," asked Jamaat in a statement.

"So, there is no war criminal in the country now and Jamaat Secretary General Mojaheed just told this truth on that day," said the statement signed by party's Publicity Secretary Prof M Tasnim Alam.

It said the then Sheikh Mujib government had identified 195 war criminals after investigation and sent them back to Pakistan without trial according to the Simla and Delhi Agreements.

It said late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared general amnesty in 1973, excluding those who were accused of killing, rape, looting and arson attacks.

"Sheikh Mujib's Awami League government was in power after the general amnesty. No case or even (GD) was filed at that time against Jamaat leaders or activists for killing, rape, looting and arson attacks. So, it is proved that leaders and activists of the then

Jamaat were not involved in such incidents," it said.

Rokon-Ud-Doula made OSD at last

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has stripped Rokon-Ud-Doula of his magistracy and made him an OSD (official on special duty) at the establishment ministry.

It issued a circular to that effect on Monday night, a few hours after getting the president's approval.

Rokon who rose to fame for his role in the anti-adulteration drives in the capital became subject to controversy after he called for the government to defer separation of the judiciary from the executive till 2021.

Addressing a seminar in the city on October 21 he also asked the executive magistrates to go on a work stoppage from November 1 in the event of his arrest.

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Prayer Timing		
October 31		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-50	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-32	5-35
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

ANTI-GRAFT DRIVE

Deadline must to restore business confidence

EC envoy says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

European Commission (EC) Ambassador Stefan Frowein yesterday said Bangladesh government must clearly state the duration of its anti-corruption drive if it wants to gain the confidence of the business community, maintain economic stability, and avoid uncertainties.

The government would also need to maintain political stability to allay foreign investors' fear of an unpredictable investment climate, said Frowein in reply to audience questions at the EU Information Day seminar in the capital.

The EC ambassador backed the government's anti-corruption drive, but warned, "It is clear from the business community that they do not know how far it goes and how long it goes; it contributes to the feeling of uncertainty, and uncertainty is the worst thing for businessmen."

He cited from his interactions with the business community, especially the representatives of ready made garments industry, to say that overseas orders are on the slide and, "I think certain things are going down and there is a kind of concern about order going down, and maybe, orders shifting away from this country due to political situation or perception of the situation."

He said if political actions hamper economic activity and creates economic uncertainty, the government must 'work it out'.

"If there is uncertainty and shortage of clear-cut information, foreign investors would not be interested in investing here," he said adding, "Without private sector and foreign direct investment, this country cannot get further -- it is so much desperately needed."

Frowein went on to say the international media is not report-

ing positive developments in Bangladesh, and that adversely affects the country's image abroad. He added foreign investors need to 'get the right information and perception' in order to be attracted to the country.

"If perception improves, order books will improve, and if order books improve, employment situation will improve," he quipped.

A number of EC staff also made presentations regarding trade and economic assistance, reporting that the EC will give a grant of 205 million euros to Bangladesh over three years for the fields of governance, human rights, economic development, disaster management, and food security.

The EU imported 5 billion euros worth of goods from Bangladesh in 2006, marking a 27 percent rise from the previous year.

Iajuddin off to New York

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed left Dhaka yesterday for New York on a weeklong official visit to the United States.

Caretaker government advisers Barrister Mainul Hossain and Maj Gen (Retd) MA Matin, head of the diplomatic corps, cabinet secretary, navy and air chiefs, charge d'affaires of the US Embassy and high civil and military officials were present at the airport to see him off.

"He will arrive in New York on October 31 via Dubai by a regular flight of the Emirates Airlines," said a Bangabhaban announcement.

During his seven-day visit to the USA, the president would attend functions in Ohio and New Orleans.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

One killed as BDR opens fire on illegal loggers

UNB, Feni

An illegal logger was shot to death and 20 others, including BDR soldiers, were wounded in clashes that erupted after the border guards opened fire to prevent timber smuggling in Feni's Phulgazi upazila yesterday, officials said.

They said Harun-or-Rashid, 40, a resident of Chhagolnaila upazila, died on the spot as the law enforcers opened fire on three smugglers who, carrying Indian timber in a pick-up van, defied a BDR order to pull up at Tarakucua village at about 1:30pm.

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The Sectors Commander Forum comprising the sector commanders of the Liberation War holds a press conference at the Liberation War Museum in the capital yesterday. (Story on page 1)

Quader sued for hiding wealth

ACC okays charge sheets against 12 top graft suspects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case against detained former state minister for youth and sports Obaidul Quader for accumulating wealth illegally beyond his known sources of income and concealing information in the wealth statement submitted to the commission.

ACC Assistant Director Ashraf Islam filed the case against AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader for concealing information about wealth worth Tk 15.55 lakh and accumulating wealth worth Tk 62.85 lakh illegally.

The ACC also approved submitting charge sheets against 12 high profile graft suspects including former communications minister Nazmul Huda and Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury in different corruption cases.

The others include former premier Khaleda Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, detained chairman of Orion Group Obaidul Karim, former AL lawmaker Mirza Azam, former BNP lawmakers Naser Rahman and Manjurul Ahsan Munshi, former chairman of Bangladesh Road

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SALE OF GOVT HOUSES

Arrest warrant against Amir Khasru, Harris Chowdhury, 10 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again issued arrest warrants against former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, former premier Khaleda Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam and 9 others in a case filed in connection with the sale of 18 government houses at lower prices.

Another Dhaka court issued arrest warrant against Akhter Hamid Paban, son of Khondaker Delwar Hossain who was appointed BNP Secretary General

by Khaleda Zia, in connection with a carjacking case.

Trial of a sedition case against Awami Swechhasebak League President AFM Bahauddin Nasim began yesterday.

GRAFT CASE
Judge Mohammad Azizul of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order as the accused have been absconding to avoid the arrest.

The same court on September 25 issued arrest warrants against them but they did not comply with its order for appearing before the court.

Names of Khasru, Harris and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Tarique surprised at latest changes in BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The detained senior joint secretary general of the BNP, Tarique Rahman, yesterday expressed surprise at the latest development in the party in which two key party posts were reshuffled and expulsions of three leaders overturned.

Tarique expressed his astonishment at a meeting with his wife, Dr Zobaida Rahman, his aunt Tahera Rahman, younger brother Koko's wife, Syeda Shamila Rahman, sister-in-law Shahina Khan Zaman and her husband Air Commodore (retired) Syed Shafiuzzaman at the Dhaka Central Jail.

The BNP leader wanted to know what led to the recent changes in the party, sources said adding that he also inquired about the health of his mother and Koko -- both now behind bars -- and other family members.

The family meeting took place in the presence of jail and Special Branch of Police officials.

Tarique, facing several criminal charges, was arrested at his family's cantonment residence on March 7.

EXTORTION CASE No-confidence petition against final report on ex-MP Abu Hena

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The plaintiff of a Tk 1.5 lakh extortion case filed against former BNP lawmaker Abu Hena and two others submitted a "naraji" (no-confidence) petition yesterday for the second time after police placed the final report of the case before a court following a reinvestigation.

The Rajshahi court scheduled November 22 for hearing on the petition.

On September 5, police submitted a final report of the case and said no witnesses or evidence was found to prove the allegations. Plaintiff Ashrafur Islam filed his first

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Suicide blast kills 7 near Pak army HQ

Musharraf was holding talks there during the blast

AFP, Rawalpindi

A suicide bomber blew himself up close to where Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf was holding talks at army headquarters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi yesterday, killing seven people, officials said.

The blast happened at a police checkpoint a less than a kilometre (half a mile) from where Musharraf was holding talks with top government officials about a spate of attacks, including a recent bid to kill Benazir Bhutto.

General Musharraf, a key US ally in the "war on terror", was safe inside his army headquarters at Camp Office at the time of the bombing, his spokesman Rashid Qureshi said.

"It was a suicide attack. The area is sensitive -- we don't know what

the exact target was," Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid, a close aide to Musharraf, told AFP.

Rawalpindi police chief Saud Aziz the bomber approached the checkpoint near Musharraf's office on foot and then detonated explosives strapped to his body.

"He wanted to get past our security cordon but we were successful in stopping him. We were alert and we will remain alert," Aziz told reporters.

Interior Ministry spokesman Javed Cheema told reporters that seven people were killed and 14 wounded in the attack. The bomber's head was found at the scene and he was believed to be aged between 19 and 23, he added.

The site of the attack is also near the office of the chairman of Pakistan's joint chiefs of staff, but

Cheema denied the bomber meant to target the army.

"It appears to be an attack targeting police," he said.

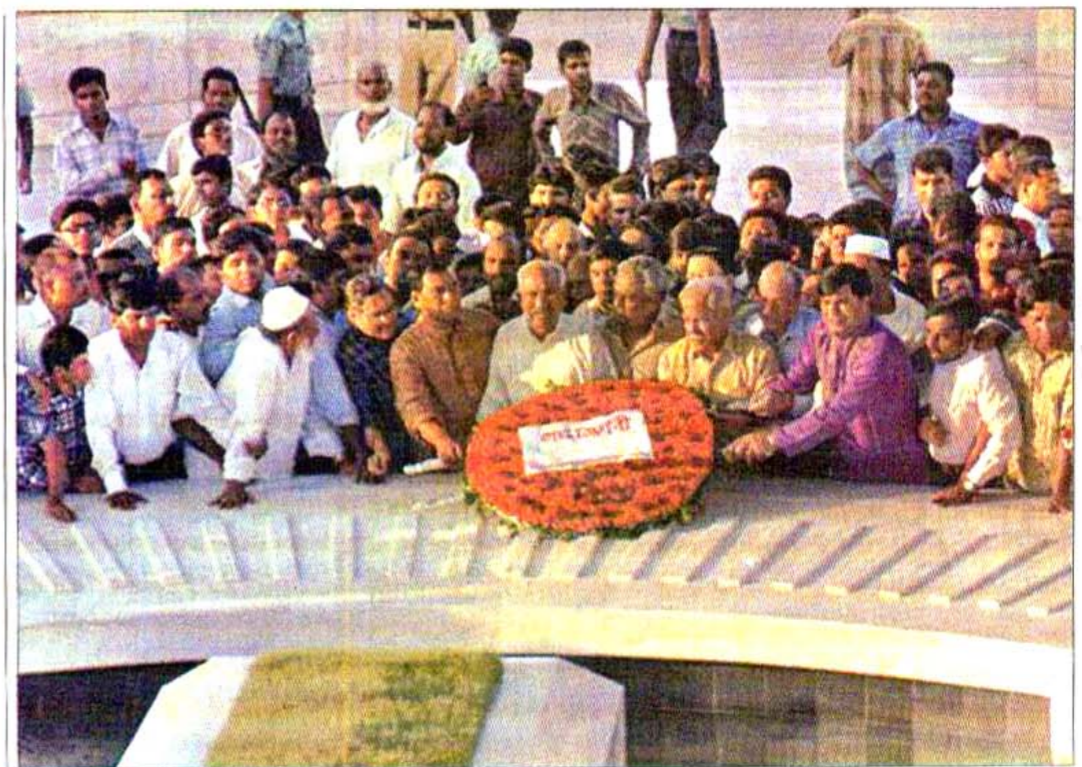
Paramedics removed bodies from the scene, while bomb disposal squads were sifting through the debris to identify type of the explosives used in the blast, an AFP photographer at the scene said.

Several civilians were wounded when the blast hit a minibus, causing it to crash, while a mangled, blood-spattered bicycle was left lying in the road.

Rashid, the railways minister, said there were reports up to three possible suicide attackers had managed to enter Rawalpindi and neighbouring Islamabad in recent days.

Military ruler Musharraf has

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8



BNP leaders led by M Saifur Rahman place a bouquet on the grave of party founder Ziaur Rahman in the capital yesterday. BNP made changes to its top brass the night before.

Law secretary seeks exemption from SC show cause notice

UNB, Dhaka

Responding to a show-cause notice issued by the Supreme Court (SC) regarding a law ministry circular for district judges, Law Secretary Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday sought exemption for his ministry from the show-cause obligation.

The SC on Sunday stayed the operation of the October 24 circular requesting the district judges not to ask for courtrooms, manpower, eflash of judicial magistrates, transport and other logistic supports following separation of the judiciary.

Apparently taking the ministry's posture as a non-cooperation ahead of separating the judiciary with effect from November 1, the SC also issued a suo moto show-cause notice, asking the law secretary to explain within 48 hours why the impugned circular "should not be declared inoperative".

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