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Haji Flight Chaos Biman, agencies cross swords

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines and Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (Haab) continue to point the finger at the other for the recurrent cancellation of hajj flights, putting the flights of a large number of hajj pilgrims in jeopardy.

Eighteen days into the hajj flights, Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday cancelled one of its extra hajj flights due to pilgrim shortage. The airline speculates that more flights might have to be cancelled unless the situation is improved immediately.

Amidst chaos in hajj flight operations this year, Biman arranged two extra hajj flights from the Saudi Civil Aviation Authority recently in addition to previously allocated 85 hajj flights to it.

Biman has been blaming Haab for not sending enough pilgrims to see PAGE 15 COL 2

Benazir launches polls campaign

Sharif likely to hold talks with PPP chief tomorrow

AP, AFP, Peshawar Islamabad

Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto launched her election campaign in troubled northwestern Pakistan yesterday, a day after unveiling her party's platform despite calls from other opposition groups to boycott the January 8 vote.

Benazir travelled in a bullet-proof black Mercedes under police escort from the capital, Islamabad, to Peshawar where she appealed for support from ethnic Pashtuns predominant in the border region assailed by Islamic militancy.

She was greeted by hundreds of flag-waving supporters of her Pakistan People's Party who chanted "Long Live Benazir!"

"I ask our Pashtun brothers to come forward for peace. They have supported the Pakistan People's Party in the past and once again they must support the Pakistan People's Party," she said.

"The Pakistan People's Party will give them security, peace and employment and will bring development to their areas so their problems can be solved."

Meanwhile, Benazir and Nawaz Sharif will meet early next week to discuss whether or not to boycott the upcoming election, party officials said yesterday.

Benazir has said that her Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) will participate in the election scheduled for January 8 under protest but Sharif has said the polls would be meaningless unless the judiciary is restored to its pre-emergency rule status.

"Sharif will hold a meeting with Benazir in Islamabad on Monday," his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party leader, Raja Zafarul Haq told AFP.

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EC starts photo taking for voter registration

UNB, Dhaka

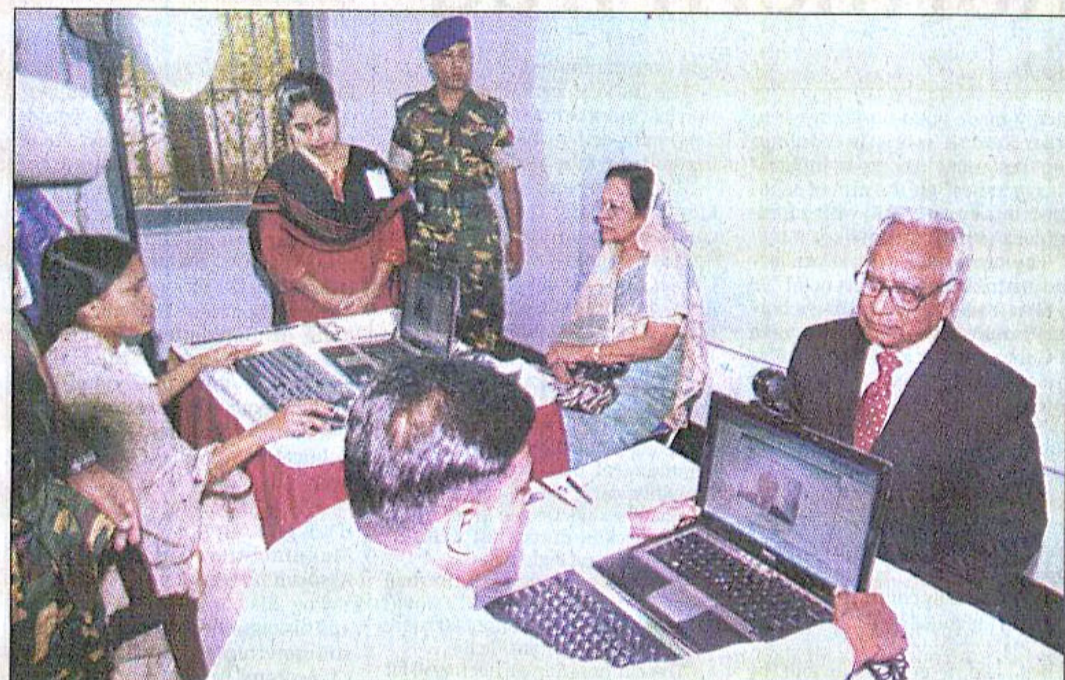
The Election Commission yesterday started taking photograph and fingerprint of voters to complete the process of voters' registration in Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) area.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and his wife Anwara Begum got their names registered with photographs at Bangabhaban Primary School Voter Registration Centre.

Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda and other officials concerned were present on the occasion.

Four district election and registration officers, 15 thana election officers and 2627 supervisors are engaged in the gigantic task of preparing the DCC voter list. There are 951 voter-registration centres in 90 wards of the corporation.

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President Iajuddin Ahmed and his wife Prof Anwara Begum register as voters with their photos taken at the Bangabhaban Govt Primary School voters' registration centre in the capital yesterday.

US, West partly responsible for Pakistan crisis

Says Musharraf

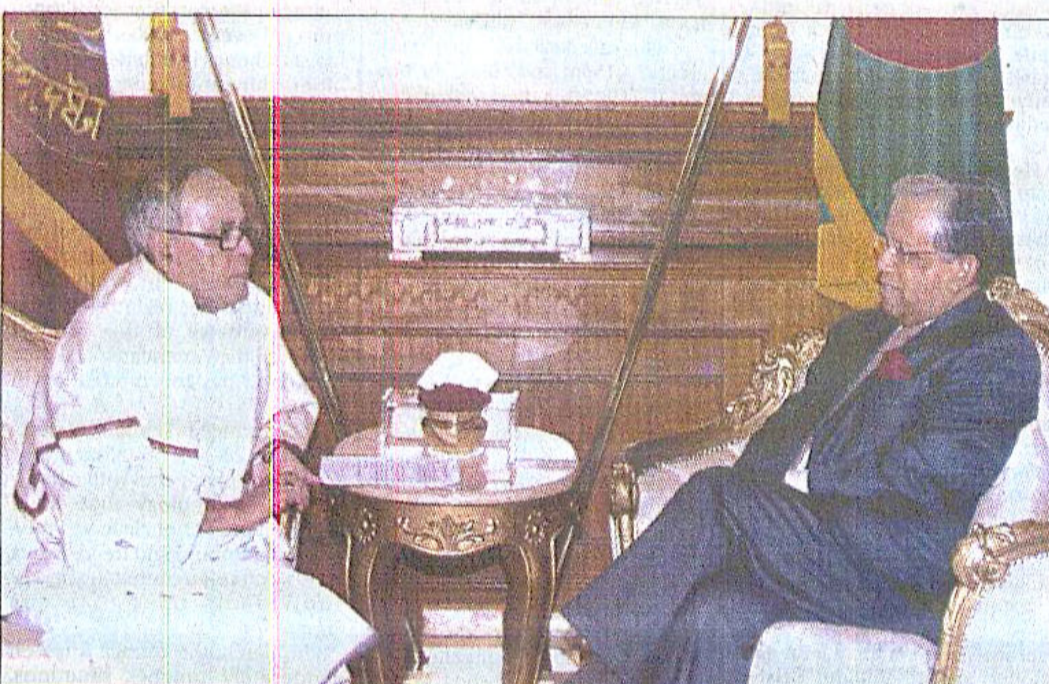
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

President Pervez Musharraf has accused US and other Western powers of being partly responsible for the current political crisis in Pakistan.

In an expansive interview, Musharraf, who was sworn in as the country's civilian president on Thursday for a term of five years after shedding his military uniform, maintained that if the coming elections created a situation that was "unacceptable" to him, he would step down.

"If the situation develops in a manner which is absolutely unacceptable to me, I have a choice of leaving," he said in an interview to ABC, reports Dawn.

Musharraf, who is a strong US ally, says PAGE 15 COL 6



Visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, left, calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office in the capital yesterday.

BIRD FLU 5,600 chickens culled in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Over 5,600 chickens were culled and at least 2,650 eggs were destroyed at a poultry farm in Dolong in Chatmohar upazila in the district Friday night as they were infected with bird flu.

The district livestock department, in the presence of the local administration, carried out the culling after receiving confirmation that the chickens of that farm were infected with the disease.

Sources said that a number of chickens died of an unknown disease at the farm of Jewel Rana. He took the dead chicken to the local livestock office to find out what went wrong. The livestock office forwarded the samples to Dhaka Livestock Research Institute for diagnosis.

The district livestock office received confirmation from Dhaka Friday afternoon that the birds were suffering from bird flu prompting the district livestock office to cull the birds.

EU-Iran nuke talks fail

AP, London

An 18-month attempt to persuade Iran to mothball uranium enrichment collapsed Friday after a senior European Union envoy failed to dent Tehran's resolve to expand the technology, despite the threat of new UN sanctions.

Saeed Jalili, Iran's senior nuclear negotiator, sought to put his talks with the EU's Javier Solana in a positive light, telling reporters the meeting was "good," and saying the two men had agreed to meet again next month.

Solana had a different message. "After five hours of meetings, I expected more, and therefore I am disappointed," he said. Unlike Jalili, he suggested no new meetings were planned, saying only the two men would talk on the telephone next month and would set up a personal encounter only "if circumstances permit."

The meeting had been considered a last chance for Iran to give in to pressure from the five permanent UN Security Council nations and at least freeze if not dismantle its enrichment programme before the end of the month, ahead of a new effort by the five nations to find common language on a third set of UN sanctions. Those endeavours were to be the focus of a meeting of the five nations plus Germany at a high-level gathering in Paris on Saturday.

Jalili said Iran was not worried about the prospect of new penalties. "What did they achieve?" he asked about the two sets of sanctions already in place. "Nothing. In fact, we made the greatest technological headway and breakthroughs in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Call for trying war criminals

Freedom fighters' day observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighters and pro-liberation political and socio-cultural organisations yesterday said it is imperative to bring the war criminals and killers of 1971 to justice under the law of the land.

They made the call on Freedom Fighters Day that was observed across the country to pay tribute to the nation's glorious sons.

Freedom fighters on the day called for special uniform for them

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

7TH NOVEMBER Delwar slates cancellation of public holiday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday expressed concern over the government decision of cancelling public holiday on the National Revolution and Solidarity Day on November 7.

In a statement, he said the government decision has hurt people's feelings and raised questions about the role of the caretaker government.

The BNP secretary general demanded that November 7 holiday be restored.

Delwar said the National Revolution and Solidarity Day is not meant for any particular group or party.

The significance of the day lies in overcoming a serious crisis in the country in 1975 through a "soldier-people uprising" that foiled a conspiracy against the nation, he added.

He urged the government to withdraw the decision in the interest of national unity.

Prayer Timing		
December 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Relocation of Dhanmondi Branch

Dhanmondi

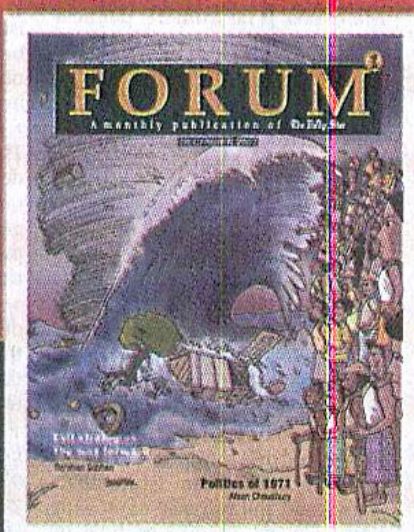
AB BANK

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Plot 286 B, Road 27 (Old) or Plot 45
Road 16 (New), Dhanmondi R/A
Dhaka

Old Address:
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Mohammadpur, Dhaka

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