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TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

Sustainable democracy ultimate goal of govt
Says chief adviser

UNB, Shafiqpur, Gazipur

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the ultimate goal of the caretaker government is to lay a sustainable foundation for democracy to flourish in the country.

"The government is taking all necessary steps to hold a free and fair election within this year. We've also taken steps for socio-economic development of the country," he said at the National Assembly 2008 of Ansar and VDP at the parade ground of Ansar-VDP Academy.

In the last one year, Fakhruddin said, the caretaker government has taken a number of steps considering the national interest, and strengthened its stance against corruption.

He said massive improvement of law and order has taken place

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CRACKS ON JAMUNA BRIDGE
Trains ordered to cut down speed

PINAKI ROY with MIRZA SHAKIL Tangail and GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, Sirajganj

In just 10 years after the completion of the construction work of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, numerous cracks and other defects on it have put train services including the long-awaited Dhaka-Kolkata service over it in limbo.

Realising the risk, the government has directed officials concerned to set a 20-kmph (kilometre per hour) maximum speed limit for the nine trains that currently cross the bridge 18 times a day.

The Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge was made open to public in 1997. Though the bridge was built at a cost of Tk 4,000 crore with an expected service life of 100 years, in

less than 10 years in service, in 2006, several cracks were detected across its north lanes. The cracks later expanded to the south lanes as well.

Apart from the cracks that are gradually widening, many nuts and bolts used for holding the expansion joints of the bridge have come off, said officials concerned at Bangladesh Railway and Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority.

The direct train service between Dhaka and Kolkata is supposed to commence soon and whether this added load would deteriorate the condition of the bridge further is yet to be ascertained.

Of the eight expansion joints on the bridge, nuts and bolts (iron ring leaders) of expansion joint number 7 had come off on November 18,

2007. Vehicular movement is going on over the joint after the authorities placed three pieces of heavy-duty steel plates over it.

Expansion joint number 8 is also in bad shape, said officials concerned working at the bridge authority.

Following newspaper reports about detection of the cracks on the bridge, an investigation committee formed by the government in its report last month said that a number of cracks have been found in 62 out of 1,262 segment joints of the bridge. The cracks were 0.7mm to 0.9mm wide at the time and those have been widening everyday at an alarming pace. The committee also detected that four out of eight expansion joints of the

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Cracks develop on the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge allegedly due to the vibration made by trains. The authorities concerned restricted train speed to 20km per hour to mitigate the problem.

BNP's OCT 29 MEETING
Mahbub says they had to sign ready resolution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmad yesterday said they had to sign a "prepared resolution" with a "special context" in the October 29 meeting at Saifur Rahman's Gulshan residence.

"It was not a standing committee meeting and I went there at the invitation of Saifur Rahman for tea since he is the senior most party leader," he told reporters at his chamber.

Only the chairperson can call a standing committee meeting and, Khaleda did not call any on October 29, he said. At least eight members must be present to fulfill quorum but only seven were present at Saifur's house, he added.

Meanwhile, the scheduled hearing on the High Court rule regarding the Election Commission letter inviting pro-Saifur faction for a dialogue was not held yesterday despite being on the cause list.

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The Central Shaheed Minar receives a fresh coat of paint yesterday as the Language Martyrs' Day is just a week away.

Extortion charges framed against Khulna mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Khulna court yesterday framed charges in one of the nine extortion cases against detained Khulna City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman.

Terminating the case false, the defence lawyers appealed to the court to exempt the mayor from the charges. District and Sessions Judge Md Shafiquddin fixed February 24 to hear the appeal.

Mayor Tayebur was present at the court at the time.

SM Hafizur Rahman, procurement officer of the city corporation's Municipal Services Project (MSP), filed the case on November 1, complaining that the mayor and public relations officer Sarder Abu Taher took Tk 2,90,000 from him in the name of promoting him to a

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Pak envoy to Kabul, nuke experts kidnapped

Pakistan searches for abducted officials

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani authorities searched for the country's abducted ambassador to Afghanistan and two kidnapped nuclear experts on Tuesday as insecurity mounted ahead of crucial elections next week.

The abductions happened on Monday near the country's rugged northwestern border with Afghanistan, where Taliban and al-Qaeda militants are waging an insurgency against the US-allied government in Islamabad.

The Pakistani envoy, Tariq Azizuddin, was heading to the Afghan capital Kabul with his driver on Monday when they disappeared in the lawless Khyber tribal district, officials said.

"We have launched efforts for his recovery. It now appears clear that he has been kidnapped," Rasool Khan Wazir, chief administrative official in Khyber, told AFP.

"We are trying to collect information... We cannot disclose our strategy but we are hopeful we will find out where he has been kept and who is involved."

Security officials said tribal authorities were scouring the rugged area, the site of the famed Khyber Pass linking Afghanistan and Pakistan, and had closed the main road between the two countries.

The Pakistan embassy in Kabul said it last had contact with the ambassador on Monday morning as he travelled from the northwestern city of Peshawar into the tribal area.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said Tuesday he hoped for Azizuddin's quick rescue from "terrorists."

"May God make it happen that our brother and neighbouring country, Pakistan, is able to rescue him from the abductors, the terrorists," Karzai said.

Azizuddin is the most senior of several government officials to have been abducted in the mountainous tribal belt. Blame has either fallen on Islamist militants or criminal kidnap gangs.

Police on Tuesday confirmed that two workers from the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission had also been abducted by masked

men from the country's northwest.

The officials were on a routine visit to conduct a geological survey for mineral exploration in a mountainous area which adjoins Pakistan's lawless tribal regions, local police chief Akbar Nasir said.

Pakistan's tribal zone has been wracked by fighting between government forces and Islamist militants linked to al-Qaeda and the Taliban, although Khyber has been one of the more peaceful regions.

Militants had previously kidnapped around 250 Pakistani soldiers in the tribal zone of South Waziristan. They were reportedly released in exchange for several rebels held by Pakistani authorities.

Meanwhile, Pakistani officials were interrogating a senior figure in Afghanistan's Taliban movement who was captured near the southwestern border between the two countries on Monday, police said.

Mullah Mansoor Dadullah, the brother of the Islamist militia's slain military chief in Afghanistan, was captured along with at least

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Arms, ammo seized from criminals' dens in CHT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Security forces in two separate raids yesterday recovered large number of firearms and ammunition and destroyed two dens of criminals at Mohalchhari and Dighinala upazilas of Khagrachhari.

Police sources said an army team, acting on a tip off, raided the remote Bangamura village in Mohalchhari early yesterday. As they reached the area, the criminals opened fire on them from their den and escaped into deep forest.

The team recovered a sub-machine gun (SMG), a 303 rifle, a Belgium-made single barrel breech

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ADB for hike in oil, gas prices

UNB, Dhaka

Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday reiterated the need for raising gas and oil prices and making the subsidy policy in this sector transparent.

"Many of you may not like it, but it is very important for Bangladesh," ADB Country Director Hua Du told reporters after a meeting of the visiting ADB mission with Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam at this office.

Deputy Director General of ADB's Private Sector Operation Department S Chander led the three-member consultation mission on "Private Sector Project in Power and Energy".

Hua Du, however, made it clear that the government would take decision about the suitable timing of adjusting the prices.

"The prices should be adjusted to some extent commensurate with the level of subsidy," she said, replying to a question.

The ADB country director said the subsidy policy should be transparent and the people, who could afford the price, should not get it.

"I'm getting the subsidy; it's not right," she said, adding that the subsidy should go to a target group of people—the poor and the farmers.

She said the ADB mission had talks with the finance adviser on

how the bank could better work to support development of Bangladesh's energy sector—gas, power and coal.

ADB has already been involved in the power and gas sector development of the country while it is now interested to support the coal sub-sector development.

"We've discussed on a package in energy sector development project," Hua Du said.

Talking to reporters, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said they discussed about developing the alternative source of energy amid scarce availability of gas to meet the increasing demand.

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Businessman shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman shot at East Kazipara in city's Kafrul area yesterday morning succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in the evening.

Asaduzzaman alias Asad, 30, owner of an engineering workshop at Kazipara, was admitted to DMCH with two bullet shots in his head. He died at around 7:30pm.

Witnesses said a group of four to five people seemed to have been waiting for Asad when he arrived at a local restaurant for breakfast with his three-year old nephew Omi. They shot him in the head twice just as he stopped his motorbike in front of the restaurant at about 10:00am.

Locals could not identify the group of people who fled after shooting Asad.

His nephew escaped unhurt.

The victim's aunt Gulnazar Begum, talking to reporters at the DMCH, could not shed any light on who may have carried out the attack.

Officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station Akram Hossain said they are investigating the incident. He said the police had found some leads but refused to disclose those immediately for the sake of investigation.

Fresh fighting kills 42 Tigers, 11 soldiers

Lankan military base shelled

AFP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger rebels shelled a key military base in northern Sri Lanka yesterday, officials said, as the defence ministry said dozens of rebels were killed in new fighting.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the Thallady military camp in the district of Mannar early Tuesday, drawing retaliatory fire from security forces, a military official said.

He said a dozen soldiers were injured. There was no immediate word from the Tigers about the

clash.

The shelling came as the defence ministry said 42 Tamil Tiger rebels and 11 soldiers were killed in new clashes across the island's embattled north on Monday.

The fighting in the Weli Oya area also left 35 security personnel and 21 rebels wounded, a defence official said.

Meanwhile, the defence ministry said that 80 members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were killed in separate

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US charges 6 for roles in Sept 11 attacks

AP, Washington

The Pentagon has charged six detainees at Guantanamo Bay with murder and war crimes in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks. Officials said Monday they'll seek the death penalty in what would be the first capital trials under the terrorism-era military tribunal system.

"These charges allege a long term, highly sophisticated, organized plan by al-Qaeda to attack the United States of America," Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Hartmann, the legal adviser to the tribunal system, told reporters. He said a total of 169

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18 trafficked Bangladeshis return home

BSF hands them over to BDR

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) handed over 18 Bangladeshi men, women and children, who were trafficked to India two years ago, to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) at Benapole checkpoint yesterday evening.

BDR sources said Indian police arrested the ill-fated people soon after they were allured to the neighbouring country in March in 2007. They languished in Kolkata's Presidency Jail before a local NGO, Sanglap, rescued them from jail and took them to its own shelter.

Bangladesh Mahila Ainjibi Samity took the initiative to bring

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Metre-gauge train lines have been converted to multi-gauge lines in the city but no tarmac was laid on the level crossing near the FDC. The photo was taken yesterday.

Prayer Timing
February 13

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-25	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-57	6-01
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation