



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

COMMITTED TO People's Right to Know

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REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XVIII No. 278

DHAKA SUNDAY OCTOBER 26, 2008

www.thedailystar.net

KARTIK 11, 1415 BS

SHAWAL 25, 1429 HJRI

28 PAGES PLUS STAR CAMPUS PRICE: Tk 10.00

7-POINT DEMAND 4-party to hold countrywide rallies today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party alliance will hold protest rallies across the country today to press home its seven-point demand including lifting of the state of emergency.

In the capital, the rally will be held at National Press Club auditorium at 3:00pm.

BNP sat with the caretaker government twice--on October 14 and October 23. The party placed its seven-point demand during the second round of talks on October 23.

After second round of talks, both sides at a press briefing claimed that they had reached consensus on six of the seven points.

Star counsels reject claim of Amar Desh lawyers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight lawyers who defended the editor and five other journalists of The Daily Star in a joint affidavit on Thursday said that their submissions made during the hearing on October 13 on charge framing in a defamation case filed by former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman were correct and authentic.

But lawyers for Mahmudur Rahman had earlier made an affidavit for publishing the submissions of The Daily Star's lawyers, which were distorted in the Amar Desh and different newspapers.

In the affidavit before a Notary Public in Dhaka, Advocate Ashraf-ul-Alam, Anwarul Kabir Babul and

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Mahmudur attempts to sue ACC chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former executive chairman of Board of Investment and Amar Desh Publications Ltd Chairman Mahmudur Rahman yesterday tried to file a case against Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury on charge of laundering Tk 20.29 crore from Trust Bank Ltd.

Rahma police refused to record the case, saying they are not the appropriate police station to do it because the head office of the bank is situated at Diluksha in Motijheel and thus under the Motijheel Police Station.

Motijheel police also refused Mahmudur Rahman, saying his complaint lacks approval from Bangladesh Bank.

Bangladesh Bank sources, meanwhile, said no individual but

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Removal of sculptures a plotted drama

Say cultural activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultural activists yesterday said the installation of "low-quality sculptures" at the airport intersection and their removal under pressure from fundamentalists was a "stage-managed drama" to abet the fundamentalists in their conspiracy against the country's arts and culture.

The activists under the banner of Sammilito Shilpi Samaj, during a views-exchange meeting, demanded an end to "beautification of Dhaka city" under which the "low-quality, statues" were installed.

The meeting was held at the Fine Arts Faculty of Dhaka University demanding a free environment for arts and culture.

They decided to have a national convention of cultural activists in which a committee would be formed. The committee would decide on what kind of statues would be installed at the Airport intersection.

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Tackling militancy gets tough for policy

29 outfits listed to be involved in militancy but only JMB, Huji get attention

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHARIFUL ISLAM

Although the law-enforcement agencies have listed 29 Islamic organisations for suspected involvement in militancy, they have trained their focus only on outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkatul Jihad al-Islami (Huji).

Sources in the law-enforcement agencies say they are not in a position to take a tough line on the suspected outfits unless they get

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hard evidence of terror activities against them.

"A crackdown on the suspected organisations requires a government policy in this regard as the issue is linked to sensitive religious matters," says a top law enforcer.

He however argues they are closely tracking these outfits since the official drive against militants started in 2005 following the synchronised country-wide blasts by

already executed Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai-led JMB.

Of these listed organisations, some are large and the rest are minor, but all of their activities are apparently confined to mosques and madrasa-based discussions and Islamic 'dawat' (invitation).

"We have observations that the objectives and statements of many of these organisations are identical to those of JMB and Huji. But it's not enough to get tough on them since such activities are allowed in

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

People start placing containers in queue at this dairy farm in Chankharpur as early as 4:00am to buy milk although sale begins at 8:00am. Controversy over melamine in powdered milk increased demand for fresh milk many folds.

Parents toil in long queue for fresh milk

Blast govt role over the issue

PINAKI ROY

Farzana Parvin was eagerly waiting in the corner of a dairy farm. Carrying her 19-month-old daughter Tumpa on her lap, she came here from Kayettuli about two hours ago.

By the time she arrived more than one hundred plastic bottles were already lying on the floor in front of the manager's table.

"It'll take still more than an hour to get the milk," commented Farzana. Asked how long she has been buying milk from the farm, she said, "Just a few days when I heard about the poison in the powdered milk."

If she buys one litre of milk at Tk 60, she can manage two days with that.

More than one hundred people crowded into that small space to buy milk. Wearing black veil, Amena Begum came from Nazimuddin Road, Badrul Hossain

from Azimpur, Suman from Chankharpur with more to join the queue.

The customers were different in age, profession, economic class and culture, but they all shared the same worry for their children. Everyone wanted risk-free fresh milk for their kids.

Even a few days ago these people used to buy formula for their children. But the sudden outbreak of melamine fear forces them to turn their back on milk powder.

As they realised the presence of a newsman among them, all of them suddenly started complaining about the role of the government on the issue.

Test results prove that the milk is adulterated, but the government is not taking any action against anyone, they said in anger.

"There are over 30 brands of milk powder on sale in Bangladesh. But the government is testing only

Form central body to watch food safety

Suggest experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts have suggested formation of a central food and drug administration body to monitor continuously safety of all sorts of food items either imported or produced locally.

There is a lack of coordination among different government agencies in ensuring food safety, and it is difficult for Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) alone to monitor the market properly with its present capacity in terms of manpower and logistics, they said.

Adulteration of food has long been a matter of concern in the country, but the recent confusion regarding toxic melamine in several brands of imported powdered milk has made it a national priority to take up the issue and reform regulatory mechanisms for food items, the experts noted.

These observations came at a discussion on "How safe are our infants? Emerging legal and scientific issues relating to baby milk," organised by the School of Law of BRAC University and held at BRAC Centre in the capital.

Boycott war criminals in polls

Urge sector commanders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The leaders of Sector Commanders' Forum urged people to boycott war criminals in the upcoming elections and demanded they be punished.

During a meeting held at the Bonomali Institute auditorium in Pabna yesterday they also advised people to uphold the spirit of the Liberation War.

"Do not vote for the war criminals," said Air Vice-marshal (ret'd) AK Khondokar, chief of Sector Commanders' Forum.

"We discussed the issue with political parties. We asked them not to nominate war criminals in the upcoming elections as candidates," he said.

About trial of war criminals, he

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Abducted Brac staff yet to be traced

Brac, Afghan govt make joint search

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi Brac employees Akhter Ali and Mohammad Shahjahan Ali, who were abducted in Afghanistan two days ago, are yet to be located.

There was no government move as of last night to expedite their release and Brac officials in Dhaka failed to say anything specific about their fate.

Unidentified gunmen abducted the two in Ghazni province of Afghanistan Thursday afternoon.

Their family members said they went to the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (Brac) head office in Dhaka and tried to communicate with officials but none was available.

Shahjahan's only son, Sharif went to the Brac office but failed to get any information as yesterday was the weekend holiday.

"I came to Dhaka from Ghatail (in Tangail) today (yesterday) to know what actually happened to my father but there was none to tell

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C'wealth secy gen K Sharma due today

UNB, Dhaka

Commonwealth Secretary General Kamlesh Sharma arrives in Dhaka today on a three-day visit to discuss with government leaders and the chief election commissioner (CEC) the progress towards restoration of democracy in Bangladesh.

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EC seeks update on loan defaulter list

Sends details of 1,800 people for bank record; CEC says poll schedule on Nov 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has sent to Bangladesh Bank (BB) a list of the winners and their nearest contenders in the last three parliamentary polls to revitalise the mechanism to prevent loan defaulters from contesting the December 18 parliamentary election.

In line with an EC decision, its secretariat sent the list containing names and addresses of 900 lawmakers elected and their 900 nearest contenders in the 1991, 1996

and 2006 parliamentary elections.

The EC Secretariat asked the central bank to make preparations in advance by updating the list of loan defaulters among prospective parliamentary contenders because review of previous facts shows that most of these candidates are expected to participate in the upcoming polls too, sources in the secretariat said.

Sources said BB officials have already started preparing to assist the EC in this regard.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yester-

day said the records have been sent to the BB to detect loan defaulters well ahead of scrutinising applications to be filed seeking candidacy for the next parliamentary polls.

Addressing deputy commissioners (DCs) at a training workshop on the electoral laws of parliamentary and upazila elections, Huda said on November 2 the EC would announce the schedules for the upcoming parliamentary and upazila elections.

Thirty-two DCs attended the workshop held at the National

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BB governor backs body to shield economy

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The central bank governor yesterday extended his all-out support to a proposal to form a high-profile committee involving politicians to monitor the global economic crisis and its impact on the local economy.

"We should come up with a strong body that will assess the effects of the crisis and accordingly make suggestions to shield the economy," Salehuddin Ahmed told a dialogue, organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in Dhaka.

(MORE IN STAR BUSINESS)

Depression in Bay triggers drizzle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Daylong drizzle coupled with cold winds disrupted life in the capital and elsewhere as a well-marked low over the Bay of Bengal grew into a depression yesterday.

Met office in Dhaka predicted that the squally weather conditions may continue for a couple of days with the depression threatening to strengthen further.

In a special bulletin, it said the low, formed over the west-central Bay and adjoining northwest Bay, has been moving north-westerly after becoming a depression.

"Under the influence, heavy to

very heavy rainfall may occur at places across Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna and Dhaka divisions during the next 24 hours," read the Met office warning issued yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, a launch carrying 40 passengers aboard overturned in Meghna in Hatia. However, no casualties were reported in the capsizing.

The drizzly weather caused long tailbacks on the city streets even on the weekend (Saturday).

The labourers were forced to stay indoors. Malls and kitchen markets that usually have more

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Talking polls and beyond

Feudal mentality a thorn in democracy

Prof Muzaffer tells of party policymakers

SHAMIM ASHRAF

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said the strong feudal mentality of



party management difficult.

"Political parties have changed their constitutions and we have read in newspapers that the Awami League and the BNP chiefs' powers have

not been reduced much. If that is the case, I would say democracy

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Find details of the interview on page 11

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