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**RE-DEMARCATION**  
**Hearing on writ petitions continues**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) continued the hearing of the writ petitions against the Election Commission's (EC) re-demarcation of parliamentary constituencies for the fourth day yesterday.

The bench of justices Mir Hasmat Ali and Shamim Hasnain adjourned the hearing until today.

Eleven writ petitions were filed with the HC after the EC published a gazette notification redrawing the constituencies.

Making his case, advocate TH Khan, counsel for petitioner Abdul Mannan, said the constitution requires the EC to redraw the parliamentary constituencies before finalising the voters' list which has not been the case this time.

He said the commission had issued the gazette notification

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**Intelligence focused only on accused JMB men**  
*Over 250 trained JMB operatives still at large, trying to regroup*

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHARIFUL ISLAM

Despite a number of major arrests during crackdowns on Islamist militants in the last few years, over 250 trained operatives of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) are still at large and many of them are reportedly trying to regroup.

The fugitive JMB operatives now remain a matter of grave concern for the law-enforcement agencies, who have no clue to their whereabouts or activities. Their concern has recently intensified as they have scattered intelligence reports these fugitives, who were directly

involved in several terror attacks in different times, are holding secret meetings under a new leadership.

There are reports Saidur Rahman has taken over as the new chief of JMB, but investigators have failed to track him though they gathered information about him and managed his photograph over a year ago.

Huge amount of explosives, which were under JMB's possession, also remain a major concern for the law enforcers.

A top official of a law-enforcement agency claims they

have already torn down the JMB network. He however said they have some "scattered" information about reorganisation attempts of the militants, especially of the charge-sheeted ones, who are still out of their dragnet.

But the law enforcers involved in the investigations into militancy don't have any specific number of trained JMB activists except those who were charge-sheeted in the blasts cases.

The law-enforcement agencies and different quarters now suspect the militants under the name JMB or any other outfit may strike again during the next national polls.

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Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office in Dhaka yesterday.

**Dec 18 polls will be a model for future**  
CA tells Commonwealth secy gen  
UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed has said the government wants the next general election to be a model for all future elections by making sure that voters can cast vote without fear.

The head of the caretaker government made the remark when visiting Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma made a courtesy call on him at his office yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed election, state of emergency, institutional reforms, socio-economic progress and global economy.

Sharma said Commonwealth is looking forward to observe the upcoming general election in

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**Indian minister due Oct 31 for transit talks**  
OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's Minister of State for Commerce Jairam Ramesh Sunday said New Delhi will seek permission to cut across Bangladesh for transporting equipment for a mega power project in Tripura from West Bengal.

Ramesh is scheduled to visit Bangladesh from October 31.

The 726MW power plant, expected to be fully commissioned in 2012, will be set up at Palatana, 60km from Agartala.

Ramesh however told reporters at Palatana that he was not hopeful that Bangladesh would agree to the Indian proposal as Dhaka had earlier rejected a similar request, adding that an alternative route through Assam has been okayed keeping that in mind.

Indian officials said distance to the project site from the West Bengal port of Haldia will come down to 979km using transit through Bangladesh.

The alternative route through Badarpur/Karimganj of Assam is 2090km long, they said.



Heavy rain and strong wind damage paddy in fields in Boalmari area of Faridpur as Cyclone Reshmi made landfall in the southwestern region of the country yesterday.

**296 local NGOs apply for poll monitoring**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 296 local non-government organisations (NGOs) applied to the Election Commission (EC) for permission to monitor the upcoming elections as observers.

The EC will scrutinise the applications in the next 15 days in accordance with the new requirements it earlier set for private election monitoring organisations' registration, commission sources said.

According to the new requirements for poll observers' registration, no organisation having political affiliation will get the permission.

Unlike the past, the EC this time around also decided not to give wholesale poll monitoring registration to local organisations.

A large number of local NGOs got permission in the past to monitor the elections, sparking

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**Recession worries send stock markets reeling**  
AFP, London

Recession fears sent world stock markets tumbling Monday, with Tokyo at a 26-year low, Europe badly under water and Wall Street struggling to hold the line despite a G7 pledge to stabilise the financial system.

Oil prices fell below 60 dollars as traders estimated that a global recession would dent future energy demand.

The European single currency sank under 1.24 dollars to a two-year trough after a downbeat survey on German business confidence pointed to a likely recession in the eurozone's biggest economy, analysts warned.

Markets were also shaken after the IMF unveiled rescue plans for Ukraine and Hungary, South Korea cut interest rates, Japan announced action to boost its

stock market and Australia's central bank intervened to prop up its currency.

"There seems to be no end to the panic in the markets with recession fears now topping investor concerns," said Dresdner Kleinwort analyst Valentin Marinov.

CMC Markets dealer Matt Buckland said that "after last week's turmoil in equity markets, many had been hoping that the new week would bring about a degree of stability but ... so far there's little to suggest this will be the case."

US stocks opened weaker Monday, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average sliding 1.01 percent to 8,294.52 points but then recovered to inch into positive territory in volatile trade.

"It is fear that is driving the market and the prevailing fear now is that 2009 earnings estimates will

need to be marked down considerably as global economies retrench," said Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com.

"Another fear of the market can't shake is the fear of forced selling by troubled hedge funds."

Japan's Nikkei index plunged 6.36 percent, striking its lowest level since October 1982, on fears that emergency steps by world governments will be too late to prevent a worldwide recession.

Hong Kong lost 12.7 percent in the biggest single-day drop since 1991 as investors dumped stocks.

The fresh equities turmoil came despite a pledge by the Group of Seven major economies to cooperate to bring stability to the global financial markets.

In Europe, London dived to a five-year trough as the market continued to digest news that the

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**ADMISSION RULES**  
**Pro-Awami DU teachers to resist 'pressure' on 7 depts**  
DU CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Awami League blue-panel teachers of Dhaka University (DU) decided to resist any sort of "influence or pressure" on seven departments of the university to cancel the prerequisites for freshmen admission they had introduced earlier.

"We observed that the Dhaka University Order, 1973, gives the departments the academic freedom to introduce such prerequisites. Any sort of influence or pressure to reconsider their move is

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**Body to safeguard policewomen**  
KAILASH SARKAR

For the first time in the history of Bangladesh Police an internal organisation is being created to safeguard women personnel's interest.

The law enforcement agency is forming Police Women's Network with a 23-member executive committee, the leaders of which will be elected for two years through direct votes of the women personnel.

The inaugural committee however will be selected from senior women police personnel.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad confirmed the formation of the new police organisation and said its inauguration is at the preparatory stage.

The new organisation is scheduled to be inaugurated in the third week of November in a ceremony

where the chief adviser to the caretaker government is expected to make his appearance as the chief guest.

Bangladesh Police first introduced women members to its ranks in 1974, with recruitment of 12 women, and now the total number of women police stands at 1,937.

Police sources said recruitment of an additional 2,000 women is also underway.

NBK Tripura, additional IGP (administration), told the Daily Star, "Police Women's Network will promote empowerment of women personnel in an effort to create gender equality in the force."

According to official sources, among the women police, there are a deputy inspector general (DIG), four additional DIGs, 19 additional superintendents of police (SP), 10

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**Mong Raja Prue Chy cremated**  
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The cremation ceremony of late Mong Raja Paibala Prue Chowdhury was held yesterday in Khagrachhari.

Hundreds of people started to gather at the residence of the late Mong Raja at Madhubazar (zero mile) in the hill district from the morning to pay homage to him.

He was cremated at 3:00pm amid blasting of firecrackers after his personal security forces gave him a guard of honour.

His son Saching Prue Chowdhury first set off firecrackers to start the cremation as per the Mongritual.

Later, Khagrachhari District Council Chairman Manindra Lal Tripura, Rangamati District Council Chairman Jagotiyoti Chakma, Bandarban District Council Chairman Prof Thansama

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**Obama moves to close the deal with voters**  
McCain battles to hold on to states won by Bush in 2004

AFP, Chicago

High-flying Barack Obama was set yesterday to present his "closing argument" to voters as the Democrat's epic White House duel with beleaguered Republican John McCain entered its final full week.

With just eight days to go until polling, the pair were to hold competing rallies in the rust-belt states of Ohio and Pennsylvania after a weekend battleground blitz through western states tilting towards the African-American Obama, 47.

A day after drawing more than 150,000 supporters to monster

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**Electoral Vote Projections**

| Candidate    | Projected Electoral Votes | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Barack Obama | 355                       | 50.4%      |
| John McCain  | 156                       | 42.8%      |

US Polls 7 DAYS TO GO

COURTESY: YAHOO.COM

**AUG 21 CASE**  
**Pintu's counsel completes arguments**  
COURT CORRESPONDENT

Counsels of detained former BNP lawmaker Abdul Salam Pintu yesterday completed arguments on the discharge petition in connection with the grenade attack case on an Awami League (AL) rally in 2004.

After completing the hearing, Judge Mohammad Masdar Hossain of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 fixed tomorrow for citing of legal points whether charges will be framed against the accused or not.

Earlier on October 23, the prosecution completed hearing on charge framing against 22 accused, including Pintu and Harkatul Jihad (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan.

Defence lawyers for Mufti Hannan and 12 others, now in jail, also completed hearing on their

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**Ex-MP Lobi gets HC bail**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted ad interim bail for four months to former BNP lawmaker and ex-president of Bangladesh Cricket Board Ali Asghar Lobi in two cases filed by the police.

The HC bench of justices AKM Fazlur Rahman and ATM Fazle Kabir also issued separate rulings upon the government to explain within four weeks why the petitioner should not be granted regular bail in the cases after hearing two bail petitions filed by Lobi.

The joint forces arrested Lobi on February 6 last year.

Two criminal cases were filed against him with Gulshan and Motijheel police stations last year on charges of making attacks and vandalism.

**Suspected US strike kills 20 in Pakistan**  
*Clashes across northwest leave 41 dead, car bomb kills 2*

AP, AFP, Dera Ismail Khan/ Islamabad

A suspected US missile strike killed up to 20 people in northwestern Pakistan on Monday, officials said, the latest salvo in an intensifying assault on militant hide-outs near the Afghan border.

The reported strike occurred in the South Waziristan region, part of Pakistan's wild border zone that is considered a possible hiding place for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda No 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Officials said the strike in the lawless South Waziristan area on Sunday night killed Haji Omar Khan, a lieutenant of veteran Afghan Taliban chieftain and former anti-Soviet fighter Jalaluddin Haqqani.

Khan was active in attacks on US-led and Nato troops across the border in Afghanistan, local residents and security officials said.

He was a cousin of late Taliban commander Nek Mohammed, who was killed in 2004 in one of the first apparent US missile strikes in the region.

"Omar was sending fighters into Afghanistan and commanded them in several outings. He did not have any political affiliations and was linked to Haqqani," a security official said on condition of anonymity.

In other violence in Pakistan's frontier zone, a car bomb killed two people in Quetta and a suicide attacker demolished a checkpoint, injuring eight police and troops.

The blast at a busy road in the government offices area in Quetta, the capital of gas-rich Baluchistan province, also destroyed several rickshaws, cars and a pick-up truck.

"The bomb was planted in a car which went off with a big bang during rush hour. Initial reports say two people were killed, including a policeman," local police chief Rehmatullah Niazi told AFP.

Tribesmen assailed Taliban militants who beheaded a local militiaman in public and tried to abduct their chief, as clashes across northwest Pakistan left 41 people dead yesterday, officials said.

The government has hailed the emergence of anti-Taliban tribal militias as evidence that it can root out militant's waging an insurgency

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**US forces launch attack inside Syria: 8 killed**  
*Damascus slams it as war crimes*

AP, AFP, Damascus

US military helicopters launched an extremely rare attack Sunday on Syrian territory close to the border with Iraq, killing eight people in a strike the government in Damascus condemned as "serious aggression."

A US military official said the raid by special forces targeted the network of al-Qaeda-linked foreign fighters moving through Syria into Iraq. The Americans have been unable to shut the network down in the area struck because Syria was out of the military's reach.

"We are taking matters into our own hands," the official told The

Associated Press in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the political sensitivity of cross-border raids.

The attack came just days after the commander of US forces in western Iraq said American troops were redoubling efforts to secure the Syrian border, which he called an "uncontrolled" gateway for fighters entering Iraq.

A Syrian government statement said the helicopters attacked the Sukkariyeh Farm near the town of Abu Kamal, five miles inside the Syrian border. Four helicopters attacked a civilian building under construction shortly before

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