

Dhaka pledges

FROM PAGE 1 decisions while discharging duties," the PM told the meeting.

She noted that though other peacekeeping countries pulled out their troops from Somalia and Bosnia due to hostile situation, Bangladesh peacekeepers taking risk of their life performed their duties over there.

Citing the experience in Sierra Leone, Hasina said alongside the peacekeeping operation, Bangladesh troops also did social activities like constructing roads and setting up schools and hospitals.

In a hearty reciprocity, Sierra Leone recognised Bangladesh as its second language and the president of the Central African Republic visited Dhaka.

The premier said Bangladesh peacekeepers also performed their jobs taking all risks in Congo and Cambodia.

"But there are many challenges it's no longer a job of peacekeeping but it has become a complex issue. For establishing lasting peace in a country it needs empowerment of women and democratic set-up and social uplift."

She said Bangladesh has got the expertise in social development and establishment of democracy. The country has prepared a digital voter list of 80 million people with photographs, which the country can share with others in their democratic transition.

Expressing his gratitude to the peacekeeping nations, President Obama said, "World benefits from your contribution." He said the UN must improve the strategy of peacekeeping so innocent citizens don't die.

But, he observed, big problem is to maintain overall effectiveness of the peacekeeping operations and evaluate the challenges.

The president said resources must match the mandated commitment of the

UN to the peacekeeping mission. He assured increased US resources for the peacekeeping operations.

Obama said the effectiveness of peacekeeping could be improved through Training Equipment Coordination and Consultation.

The US president agreed with Bangladesh PM that the support of the local people is important for establishing sustainable peace in a country.

During the meeting, Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi mentioned the common responsibility of peacekeeping and Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari reaffirmed Islamabad's commitment to the UN peacekeeping.

The presidents of Ghana and Senegal spoke about the challenges of the future peacekeeping and long-run sustainable peace in the meeting.

Clock goes

FROM PAGE 1 during the last June-September period, most people did not notice the impact of 200MW power demand reduction due to the DST, PDB says.

Load shedding will continue to nag the country till adequate new power plants come into operation in 2011. This is why the government introduced several steps to reduce power demand and manage the crisis.

The on-going power crisis has already shifted traditional power demand peak hours from the evenings to midnight, according to PDB's data.

Presently the country's power demand shoots to its highest point between midnight and 1:00am, instead of the typical peak hours of 7:00pm to 9:00pm.

In addition, the gap between highest and lowest power demands has reduced to only 300MW to 400MW from the previous trend of 1000MW to 2000MW.

EC to go

FROM PAGE 1 election, for suppressing information in the affidavit submitted along with the application for candidacy.

The RPO does not have any specific provision on taking action against a lawmaker if s/he is found guilty of suppressing information in the affidavit after the election is over.

In the absence of a specific provision, the EC has faced difficulties in taking action against BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury who concealed information on his educational qualification in the affidavit.

"The commission could have vacated parliament membership of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury if there were a specific provision in the RPO," a senior EC official said.

The EC is also drafting a proposal for increasing the election expenditure ceiling for a candidate to Tk 25 lakh from the existing Tk 15 lakh.

It has also decided to propose providing parliamentary political parties with state funds to meet their election expenditures.

"We are, however, yet to work out the plan in details," a senior official said.

A few more proposals will also be drafted. The EC is examining the current provisions of the RPO to find out loopholes in the existing electoral laws.

"We are yet to complete examining the RPO. We will hold more meetings to discuss its various provisions," Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday.

Once the proposals are ready, the EC will hold dialogues with political parties for their opinions.

3 held

FROM PAGE 16 Comilla, and Mohammad Yunus Miah, 18, son of Mohammad Saru Miah.

Locals said Delwar came to Shantipur from Kishoreganj about 18 months ago and started poultry business renting a shop from Saru Miah. Zahid often used to visit him there.

Matiranga police sources said a team of Rab-7 personnel raided Shantipur, an area 60km from Khagrachhari district headquarters, around 5:00am yesterday and arrested the three on charge of their link with JMB.

The arrestees were later taken to the Chittagong Rab office.

Donors to help

FROM PAGE 16 the finance minister avoided a direct reply and said the meeting had discussed the issue and it would be discussed in detail at the next BDF meeting.

The minister said the PRSP would be finalised by December. The meeting of BDF is likely to be held between January 20 and February 7.

The finance minister said transport, energy and power sectors were given the highest importance in the PRSP.

The UK Department for International Development Country Director in Bangladesh Robert L. Floyd told journalists, the PRSP document spelled out how the government would remove corruption and ensure good governance.

An initial discussion in this regard was held with the government. The issues would come up for elaborate discussion at the next BDF meeting, he said.

For the development of the transport sector the PRSP laid emphasis on construction of major bridges, development of road corridor and border road to facilitate sub-regional trade, and regional balance in road development.

It said that the construction of Padma Multi-purpose Bridge would be completed by 2013.

It also mentioned the plan to construct a four-lane Dhaka-Chittagong Expressway, establish rail link with neighbouring countries under the Asian Rail and Highways Scheme, undertake a three-year maintenance rolling plan and rehabilitation of railway.

It also said Mongla Port and Chittagong deep sea port will be developed and will be opened to all regional users.

According to the PRSP electricity generation will be raised to 7,000 megawatt (MW) by 2013, and 8,000 MW by 2015.

Renewable energy and coal energy, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) towards a new business climate, exploring new fields of oil and gas and tapping nuclear resource for generation of electricity were also given importance in the second PRSP.

Durga Puja

FROM PAGE 16 (dhak) amid high-pitched ululation by women.

Thousands of devotees attended the mandaps (worship pavilions) to receive Durga and her children Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesha on earth.

Hindus believe the goddess descend on earth at the invocation and supplication of the devotees through Bodhon rituals during the Mahashashthi, the formal start of the puja.

The origin of Durga Puja can be traced back to the 15th century. Interestingly with the ascent of Moguls, Durga Puja became more popular. Grand celebrations, gala feasts and huge fanfare became part of the festival.

As a festival, Durga Puja was first organised by Raja Kangsharanayan of Taherpur in Rajshahi in the month of Aswin (in the season of autumn) in the Bengali year 887 and then by Bhabananda Mazumdar of Nadiya in 1606.

It is believed that goddess Durga appeared in the midst of the commoners following the prayer of King Kangsa. Marking the occasion, the first Durga worship was held at Taherpur king's palace.

Rama, elder son of King Dasheratha, had earlier offered the puja in autumn to seek blessings from the deity to save people from the "repression and misrule" of Lanka Raj Ravana.

With her boon, Rama destroyed the kingdom of Ravana and "annihilated the tyrant monarch."

The government has taken adequate measure to ensure maximum security for maintaining a sound atmosphere during the Durga Puja.

Earlier, Home Minister Advocate Sahara Khatun had directed the law enforcement agencies to keep sharp vigilance to resist any untoward incident during the Durga Puja so that the Hindu community can celebrate Durga puja without any disturbance.

In a statement, President Zillur Rahman said he is very happy as Durga Puja is being observed in a befitting manner with due solemnity across the country.

In a separate message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the main characteristic of the Durga Puja is to destroy evil power and establish truth and beauty.

State Minister for Home Affairs Shamsul Haque Tuku visited different temples and mandaps of Sutrapur and Rayerbazar area in the city yesterday. During the visit, he directed the law enforcement agencies to perform duty with maximum alertness.

Additional police and ansars have already been deployed at different puja mandaps. A contingent of 30 security personnel including nine ansars has been posted at each vulnerable puja mandap while 16 personnel including five ansars at each less-vulnerable mandap and 11 personnel including five ansars at each normal puja mandaps.

Around 24,000 puja mandaps have been set up in the country including 172 in Dhaka this year. The number of mandaps has been raised by around 2,500 across the country and nine in the city over that of last year's.

Leaders of different social, political and cultural organisations including

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Sree Sree Ram Shita Mandir Committee, Jatiya Hindu-Moitri Parishad, in separate statements, have greeted the countrymen on the occasion of Durga Puja.

Dhaka Mahanagar Sarbojanen Puja Committee and Bibeknando Shiksha O Sangskriti Parishad will separately distribute new clothes among the poor people on the occasion today.

Constitution

FROM PAGE 1 martial law proclamations at different times, and we have been far removed from the ideals of the great Liberation War."

Replying to a query, Shafique said the Law Commission will examine how the constitution was distorted over the years.

He said German Ambassador Holger Michael has offered financial assistance for the government to reform the country's laws.

The law minister however said everything regarding the constitutional amendments would be done in line with the Law Commission's recommendations.

Sources said the law ministry has already drafted a letter asking the commission to make recommendations for an update of the constitution.

The letter will be issued within a few days, added the sources.

SYED ASHRAF Speaking to newsmen at his office, LGRD Minister Syed Ashraf Islam said the government would not amend the constitution unilaterally to decide the fate of the caretaker government system and tenure of parliament.

Rather, he added, it will try to reach a consensus on the matters.

The AL general secretary said the caretaker system was thrown into question during the times of Iajuddin Ahmed and Fakhruddin Ahmed, as the three-month tenure was stretched to over two years.

In the wake of the controversy, many political analysts advise re-examination of the caretaker government system.

Ashraf said there was a consensus over constitutional amendment in the past, and that same might happen again is not too great an expectation.

Citing examples of different countries, the minister said updating the constitution is good for democracy.

Gas supply

FROM PAGE 1 Four other districts—Satkhira, Magura, Narail and Meherpur—would be brought under the project in the second phase, Kamal Uddin said.

Estimates of fund needed for the second phase, and its implementation period are yet to be finalised.

Meanwhile, Petrobangla has started preliminary work for installing a 30-inch diameter pipeline from Ashuganj to Bheramara.

Khulna City Corporation Mayor Talukder Abdul Mahaleque said gas supply would largely contribute to economic development of south-western region in particular and the country in general.

President of Greater Khulna Development Action Coordination Committee Liakat Ali hoped that gas supply would encourage both local and foreign investors to set up industries in this region, and help reopening of closed mills and healthy operation of sick ones.

Crocs eye

FROM PAGE 1 The number of crocodiles was 68, including 55 females. The crocodiles were between 15 to 28 years of age then.

During the last four years the farm expanded. The farm's crocodiles produced 140 hatchlings in 2007 and 240 last year. Some 400 hatchlings are expected from some 550 eggs laid this year.

"We are waiting for the grand day when our venture bears fruit and our hard labour and investment pays off," said the farm's Chairman Mesbahul Hoque.

Crocodiles are being cultivated commercially in 40 countries of the world including China, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam, farm sources said.

They also said the flesh of crocodile is consumed widely in Australia, Japan, Singapore, China and America. One kilogram of crocodile meat is sold between \$7-8 on the international market, the sources added.

Fashionable items made of crocodile hide have great demand. World celebrities have good eyes for such goods and a good quality bag made of crocodile hide is sold between \$50,000 and \$55,000, farm sources said. Celebrities even wait for two to three years to get the delivery of such a bag.

Crocodile teeth, hide and other by-products are used for making garlands, ornaments of different kinds and small showpieces, which enjoy high demand in local and international market, said farm sources.

Charcoal made from crocodile bones is used for preparing perfume.

Officials of Reptiles Farm Ltd said the government is now formulating a Crocodile Farming Guidelines for new entrepreneurs interested in investing in this sector. Recently, a workshop was arranged by the Forest Department on this issue to accommodate views of stakeholders, farm sources said.

Water detected

FROM PAGE 16 for astronauts wishing to live on the Moon, scientists say.

"If you had a cubic metre of lunar soil, you could squeeze it and get out a litre of water," explained US researcher Larry Taylor.

The rock and soil samples returned by the Apollo missions were found to be ever so slightly "damp" when examined in the laboratory, but scientists could never rule out the possibility that the moisture got into the samples on Earth.

Now a remote sensing instrument on Chandrayaan-1, India's first mission to lunar orbit, has confirmed that the signal was real.

Two other spacecraft to look at the Moon - NASA's Deep Impact probe and the US-European Cassini satellite - back up Chandrayaan.

Both collected their Moon data long before Chandrayaan was launched (in the case of Cassini, 10 years ago), but the significance of what they saw is only now being realised.

The quantity of water is seen to increase the closer the observations are made to the poles.

WATERICE Scientists suspect the water is created in the soil in an interaction with the solar wind, the fast-moving stream of particles that constantly billows away from the Sun.

Harsh space radiation triggers a chemical reaction in which oxygen atoms already in the soil acquire hydrogen nuclei to make water molecules and the simpler hydrogen-oxygen (OH) molecule.

The amounts are small, say researchers, but boost the notion that astronauts based on the Moon could use it as a resource.

"If it is a little or a lot, it's easy enough to split into hydrogen and oxygen and then you have rocket fuel," said Professor Taylor, a University of Tennessee researcher working on Chandrayaan.

The Indian Moon mission was launched late last year but has already stopped working due to a fault. Nevertheless, the Indian space agency (ISRO) will consider the water discovery a major triumph and a vindication of its endeavours.

A Nasa probe is due to impact the Cabeus A crater near the Moon's south pole next month to see if it can kick up sufficient soil so that another satellite and Earth-based telescopes can detect the presence of water in the dusty plume.

Researchers say the latest water results give them confidence that the experiment

performed by the Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite mission, known as LCROSS, could have a positive result.

They speculate that the water seen elsewhere on the lunar surface may migrate to the slightly cooler poles, much as water vapour on Earth will be drawn to a cold surface and condense.

This cold sink effect could result in vast quantities of water being retained in permanently shadowed craters in the form of ice, especially if it has been supplemented by water delivered comets.

Nasa's Lunar Prospector probe in the 1990s saw a strong hydrogen signal in the far north and south. Some scientists on the mission suggested there could be up to 300 million tonnes of water-ice buried in crater soils that never see sunlight.

Chandrayaan made its observations using a US-provided instrument, the Moon Mineralogy Mapper, or M3 for short.

The M3 assessed the nature of lunar soils by analysing the way that light from the sun was reflected off the surface.

Govt orders

FROM PAGE 1 Sources said National Security Intelligence (NSI) has been given the charge of investigating the price spiral of sugar and arresting the businessmen responsible for this. Those already identified are wholesalers, added the sources.

Nat'l Eidgah

FROM PAGE 16 He said the committee has been formed to trace out the officials responsible for the deficient preparations, which resulted in sufferings of many devotees who expressed their resentment over the poor arrangement at the eidgah.

During the main jamaat, it was noticed that the cover overhead was not stretched enough to cover the Eidgah ground.

Ashraf, also the ruling Awami League general secretary, said the DCC should have given proper attention to the Eidgah as the Eid-day was rainy and VVIPs, including the president of the country, gathered there to offer their Eid prayers.

The minister said the government would develop the country's largest Eidgah at Sholakia in Kishoreganj and construct a bridge over the nearby river to facilitate transportation of the devotees.

He said necessary allocations have already been made for the development of the Sholakia Eidgah.

Obama aims

FROM PAGE 1 "We must never stop until all until we see the day when nuclear arms have been banished from the face of the earth. That is our task. That can be our destiny."

US officials have stressed the aim of the summit is to reinvigorate the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which will be the subject of a key review conference next year.

The Security Council meeting comes as Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has offered landmark talks between Iranian and US experts for the first time to allay fears about his country's nuclear programme.

"Why not just let them sit and talk and see what kind of capacity they can build? I think it is a good thing to happen," Ahmadinejad said in an interview with the Washington Post and Newsweek.

And he said Iran would offer to purchase enriched uranium for medical purposes from the United States at upcoming talks with six world powers on October 1 in Geneva.

Russia on Wednesday signalled it could back sanctions if Tehran fails to make concessions at the October 1 meeting with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - which are all declared nuclear powers - plus Germany.

India and Pakistan are also nuclear powers, while North Korea has carried out nuclear tests.

The annual UN General Assembly was to be addressed later Thursday by Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu, whose country is widely believed to be the Middle East's sole, if undeclared, nuclear power.

The resolution urges all states to comply with the obligations of the NPT, to refrain from conducting nuclear test explosions and

ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

It also calls for talks on drafting a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, and urges those nations, which are not members of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to join it as non-nuclear states.

It also includes provisions to deter countries from leaving the NPT.

The text makes no direct reference to Iran and North Korea but points to Security Council resolutions enjoining Tehran to halt sensitive nuclear fuel work and Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme.

Climate Change

FROM PAGE 16 The minister also presented the country paper to the UN on behalf of Bangladesh seeking another amount of \$ 5 billion as compensation for next five years.

Earlier on Tuesday, Hasan took part in the roundtable discussion of the Climate Change Summit on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the UN headquarters.

He also had a bilateral meeting with US Special Envoy for Environment Tadd Stern.

During the meeting, the state minister discussed various adversities facing Bangladesh due to environmental disaster.

He also sought financial and technical supports from the developed countries in building and reconstructing dams in coastal areas, river dredging and forestation.

He invited Tadd Stern to visit Bangladesh. Besides, the minister attended a luncheon with the Swedish forest and development cooperation minister and forest ministers from Tanzania, Rwanda and the Maldives.

New vaccine

FROM PAGE 16 "This is a scientific breakthrough," Thai Health Minister Witthaya Kaewparadai told a news conference in Bangkok. "For the first time ever there is evidence that HIV vaccine has preventative efficacy."

The study actually tested a two-vaccine combo in a "prime-boost" approach, where the first one primes the immune system to attack HIV and the second one strengthens the response.

They are ALVAC, from Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccine division of French drugmaker Sanofi-Aventis; and AIDSVAX, originally developed by VaxGen Inc. and now held by Global Solutions for Infectious Diseases, a nonprofit founded by some former VaxGen employees.

ALVAC uses canarypox, a bird virus altered so it can't cause human disease, to ferry synthetic versions of three HIV genes into the body. AIDSVAX contains a genetically engineered version of a protein on HIV's surface. The vaccines are not made from whole virus dead or alive and cannot cause HIV.

Neither vaccine in the study prevented HIV infection when tested individually in earlier trials, and dozens of scientists had called the new one futile when it began in 2003.

"I really didn't have high hopes at all that we would see a positive result," Fauci confessed.

The results proved the sceptics wrong.

"The combination is stronger than each of the individual members," said the Army's Kim, a physician who manages the Army's HIV vaccine programme.

The study tested the combo in HIV-negative Thai men and women ages 18 to 30 at average risk of becoming infected. Half received four "priming" doses of ALVAC and two "boost" doses of AIDSVAX over six months. The others received dummy shots. No one knew who got what until the study ended.

All were given condoms, counselling and treatment for any sexually transmitted infections, and were tested every six months for HIV. Any who became infected were given free treatment with antiretroviral medicines.

Participants were followed for three years after vaccination ended.

Results: New infections occurred in 51 of the 8,197 given vaccine and in 74 of the 8,198 who received dummy shots. That worked out to a 31 percent lower risk of infection for the vaccine group.

The vaccine had no effect

on levels of HIV in the blood of those who did become infected. That had been another goal of the study seeing whether the vaccine could limit damage to the immune system and help keep infected people from developing full-blown AIDS.

That result is "one of the most important and intriguing findings of this trial," Fauci said. It suggests that the signs scientists have been using to gauge whether a vaccine was actually giving protection may not be valid.

"It is conceivable that we haven't even identified yet" what really shows immunity, which is both "important and humbling" after decades of vaccine research, Fauci said.

Details of the \$105 million study will be given at a vaccine conference in Paris in October.

This is the third big vaccine trial since 1983, when HIV was identified as the cause of AIDS. In 2007, Merck & Co. stopped a study of its experimental vaccine after seeing it did not prevent HIV infection. Later analysis suggested the vaccine might even raise the risk of infection in certain men. The vaccine itself did not cause infection.

In 2003, AIDSVAX flunked two large trials the first late-stage tests of any AIDS vaccine at the time.

It is unclear whether vaccine makers will seek to license the two-vaccine combo in Thailand. Before the trial began, the US Food and Drug Administration said other studies would be needed before the vaccine could be considered for US licensing.

Also unclear is whether Thai volunteers who received dummy shots will now be offered the vaccine. Researchers had said they would do so if the vaccine showed clear benefit defined as reducing the risk of infection by at least 50 percent.

Those issues, plus how to proceed with future studies, will be discussed among the governments, study sponsors and companies involved in the trial, Kim said. Scientists want to know how long will protection last, whether booster shots will be needed, and whether the vaccine helps prevent infection in gay men and injection drug users, since it was tested mostly in heterosexuals in the Thai trial.

The study was done in Thailand because US Army scientists did pivotal research in that country when the AIDS epidemic emerged there, isolating virus strains and providing genetic information on them to vaccine makers. The Thai government also strongly supported the idea of doing the study.

Crisis in Ctg BNP

FROM PAGE 16 criticised some of the party decisions, activities, the inclusion of so-called reformists in the party, and reinstatement of those having bad reputation or who have indulged in corruption.

Noman's and S Q Chowdhury's factions demonstrated against each other yesterday afternoon.

Noman-faction held a rally, followed by a procession, demanding organisational action against S Q Chowdhury for, what they said, his comments on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, her sons Tarique Rahman and Arifat Rahman Koko.

At the rally held at Nasim Bhaban City BNP Office premises the speakers termed S Q Chowdhury a privileged leader of BNP and demanded his ouster from the party.

Earlier, over 60 leaders and activists of BNP loyal to S Q Chowdhury staged a demonstration at the same venue just before the faction of Noman held its rally.

At a rally they said conspiracy is being hatched both at home and abroad against S Q Chowdhury.

S Q Chowdhury, lawmaker from Chittagong-2, created sensation in the political arena when he along