Blast kills

three police

in Pakistan

A roadside bomb targeting a

police van yesterday killed

three newly recruited

policemen and wounded 10

others in northwestern

Torghar district, a moun-

tainous region of restive

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa prov-

ince, where Taliban mili-

tants frequently attack gov-

ernment officials and

controlled bomb. The target

was the police vehicle. Three

police recruits were killed

and 10 were injured," Farid

Khan, the district's top

2 Ws tipped

Zaman as cabinet secretary

is almost certain, sources

Secretary Molla

Waheeduzzaman might take

over as principal secretary,

Abul Kalam Azad might

replace Molla. It is also pos-

sible that PM's Private

Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan

is picked for the position,

highly placed official

could be made education or

finalised that Local

Government Joint Secretary

Abdul Malek will become

Sobhan Sikder, Public

Administration Secretary

Igbal Mahmood, Economic

Relations Division Secretary

Muhammad Musharraf

Hossain Bhuiyan and Jute

and Textile Secretary Md

Ashraful Moqbul are in the

race for the posts of cabinet

secretary and principal

Home Secretary Abdus

PM's private secretary.

water resources secretary.

Other sources said Nazrul

It is, however, almost

sources told The Daily Star.

Power Division Secretary

Prime Minister's Office

police officer, told AFP.

FROM PAGE 1

they added.

"It was a remote-

The incident took place in

Pakistan, officials said.

AFP, Peshawar

troops.

Durga Puja

FROM PAGE 20 All temples and houses of the Hindus wore a colourful look on the occasion of Durga Puja,

the worship of the Hindu

goddess of power and peace.

The celebration will begin with Bodhan ritual (the process of infusing life into the idol) today and end with the immersion of idols in rivers or other water bodies after Dashami Puja on October 6, said Pradip Kumar Chakrabarty, shebait (chief executive) of Dhakeshwari National Temple yesterday.

The main puja mandaps in the capital are at Dhakeshwari National Temple, Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University, Ramakrishna Mission, Ramna Kali Mondir, Siddheshwari Kali Mondir, Tanti Bazar and Shankhari Bazar as well as Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani and Uttara.

About 28,000 mandaps have been erected across the country with 199 mandaps in the capital alone for puja celebration, said Mohanagar Sarbojaneen Puja Committee and Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Benazir Ahmed yesterday told reporters that they have taken all-out preparations for ensuring safety of puja mandaps and visitors during the festival.

"We did not get any information of untoward incidents in the city until now and hope the festival will be celebrated safely with cooperation from all," he said at Dhakeshwari Temple while checking out the security measures taken

Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad and Mohanagar Sarbojaneen Puja Committee have set up a monitoring cell inside the temple. DMP also set up a similar cell there to monitor puja activities.

Mohanagar Sarbojaneen Puja Committee sources said Tk 1.50 crore was allocated for puja celebration across the country.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the poor allocation, Subrata Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad, said "the allocation is insufficient and we demand budgetary allocation for Durga Puja."

Meanwhile, different socio-cultural organisations including Vivekananda Shiksha O Sangskriti Parishad and Suhrid of Dhaka University have distributed new cloths among the poor and orphans on the occasion of Durga Puja.

History

The origin of Durga Puja can be traced back to the 15th century. Interestingly, with the ascent of Mughals, Durga puja became more popular and grand celebrations, gala feasts and huge fanfare became the major attraction. As a festival, Durga Puja

was first organised by Raja Kangshanarayan of Taherpur in Rajshahi in the month of Aswin (autumn) in the Bengali year 887.

It is believed that goddess Durga decended on earth following prayers by King Kangsa. Marking the occasion, the first Durga worship was held at Taherpur king's palace. According to Hindu

Mythology, Rama, elder son of king Dasharatha, 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 blessings, Rama destroyed the kingdom of

Ravana.

3 Tahrir men ROM PAGE 20

year student of BBA a International University o Business Agriculture and Technology.

Producing them before newsmen at Rab-3 office in Tikatuli yesterday afternoon, Deputy Director of Rab-3 Chowdhury Md Hamid Al-Mahbub said they arrested the Hizb ut-Tahrir activists around 2:35pm while they were distributing leaflets containing anti-government statements.

The arrestees told reporters that they were trying to motivate people through distributing leaflets to establish Khilafat and rule of Islam. They did not disclose the

names of their leaders and the source of leaflets. The Rab official said they found some mobile phone numbers used by Hizb ut-Tahrir men and were trying to

trace them.

1,000 taxis

be made in a meeting after the

managing director returns home from abroad.

The licence had been issued as part of a revised policy to register 6,740 new taxis in the capital to ensure smooth cab services for commuters.

According to the Taxicab Services Policy Guideline 1998, at least 11,260 taxicabs had been registered with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). Of those, nearly 2,000 are operational while the rest were discarded for failure to meet standard fitness requirements, said taxicab owners.

Of the registered cabs, 4,513 are equipped with airconditioning and the rest 6,747 are non-AC.

Most taxis are in a bad shape putting the cab service in the city on the verge of a collapse. Cab owners put it down to the import of low quality vehicles from India.

They also blamed unskilled drivers for the sorry state of the service.

In a move to streamline the transport sector, the BRTA issued a circular in March stipulating that any company seeking licence to operate cabs must have a fleet of at least 1,000 taxis with a minimum engine capacity of 1500cc each. The move was an aberra-

tion in the usual practice, where a company with a fleet of 20 taxicabs had been permitted to run the business.

The BRTA circular said once a company obtains licence, it will not be able to lease out taxis, and has to have wireless phone service in all its taxis and own parking space for at least 1,000 taxies at a time.

The company also needs to have a minimum paid-up capital of Tk 2.5 crore to import the vehicles. Earlier, the amount was only Tk 10

"Our main objective is to restore discipline in the sector and ensure safe and smooth public transport service in big cities," said a top BRTA official preferring anonymity.

SR Khan, president of Association of Taxicab Owners of Bangladesh, said some big cab companies such as Navana, Anudip, Cab-ex and Sarika that started business with nearly 1,000 cabs, could have put up a better performance, had they got necessary support from the government.

He said despite having necessary infrastructure in place, none of the companies is in a position to import new taxies for Bangladesh Bank's delay in the implementation of a government decision on waiving bank interests.

He said taxicab business was dealt a heavy blow only one year into its start, as the government put a restriction on import of three year-old cabs from Japan through a change in the rules. A substantial increase in duty and value-added tax also contributed to the slump in business.

The move prompted businessmen to import low quality vehicles from India. These vehicles got damaged in a year, partly because of mishandling of inexperienced

He said once bank interests are waived, the companies would be able to import new taxis to replace the old

Gas crisis

FROM PAGE 20

Ultiganj, Senpara Parbata, Mirpur Pallabi and Gendaria.

Fed up with the disruption in gas supplies for the last one year, Rasheda Begum of Sobhanbagh purchased a kerosene stove as an alternative.

A daily trouble of eight hours has forced her to pick the costlier option. But with the advent of winter, gas supply to the locality remains cut off between 7:00am and 11:00pm.

To get relief from the unceasing suffering, Fatema Akhter of Pearabagh in Moghbazar has bought a microwave oven to cook foods. She starts cooking for

the next day at 8:00pm. "Gas supply in our area has been woefully low between 6:00am and 6:00pm every day for the last one year," she mentioned.

Housewife Nilufar Yasmin of Bibirbagicha in Uttar Jatrabari wakes up every day at 5:00am to prepare breakfast and lunch for her family as there is no supply of gas between 8:00am and 3:00pm.

Md Nawshad Islam, general manager (planning and

development) of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Co Ltd, attributed the problem to shortage of gas production.

During winter the crisis escalates as the gas in pipelines gets compressed and its pressure reaches low

According to Petrobangla sources, the country's present gas demand is 2500 mmcfd, but the supply is only about 2000 mmcfd.

Besides affecting the domestic users, this huge supply-demand gap leads to severe crisis in producing power at gas-fired power stations.

To ease the crisis, Titas Gas will do some development works including connecting lines at several areas which have been suffering the most, mentioned Nawshad.

'We could not start the work in the rainy season as Dhaka City Corporation charges double the amount applicable for granting permission to dig a road in the winter," noted the Titas official.

He hoped the works will start next month.

BJP slams land deal

FROM PAGE 20 with Bangladesh and has demanded in its resolution that the 1,500-odd survey maps that were exchanged between Bangladesh and India be made public.

"The party has also demanded that all maps be placed in public domain and a discussion be held in the next session of parliament and the advice of parliament be taken into account before deciding on the issue," he added.

The BJP leader said, "In the name of rationalising the borders, local interests have been severely compromised with. The local population has been kept in the dark and people of the area are very disturbed."

Mitra said BJP factfinding teams, which visited the area and met the affected people on Bangladesh border with India, found that the people were "very disturbed as they were kept in the dark about the land transfer". "Some families have already started migrating to Indian territories now and are demanding their land back or adequate com-

pensation in lieu thereof." Mitra, who was part of one such fact-finding team, said, "The team found widespread confusion and anxiety prevailing among the people because they had not been taken into confi-

dence. The BJP resolution said the party pledges to fight for the rights of people "adversely affected by the land boundary agreement" of September 6 and demands that the government come

clean before parliament. "BJP is of the view that demographic invasion of India by illegal Bangladesh migrants has already severely affected the identity, culture and social cohesion of many parts of Assam and West Bengal. No further compromise with the country's national interests can be permitted," it said.

The BJP also alleged that in the name of rationalisation of adversely possessed land and exchanging enclaves of Bangladesh in India and vice versa, the rights and interests of the local population have been "severely compromised leading to unrest throughout Assam and in many parts of north Bengal".

Too old

FROM PAGE 20 the local UP member seeking sanction of an old-age allowance for his grandmother, but all such efforts have gone in vain for the last

FROM PAGE 1

13, 2006.

groups.

After their calls for an

end to the trend fell on deaf

ears, Amnesty International

urged all countries in

August this year to stop

supplying arms to

Bangladesh citing that

those would be used by Rab

and other law enforcement

agencies to commit extraju-

said since its inception in

2004, Rab has been impli-

cated in the unlawful killing

including about 200 killed

after the Awami League-led

government assumed

tional director general of

Rab, later became the

counterintelligence direc-

tor of Directorate General of

"I was there at the initial

planning," Butenis quoted

Bari as saying. The diplomat

also identified him as "a

forceful advocate" for Rab,

citing a discussion on April

15, 2006 on the margins of

the 2006 PASOC conference

origins of the controversial

anti-crime unit, disparaged

the skills and integrity of

police", and cited the inter-

rogations of Jama'atul

Mujahideen Bangladesh

(JMB) suspects to suggest

Bari "recounted the

Forces Intelligence (DGFI).

Bari, the former addi-

An August 23 AI report

dicial killings.

power.

several years. "I went to the UP member of our ward for my grandmother's old-age allowance, but to no effect", Oliar told The Daily Star.

As Asiron's husband did not leave behind any assets for the family, she had to struggle hard to raise her children. Arzu Biswas, another of her grandsons, said that she even had to work as a housemaid in the village.

Asironnessa's only son Ershad, who passed away in 2005, left behind four sons along with his old mother, according to her grandsons. Since the death of her son, Asiron has been surviving with financial help from her grandsons, who eke out a bare existence as sharecroppers.

"The UP member did not pay any heed to us, though we approached him several times for the allowance", said an aggrieved Oliar.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Sheikh Rafikul Islam, Social Service Officer in Magura sadar upazila, said a six-member committee headed by the UP member concerned prepares the list of allowance recipients and sends it to the upazila authorities, after which the list is approved by the

upazila committee. When contacted, Nirmal Kumar Biswas, UP member of the ward, expressed his regret over the matter but claimed, "As nobody approached me, it was beyond my knowledge that such an aged woman lives in my area. So her name could not be enlisted for an old age or widow allowance."

The UP member, however, promised to have Asiron's name placed on the list next time.

Talk shows

FROM PAGE 20

should sometimes try to add a little sweetness into the discussions otherwise the talks become all sour,' Sheikh Hasina said.

Flanked by senior cabinet members and trusted party leaders at the press conference, the prime minister spoke about different political issues including why the caretaker government system was nullified. She also talked about BNP's anti government movements and the outcome of her

recent visit to the USA. "I sometimes watch talk shows on television late at night and find no praise of the government for the good it does. Some people talk in such a way as if my government has only generated 2200 megawatts of power and nothing more," she said before pointing out that private television channels were granted permits to go on air during her previous

tenure as head of state. Referring to the criticism of politicians by the media, the prime minister said the media will also have to learn to accept criticism for their

wrongdoings. "Now many television channels are on air and telecast many talk shows every night. However, I can't watch all of them as I have to get early every morning for my Fazr prayers and work,' she concluded.

IP to run

FROM PAGE 20 afternoon, on his three-day

visit to Rajshahi. According to Ershad, peace prevailed during his rule and subsequently his party joined the grand alliance to save the country from anarchy, terrorism, theft of public property and

to uphold democracy. Jatiya Party advised the government on meeting public demand it did not keep its promises to the party.

Earlier in the day, at a seminar on "Planning of provincial government system in Bangladesh" at a Rajshahi community centre, Ershad emphasised the need for introducing provincial government system.

The country would be divided into eight provinces to reduce pressure on the capital and ensure balanced development throughout the country, he said.

Crossfire killings necessary that Bangladesh's zeal in Khaleda Zia herself selected arresting the August 17,

city

The cable, marked secret and recently posted on 2005 bombers ironically whistleblower website triggered JMB's deadly WikiLeaks, was sent to campaign of terror in late Washington by the then US 2005 as retaliation. ambassador in Dhaka Though the original plan

Patricia A Butenis on April had been to have 44 percent military, 44 percent police, The killings in the name and 12 percent from the of "crossfire" or "encounter" paramilitary Bangladesh by Rapid Action Battalion Rifles (BDR, now Border (Rab) have generated con-Guard Bangladesh), police cern and ire among local were reluctant to fill their and international rights slots, Bari told US officials.

Explaining the reluctance, he said police "earned more money on the outside" from bribes and other illicit activities, the cable said, adding, "Senior police officers, he claimed, preferred to sit in their offices." "Military disdain for the

police is not new, and police failings are often cited to justify the military's continuing dominance of Rab -about 80 percent of its total force structure and virtually of at least 700 people all of its senior officers eral himself," Butenis wrote in the cable. "The police, he agreed,

operate like a giant pyramid scheme, where street personnel pass payoffs up to their bosses. Corruption, he added, was one reason police failed to capture JMB commander Sheikh [Shaikh] Abdur Rahman."

Bari further complained that "police remain unwilling to second able personnel, often providing instead the old and physically unfit. Police personnel lack basic skills, such as shooting, and have no training in special operations", the cable read.

Asked if there was one political sponsor of establishment of the Rab, "Bari said no, there were several," the cable said.

The then prime minister

black uniform for Rab from six alternate designs, including the distinctive black Rab "doo-rag," it quoted Bari.

Identifying the JMB as a "home grown" military organisation, the former Rab second-man described JMB operatives as poor people who flunked out of madrasas. "Being poor, they could easily blend in as rickshaw pullers and hawkers and go anywhere to recruit for JMB."

his capacity at the DGFI said law enforcement per-The arrests "angered the

JMB rank-and-file and generated internal pressure on Rahman to retaliate and demonstrate that JMB except for the director gen- remained a viable entity. The result, Bari claimed, was the onset in October [in 2005 when a number of people including two judges were killed] of the deadly attacks on the judicial system".

> "interesting twist" to suggest, as Bari did, that the deadly JMB attacks in late 2005 were an unplanned action triggered by Bangladesh government's zeal in rounding up August 17 bombers. Along with downplaying

JMB's religious credentials as failed madrasa students and describing JMB as home-grown, Bari is toeing the government line that JMB operatives were basically local yokels with little or no interest in "true" Islam, the cable adds.

EC recast thru' talks

FROM PAGE 1

in Hawaii.

government, and it will be free and fair.

"BNP has to participate in that election if it is to remain in politics. People want election; they want to practise their constitutional right to vote." Flanked by senior cabi-

net members and party leaders, she spoke at length about the latest political developments and her trip to the US to attend the UN General Assembly. In a swipe at the opposi-

tion leader, she said, "Prepare for the polls instead of running a movement to protect the war criminals and corrupt sons." About the prospects for

talks with the BNP chief, she said the door is still open and she is ready for a dialogue in parliament. "Come to parliament for

discussions. You [Khaleda] will be allowed to speak as much as you can. The microphone will not be switched off."

Queried about her remarks abroad that she would not sit with the "thieves and thugs" for dialogue, Hasina said those were misinterpreted. " meant if I agree to sit with the opposition leader, she will request that corruption charges against her two sons be withdrawn."

Asked if she will sit with the BNP chief if the latter does not raise any such issue, she said it is a hypothetical question. "She has already set a time limit for the government...so how will there be any talks?"

On the opposition's threat to limit the government's tenure till next September, the prime minister said she [Khaleda] had first threatened to topple the government by June this year and now she has this new time limit. "I must thank her for giving us another 15 months," she quipped.

Referring to Khaleda's statement that the opposition will play the "final game" against the government after the road-march programme, she said, "Before the final, there are quarter-final and semifinal. I would like to know in which round she is now."

after an 11-day visit to the Mentioning that the BNP chairperson had predicted Those present at the AL would not even get 30 press conference included seats in the last parliamen-

tary polls, she said, "Every- Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, thing depends on the Almighty Allah. We won the election with an absolute majority while they got less then 30 seats. I wonder what would have become of BNP and its chief if we had shared some more seats with Ershad!"

Hasina said the BNP chief had once been steadfast in her opposition to the provision for caretaker government, while Awami League pressed for it. The provision has been scrapped in line with a

Supreme Court verdict and considering the bitter experiences. "Now why would she [Khaleda] go against the apex court verdict," she asked. Referring to a story published in The Daily Star on November 2, 2008, which was titled "Govt wants controlled democracy:

Khaleda", the AL chief said

she wonders if the opposi-

tion leader wants to see

controlled democracy again

by having the caretaker government system rein-Criticising the September 19 vandalism and attacks on policemen by Jamaat-e-Islami activists, she said those responsible must be brought to book. "The fundamentalist forces will not be allowed to take to the streets to repeat

such incidents." She urged the people to put up resistance against Jamaat-Shibir men.

Speaking for about one and a half hours, Hasina also outlined her administration's success. She said the volume of exports has gone up by 42 percent despite global recession, and the country has clocked a GDP growth of 6.7 per-

Terming the outcome of her US trip "positive", she said she dedicates the South-South Award to the people. She was given the award on September 20 for her contribution to improving the lives of women and children through use of information and communications technology.

The prime minister returned home on Thursday

Deputy Leader of the House

Bari, who attended many of JMB leader Abdur Rahman's interrogations in sonnel quickly arrested 70 persons involved with the August 17 countrywide bomb explosions by the

Butenis found it as an

Quader and AL Joint

General Secretary

Mahbubul Alam Hanif.

China marks

national day

with vows for

'democracy'

China's top leaders marked

national day yesterday with

an appearance on

Tiananmen Square in cen-

tral Beijing after Prime

Minister Wen Jiabao pledged

greater "democracy" and

and top Communist Party

leaders descended on the

vast square and bowed

before the monument to

revolutionary martyrs, as

they marked the 62nd anni-

versary of the founding of

the People's Republic of

In a speech Friday night

Wen pledged to address

China's biggest social issues,

including rising inflation, a

yawning income gap, unem-

ployment, food safety, cor-

ruption, environmental

destruction and social injus-

efforts to guarantee and

perfect democracy and

resolve the problems that

most concern the people

and that most directly

involve their interests," Wen

said in the speech posted

Saturday on government

efforts to advance the open-

ing and reform and con-

tinue to push forward eco-

nomic, political, cultural

and social system reform.

We will make great efforts to

safeguard social justice, and

ensure the people's demo-

cratic rights and judicial

China's communist leaders

within the ruling elite.

But by "democracy"

"We will make great

websites.

fairness.'

"We will make great

China.

President Hu Jintao, Wen

rights for the people.

AFP, Beijing

Agriculture Minister Matia To be replaced by Housing and Public Works Joint Chowdhury, LGRD Minister Secretary Jiller Rahman, Sved Ashraful Islam Dhaka Divisional Information Minister Abul Commissioner Moinuddin Kalam Azad, prime minis-Abdullah might be made ter's adviser HT Imam, AL acting secretary of a ministry. presidium member Obaidul

secretary, sources said.

Some other posts including secretaries of women and children affairs, housing and public works, labour and manpower and health, and privatisation commission member-1 are likely to be reshuffled.

Outcry

FROM PAGE 1 some leaders of a local sporting club.

Earlier the authorities added two floors to the building, covering the main structure.

Contacted, prominent archaeologist AKM Zakaria condemned demolition of

the historical structure. "I strongly oppose tearing down the ancient building, Zakaria said adding, he was not sure about whether the mosque was protected by the

Department of Archeology. Rights chief

FROM PAGE 1 approval according to section 12 (Ga) of the NHRC Act, 2009, said NHRC Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman.

The NHRC staff went to visit Sylhet Central Jail, after receiving allegations of corruption and human rights violation against the jail authorities, he added.

Mizanur Rahman alleged that IG Prisons Brig Gen (retd) Ashraful Islam Khan violated the law by preventing him from visiting the prison, adding that, the NHRC will move to HC if government does not take any action.

Earlier on Thursday, Sylhet

jail authorities barred NHRC Chairman from visiting the jail as he did not have an approval letter from the IG Prisons. Mizanur Rahman spoke to the reporters following a

seminar on tasks to be done in the next 40 days to elect the Sundarbans as one of the seven natural wonders of the world. Bangladesh Wonders Promotion Foundation

arranged the seminar at National Museum. Dr Muhammad Zafar

do not mean multi-party competition for power at the Iqbal, Ali Zaker, Asaduzzaman ballot box, generally refer-Noor, Saikh Siraj, Lt Gen (retd) ring instead to discussions M Harun-or-Rashid spoke in the seminar among others.