

AL demands probe into Dinajpur explosions

UNB, Dhaka

Expressing grave concern over Dinajpur bomb blasts, opposition Awami League said the latest incident proved there might be more than one "terrorist network" active in the country.

Acting AL President Johra Tajuddin and General Secretary Abdul Jalil in a statement yesterday criticised the administration for allegedly trying to suppress facts about the explosions that they said occurred in a "hideout of a fundamentalist terrorist group called Jama'at Mujaheddin".

The Awami League leaders demanded proper inquiry into the incident, which took place on Thursday morning. They also demanded arrest of those involved.

In the statement, they repeated the party's earlier remark that "the evil force that wanted to make Bangladesh a Taliban state is in the BNP-Jama'at government".

They alleged that to protect the terrorists and divert people's attention the government was putting blame on AL men. "Instead of nabbing the culprits who carried

out similar acts in Satkhira, Tangail and other places, the government has maintained a mysterious silence," they said.

And such silence of the government made the "fanatic-terrorist groups more fearless and reckless," the opposition leaders observed in the statement.

They particularly criticised the local administration for its alleged move to cover up the criminal act and for not allowing journalists to go to the spot.

Zohra and Jalil noted that during the AL rule eight people, including a commander of this group, were arrested from Parbatipur along with arms. They said people became skeptical about police investigation. Police failed to detect anything when "the same group, establishing madrassah and hostels in Dinajpur, have long been engaged in arms buildup and bomb manufacturing", they said.

The AL leaders alleged that because of killing, rape, repression and violation of human rights under the present government country's image was tarnished abroad.

Armed attack on Eid reunion in Feni: 8 hurt

BSS, Feni

At least eight people were injured when armed criminals attacked an Eid reunion at Koraismunshi Bazar under Dagonbhuia upazila on Friday night.

Police arrested two criminals from the spot. They are Mafizur Rahman and Abdul Malek.

Police and witnesses said a gang of 50 criminals attacked the Eid reunion organised by a local social welfare organisation at about 8.30 pm.

The gang exploded crackers and fired shots during the attack.

Of the injured, Balayet Hossain Sumon, Abdul Khalak, Sirazul Hoq Badu and Rasul Ahmed were admitted to different clinics in Feni town.

Pakistani PM cancels trip to Iran

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali has cancelled a planned trip to neighbouring Iran, state media announced today. Jamali had planned a three-day visit to Tehran starting February 17.

He cancelled it "owing to some important affairs including the upcoming Senate elections," the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported.

Elections for Pakistan's first senate since it was suspended in the wake of the October 1999 army coup are scheduled for February 24 and 27.

Jamali recently toured the four Gulf states of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates seeking non-military solutions to the Iraqi crisis.

Iran lies between Pakistan's south-west border and Iraq.

Only 15 beds

FROM PAGE 12

said at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday, held in observance of International Childhood Cancer Day.

Seventy per cent of such patients can be cured through proper diagnosis and treatment, they said and demanded setting up of a cancer hospital for children.

There is also scarcity of skilled physicians and nurses for treatment of cancer, they said.

Different international organisations have assured Ashic to help it with medical equipment, medicine, and oncologists and to train local physicians and nurses if a childhood cancer hospital is set up, they said.

Chairperson of Ashic Salma Chowdhury, Afzal Hossain Chowdhury, Prof Manna of BSSMU and Executive Member of London-based International Confederation of Childhood Cancer Parent Organisations (ICCCPO) Geoffrey Thaxter spoke at the press conference.

Later, a human chain was formed in front of the press club in which 15 children with cancer took part.

At the stage Gillespie had 2-2 from three overs, building on McGrath's 1-23 from eight and Lee's 2-16 off six.

Gillespie stopped the run flow by conceding just six runs in his next five overs before grabbing the wicket of the Australians wanted more.

Tendulkar, who faced 59 deliveries watching the batting collapse at the other end, went inside the line of



An activist of the Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal carries a placard during an anti-war rally in Dhaka. The socialist party demonstrated yesterday against a possible US-led strike on Iraq.

Hasina offers fateha at Prophet's Rawja Mubarak

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina offered fateha at Rawja Mubarak of Prophet Hajrat Mohammad (SM) in Medina on Friday.

She prayed for peace and progress of Bangladesh people.

Sheikh Hasina also attended a dinner hosted by the wife of Saudi King for the women royal guests on the Eid day, said an AL press release here yesterday.

The royal hostess presented two pieces of the Quran and a wall-mat to Sheikh Hasina.

Earlier on the day, expatriate Bangladeshis met Hasina at Sheraton Hotel in Makkah.

Meghna tragedy

FROM PAGE 1

Express-- sank with 29 people on board. The launch went to Ichal Ghat in Chandpur from Dhaka and capsized on its way back.

Earlier reports said at least eight people drowned and three were missing in the launch tragedy.

The dead included A F M Siddiq, managing director of Siddiq Textile Mills, and his family members.

The victims' bodies were handed over to their relatives and they were buried yesterday.

Aussies run thru India

FROM PAGE 1

bat with a 40-run stand for the eighth wicket.

Harbhajan hit 28 off 32 balls, including an astonishing six over third man off Lee, while Kumble remained unbeaten on 16.

"It's hard to explain why we've fallen off in recent months," Ganguly told AFP during the lunch break.

"It's not that we are not trying, but nothing is falling in place. Batting was our strong point, but it is letting the side down."

India must now win all the three key games against Zimbabwe, England and Pakistan to ensure a place in the super-six round.

A combination of reckless batting and devastating pace bowling saw India lose their first four wickets for 45 runs by the 15th over after Ganguly won the toss and elected to bat.

Ganguly (nine) and Virender Sehwag were caught behind off Lee slashing outside the off-stump.

Rahul Dravid played Gillespie's first delivery on to his stumps, while Yuvraj Singh was given leg-before off Glenn McGrath by Sri Lankan umpire Asoka De Silva even though replays showed the ball hit the top of the pad.

Gillespie earned his second wicket soon after when Mohammad Kaif hooked a short ball down Andrew Symonds' throat at deep square leg to make India 50-5.

At the stage Gillespie had 2-2 from three overs, building on McGrath's 1-23 from eight and Lee's 2-16 off six.

Gillespie stopped the run flow by conceding just six runs in his next five overs before grabbing the wicket of the Australians wanted more.

Tendulkar, who faced 59 deliveries watching the batting collapse at the other end, went inside the line of

the ball to flick, missed and was caught plumb in front of the wicket.

"We decided before the game that Brett would take the new ball to see if he could rattle the batsmen," said Gillespie.

"A couple of wickets fell early on and I just chipped in. It was vital to get Tendulkar out because he was looking good."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Pool A match between Australia and India at Supersport Park on Saturday:

INDIA		AUSTRALIA	
Ganguly c Gilchrist b Lee	9	Gilchrist st Dravid b Kumble	48
Tendulkar lbw b Gillespie	36	Lee	45
Sehwag c Gilchrist b Lee	4	Ponting not out	24
Dravid b Gillespie	0	Extras: (lb-3, w-8)	11
Yuvraj lbw b McGrath	1	Total: (For 1 wkt in 22.2 overs)	128
Kaif c Symonds b Gillespie	1	Fall of wicket: 1-100	
Mongia c Symonds b Lee	13	Did not bat: Martyn, Lehmann, Boven, Symonds, Gillespie, Hogg, Lee and McGrath.	
Kumble not out	16	Bowler	O M R W
Harbhajan lbw b Hogg	28	Srinath	4 0 26 0
Zaheer lbw b Lehmann	1		
Srinath run out	0		
Extras: (lb-5, nb-1, w-10)	16		
Total: (All out in 41.4 overs)	125		
Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-41, 3-44, 4-45, 5-50, 6-78, 7-80, 8-120, 9-125			

Zaheer	4	0	26	0
Harbhajan	7.2	0	49	0
Kumble	7	0	24	1

Result: Australia won by nine wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Jason Gillespie.

Toss: India.

Umpires: David Shepherd (Eng) and Asoka De Silva (Sri)

TV umpire: Brian Jerling (Rsa)

Match referee: Clive Lloyd (Wls)

Papal envoy holds peace talks with Saddam

AFP, Baghdad

Papal envoy Cardinal Roger Etchegaray held two hours of talks with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein yesterday in a bid to "guarantee peace."

"My meeting with President Saddam Hussein centred on concrete questions," the French cardinal told reporters.

"It was to see if everything had been done to guarantee peace by restoring a climate of trust which allows Iraq to recover its place in the international community," he said.

The meeting in Baghdad came a day after Pope John Paul II urged Iraq to respect UN resolutions in talks with Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz.

Etchegaray said Wednesday after talks with Aziz and Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan that he would deliver a message to Saddam from the pope.

The Vatican reiterated Friday its opposition to a US-led war on Iraq, saying military intervention would "worsen the suffering of a population already tested by long years of embargoes."

World protests US plans

FROM PAGE 1

favour of extending weapons inspections.

Iraq can claim to have won a round in the fight against the United States at Friday's Security Council meeting, a ruling Baath Party official said.

"The round was in Iraq's favour," said Saad Kassem Hammudi, who runs the government-backed Organisation of Popular Arab Forces. Hammudi said the session had "tamed the runaway American bull ... and given the inspectors the opportunity to pursue their mission in line with Resolution 1441."

The influential Babel newspaper, run by President Saddam's elder son Uday, saw in the chief inspectors' report fresh ammunition for those opposed to a US attack on the Baghdad regime.

"The Iraq issue may be an important chance ... for countries like Russia, France, China, Germany, and groups like the European Union and the Arab League and others, to rise up and carry out their duties effectively."

But defiant US Secretary of State Colin Powell had said after the session that Washington would only wait "weeks" before deciding whether to launch its own action and Bush also expressed his exasperation at the UN debate.

"Saddam Hussein is a danger and that's why he will be disarmed one way or the other," he said.

Protest organisers around the world were expecting to see people march for peace yesterday on a scale not seen since the

demonstrations against the war in Vietnam.

The mass protests kicked off in New Zealand, in Wellington and Auckland, as well as across Australia in Perth, Hobart and Canberra to be followed on Sunday by others in Brisbane, Darwin, Adelaide and Sydney, spreading through Asia and on to Europe, with major demonstrations taking place in key capitals and other big cities.

In the Italian capital Rome, organisers said three million people took to the streets, while police in London said half a million people had turned out.

New York is the focus of the main United States anti-war demonstration, with hundreds of thousands expected at a rally near UN headquarters.

In London, more than half a million people were taking part in a march against a looming US-led war against Iraq, police estimated, while organisers of the event put the number at around one million.

A figure of over 500,000 makes the march the biggest demonstration in the British capital since World War Two.

John Rees, one of the protest organisers, said: "We are calling it a million now. At the end of the day I think it will probably be over a million."

The march started around midday (1200 GMT) and was due to finish at about 5.30pm.

In Baghdad, which saw not one but two massive anti-war demonstrations, Papal envoy Cardinal

UN must act on Iraq or lose its voice: Bush

REUTERS, Glasgow, Scotland

Britain's Tony Blair said yesterday weapons inspectors would get more time to scour Iraq but warned the United Nations that it's authority would be lost if Saddam Hussein was not disarmed peacefully or by force.

"Dr Blix reported to the UN yesterday and there will be more time given inspections," the prime minister told his ruling Labour Party's conference in the Scottish city of Glasgow.

"But if we show weakness now, if we allow the plea for more time to become just an excuse for prevarication until the moment for action passes then ... the menace, and not just from Saddam will grow. The authority of the UN will be lost," he said.

In a setback for the United States and Britain, top UN arms officials held out hope on Friday that inspections were working. That prompted Russia, France, China, Germany and others, in a dramatic Security Council showdown, to demand peace be given another chance and allow inspections to continue.

A crucial report by chief inspector Hans Blix, while critical of Iraq's failure to deliver information in vital

areas, lacked the bite of his previous assessments, allowing wavering council members to declare it was premature to take military action.

A Brussels report adds: A compromise to end a NATO crisis on protective measures for Turkey in case of US led war on Iraq is likely to be agreed next Monday or Tuesday, diplomatic sources said yesterday.

The refusal of France, Germany and Belgium to allow the 19-nation alliance to start defensive planning for Turkey has plunged NATO into one of the most serious crisis in its 54-year history.

"There is a general move towards a deescalation and the search for a solution early next week," one senior diplomatic source said.

He gave no details but other sources said NATO would reaffirm its solidarity with Turkey and allow national defence measures such as the transfer of patriot air defence missiles and anti-chemical and anti-biological warfare units to Turkey.

The 18-nation NATO defence planning committee, of which France is not a member, would agree to send AWACS early warning aircraft to Turkey.

Delhi for action

FROM PAGE 1

India announced last month a drive to deport millions of Bangladeshis it said had entered its territory illegally and could pose a security threat.

The issue bubbled over into a major diplomatic crisis last week when a group of snake charmers was apprehended by Indian border guards in eastern West Bengal state.

New Delhi said the 213 men, women and children held in no man's land between the two countries were Bangladeshis and should be taken back, while Dhaka said they were Indians.

After days of diplomatic tensions, the group left no man's land. India claims they were taken back by Bangladesh, but Khan denied this.

"We have not taken them back. I don't know where they have gone. They have gone back to where ever they came from, but we have not taken

them," he said.

International human rights group Amnesty International yesterday said it was gravely concerned over recent reports about the fate of people whose nationality was disputed along the Indian-Bangladesh border.

Amnesty said these people were subjected to "push-in" and "push-out" attempts by security forces on both sides.

"The organisation considers that such collective expulsions by India and Bangladesh across the border without offering recourse to judicial remedy or appeal to the persons being expelled appear to be arbitrary and to deny them their fundamental human rights," Amnesty said in a statement.

Amnesty asked both governments to refrain from mass expulsions and to ensure that anyone who was expelled was provided with competent legal representation.

It also said detainees should be protected from mob attacks and be given food, shelter and medical facilities.

Last Ariane-4 rocket launched

REUTERS, Kourou

The final mission of Europe's Ariane-4 rocket series placed a telecommunications satellite into orbit yesterday, ending a 116-launch career two weeks after the loss of the space shuttle Columbia.

Yesterday's Ariane-4 flight was to have been a triumphant event, but the destruction of Columbia on February 1 with seven crew and problems with Ariane-5 have cast a shadow over space exploration.

The Ariane-4 rocket deployed the satellite for global operator Intelsat after its launch had been delayed for three days due to bad weather.

Arianespace officials said at the launch site in French Guiana on the northeast coast of South America.

US extends

FROM PAGE 12

The registration was prompted by concern about the lack of records on tourists, students and other foreign visitors after the Sept 11, 2001 hijacked plane attacks.

Temporary male visitors from Pakistan or Saudi Arabia who were in the United States before Oct 1 were given an additional four weeks to register, until March 21.

Temporary male visitors from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan or Kuwait who were in the United States before Oct 1 also got four more weeks to register. Their registration period will last from Feb 24 until April 25, the Justice Department said.

NGO fund stuck

FROM PAGE 1

Minister Khaleda Zia mentioned the names of some NGOs to be brought to book for their involvement in politics.

Since then, different government agencies the NGO Affairs Bureau, the Bureau of Anti-corruption and the National Security Intelligence have been investigating the alleged political links of some NGOs.

But whenever the representatives of the NGOs contacted the authorities, they were told that the investigation was on, and there was nothing to be done at "that stage" as there was no signal from the government high-ups, alleged the NGO executives.

"Whatever they have in hand should be made public," said Aroma Dutt, executive director of the PRIP Trust, denying any involvement in political activities.

Grants worth over Tk 21 crore from the Swiss Development Cooperation, Embassy of the Netherlands and Danida were approved against "Towards a Just Society" project in January. It is the NGO Affairs Bureau, which is delaying the process of releasing the funds.

The biggest chunk of money blocked is Tk 324 crore of Proshika's "Towards a Poverty Free Society" project, running since 1999. It supports some 600 small NGOs to accelerate development and fight illiteracy.

"It is like confinement without trial," President of Proshika Qazi Faruque Ahmed, who is also the chairperson of the NGO apex-body, ADAB, told The Daily Star.

He said the government blocked the money in an unjust way.

"It is donors' money. If they find that the fund raised with their taxpayers' money was not being used, then they could transfer it from Bangladesh to other poor countries."

Funds of over Tk. 14 crore of BNPS projects on promoting responsive governance and gender justice, and Taka seven-crore of the ADAB project of 'Strengthening the Role of NGOs and Civil Societies Towards Sustainable Development' were also blocked.

Morshed Khan

FROM PAGE 12

between the two countries is simply impossible, given the size of Indian economy.

Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal told reporters Friday night that the talks were in the nature of "cleaning the air".

Providing zero tariffs to Bangladeshi goods does not make much sense and the two countries should reach a free trade arrangement, said Sibal.

Rice diseases

FROM PAGE 12

rich treasure of e-learning courses, fact sheets, reference materials, training materials as well as rice biological database and geological information system (GIS) maps.

Dolly's death

FROM PAGE 12

Many cloned offspring die within the first 24 hours of birth from malformed heart, lungs and kidneys. Others, apparently healthy at birth, survive longer but then die suddenly.

And some evidence -- including the circumstances of Dolly's death -- suggests clones may age prematurely because their DNA source is older.

A post-mortem will now be carried out to tell whether the incurable lung disease that Dolly contracted was a result of her being cloned. Sheep can live to 11 or 12 years.

In February 2002, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) backed proposals to outlaw reproductive cloning, saying the process incurred "serious health risks".

Wilmot says that scientists have a long way to go before understanding exactly how genetic mechanisms work.

"The fate of cloned embryos is determined by molecular events within hours of nuclear transfer," he wrote in the British journal Nature last October.

"It is disappointing that so little is known about these events during the early development of cloned embryos."

The method pioneered by Wilmot remains the dominant cloning technique around the world.

It entails removing the nucleus, or core, from an egg and replacing it with DNA from a donor and then fusing the two together with a jolt of electricity.

This imported DNA "reprogrammes" the egg, transferring into it the entire genetic code of the donor.

In theory, all the right genetic machinery is there for the egg to develop normally, yet that machinery can still malfunction in many ways.

Lab experience shows that some genes do not appear to switch on and off as they should at key phases -- a huge problem in the complex ballet of making proteins, the material that comprises virtually all of the human body.

Dinajpur blasts

FROM PAGE 1

in the investigation is unlikely till the condition of Badal improves to allow interrogation or any other resident of the tin-shed house in caught".

A three-member CID team from Dhaka, led by ASP Atiqur Rahman Munshi, and a police team led by Kotwali thana OC Shahid Shakrama are jointly investigating the bomb blasts.

It is suspected that the persons responsible for the incident belong to Za'amatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (ZMB), allegedly an Islamic extremist group.

The organisation has been doing its "underground work" in the region for more than a year now, said a highly placed police official.

A heavy contingent of armed police is still cordoning the house.

In October last, one Hafez Shahidullah of Kamar Kachal area in the town and one Kari Obaidul, an official of Al Falah Alam (universal) Development Organisation, rented a ground floor of a three storied building in Chhoto Gurgola area and opened the madrassah.