



## Saddam's defence minister surrenders

REUTERS, Mosul

Iraq's former Defence Minister Sultan Hashim Ahmed, number 27 on Washington's wanted list of former top officials under Saddam Hussein, has surrendered to US forces, an Iraqi mediator said yesterday.

Dawood Bagistani, a local human rights official who acted as a go-between in talks with Ahmed, told a news conference the ex-minister surrendered at a house in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and was being taken to Baghdad by US forces.

"At eight o'clock this morning, Sultan Hashim Ahmed and his family surrendered to coalition forces," he said.

Bagistani said Ahmed gave himself up after US officials agreed in negotiations that he was innocent of "crimes." There was no immediate US comment.

"We didn't take this step until the US announced that Sultan Hashim was innocent of crimes," Bagistani said. "This is a moral commitment"

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## Krishak League leader murdered in Meherpur

UNB, Meherpur

A Krishak League leader was murdered at Badiapara in Gangni upazila on Thursday night.

Police said armed miscreants entered the house of Ahmed Ali Bhadu, 50, vice-president of the upazila unit of Krishak League, at about 11pm and hacked him to death.

The victim's brother Shahidul Islam filed a case with Gangni Police Station yesterday, accusing nine people.

District Awami League president and former MP Makbul Hossain blamed the ruling party cadres for the killing.

## Nat'l policy for ship-breaking demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan (BAPA) has demanded formulation of a national policy for ship-breaking industry and strict enforcement of it to check environmental pollution caused by the industry in the coastal areas.

The existence of marine life including fishes is also under threat as oil from old vessels at ship breaking yards creates a thick layer on sea water, speakers said at a BAPA rally at Shahbagh in the city yesterday.

They said although ship breaking industry earns around Tk 100 crore a year in foreign exchange, its harmful effects on environment and marine life must be taken into consideration on an urgent basis. The industry also causes noise pollution, they mentioned.

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# Govt harbours criminals, Hasina tells Khulna rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has reiterated that her party is determined to oust the four-party alliance government through a resolute movement.

The BNP-Jamaat unholy alliance has ruined the national economy during its 23-month rule and is harbouring criminals, she said.

Addressing a big public meeting at the Circuit House Maidan here yesterday afternoon, the leader of the opposition in parliament said murders and other crimes are on rise as criminals are sheltered by a 'godmother' and a 'godbrother'.

Hasina asked the prime minister to step down if her government fails to reopen all laid off mills and factories and reinstate thousands of jobless workers and employees.

Armed goons of BNP-Jamaat alliance are now controlling trade and commerce, she said.

Hasina alleged the coalition government is responsible for the killing of at least 24,000 people since it took over. Leaders and activists of her party are being killed in a planned way, particularly in the south-western region of the country. Thousands of women and girls have been raped and repressed and policeman are also being killed, she said.

The former prime minister accused the alliance government of making parliament inactive. It has created a reign of terror, targeting opposition leaders, she said.

The government has not yet taken any legal action concerning arms haul from a fish processing factory in Rupsha upazila, owned by

Khulna City BNP president, she added.

The opposition leader claimed a top leader of the government and family members have amassed over Tk 11,000 crore from different sources through forgery.

She said the government's govt rearing programme and allocation of Tk 1000 crore for this are aimed to cheat poor people in the name poverty alleviation.

The AL chief claimed the five-year rule of her party was a 'golden age' as people lived in peace.

She called upon the people to make the September 25 hartal a success to intensify the anti-government movement.

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a public meeting at the Circuit House Maidan in Khulna yesterday.

## Poverty alleviation 13 working groups by Oct to implement programme

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The planning ministry will form 13 working groups by October to monitor and implement a poverty alleviation plan under the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP).

Each working group will consist of officials of different departments and is likely to include representatives of donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), planning ministry sources said.

To oversee the progress in the programme, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics will calculate gross domestic product every three months instead of doing it annually,

keep track of consumption, savings and investment and send information to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) and Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has agreed to provide a \$490 million loan in seven instalments, with \$70 million given last June in the first tranche to help the government kickstart the three-year poverty alleviation programme. Other international donors at the last Bangladesh Development Forum promised to lend credits in harmony with the programme.

The 13 working groups are rural development, rural infrastructure, education, health and nutrition, family planning, water supplies,

food-assisted programme, housing for the rural shelterless and urban slum dwellers, disaster management, public safety, credit for the poor, real sector statistics and balance of payment statistics.

The last two groups will deal with macroeconomic issues and its proposed tasks may be modified later.

Each working group will monitor and guide the ministries concerned on poverty-related expenditure and programmes, said the sources. A specific plan of action along with targets and schedules will be prepared to that end by October.

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## Extortion 5 cops, 14 pirates arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The navy in a drive against piracy arrested five police personnel and 14 pirates in the Meghna estuary and coastal areas on Thursday.

Sources said the forces on board the BNS Barkat anchored at the Meghna junction near Hatia and formed two groups in disguise of businessmen and fishermen.

One of the groups met a gang, that demanded toll near Khashiar Char. The navy men fired blank shots and arrested eight pirates -- Jhantu Mia, Makbul Hossain, Jasimuddin, Manir, Mohibuddin, Abdul Hannan, Monir Hossain and Nurul Islam. They also arrested five policemen -- ASI Syed Sekandar Ali, constables Syed Kawser Ali, Md Shahidullah, Md Isahaq Ali and MA Rahim -- from the boat.

The forces seized two .303 rifles, 2 shotguns, 45-round rifle bullets, 40-round shotgun ammunition and a walkie-talkie set, all belonging to police and Tk 8,248 collected by extortion.

The other group was also held for extortion by the pirates near Char Gazaria at 8:00am. The navy men arrested six pirates -- Majhir Uddin, Manjur, Sultan, Jafar, Nasu Mia and Siraj and recovered Tk 1,100 seemingly extorted by them.

The arrestees were handed over to Ramgoti Police Station and two separate cases were filed against the policemen with Daulatkhan Police Station and Tajumuddin Police Station under Bhola.

## No progress in steps to bring back Arifa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The return of the abducted Bangladeshi child Arifa has become uncertain due to slow administrative procedure of the West Bengal government.

Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh yesterday sent a letter to the West Bengal government requesting to take necessary steps to that end.

West Bengal authorities are now scrutinising the letter and, if need be, they would take the help of their foreign ministry, said the BBC Bangla Service, quoting the home minister of West Bengal.

Meanwhile, a court in Coochbihar yesterday rejected the bail petition filed by alleged kidnapper Noor Jamal, said the BBC.

The West Bengal government needs to file a petition to the court for Arifa's return with the confirmation of identity of her parents, the BBC added.

Arifa, a child of Kurigram district, was kidnapped by an Indian national, Jamal, on August 25.

She is now under care of a shelter home in Kolkata's Salt Lake area following a Coochbihar court's order, while Jamal is under detention.



PHOTO: STAR

An indigenous Koch family lazes out in the open but is always fearful of eviction because of a controversial acacia tree plantation in Modhupur Forest.

## Forestry project all right, but where will they go?

PINAKI ROY, back from Modhupur

At least 29 indigenous Koch families along with five Bengali Muslim families are allegedly facing eviction from their homes in Modhupur Forest because of a controversial acacia tree plantation programme under the government's social forestry project funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Modhupur forest officials last April reportedly issued an eviction notice to the residents of Kamarchala village of Aronkhola forest ranges where the Koches have lived for at least eight generations. Recently, the indigenous people have been subjected to fresh harassment and human rights abuses by forest guards,

locals say.

"The land was given to our ancestors Umesh Chandra and Mochu Ram Koch by the king of Natore in 1940. We also have documents to prove it but the forest officials have asked us to cut down all our fruit trees that we depend on for our livelihood and pull down our houses," said Nani Mohon Koch of Kamarchala, a retired Naek of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

Kamarchala was named after Lakhai Kamar, a Koch blacksmith. The present Koch families of the village, most of whom are weavers, are the descendants of Lakhai Kamar and other contemporary Koch people. A few Koch families are also subsistence farmers like the Bangalees in the area.

"Thrice they came to cut down our trees. But we did not let them by placing ourselves between their chainsaws and our trees," said Gouribala Koch.

"Where would we go if they plant acacia on our land," said Gouribala who along with her mother Surobala and some other women came to the Dokhla forest range office premises to join a discussion meeting on the Modhupur National Park Development project.

Some villagers of Kamarchala alleged the local forest officer has been threatening to evict them and demanding up to Tk 50,000 for

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## Babri Mosque case Joshi quits cabinet, Advani cleared of charges

PTI, New Delhi

Union Human Resource Development Minister Murlu Manohar Joshi resigned yesterday from the Cabinet.

Joshi sent his resignation to the Prime Minister's Office shortly after a special court in Rae Bareilly announced its decision to frame charges against him and some others in the Babri Masjid demolition case, sources close to the minister said.

Joshi also spoke to Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani and party presi

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Murlu Manohar Joshi

## Jubo Dal leader shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified assailants gunned down a Jubo Dal leader at Mohakhali TB gate yesterday.

Matiur Rahman Mati, 25, was shot in the chest, back and abdomen at about 8:00pm. Fatally injured Matiur was rushed to Chest Diseases Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Sources said he was killed by his rivals over fishing in a lake and establishing supremacy at Sattala slum in the area. Locals said he was also shot at by his rivals in 1997.

Gulshan police confirmed the incident. No case was filed till 10:00pm yesterday.

In another incident, a youth was shot at West Kafrul yesterday at 8:30pm.

Jahangir, 30, was shot by unidentified gunmen in front of a furniture shop. He was rushed to Chest Diseases Hospital.

## DOWN TO EARTH

# Dhaka's nocturnal traffic hazards

ASM NURUNNABI

Apart from the horrendous daytime traffic situation in Dhaka City, the deadweight of this urban affliction also has two nocturnal aspects -- one in the early part of the night and the other from midnight.

The sheer volume of rickshaws plying the city roads presents an extra hazard due to lack of any lights on these vehicles unlike during pre-independence days when rickshaws, with the onset of dusk, used to hang hurricane lanterns from the rear. The traffic police also don't enforce such requirements. This increases the danger of road accidents particularly in areas where streetlights are inadequate or absent, or when the city plunges into darkness due to loadshedding. Also, such rick-

shaws become the choice targets of muggers lying in wait for their victims in dark alleys.

As night progresses, office-goers go home and businesses close. The road then belongs to speedsters -- drivers of commercial vehicles like trucks and night coaches. Dhaka's midnight traffic represents almost an unending flow of such vehicles passing through some of the city's main thoroughfares. A view from the roof of any high-rise building by the road will present a staggering sight of a large number of trucks and other commercial transports racing with each other and sometimes jamming the road. Many of these vehicles are inter-district trucks and night coaches bringing in or taking out goods and passengers to and from the capital. Also, due to the development spree with

high-rise apartment buildings and shopping complexes, we can see an army of trucks carrying building materials and labourers to construction sites that are spread all across the metropolis.

Dhaka's traffic control mechanism is practically non-functional at night as traffic police pack up and leave their stations at around 11:00pm. Thus, the road becomes virtually free for all from around midnight till morning. Dhaka's roads, especially those connecting other districts, resemble more like racing tracks as soon as the traffic police leave their posts. The drivers of heavy vehicles like trucks, buses and pickups race through the same arterial roads

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