

Hasina alleges Jamaat harbouring terrorist groups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that the ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami is harbouring over a dozen fundamentalist 'terrorist' groups in the country.

"These trained armed men have been targeting Awami League and other pro-liberation forces in a bid to eliminate us," Hasina said while addressing a discussion on the Martyred Intellectuals Day as chief guest.

Awami League organised the discussion on 'Genocide of '71 and trial of war criminals' in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the city.

Hasina put the blame on Ziaur Rahman, former president and founder of BNP, for patronising the collaborators of Pakistani occupa-



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and other party leaders place a wreath at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Mirpur on Martyred Intellectuals Day commemorated nationwide yesterday.

Car bomb kills 16 cops, civilian in Iraq

AGENCIES, Khalidiyah, Iraq

A car bomb yesterday ripped through a police station west of Baghdad, killing at least 17 people, in the latest attack on the force central to Washington's plans to hand over power to Iraqis.

US troops on the scene said there a suicide bomber may have been behind the blast. It left a thick cloud of black smoke rising into the sky over the restive village of Khalidiyah, 60 km (35 miles) from the capital, around 8:40am (5:40am British time).

Pools of blood, shattered glass and scattered shoes littered the street. A US officer said 17 were dead and 33 wounded. None were Americans or from allied foreign forces.

An Iraqi police lieutenant however said 16 policemen were among the dead.

US troops and several Bradley armoured vehicles and tanks stood off about 50 metres (yards) from station, with soldiers stepping in to break up a confrontation between Iraqi police and about 200 local demonstrators who chanted "Yes, Yes to

Saddam".

The remains of a twisted car lay outside the two-storey station. A stone wall around the structure appeared to have borne the brunt of the blast which destroyed parts of it.

US Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Swisher told reporters at the scene that there was "some evidence" of a suicide bomber.

A US military spokesman in Baghdad said there were no casualties among US or foreign allied forces.

Ambulances and rescue work-

ers ferried the casualties to a hospital in the town of Ramadi, 110 km (70 miles) west of the capital. The area, dominated by Iraq's Sunni Muslim minority, is a focus of support for ousted president Saddam Hussein.

The bomb was the latest in a string of attacks on Iraqi police and other targets seen as cooperating with the US-led occupation. Scores of Iraqis have been killed.

US-led forces in Iraq have also come under daily attacks since the end of the war that toppled Saddam in April.

Launch security compromised on owners' pressure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday caved in to the pressure of launch owners and back-peddled to the 1993 six-ansar security arrangement for ferries and large vessels from its decision to deploy 14 ansars to each.

Leaders of the launch owners opposed the government decision at an inter-ministerial meeting at the home ministry with Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury in the chair.

"We don't need additional ansars for passenger launches now," said

Indian chopper hovers over Bangladesh sky

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

An Indian chopper yesterday crossed the international boundary and entered two kilometres of Bangladesh through Tebhata border in Sathkira.

The silver chopper, carrying Indian colours, entered Bangladesh at 2:20pm and encircled the area for about 10 minutes, creating panic among the people.

Major Ashraf, second-in-command of the 12-Rifles Battalion, confirmed the report but could not say anything about the chopper's intention. He also told reporters that they are looking into the matter.

| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| December 15 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-15 | 5-50 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 3-45 | 4-00 |
| Maghrib | 5-21 | 5-26 |
| Esha | 7-00 | 7-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

Noakhali char people fear to land in the middle of nowhere

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They survived the torments of ferocious forest gangs in the chars of Noakhali, but the villagers now fear losing the lands they have transformed into their homes when the government leases them out as water-bodies.

The government says its plan is aimed at giving shelter to the landless people, but the locals fear dishonest political leaders and businesspeople, jockeying for empire building, will fix the lease process in their favour.

They allege that political and business bigwigs have already grabbed more than 2,500 acres in the chars illegally and established lucrative shrimp farms there.

They captured the land in collusion with four powerful gangs that virtually carved out their fiefdoms in the remote chars.

"We're definitely subjected to unspeakable torture and repression by the gang operatives, but we cling onto our property tenaciously. Now we're fearful of losing our lands to influential people who will doctor the process to 'legally'

take control of our land," said a locally respected man of south Char Clerk.

Dozens of fish farms have already thrived in the area in a run of freestyle land grab.

"We did not lease out the lands where the fish projects have been established," said Noakhali Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mostafa Kamal Haider recently.

Influential people patronised the robbers to capture the chars

and

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Summit on info society

Organisers under fire for poor show

MUSTAK HOSSAIN, from Geneva

Organisers of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) came under fire from critics for the unimpressive outcome of the summit and sloppy security arrangement.

Media also expressed doubt over the outcome of the WSIS, organised by United Nations, which wound up three-days of lofty speech-making by endorsing a declaration of principles and 29-point plan of action, but dodged the issue of bridging the so-called

digital divide between rich and poor.

More than 170 countries approved an ambitious call to extend the Internet and the benefits of information technology to the poorest countries of the world but avoided detailing measures necessary for achieving it.

The declaration committed itself to using telecommunications technologies, such as the worldwide web and cellular telephones, to boost economic growth and meet the United Nations develop-

ment targets for eradicating extreme hunger and poverty by 2015.

Around 90 percent of the world population is not connected to the Internet, depriving them of a 21st-century resource and widening the gulf of "digital divide" between rich and poor. But richer states, notably Japan and the European Union, which did not send top government officials to Geneva, resisted the call for a "Solidarity Fund" to help

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2 pirates killed in gunfight with cops in Bhola

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least two alleged pirates were killed and three others held following a gunfight with police in Bhola on Saturday.

Forces from Char Fission Police Station and Manpura Police Station also seized a 'pirate trawler' with huge metal weapons, police said.

On a tip-off, two police teams cordoned off a remote area of Meghna estuary in Manpura at about 5:30pm and opened fire at a trawler allegedly used by Joyal Speaker Bahini pirates.

During the hour-long gun battle with police two unidentified pirates were killed. Later police nabbed Kamal Sareng, 35, Akbar Hossain, 32, and Ruhul Amin, 35, and

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Shibir man killed in factional feud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A cadre of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) was gunned down by activists of a rival faction at West Damdamiya in Fatikchhari yesterday.

Fatikchhari police recovered the bullet-riddled body of Abul Hashem, 30, a close associate of top ICS cadre Nasir, from Buraburi Road near Telparoi Khal at around 11:30am. Police found Tk 2,735 and a packet of cigarettes in his pocket but failed to identify the reason behind the killing.

However, locals claimed ICS cadres allegedly belonging to anti-Nasir group shot dead Hashem sometime after midnight.



A BRTC double-decker goes up in flames apparently due to a short circuit in front of Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Tiger kills one in Sundarbans

BSS, Sathkira

A man-eater tiger killed a fisherman's son at Kalkhali forest range in the Sundarbans under Shyamnagar upazila Wednesday.

The victim was identified as Ayub Ali, 16, son of Abdul Hamid Mollah of Kalinchi village in Shyamnagar.

Family sources said Ali was fishing in Mathabhanga canal with others when the tiger attacked them and dragged Ali to the deep forest.

His friends with the help of the forest guards recovered Ali's body from the forest the following morning.

Death threat to CHT Dev Board leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Seven local leaders including Chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) and lawmaker Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan have been threatened with death in anonymous letters allegedly sent by the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF).

The other leaders are Zila Parishad Chairman Nakkhatra Lal Devbarman, members Animesh Chakma Rinku, Anupam Tripura, Mongpru Chowdhury, Chairman of Ramgar Municipality Belaet Hossain Bhuiyan and President of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Welfare Trust Prabin Chandra Chakma.

The UPDF refuted the allegation saying that a vested quarter used its name intentionally.

Signed by the administrative head of the district unit of the UPDF, the obscurely letters accused the leaders of corruption in recruiting teachers to the primary schools under the Zila Parishad.

"The military unit of the UPDF declared death sentences to the leaders, as the administration has not taken any initiative to bring them to justice," the letter said adding that the persons executing

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S Korean president offers to quit over corruption scam

AFP, Seoul

South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun said Sunday he was prepared to quit over a political slush fund scandal that has emerged as the latest threat to his already troubled career.

Roh said that if a probe into last year's illegal election campaign funding revealed his aides had accepted more undeclared cash than his rivals he would resign, according to presidential spokesman Yoon Tai-Young.

"I will step down and quit politics if my camp is found to have improperly accepted funds totaling more than a tenth of the donations the GNP took," he was quoted as saying.

Hit by corruption scandals implicating his associates, Roh has already called for a national referendum on his rule, saying he would resign if he lost the vote.

At talks with political party leaders, Roh expressed "shame" for

the implication of his associates in the slush fund scandal, the spokesman said.

He urged opposition parties to cooperate with the prosecution's probe but said he was ready to

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Accusation against judge

Prime witness alleges threat not to disclose 'truth'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prime witness for the inquiry into the allegations of graft against a judge yesterday alleged that she was threatened by a relative of the accused not to disclose the 'facts' before the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC).

Nasim Sultana Kona, who claimed to have paid Tk 50,000 to High Court Additional Judge Syed Shahidur Rahman for fixing bail in a women repression case, yesterday disclosed this before the SJC.

She was cross-examined by the accused judge at the SJC during in-camera proceedings. Kona further said the relative of the judge threatened to kidnap her child if she disclosed the 'truth'.

She also named a journalist of a pro-government Bangla daily who threatened her several times.

Kona has filed a general diary with Dhanmondi Police Station

about the threats.

Judge Shahidur contested Kona and said she had been parroting what President of Supreme Court Bar Association Rokanuddin Mahmud had told her to say. Rokan first brought the issue to public domain by alleging that Kona had paid the judge money for fixing bail.

The SJC headed by Chief Justice KM Hasan and two senior judges of the Supreme Court -- Ruhul Amin and Fazlul Karim -- yesterday completed the statement of Kona.

The council will sit again on January 6.

During the cross-examination, journalists waiting outside the chief justice's chamber were asked to leave the Supreme Court premises, which made the newsmen agitated.

For the first time in the country's judicial history, the council on

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