

Govt wants to eliminate political opponents: AL

Probe into planting of bomb demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League leaders yesterday demanded an investigation into the planting of a bomb at Kabirhat Bazar in Sudharam, Noakhali, saying that it was aimed at killing the party leader Obaidul Quader.

The bomb was planted on January 12 to kill AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader as he was scheduled to address a gathering there, the leaders said, demanding that the persons responsible be brought to book.

The government is harbouring fundamentalists and bombers with a view to eliminating political opponents and creating a panic among the countrymen, said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil at a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office.

The bomb blasts will not stop unless the BNP-Jamaat alliance government is toppled and a democratic government is established through a free and fair election, he added.

The government is trying to cover up the incident of planting the bomb as its men are involved, the AL leader said, adding that the ruling alliance has created a reign of terror through repeated bomb blasts.

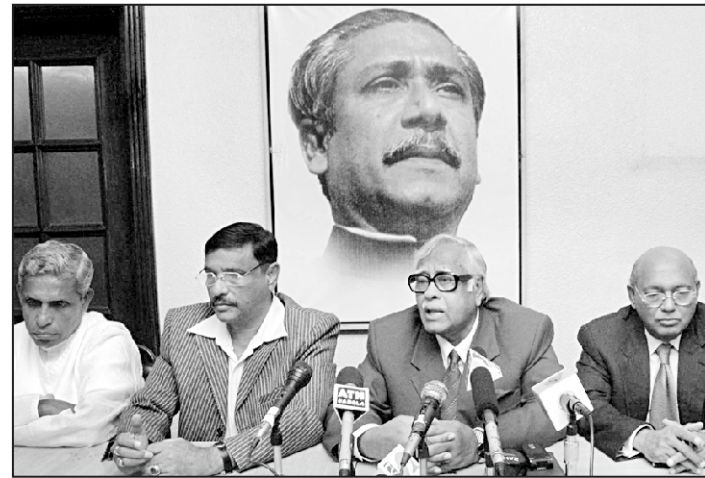
Obaidul Quader said the Noakhali district administration remained indifferent to the incident; they even did not visit the place where the bomb

was found.

"The officer-in-charge (OC) of Sudharam police station even refused to register any case," he said.

Although the police recovered the bomb weighing four kilograms, they claimed that it was not a bomb, just a bomb-like object, he added.

After the press conference, the leaders held a meeting with the presidents and general secretaries of the city's AL thana units and discussed their January 19 programme. The AL leaders and activists will march towards the Election Commission Secretariat on the day.



Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil speaks at a press conference at the Dhanmondi party office in the city yesterday.

18 cargo vessels fined at Ctg port

CU CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) in a drive here yesterday awarded over Tk 2.5 lakh fines to 18 cargo vessels for violating port, inland and merchant shipping ordinance.

The drive was conducted from the main jetty area of the port to Shah Amanat Bridge point.

CPA magistrate Mohammad Munir Chowdhury led the drive in cooperation with the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

The vessels were fined for illegally anchoring on the way of foreign vessels and for over loading and tax evasion, sources said. Some were fined for illegal entry to Chittagong port channel and for risky movement at the channel, sources added.

Channel One begins test transmission today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Channel One, another satellite television channel, will begin its test transmission today.

The authorities of the new channel told a press conference in a city hotel yesterday that

President Iajuddin Ahmed has given his consent to formally launch the channel on January 24.

They said the new channel would try to maintain objectivity while covering political and social issues.

The channel would also be visible in the Middle East, Africa, North and East Australia and the East European countries from the very beginning of the transmission.

The authorities are also trying to make the channel visible in the USA, Canada and the UK, the press conference was told.

Giasuddin Al Mamun is the managing director of Channel One. He is known as the business partner of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's elder son and senior joint secretary general of ruling BNP Tarique Rahman.

Mamun, however, denied any involvement of Tarique Rahman or ruling coalition government with the new channel.

He also ruled out any control over the channel by any quarter including the Hawa Bhaban.

Mamun said the new channel would broadcast news and features without any partisanship. "Forty-four crore people in the country are our main target and we would highlight whatever is good for the people," he said.

Mamun said the new channel would broadcast news and entertainment programmes round the clock. In the beginning it's main news bulletins would be aired in the evening and night, he added.

Chief News Editor Nazmul Ashraf and other high officials of the new channel were present at the conference.

Two more channels are coming very soon.

Teachers' grand rally postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The grand rally of primary teachers scheduled for January 19 has been postponed due to a division among them over holding the rally.

The postponement of the rally shattered the hope of the teachers of non-government primary schools that their long-standing demand for more government grant could be realised through this rally. Expectation was high that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would give an announcement in this regard at the rally.

The rally was postponed as the prime minister will remain busy due to her official engagements and the fresh date of the rally will be announced later, said a press release signed by Md Selim Bhuiyan, chairman of Jatiya Shikshak Samity Oikya Jote, yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Jatiya Shikshak Karmachari Front, another forum

of teachers, said there is no need to hold such a grand rally in order to realise the demands, including 100 percent of basic salary from the government.

At present, the non-government primary teachers are receiving 90 percent of their basic salary from the government.

At a press conference yesterday, the Front leaders said the government can announce the enhancement through official handout, but its move to hold a rally is aimed at achieving political gains ahead of the next general election.

They also demanded that the government announce the 100 percent of basic salary with effect from October 2001 as it was an election pledge of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

Among others, Prof Kazi Faruque Ahmed, chief convener of the Front, spoke at the press conference held at its central office in the city.

Ctg JMB leader gives confessional statement

BDNEWS, Chittagong

The arrested JMB leader Rafiqul Islam, also second in command of Chittagong militant commander Javed Iqbal alias Mohammad, gave statement under 164 to the metropolitan magistrate court yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Maksudur Rahman recorded the one-hour-long deposition of the confessional statement of Rafiqul Islam.

Rafiqul in his four-page confession admitted his involvement in August 17 bomb blast in Feni. He collected bombs from military commander Ataur Rahman Sunny from Dhaka and returned to Chittagong from Feni on August 17 after handing those over to his comrade on the night of August 16.

He met Chittagong divisional commander Mohammad in Chittagong and carried out other JMB operational activities in Chittagong.

Islam said that a madrasha teacher of Ruppaganj in Narayanganj inspired him to join Islamic militant outfit JMB where he undertook three day training on militancy.

Earlier, arrested two top JMB leaders Chittagong militant commander Javed Iqbal alias Mohammad and his second in command Naimuzzaman gave statement under 164 to the metropolitan magistrate court on Friday.

AUG 17 BLASTS IN BOGRA Defence lawyer's absence delays charge framing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A Bogra court yesterday could not frame charge against Abdul Razzak alias Hasan and five others in the August 17 serial bomb blast case as the lawyer of Razzak was not present in the court during the hearing.

Judge KG Mostofa of the Third Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court fixed January 22 for hearing on the bail petition and February 26 for the next hearing of the case.

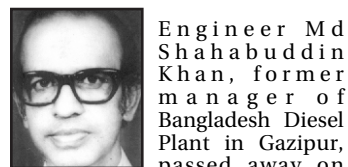
Razzak was produced before the court yesterday while Siddikul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, Shaikh Abdul Rahman, Waliullah of Chapainawabganj, Golam Kibria of Naogaon and Mamunur Rashid of Gaibandha have been absconding since the incident.

According to the prosecution, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) exploded bombs at seven places of Bogra town on August 17 last year.

Later separate cases were filed with different police stations in this connection the same day.

The Investigation Officer (IO) pressed charges against JMB chief Shaikh Abdul Rahman, JMB chief Bangla Bhai and four others on November 9 last year.

Obituary



Engineer Md Shahabuddin Khan, former manager of Bangladesh Diesel Plant in Gazipur, passed away on

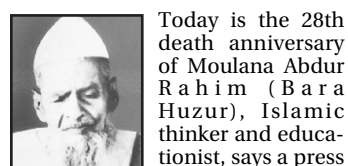
January 14 at the age of 82, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife, three sons and two daughters.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Shimultali in Gazipur.

His qulkhwan will be held at his home at Shimultali after Asr prayers today.

Death anniversary



Today is the 28th death anniversary of Moulana Abdur Rahim (Bara Huzur), Islamic thinker and educationist, says a press release.

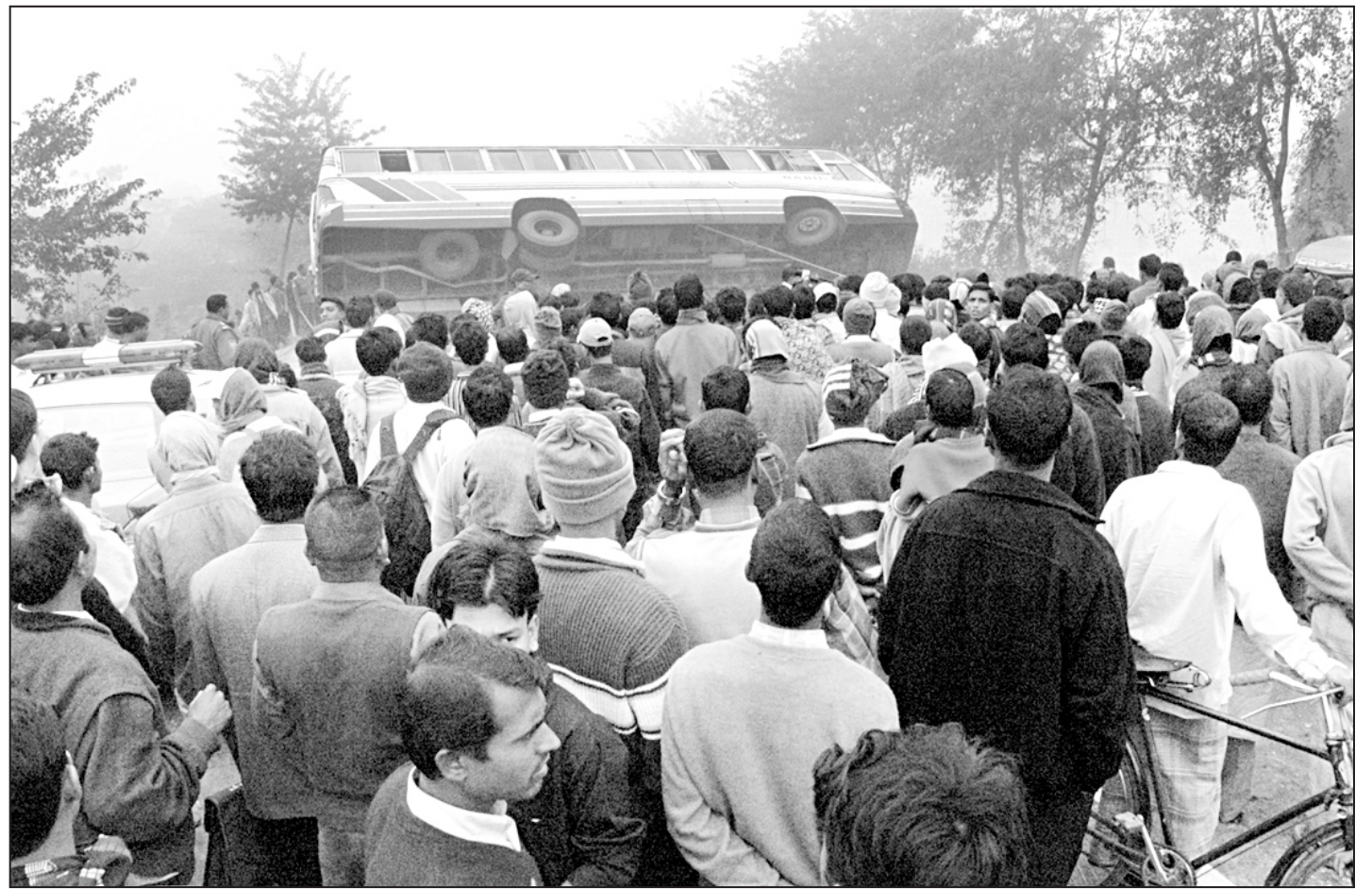
A discussion and doa-mahfil will be held at the house of his son Moulana M Habibullah in Monipurpara in the city in the evening.

Meanwhile, Hazipur Foundation will organise a discussion and doa mahfil on January 21 on Hazipur Senior Madrasa premises, in Daulat Khan, Bhola which was founded by late Moulana Rahim in 1912.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of Begum Momtaz Jasim Uddin, wife of Pallikobi Jasim Uddin and mother-in-law of Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, will be held at the minister's residence at 159 Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan-2 in the city after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the event and pray for the salvation of her departed soul.



Passengers remain stranded for several hours on Dhaka-Tangail highway at Mirzapur yesterday following a collision between a bus and a truck that created a gridlock in the morning. The Tangail-bound bus overturned after it collided with the truck coming from opposite direction amid dense fog.

Security to be tightened on Independence Day

March-past to be telecast through LCD displays

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to telecast the Independence Day march-past at the national parade ground live through LCD displays at various points in the city apart from radio and television.

It also decided to display pictures of significant achievements the country achieved in the last 35 years before the city dwellers on March 26 through mobile trucks.

All the ministries will be directed to organise truck displays on the day.

The decisions were taken at an inter-ministerial meeting on maintaining law and order on the

Independence Day at the secretariat.

Chaired by State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, the meeting formed five committees to hold the Independence Day programmes smoothly.

Emerging from the meeting, Babar told reporters that the government has taken adequate measures to ensure security on the Independence Day.

Asked whether there is any possibility of militants' attack on the day's programmes, the state minister said they do not have any information about such threat.

On increased highway accidents during the Eid holidays, Babar blamed inclement weather for the road mishaps.

He also lauded the role of highway police saying that any incident of robbery or snatching could not take place in passenger buses stranded on the road due to inclement weather prior to Eid.

About the arrest of militant kingpins Abdul Rahman and Bangla Bhai, Babar said the government has taken all-out measures to nab them and they will be arrested finally.

State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Prof Rezaul Karim, Inspector General of Police and Director Generals of Rapid Action Battalion, Bangladesh Rifles, Ansar and VDP, Coastguard and Fire Service and Civil Defence were present at the meeting.

50 injured as launch hits cargo vessel

BDNEWS, Chandpur

At least 50 passengers were injured and one went missing when a launch collided with a cargo vessel in the river Meghna at Haimchar in Chandpur yesterday.

The missing passenger was identified as Abu Taher of Raypur upazila.

Witnesses said the collision between the cargo ship, MV Golden Dream, and the Dhaka-bound passenger launch MV Bogdadia-9 took place in Chairbhanga area.

Passengers alleged that the accident occurred due to inexperience of the launch master.

Mahfuz Ahmed, in-charge of MV Bogdadia, told the news agency that the cargo ship pushed the passenger launch from behind while it was trying to give side to another launch MV Banglar Milon.

Of the injured, Launch Master Kalimullah, 42, Ansar Commander Mostafa Sheikh, 45, mechanic Berek, 30, were admitted to Haimchar Upazila Health Complex in critical condition.

The other injured were admitted to different hospitals and clinics in Chandpur town and Raypur Upazila Health complex.

One trampled to death by wild elephants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A farmer was trampled to death and three others were injured by wild elephants at Kalatali forest near Cox's Bazar town yesterday.

While some farmers were working on a potato farm, a herd of wild elephants surged towards them crushing and killing Mohammad Yusuf, 35, by their feet and injuring Abul Kalam, 55, Farid Alam, 28, and Md Jubair, 38.

Police and sources said local farmers kept off their crop field in fear of the elephants.



LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan signs the condolence book on Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Kuwaiti ambassador's residence in the city yesterday.

KILLING OF LEADER

BCL to continue indefinite strike at CU

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University (CU) unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday vowed to continue its indefinite strike when the university reopens today.

In a fax message, General Secretary Ershad Hossain said they would go for tougher agitation if their demands are not fulfilled within the next seven days.

The demands included punishment to Islami Chhatra Shibir activists involved in the attack on BCL mourning procession on the university campus on December 29.

The procession was brought out to protest the killing of CU BCL Senior Vice-president Ali Murtaza Chowdhury on that day.

BCL enforced the indefinite strike on December 31.

Knitwear factory gutted at Fatullah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nganj

A devastating fire gutted an export-oriented knitwear factory at Fatullah in the district early yesterday.

Witnesses said the fire broke out at the ground floor at about 2:30am when all the workers returned home after their work.

More than a hundred firefighters from the district and the capital took six hours to douse the fire at EEC Bangla Knitwear Factory.

One firefighter Fazal, 40, was injured during the operation.

The origin of the fire that gutted machinery, threads, fabrics and clothes, could not be known immediately.

Firefighters estimated the damage at around Tk 1 crore, but the factory authorities claimed it at Tk 10 crore.

Locals said the factory caught fire four times in last five years.

The BKMEA leaders visited the spot.



Students of the Department of Zoology, Jagannath University, along with their teachers pose for photograph.

JNU students' study tour

The students of Honours Part-3, Department of Zoology (Evening), Jagannath University went on a study tour, says a press release.

The department arranged the tour from January 1 to January 5 as per the content of the syllabus.

Directed by the head of the department Prof Gulrukh Haque and two lecturers Rehena Khatun and Rawshan Ara Begum, a total of 32 students visited Cox's Bazaar, Teknaf, St. Martin's Island and Chhera Dwip.

They studied different kinds of birds and their adaptation, floral and faunal ecosystem, food chain of forests and seashore.

WEATHER TODAY

Moderate fog likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain dry over the country in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderate fog may also occur during late night till morning over the country in this period, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged night temperature.

Country's highest temperature 28.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sandwip and lowest 08.3 degree at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:34pm and rises tomorrow at 6:43am.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.7	12.5	85	65
Chittagong	28.0	14.2	85	82
Rajshahi	24.4	10.6	100	76
Khulna	27.4	12.8	86	74
Barisal	27.4	11.2	94	79
Sylhet	24.7	12.5	81	70
Cox's Bazar	28.2	15.6	69	59



Giasuddin Al Mamun, managing director of Channel One, speaks at a press conference at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday. On his left is Nazmul Ashraf and on his right is Abdul Mannan.