

## Kushtia operation

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enough time to escape as primarily the number of force was inadequate to seal off the entire area, the minister added.

He however repeatedly said the information that top leaders of the banned outfit met in a secret meeting came from 'a very reliable source'.

"We cannot take such information lightly. We immediately started the operation with local force. But that was not enough for searching the entire area."

The minister, now at the helm of the ministry, said it took 'a good time' for additional forces including Rab personnel from Dhaka to reach the area and join the local force. "Five minutes are enough for escaping," he told the reporters.

The operation started in two phases -- at 7:00am on Thursday and at 5:00pm the same day. It was wrapped up at 1:30am yesterday with the arrest of 10 locals in Ailchara, Ballavpur, Katdah, Khajanagar in sadar upazila and Poradaha Bazaar, Dostpara, Koburhat, Chitholia, Khoerchara, Balishasha and Swarupkathi in Mirpur upazila, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

Six of them were released yesterday. Three of the arrestees -- Sajib, 32, Riku, 22, and Biplob, 27, -- were members of local Bangla Cooperative Samity known to locals for its religion-based activities. Local police officials however suspect they are involved in militant activities.

The three along with another man are being interrogated in the custody of law enforcers in a secret place, which local authorities declined disclose.

The government or the law enforcement agencies are yet to make any official disclosure of the arrestees' involvement with the JMB.

Locals said the law enforcers called people, who were asleep, and frisked them and their houses at gunpoint. But the operation ended without any arrest of JMB top brass or seizing any bombs, explosives or firearms.

Locals questioned whether the information from 'reliable source' as claimed repeatedly by Lutfuzzaman Babar and Inspector General of police (IGP) Abdul Quayum was true.

Asked about massive preparation for the operation on the basis of such information, the IGP on Thursday told reporters they have strong trust in the source.

"On the other hand, Rab Director

General Abdul Aziz Sarker however declined to term the operation a failure.

"Although we could not arrest any militant leaders, the operation has a lot of positive aspects. Through this operation, we showed our capacity to act in the quickest possible time on any information," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"After getting the information, we did not delay for verification as we had to respond to it immediately. It is a message for those involved in crimes that we can rush anywhere and conduct massive operations in the shortest possible time."

On failure to arrest any JMB leaders despite 'reliable information' and maintaining strict secrecy, the Rab DG however said the law enforcers are to act on information from various sources and many of the operations do not yield expected results.

He however said there is no possibility of prior leak of information, saying the officers in commanding-level learnt about the operation just before it started.

On wrapping up the operation at 1:30am despite announcement of continuing it until 6:00am yesterday, he said the forces completed their task by that time.

Former IGP Ashraf Huda also said the operation was conducted as the authorities did not think it would waste to waste time for crosschecking the information. "Maybe it was necessary."

**MYSTERY ABOUT A RICE MILL**  
Intelligence report identified Rashid Rice Mill in Poradaha as a JMB den and the law enforcers started the operation there. They did not find the owner of the mill, Abdur Rashid, president of BNP Poradaha Union Parishad unit, there, our Kushtia correspondent adds.

Rashid was confined and interrogated until the operation ended as he went to meet the leader of the joint force.

Police failed to squeeze any information out of Rashid and released him around 1:30am. The police however said he is not involved with any Islamist outfit.

The rice mill is located on 100-acre land and many parts of it are covered with bushes. Two other agro-based farms are also situated there. Locals said anyone may hide in the bushes there.

The joint force also arrested five labourers at Aban Rice Mill owned by Siddiqueur Rahman, chairman of Ailchara UP, who claimed yesterday police released four of them.

## Counter-terrorism

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counter-terrorism bureau will be discussed during Rocca's upcoming visit," said the official who asked not to be named under the briefing rule.

He said the proposed institutional cooperation on counter-terrorism might take place either at the military intelligence level or national security intelligence level between the two countries following the model of US-India and US-Pakistan Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism.

Asked how Washington would extend cooperation to enhance Dhaka's counter-terrorism capability, the official said, "We will discuss the area of cooperation and how the US can help us in terms of financial, expertise or logistic supports."

Rocca will hold discussions with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar, Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin and senior officials of the home ministry on January 26.

"The discussion will focus on modalities of US cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism," the official said. He, however, could not say if Dhaka and Washington would sign any protocol during Rocca's visit.

On the same day, Rocca will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and hand over President Bush's letter to her. There are indications that the US President will appreciate the government's anti-militancy crackdown and give US assurance of support in combating terrorism.

In reply to a question, the official hinted that counter-terrorism cooperation may take place in the form of exchange of intelligence information about terrorists, special training of law enforcers and military personnel, forensic cooperation, technological support for border administration to stop terrorist movement and legal cooperation in halting terrorist financing.

During the previous visit of Rocca in May 2004, the home ministry and the US government had signed a MoU for better management of Bangladesh's border by installing technology at entry points to help screening any potential terrorists entering the country.

US first mooted the proposal for institutional cooperation like joint working group by State Department Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Ambassador J Cifer Black during a meeting with Foreign Minister Morshed Khan in Dhaka on September 5, 2004.

The proposal came on the heels of the grenade attacks on opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's rally at Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004, leaving 22 people, including AL leader Ily Rahman, dead.

In response to Black's proposal, Morshed was learnt to have expressed Bangladesh's willingness to sign a protocol with the US to enhance Dhaka's capability in tackling religious extremists and regional and international terrorists.

The issue was again raised and

discussed when Morshed Khan met US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at State Department in Washington on May 19, 2005.

The official said presently, Dhaka and Washington have close relations and active anti-terrorism programme under which US military is providing training to Bangladesh military and police personnel to combat terrorism.

The United States has got similar cooperation with India and Pakistan in the form of Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. US-India Joint Working Group was set up in January 2000 while US-Pakistan Joint Working Group was established during President Pervez Musharraf's visit to Washington in February 2002.

### 42 killed

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One person apparently survived, although it was not clear if it was a man who was able briefly to call his wife on a mobile phone before the linewent dead.

"There are 42 dead and a sole survivor," said Tibor Dobson, who heads the Hungarian interior ministry's disaster prevention unit, by telephone from the crash site near Telkibanya.

The survivor was rushed in critical condition to a hospital in Kosice, on the Slovakian side of the border.

The death toll was confirmed by Slovakian Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda who said his government would declare a national state of mourning.

He refused to speculate on the cause of the accident but Hungarian Defence Minister Ferenc Juhász told reporters in Budapest it was due to a "navigation error."

He said an investigation was being carried out by Hungarian civil aviation authorities.

On Thursday evening, Michaela Farkasova, the wife of one of the soldiers on board, told the Slovak channel TV3 that her husband contacted her immediately after the crash at around 7:30 pm (1830 GMT).

"He told me that the aircraft had crashed and was on fire and was somewhere in the forest. He told me that he was alive and to alert the rescue services and police. Then the linewent dead," she said.

A source close to the Slovakian military told AFP that "the plane crashed into a mountain" while flying at about 700 metres (2100 feet), before bursting into flames.

The "black box" registering flight details from the Antonov plane had not yet been found, the Hungarian press agency MTI said.

The 43 people on board included seven crew members.

Body parts were scattered around the site, making it difficult to count and identify the head, Dobson said. "We are trying to piece together the bodies of the victims which were scattered over a very large area. It is very grim," he said.

### BTTB charge

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The finance ministry on Thursday approved the BTTB proposal submitted to it on December 22 to increase the call tariff.

According to the proposed call tariff, there will be no difference in charge between peak and off-peak times. On the other hand, an inter-district caller will not have to pay the present nation-wide dialling (NWD) charges.

The BTTB does not have any minute-based revenue-sharing agreement with the private mobile phone operators, but it has one with the state-run operator Teletalk. A process is now on to ink such deals with the private cellphone operators after the BTTB enforces the new tariff regime, sources said.

BTTB officials said users across the world pay more for land phone-to-mobile phone calls than the land phone-to-land phone ones, but the BTTB has not gone for this typical charging so far.

### Ctg AL leader

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Rangunia unit of Awami League, Sadeq was involved in politics since his student life and held different important posts at both local and central levels of Bangladesh Chharta League.

He contested the parliamentary elections on AL ticket in 1996 and 2001 from Rangunia constituency.

The first namaj-e-janaza of Sadeq Chowdhury will be held at the City's Laldighi Maidan at 10:00am today. After the second janaza at Saraf Bhata Eidgah Maidan at Rangunia in the afternoon, the AL leader will be laid to rest at his family graveyard, sources said.

### Murder of boy

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Rintu, Sujon and Ershad from their houses at Bhormohoni.

As per their confession statement, police recovered Niloy's body from the safety tank of Abdul Khalek's latrine in the same village.

Police also arrested Kajoli, who had gone into hiding after the incident.

The demonstrators paraded the main roads in Solonga and held a rally at Kadomtola of Solonga Bazar.

Niloy's father Abdul Halim, mother Ismot Jahan Lipi, ABM Abdus Sattar, Abdul Halim, Hossain Ali, Khandaker Maruf Hasan Khokon, Abdul Gafur, Dulal Ahmed, among others, addressed the rally.

The speakers alleged that police including the officer-in-charge concerned and investigating officer of the case are trying to save the accused for big amount of bribe.

They demanded immediate arrest and punishment of all the culprits.

### 70 more plots

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benefit, sources said.

It developed the allocated land at a cost of Tk 3.5 crore while it will bear other expenses for further infrastructure development and utility services, said a CPA press release.

The CPA started implementing the Tk 737 crore project, involving Tk 435 crore for infrastructure development, on February 14, 2004. The budget for infrastructure development, however, was earlier fixed at Tk 311 crore, which was later raised due to the price hike of rods.

Around seven months are left for completion of the 30-month project with over 50 percent of work yet to be completed, sources said.

### 15 Bangladeshis

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manpower traffickers lured the young men to leave the country with promises of lucrative jobs in Pakistan.

The men set out for Pakistan via India and were sent to jail after being captured by the Indian police for illegal entry into India.

Other imprisoned youths also wrote letters to their families in Panchagarh from Amritsar jail requesting them to take steps for their release. They described their present situation in the jail as inhumane, where inmates of different languages and cultures are languishing.

After receiving the letters, families of the youths contacted the speaker of the parliament of Bangladesh also the elected lawmaker from Panchagarh-1 constituency, Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, urging him to make arrangements for bringing them back.

The families also contacted the first secretary of the Indian high commission in Bangladesh, Neeraj Sinha, who had recently visited Panchagarh for official business. They apprised him of the present condition of the youths. In reply to their request to return the detained youths to Bangladesh, the Indian high commission first secretary told them that the Indian government would take initiative for the return if applications were submitted through proper channel with necessary papers.

But the families alleged that the government of Bangladesh has not yet taken any step in this regard.

## Buyers of cattle

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from them about the buyers of expensive animals.

The information will be compared with their tax files. The NBR will also check whether the lease-holders have paid due taxes for their income from the cattle markets.

The board is also reviewing its latest list of the top 56 taxpayers, which includes individuals, and private and public companies. Surprisingly, this list does not contain a large number of top businessmen and business houses.

Only four leading businessmen of Dhaka are on the list as top individual taxpayers, with the rest coming from outside the capital. The topmost individual taxpayer, who paid Tk 1.03 crore, is a businessman of Chittagong.

Standard Chartered Bank, a foreign bank, has topped the list of taxpaying private companies, paying Tk 97 crore. Islamic Bank Ltd has become the number one taxpayer among the public limited companies, depositing Tk 45 crore.

These top 56 taxpayers will receive VIP treatment from the government.

An NBR source noted, "We must find out why a good number of renowned businessmen of Dhaka is not on this list. We will conduct a special investigation."

"We will also continue monitoring our 56 VIP taxpayers to encourage them and ensure future honesty of the top taxpayers," he added.

The NBR is also setting up a special cell to audit selected tax

## Farm subsidy fails

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Production cost of urea in the BCIC (Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation)-run factories is Tk 6,000 per tonne while the government has to purchase it from Kafco and global market at Tk 18,000 per tonne.

The BCIC has to sell urea at Tk 4,800 per tonne following a government decision to provide farmers with chemical fertilisers at subsidised rate.

This would cause the BCIC to incur a loss of Tk 228 crore from the sale of 19 lakh tonnes of urea it would produce and another Tk 1,188 crore by selling nine lakh tonnes procured at global market price.

This shows a subsidy requirement of Tk 1,416 crore with around Tk 800 crore available for the purpose.

Sources at the agriculture and industries ministries say additional allocation is not made, the BCIC would be unable to import required quantity of urea, posing a threat to agricultural production.

Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nazami had told the press earlier that the deficit of urea would be met by purchasing 3.5 lakh tonnes

cases by reviewing VAT and income tax records. It is going to recruit a chartered accountant as its adviser for the audit cell, which will work directly under the NBR chairman.

"This audit cell and the central intelligence cell (CIC) will work in a coordinated way to check tax evasion and increase direct tax collection," noted a NBR high official.

The CIC launched last year has already helped the NBR improve the tax collection scenario. The cell monitored 100 physicians and found inconsistencies between their actual income and that declared in their tax files. This strict monitoring forced 86 of the 100 physicians to revise their tax files this year.

"For instance, a doctor who previously showed his income at Tk 3 lakh a year later revised it to Tk 38 lakh," the official added.

**SIX-MONTH TAX COLLECTION**  
In July to December, the NBR tax collection marked a 14 percent growth from that of the first half of FY05, which also had achieved a 9.39 percent growth from the corresponding period of FY04.

In July-December, the NBR collected Tk 7,227 crore at import level, registering a 9.4 percent growth. At local level, the collection grew by 19 percent with the amount reaching Tk 4,774 crore. Income tax collection also grew by 19 percent, with the NBR collecting Tk 2,416 crore.

The NBR issued 17 lakh tax identification numbers (TINs), of which only 5 lakh TIN holders pay tax.

from Kafco and importing 5.5 lakh tonnes.

Agriculture ministry sources mentioned that out of the annual requirement of 28 lakh tonnes of urea, 11 lakh tonnes are needed during the peak season (January-March) alone.

BCIC officials however hope there would be no shortage of urea in this peak season as it has got a carryover of over three lakh tonnes, procured three lakh tonnes from Kafco and imported two lakh tonnes. Besides, tender has been floated for import of another 50,000 tonnes.

If funds are not made available, they fear, the post-peak season (April-June) might see a supply shortage of urea.

While the BCIC has to maintain proper supply of urea in the market, its ageing factories are subjected to negligence in periodic maintenance, resulting in disruption of production frequently.

Chittagong Urea Factory Ltd was out of operation for over 40 days last year while Zia Fertiliser Company Ltd has just resumed production after several days of closure due to mechanical faults.

## Asian highway

**FROM PAGE 16**  
action, improper assessment of consequences, weak policy settings and diplomatic relations with neighbouring states seem to have accounted for the government's failure in negotiation on the Asian Highway," Shoab observed in his paper.

A professional associate of Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), Inc. of New York, one of the world's leading transportation engineering firms, he said the government can still discuss with the experts the routes proposed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and reach a consensus to be a part of the Asian Highway network.

It will be hard to bear the burden of the losses resulting from the failure on such a significant issue of national interest, the paper said, adding that the government must set strong policies by forming teams of well qualified policy experts on the issues concerning national interest.

Beside, the transportation engineer urged the ESCAP to

reconsider the option to include Benapole-Teknaf route in the Asian Highway.

Another Washington-based Bangladesh transportation expert Dr Anwar Karim said Bangladesh could still regain it by making an agreement with Myanmar on Teknaf-Myanmar route.

Another important option for the country can be making internal highway system in line with the Asian Highway route so that Bangladesh could link itself to the network at any time. "In that case, if the country fails to connect with the Asian Highway, it can still do business with the neighbouring countries."

The expert said, "The government should go for privatisation if it fails to mobilise resources to that end."

Noted jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said Bangladesh has missed out on many an opportunity as it has in case of the Asian Highway. "Let us work together and utilise the resources we have to free the country from poverty."

JAF president's post as his move to unite the pro-government lawyers had failed.

TH Khan and Aminul, however, said Huda's resignation bears no significance as his election as the JAF president was illegal in the first place.

At Thursday's convention held on the Supreme Court premises, Nazmul Huda said, "We formed the forum in 1991 but failed to strengthen our position due to lack of dynamic leadership."

"We have to strengthen our position before the next election in the Supreme Court Bar Association, which will be held in March," he added.

He also cut a 70-pound cake at the convention to mark the 70th birth anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman.

In October last year, Huda, the erstwhile vice-president of the forum, unilaterally dissolved the central committee before forming a 501-member convening committee headed by himself.

### 2 held

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pairs of battery plate, 2.3 kg grenade pins, eight packets of highly inflammable chemical mixed cotton, seven pat insulating rolls, 18 containers, one kg steel and iron balls, 25 switches with circuit, 203 plastic bodies for switch, 250 indicator bulbs and a set of balance.

The arrestees are Ashraf Islam alias Arshad alias Abbas Khan alias Araf, 22, an Ehsar [full-time activist] and commander of Sherpur upazila JMB, and Abdul Pramanik alias Mansur, 30, also an Ehsar and former commander of Mymensingh and Chittagong district units of JMB.

After a tip-off, a team of Rab-5 raided Charmatha bus terminal area in Bogra town at about 3:30pm Thursday and apprehended Ashraf.

The arrestee told Rab that a huge quantity of bomb-making materials was in the possession of Mannan. Following up the lead, the elite crime busters held Mannan in Shohagipara area in the district at about 4:30pm.

Under interrogation, Mannan admitted that he had the materials buried in North Shahpara area under Sherpur upazila. The Rab members raided the area at about 6:30pm and recovered some of the materials, digging up near a tube-well. The other explosives were found in a drum buried beside a boundary wall in the same area.

A Rab source said the seized materials are so big in quantity that they could be made into a huge number of bombs.

Ashraf, son of Moulana Abdullah Khan Salafi of Sukhdhan village under Nilphamari district, is said to have joined the militant outfit in 2003 and became an Ehsar by the end of the year, the Rab press release said. The following year he was made the commander of Sherpur JMB.

While being grilled by the law enforcers, Ashraf said JMB ranks Sherpur as a district-level zone within its organisation, considering the extent of its organisational capability in the upazila, Rab claimed. Ashraf also took part in JMB operations with its then military commander Bangla Bhai at Baghmara in 2004.

Mannan, son of Nazmul Haq of Shohagi, used to study with JMB Majlis-e-Shura member Abdul Awal at Mohammadia Arabia Madrasa in the capital's Jatrabari area. He joined JMB in 2000 and soon became an Ehsar. The same year he graduated from being an Ehsar to taking the charge of Mymensingh district unit and the next year he was tasked with overseeing the militant activities in Chittagong.

He returned to his home district in 2003 and since then he had been using his locality as the base for running militant campaign in the region, the Rab press release read.

### US still sees

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Shyam Saran following an agreement signed between the two countries last July during a visit by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Washington.

Under the terms of the accord, India must separate civilian and military nuclear programs in exchange for advanced civilian nuclear technology. It would place its civilian nuclear reactors under International Atomic Energy Agency inspection.

Washington would ask the US Congress to amend laws to allow India access to technology normally reserved for nations that have signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The deal also commits Washington to persuade countries in the 44-member Nuclear Suppliers Group to lift restrictions on India in the civilian nuclear technology trade.

Saran last month gave Washington a plan to separate India's civilian and military nuclear facilities, an Indian official said.

Some US lawmakers have questioned the wisdom of providing atomic fuel and technology to a nuclear weapons power like India that has refused to sign the NPT.

They also see India's response to Iran's suspected efforts to build nuclear weapons as key to the closure of the deal.

### Koirala

**FROM PAGE 16**  
with rifles and machine-guns sat on temple steps or took shelter from the sun under ornate pagodas.

More than 100 politicians and student activists were also detained on Thursday and mobile phoned links cut.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he was dismayed by the arrests, while the United States, the European Union, Japan and neighbour India joined in the criticism.

At Koirala's house, armed police prevented a Reuters team from entering, or meeting the former prime minister, who is spearheading a multi-party alliance against King Gyanendra. Guards said phone lines to the house had been cut.

"This is an extreme form of dictatorship by the king," Koirala's Nepali Congress party said in a statement.

## US demands

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meeting would be guided by the agency's own assessment of Iran's behaviour, while China reiterated its preference for diplomacy.

China and Russia, permanent council members with veto powers like the United States, France and Britain, have trade interests in Iran and are wary of any full-scale embargo.

"What Russia and China are concerned about is a shadow cast over Iran and their commercial stakes if this case goes to the council," a Vienna-based EU diplomat said.

Iran's Ahmadinejad has scorned a referral resolution drafted by the EU negotiators. The Islamic republic has taken a defiant stand, aware of its muscle as the world's fourth biggest oil exporter in a volatile market.

Iran's nuclear negotiator said his country would discuss the West's concerns, but not to scrap nuclear-fuel research, which could advance a quest for atomic power or bombs -- or both.

### Horrifying tales

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Organisation for Migration in Geneva, which later contacted the Bangladesh government.

"We are grateful to them and urge all Bangladeshis not to get trapped like us," said Ariful who thinks there is a big international network of the racketeers with secret branches in every country of the world.

"Whichever airport we went, the immigration officials would look at us and smile mildly. Some police in Morocco and Mali may also be involved in the business," Ariful said.

When contacted, a Zia International Airport Immigration Police official said they could not do anything unless the returnees file cases.

## 6000 Rohingya

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them who completed primary education in the camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) flee the camps and go to Ukhta or Teknaf for madrasa education.

"They panhandle to earn money and study in madrasas," said Kamal from the Nayapara camp. An official of the UNHCR said about 200 such students might be studying in madrasas outside the camps.

"We have no peace here or in our own country. Many Rohingyas who had been repatriated, came back again and told us that the Myanmar government had harassed them," said a 16-year old boy preferring anonymity.