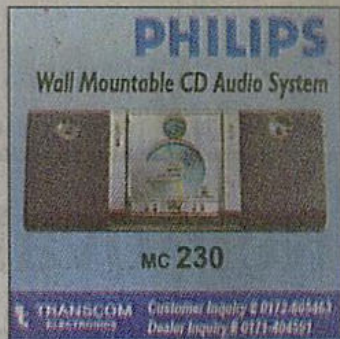




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## CAPTURE OF MILITANTS A party calls it 'drama' to divert public attention: PM

UNB, Noakhali

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said a political party is calling the capture of top terrorists a 'drama' in a bid to divert public attention from external conspiracy behind the recent bomb terrorism.

Addressing a public meeting at Mujib Government College ground at Companiganj yesterday, she said bomb terrorism was a vile outcome of domestic and foreign conspiracies.

"The opposition is calling the capture of two top terrorists a drama to divert public attention since foreign links with the recent bombings will come to light from the statements of the arrested terrorists," she said.

The prime minister said it was the demand of all people of

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## WAR ON TERROR US to work closely with Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States will work closely with Bangladesh government on fighting the war against terrorism, said US State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack at a daily press briefing in Washington on Tuesday.

Replying to a question on arrest of 'Bangla Bhai', he said, "We believe this is an important step forward in Bangladesh's response to the recent bombing campaign and that we encourage Bangladesh to continue to address the threat of extremism. We'll work closely with the Bangladesh government on fighting the war against terrorism."

Asked about more US assistance in counter-intelligence measures in Bangladesh, McCormack said, "We have a good partner in Bangladesh in fighting the war against terrorism and we look forward to working together to address the common threat of terrorism that we all face."

## ROUTING TERROR FINANCE

# Top US agency men join fight

### BB, cops clueless about militants' funding sources

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Two visiting US Treasury Department intelligence experts are assisting Bangladesh in detecting and routing sources and channels of funds to the Islamist militants.

US Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) Senior Research Analyst Mary Jo Melancon and Senior Intelligence Research Specialist Kristen J King, who arrived here last week, have already sat with Bangladesh Bank (BB)

officials on Monday and Tuesday.

Today they will illustrate and orient a select group of police, judicial, customs and central bank officials to how FinCEN operates to safeguard the US financial system from abuses and crimes like terrorist financing and money laundering, BB sources said.

The Washington-Dhaka high-level cooperation to clip the wings of the Islamist terrorists comes concurrently with the recent captures of the top two JMB masterminds and the government's inability so far to unearth the sources and ways

of their funds.

While Melancon and King were discussing strategies with BB officials to detect and prevent terror financing on Tuesday, the foreign minister was briefing the foreign envoys on the situation following the arrests of JMB supremo Abdur Rahman and his second-in-command Bangla Bhai.

After the two-hour lunch briefing, US Charge d'Affaires Judith Chammas said, "If requested, I'm sure we'll be able to provide assistance," in the investigation into

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## ROK seeks Saarc observer status

UNB, Dhaka

South Korea desires to become an observer of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), which has now been expanded with Afghanistan co-opted as its new member and China and Japan as observers.

Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bangladesh Seong Ung formally handed over the request letter to Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at his office yesterday.

The foreign minister noted with satisfaction that a number of countries have expressed their interest to be associated with the Saarc, especially following the signing of the Safta agreement.

"Dhaka will advise the Saarc Secretariat to process the request made by South Korea," the foreign minister said.

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# JS body grills Akbar for jacked-up ship price

### It calls the 43pc price increase 'mysterious and dubious'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday criticised the shipping minister for a "mysterious" increase in price for building an ocean-going ship and misuse of funds for the construction of a new container terminal in Chittagong.

The parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry termed the 43 percent price increase compared to the price on the first project proposal "mysterious and dubious". It asked Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain why the price for the construction of an ocean-going ship was increased in the third tender to Tk 130 crore from the earlier Tk 91

crore. Forty-three percent price increase in a single tender is "mysterious" and "not acceptable", Golam Mohammad Siraj, committee chairman and a ruling BNP lawmaker, told journalists after the meeting. "The shipping minister could not give satisfactory answers," he said.

The shipping minister and senior officials of the ministry showed different causes, including devaluation of the taka and quality in the work, but the parliamentary body rejected the clarification. It decided to sit again on March 23 to discuss the issue and asked the shipping ministry to submit relevant documents at that meeting.

The committee members said the shipping minister changed the project proposal twice by increasing the construction cost as well as changing the date for tender dropping on April 10 this year. They also accused the minister of ignoring the decisions of the committee of which he himself is a member.

On consent of the shipping minister, the committee on May 4 and November 10 last year decided that any decision regarding purchase or construction of a new ship will be taken after discussion at the committee.

"But the committee was informed nothing about the process of construction of a new ship,"

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## Cops set to hunt for 2 top JMB militants

### Investigators verifying clues from Rahman, other arrestees

STAR REPORT

Investigators are working out an operation plan to arrest the two fleeing Majlish-e-Shura members of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Salahuddin and Khaled Saifullah.

The investigators are scrutinising the information squeezed out of JMB chief Abdur Rahman, Shura members Ataur Rahman Sunny, Abdul Awal, Hafez Mahmud and Bangla Bhai's wife Fahima Khatun for clues to trap them.

Sources said Rahman has given the investigators detailed information about the JMB network, funding, connections in and outside the country and bank accounts and transactions.

But they declined to disclose the

information "for the sake of investigation".

JMB second-in-command Bangla Bhai, who is undergoing treatment at Bangladesh Rifles hospital for burns and bomb injuries he suffered during his capture, meantime, is recovering.

Hospital sources said his bomb injuries will be cured in seven to 10 days but he would take some more time to recover from burns.

Interrogators will start quizzing him only after he recovers totally, said sources, adding, no high official of Rab or BDR visited him until yesterday noon.

His wife Fahima told the investigators Bangla Bhai went to Mymensingh after the August 17 countrywide blasts and was staying

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## Australia offers tech help to track down militants

UNB, Dhaka

Australia yesterday offered training and technological assistance, including highly developed software, to enhance the intelligence skills in Bangladesh in tracking down the funding of terrorists.

Australian Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Amanda Vanstone made the offer during a meeting with State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar at his ministry.

"It is important that there are whole range of ways to fight against terrorism and one important way is to track the money of the terrorists," Vanstone told reporters after a meeting with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at his office.

Replying to a question, she said: "One way we can attack the enemy is to attack their financial sources."

Referring to her meeting with Babar, she said: "We told the home

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As electricity is off, staff at the city's Segunbagicha High School centre work in candlelight yesterday to paste slips with roll numbers of candidates to sit for the SSC examinations beginning today.

## SSC, Dakhil examinations begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Dakhil and SSC Vocational examinations begin today under the country's nine education boards.

The SSC examinees will appear in English First Paper examination on the first day.

A total of 7,89,669 examinees -- 4,18,930 male and 3,70,739 female -- will appear in the SSC examinations at 1,856 centres under the seven education boards.

The number of Dakhil examinees under the Madrasa Education Board is 1,62,735, of which 93,803 are male and 68,932 are female students.

Besides, 48,160 examinees will appear in the SSC Vocational examinations under Technical Education Board.

As many as 2,03,030 SSC examinees will appear from

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## BANGLA BHAI'S REIGN OF TERROR

# Cops to hear muffled victims' voices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police stations in the areas where Bangla Bhai and his men established a reign of terror have now received orders from the headquarters to pursue victims' families and tortured people, who did not file cases earlier fearing a backlash.

All concerned police stations in Rajshahi, Naogaon, Bogra and Natore yesterday received the order after the arrests of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman and second-in-command Bangla Bhai.

"We now have no sympathy for

the militant linchpins as we have already gathered enough documents and evidence of their atrocities," a Rajshahi police official told The Daily Star showing a copy of the order.

"We're inviting everyone to come forward and file complaints, if they have any, without fear," said the police official asking not to be named.

"We have completed investigations into several cases and are ready to press charges against Bangla Bhai. Once we get the green signal from the higher authorities,

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## Gruesome torture tales

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

It was May 19, 2004 in Naogaon. Bangla Bhai-led Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) abducted Idris Ali Khejur, Abdul Qayyum Badshah and Bashir at Simba in Raninagar and Ala at Sharia in Atrai to avenge the murders of two militants by outlaws.

Members of the militant outfit announced in loudhailers in the night that they would slaughter the four in public the next day.

Journalists informed the matter to the then Naogaon superintendent of police, Fazlur Rahman, who brushed aside the information.

As a 'show of respect' to the villagers, who pleaded against the

slaughter, the JMJB men beat up Khejur and Badshah to death. The cries of the victims were amplified by loudhailers to terrorise the neighbourhood.

Badshah was found hanging upside down in a roadside tree at Bamogram in Nandigram, Bogra on May 20. Police dub out Khejur's body, sliced into four pieces, from near Bhiti camp on May 28.

Khejur's family said he was innocent and demanded proper investigation into the killing.

The family of Badsha also claimed that Badsha was not an outlaw as police and JMJB men branded him before killing him.

His brother Muhammad Musa

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## FENI GAS FIELD

# Niko resumes gas supply after threat

SHARIEF KHAN

Following a threat of legal action, Canadian oil company Niko Resources yesterday resumed gas supply from Feni gas field, stopped on February 26 as unusual pressure tactics.

The Canadian company, which struck a joint venture deal with Bapex in violation of several rules and is responsible for two blowouts at Tengatita gas field, stopped gas supply from the Feni field demanding immediate settlement of gas price and payment for gas sales.

As the stoppage affected overall gas supply situation, energy minis-

try adviser Mahmudur Rahman on Tuesday asked Niko to resume supply from the Feni field within 24 hours or face legal notice for takeover of the gas field by Bapex.

Niko's action violated its joint venture agreement (JVA) with Bapex, which contained its premise to develop the previously-abandoned gas fields of Feni, Kamta and Chhatak west and an unexplored field in Chhatak east.

Niko had previously turned down a government gas price offer of \$1.75 per thousand cubic feet (mcf) and demanded \$2.35 for Feni gas that started flowing to the

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## Dhaka fares poorly in HR record

### State Department report for 2005 says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US State Department in a report released yesterday said Bangladesh fares poorly in human rights record and the government continues to commit numerous serious abuses.

The abuses include extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest, politically motivated violence and killings, impunity for security forces and violence against and restrictions on journalists, among other things.

The State Department's Human Rights Report 2005 said security forces committed numerous extrajudicial killings. The police,

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) used unwarranted lethal force.

"There was an increased number of killings by security personnel. Nearly all abuses went uninvestigated and unpunished," the report said. "The resulting climate of impunity remained a serious obstacle to ending abuse and killings. In the few instances where charges were levied, punishment of those found guilty was predominantly administrative."

About deaths in the hands of law enforcement agencies, it said the deaths, all under unusual circumstances, occurred while an accused

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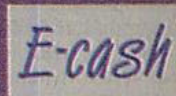
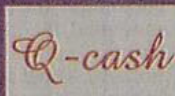
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