

## Kuwait-based NGO

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withdrawn for official purpose, the cheques did not bear any seals of the NGO, said the sources.

Abu Moaz was ousted from Iraq for his alleged lies with international extremist outfit Ikhwanul Muslimin, they added.

NGO bureau sources said they are knowledgeable about one RIHS account with Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited's Uttara branch that was suspended on requests from the central bank and intelligence agencies.

In the second week of March, Tk 1 lakh in cash and other valuables were stolen from the Kidney Dialysis Centre in Banani in Dhaka. Interestingly, the authorities did not file a complaint with the concerned police station.

The RIHS has received huge amounts of money through hundi since the arrest of Ahle Hadith Andolan, Bangladesh (Ahab) chief Asadullah Al Galib in February 2005 as the government stopped releasing its funds.

In November, the RIHS managed to release a sum of about Tk 2 crore days before the suicide attacks on courts by outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The fund was distributed among 'contractors', mostly followers of Galib and his deputy Abdus Samad Salafi (now behind bars) on bearer cheques instead of account payee ones.

Galib and Rahman established their relations with the RIHS following recommendations by Indian militant kingpin Abdul Matin Salafi, who was expelled from the country in 1988.

Meanwhile, visits to Bangladesh by RIHS top officials before or after several major incidents related to Islamist militancy are widely believed to have much significance.

RIHS Asia regional chief Kuwaiti citizen Abu Khaled Falah al Mutairee came to Bangladesh on March 6 after JMB chief Abdur Rahman was trapped in Sylhet on March 2.

Despite tight vigilance,

Mutairee met three Ahab men -- Maolana Akhter Madani of Naogona and two other unidentified people -- at a Gulshan hotel in Dhaka on March 7.

Akhter, a teacher of RIHS-run Nashipur Islamic Centre in Bogra, studied in Pakistan and at Madina University in Saudi Arabia on Galib's recommendations.

RIHS Bangladesh chief Abdul Aziz Mal-ullah, a Kuwaiti citizen, who seldom visits Bangladesh, landed in Dhaka three days before the August 17 serial blasts and stayed in the country until August 21.

Tarek Sami al Isa, RIHS central chairman, visited Bangladesh during November 13-15 and a JMB suicide bomber assassinated two judges on the second day of his tour.

Sources believe the top RIHS officials' visits were made through diplomatic channels and they had good opportunities to leave cash money behind.

The top suspected Bangladeshi national in RIHS, Akramuzzaman Bin Abdus Salam, was present during the Ahab annual conference in Nawdapara in Rajshahi on February 16-17.

Sources said the RIHS funded Ahab for holding the two-day conference where all attendants were brought in at the Islamist outfit's cost.

Before the August 17 blasts and early in the last year, four foreign nationals -- two Pakistanis, one Saudi and one unidentified man -- watched militants' performances at a remote char of Sariakandi in Bogra.

A source who witnessed the training told The Daily Star JMB chief Rahman asked him to go there following Galib's diktat.

He said the arms, which were stolen from police during the Moheshpur fight in Joypurhat in 2003, were used in the training.

JMB chief Rahman also told the media in 2004 that he got funds from the RIHS while investigators have found evidence that the NGO is funding Ahab, which has support for the banned outfit.

## AL to force BNP accept reforms thru' talks, agitation

**BNEWS, Dhaka**

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP said they would force the government to accept the reforms in caretaker government and election commission systems through united movement alongside dialogue.

He was speaking at the preparatory meeting of the 14-party opposition combine at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium on today's demonstration programme and secretariat siege programme on March 30.

He said the army was used in the parochial party interest in the past and the conspiracy to use it for the same purpose is still on.

Jalil said it should be ensured that the president act at the advise of the caretaker government since there is a chance that he might manipulate the administration in the interest of a particular party.

He reiterated the vow to resist the election as what he said the chief election commissioner (CEC) had prepared the electoral roll disregarding the verdict of the court.

Jalil urged all pro-liberation forces to be united and take part in the on-going democratic movement to overthrow the autocratic regime.

Leaders of AL, 11-party, JSD and NAP spoke at the meeting chaired by Samyabadi Dal leader Harun Chowdhury.

## 9-yr low rainfall

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to Met office.

In January, there was no rain in the country while normal rainfall for the month is 308 ml. In December last, the shortfall of rain was 137 ml as it rained only 191 ml against the usual 328 ml.

The estimate is based on rainfall statistics of the last 35 years.

The Met office however said the situation is not very unusual and confirmed that it is not an effect of EL-NINO that causes a drought-like situation.

Samarendra Karmakar, deputy director of Met office, said rain occurs during this period when easterly and westerly low-pressure conjunction occurs. But there has been a lack of those phenomena in the weather this time.

"The westerly low is blowing by the far northern side of the country's latitude. We don't see any strong westerly now. But the situation might change at any moment," he said.

An agro-metrologist of Met office pointed out that thanks to irrigation-based farming, the shortage of rainfall might not create any problem in paddy production.

Samarendra said, "Paddy production now depends on irrigation. So, it would not be affected. But production of mango and lichee would be hampered."

Meanwhile, amid the shortfall of rain and load shedding of power, rising temperature is affecting life.

Met office yesterday recorded 41 degrees Celsius in Jessore, the highest temperature this season.

The sub tropical pressure in the Bay of Bengal is high this year, resulting in less rainfall, weather officials said.

"It is not very unusual at this time," said Sujit Dev Barman, assistant director of Met office. The situation might change in April and May, he added.

A shortfall of rain as this time occurred in 1997, weather officials mentioned.

In 1979, a severe drought occurred in the country, badly hampering paddy production. Then in 1992 and 1994, drought-like situation prevailed in the country but it did not affect paddy production as the pattern of farming changed by that time.

## Rahman

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The court gave the order when district Detective Branch (DB) of police, responsible for the investigation of the cases, appeared before it to submit additional charge sheet on the serial blasts at Chandpur District Judge Court on August 17 and October 3, court sources said.

Eight more witnesses were added in the additional charge sheet. Most of them had seen Abdur Rahman themselves at a JMB den at Torpurchondi village sadar upazila, sources said.

## 6 killed

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the road around 12:45pm.

The six died on the spot. The injured were admitted to Mohammad Ali Hospital. The condition of Saiful Islam, 20, and Rony was stated to be critical.

An angry mob set fire to the bus and barricaded the Bogra-Rangpur Highway disrupting communications for two hours. They also hurled bricks at the policemen who tried to bring the situation under control.

## Farming gets hardly

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against the power crisis across the country. They laid siege to the house of a local lawmaker in Chapainawabganj and put up barricades on a road in Jessore demanding uninterrupted supply.

While the Rural Electrification Board (REB) report placed at the meeting shows a dismal picture of power supply situation, the Power Division in its report claimed that electricity is being supplied adequately and uninterrupted.

The Power Division report says the northern region is getting at least 65 to 80 percent of power required in the peak hours for irrigation.

"Hours of electricity was 992.14 MW against the demand of 1,941 MW on March 26 in the peak hours," says the REB report on its coverage areas.

The situation is worse in the northern region where the supply is less than one-third of the demand.

"Supply of electricity was 49.40 MW against the demand of 167 MW on March 26 in the peak hours in Rangpur region," the report says. In this region, the REB has provided electricity connections to 37,838 shallow and deep tube-wells.

The areas under Nilphamari Palli Bidyut Samity (PBS) got supply of 2.20 MW against the demand of 14.53 MW while Thakurgaon PBS got 7.50 MW against the demand of 29.96 MW, says the REB report.

In Rajshahi region, REB supplied 116.10 MW against the demand of 307.36 MW. In this region, the REB has provided electricity connections to 39,625 irrigation pumps.

The electricity supply in Khulna region on March 26 was 80.78 MW against the demand of 240.44 MW to run 27,346 pumps.

However, the situation is a bit better in REB's Dhaka region where REB supplied 417.15 MW against the demand of 566.54 MW to oper-

ate 16,857 electricity-run pumps.

In Mymensingh region where 32,604 irrigation pumps are in operation, the supply was 76.40 MW against the demand of 184 MW.

Sources said committee member and ruling BNP lawmaker Nazimuddin Alam at the meeting blasted the Power Division for the power crisis. "SSC examinees' preparation is also being hampered due to electricity crisis," he said.

Officials of the Power Division however informed the parliamentary body that they are supplying more electricity to the rural areas to run irrigation pumps. For this, they have reduced the supply of power to the urban areas, they claimed.

The Power Division also assured the committee that the power crisis will ease by this month as generation will increase to 3,500 MW. The present generation is between 3,000 and 3,200 MW against the demand of 3,900 to 4,000 MW.

While discussing the slow progress in implementing different power projects the committee members blamed the donor agencies. "Implementation of power projects is being delayed due to various conditions of the donors," committee member and BNP lawmaker Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul told reporters.

Another lawmaker of BNP wishing anonymity said he had witnessed chaos at an Independence Day programme in his constituency on Sunday when the party activists protested their leaders' claim that the power situation is now better than in the past.

## Rupali Bank

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from March 13 to 25 to find prospective buyers for the bank. Commission Chairman Enam Ahmed Chowdhury led delegations at the road shows.

The delegations presented the government plan for sale of the bank mentioning a time-frame and its financial state till 2005, commission sources said.

At the road shows, the delegations also described in detail government commitments regarding recapitalisation of the bank, employment of expatriates, waiver on restrictions of foreign ownership and branch rationalisation.

Around 20 buyers showed interest in buying the bank. They include Alliance Bank, Malaysia, Melewar Group Berhad, Malaysia, United Bank Ltd of Pakistan, India's ICICI Bank, Sabre Capital Ltd and State Bank of India, Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia, Muscat Finance Limited of Oman and JJ Finance, UK/Bangladesh.

The delegations informed the potential buyers that the government is working out the privatisation process to complete it by September through signing sale

and purchase agreement.

The prospective buyers will have to collect tender documents in between April 30 and May 4 by depositing \$ 2,000 that is non-refundable.

As per the privatisation timetable, the buyers will have to submit tender proposals with a deposit of \$100,000 by July 6.

The Privatisation Commission will announce the chosen bidder on August 31, sources said.

The government commitments regarding divestment also mentioned that it will waive existing restrictions on the number of expatriate management staff. About branch rationalisation, it says majority shareholder (buyer) will have management control over all aspects of the bank's operations, including human resource policies and pay scales. The government will not impose any restrictions on those.

The bank's pension liabilities would rest on the government with the latter taking full responsibility of paying off the pensioners' dues from its own funds.

## Owner gets bail

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The court also rejected the petition seeking remand of Deen by the investigation officer (IO) for interrogation.

Families of each of the dead will get Tk 3 lakh each while those who were seriously injured will get Tk 2 lakh each. Besides, the victims who suffered minor injuries will get Tk 50,000 from the deposited money, court sources said.

The February 25 building collapse left 22 dead and 48 seriously injured.

As per direction of the High Court (HC), Deen Mohammad and five others along with their lawyers appeared before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court around 3:30pm and prayed for bail.

Five others are Deen's son Mohammad Shoib, one of his (Deen's) partners MA Majid, Managing Director of Phoenix Medical Centre Dr Jahangir Alam, Executive Director of Phoenix Fabrics Ltd MA Hassan and its Manager Sirajul Islam.

Moving the bail petition, Barrister Omar Sadat told the court that his client Deen was shocked at the loss of so many of his workers' lives. Moreover, his client had earlier given the victims and victims' families through financial assistance for treatment. So he prayed for bail for all the accused, the lawyer said.

Court Inspector Abdul Aziz Khan opposed the bail petition saying Deen could not show the documents of the ownership of the building to the IO of the case.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Suzayet Ullah granted them bail upon a bond of Tk 50,000 with two guarantors even though the HC directed the CMM to hear the matter of granting bail.

Earlier on March 12, Deen appeared before the High Court (HC) for an anticipatory bail, but the court denied his prayer and directed him to appear before the CMM court within two weeks.

The CMM will settle the amount

## SC Bar demands

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(independence award) to Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

They said the extra-judicial killings are clear violation of human rights.

"Bangladesh has been criticised due to the incidents of extra-judicial killings. Executive investigations into the incidents are merely unreal, immoral, unjust and expression of no-confidence in the constitution, existing laws and the judiciary," the statement said.

The SCBA leaders said killings in the custody of the law enforcement agencies, including the Rab, in the name of "encounter" and "crossfire" without handing over the arrested persons to courts are the same offence the militants are committing taking position against the constitution, existing laws and the judicial system.

Their targets are same and identical, they said.

They also said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government has been using the Rab for political purposes.

## HC asks govt

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her husband Advocate Atiur Rahman on charges of toll collection and theft.

The High Court granted anticipatory bail to Shanta and Atiur Rahman in the cases.

Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury and Barrister Tania Amir moved for the petitioner.

## Sunny

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The other accused are Sunny's friend Fariduzzaman Swapan, JMB regional commander of Gazipur Enayet Ullah alias Jewel, Kamrul alias Sunon alias Zahidul and Alamgir alias Bijoy.

Sumon and Alamgir are absconding while the others are now in custody.

Rab dropped the names of Monir and Abul Khair, landlords of Sunny, from the charge sheet, as evidence of their involvement with JMB was inconclusive.

Sunny, younger brother of Abdur Rahman and also a member of JMB's top tier Majlish-e-Shura, masterminded the August 17 blasts across the country. He was arrested at the Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute on December 13 last year.

Following his information, Rab seized 56 items of arms, ammunition, explosives, bomb-making materials, and books on jihad from the house of Abul Khair at South Manda in the city's Sabujbagh area.

## 3 customs men

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made the investigation officer (IO).

After his transfer, SI Mainuddin was made the IO. Night guard Oliur Rahman gave a confessional statement before the magistrate court under Section 164 stating the complicity of three customs officials in the incident.

The statement gave the investigation a new turn and the IO filed his final report to the court on March 17 this year.

The report said the mobile phone sets had been taken away from the godown and sold in the market by three officers of the department.

Accordingly, SI Mainuddin filed a fresh case of misappropriation under Section 409 and Section 114 with the Kotwali Police Station on March 25 night accusing the three customs officials.

## Kamal blasts

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and the patrons of the militants can remain beyond the law.

He called upon the patriotic and honest people to get united for a massive movement against the evil forces to save the country. "We will protect our national sovereignty the way we had liberated the country from the clutches of the Pakistani occupation forces," Dr Kamal added.

BDB President Badruddoza Chowdhury said, "The martyrs sacrificed their lives not only for a flag and a map, but they dreamt of a repression- and poverty-free country, which could not be realised yet due to failure of the leadership and politics."

The people would mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) kingpins Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai as staged dramas of the coalition government, if it does not bring the patrons of the militants including the ministers and MPs of the government to justice, Badruddoza, also former president of the country, added.

Chairman of Bangladesh Tarikat Federation (BTF) Nazibul Bashar Maizbandari vowed to resist Jamaat-e-Islami's coming to power again. "If Jamaat comes to power again, they would destroy all the shrines of the country."

BDB Secretary General Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan, BTF Secretary General Zakir Hossain, BDB Vice President Dr Mozaffar Ahmed, Dr Nurul Alam Beprari, Convenor of Bangladesh Gonatantrik Jatiya Party Shafiul Alam Pradhan, Shah Mohammad Badal, Advocate Sabera Begum, ATM Kamal, Nasir Uddin Sarker and Advocate Abdur Rouf also spoke at the meeting.

## 40 killed in attack

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nearby Sadr City, reported 17 dead and five wounded in an incident that risks further inflaming tensions in Iraq.

The US military admitted that members of the US special forces were present in an advisory capacity and said that "no mosques were entered or damaged during this operation."

The statement added that the meeting house was the headquarters of an insurgent cell linked to attacks on coalition and Iraqi forces as well as kidnapping Iraqi civilians.

Large numbers of weapons were found, including dozens of assault rifles, rocket propelled grenades and launchers, two heavy machine guns and material to make explosives.

A dental technician with the Ministry of Health who had been taken hostage the day before was also rescued. He had been tortured for the last 12 hours, reported the US military.

Hazam al-Aaraji, a high ranking official in radical Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr's movement, flatly denied the US version of events.

"This is a lie, we saw unarmed worshippers and we didn't find any Iraqi weapons. This place was just for praying and worshipping and it included different groups of Shias, including not just Mehdi Army but Dawa Party as well."

Aside from during full scale battlefield conflict like the re-taking of Fallujah in November 2004, US forces have a strict policy of not entering or attacking mosques. Iraqi forces are brought in if such a building needs to be investigated.

On Monday morning, the bodies were moved from the hospital and placed in coffins before being loaded into pickup trucks for the journey to the cemetery in the holy city of Najaf where Shias prefer to be buried.

The incident comes at a particularly tense time with a rising tide of corpses from sectarian killings and the US putting increasing pressure on Iraq's political factions to form a long awaited national unity government.

Since the dynamiting of a revered

Shia shrine in Samarra on February 22, corpses showing signs of torture have been discovered on a regular basis in Baghdad and surrounding provinces, victims of tit-for-tat sectarian killings.

On Monday, police discovered nine more corpses dumped in an empty lot used to sell used cars. The bodies had all been killed by strangulation.

Police found 30 more victims of the sectarian slaughter ravaging Iraq most of them beheaded dumped on a village road north of Baghdad on Sunday.

Separately, 12 more bodies were found near Baghdad nine handcuffed and blindfolded, with rope around their necks and three shot in the head, police said Monday.

Most of the dead appeared to be victims the shadowy Sunni-Shia score-settling that has torn at the fabric of Iraq since Feb. 22 when a Shia shrine was blown apart in Samarra, north of Baghdad.

In violence around Baghdad two bombs killed a total of three people.

At the end of meetings Sunday, Iraq's political factions were still deadlocked over the issues of forming a new government. Talks resumed Monday.

Izzat al-Duri, the number two in Iraq's Revolution Command Council in Saddam Hussein's fallen regime and is its highest ranking official urged Arab leaders at the ongoing Khartoum summit to consider the Iraqi resistance as the Iraqis' "legitimate representative", the Qatar-based Jazeera satellite news channel said.

"Your upcoming conference should take a courageous, frank and clear decision to recognise the valiant nationalist Iraqi resistance as the sole legitimate representative of Iraq's people," said a taped voice attributed to Duri. (AFP, AP)

## Hamas ready

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funding unless his incoming administration executes a sea-change in its hardline platform.

"Our government will spare no effort to reach a just peace in the region, putting an end to the occupation and restoring our rights," Haniya told MPs.

"We have never been supporters of war, terrorism or bloodletting. Instead it is the Israeli occupation that waged all forms of terrorism against our people in chasing them out of their homeland, besieging it and starving it."

Israel has refused to have any dealings with the incoming administration and has already imposed a series of sanctions including travel restrictions, which forced Haniya to deliver the speech to the Ramallah-based parliament via video-link from its Gaza City branch.

Haniya was heavily critical of acting Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert's plan to unilaterally fix the Jewish state's final borders, saying it would "turn our country into isolated cantons", while also demanding an end to the Israeli occupation and dismantling of its West Bank barrier.

But while holding off any suggestion of negotiating with Israel, Haniya welcomed the prospect of continued international involvement in the peace process, in particular from the so-called Middle East quartet.

"Our government will be prepared to hold dialogue with the international quartet about the ways to end the conflict and install calm in the region," said Haniya.

The quartet -- the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States -- is the sponsor of the roadmap peace plan which aims for the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.

The blueprint, which has made next to no progress since its launch three years ago, was rejected by Hamas, which refuses to acknowledge Israel's right to exist.

Both the United States and European Union have threatened to

slash funding to the Palestinian Authority unless Hamas recognises Israel, commits itself to non-violence and respects past international agreements.

Despite the Palestinian Authority's reliance on foreign aid, Haniya said that there would be no caving in to outside pressure.

"The Palestinian people should not be punished for exercising their right to choose their leaders in free and democratic elections," Haniya said.

"Those who think that economic pressure is going to make our government collapse or undermine the determination of our people is very much mistaken."

Washington has already asked the Palestinian Authority to return a multi-million dollar loan in the aftermath of Hamas's landslide election victory on January 25, but Haniya said it was the United States rather than Hamas needed to change its policy.

"We believe it is necessary for the United States to revise its policy with regard to the Palestinian people and to prove fair and responsible, and stop supporting the occupation and its policy of double standards so that peace, stability and prosperity can be established in the region," he said.

Given Hamas's majority, the vote on the list of 24 ministers, which has been pieced together by Haniya should be a formality, although the formerly dominant Fatah faction will vote against it. The list will get the final seal of approval from Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas on Wednesday.

## Thaksin's frantic offer

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Saturday to demand that Thaksin resign.

Political analyst Thitinan Pongudhirak said Thaksin needed to make such gestures to make the elections appear legitimate despite the boycott.

"Without the opposition, the elections lack legitimacy," he said.

"If they don't accept the offer, Thaksin can say 'Look, I'm trying to reach out to you for the country but you are not cooperating'," Thitinan said.