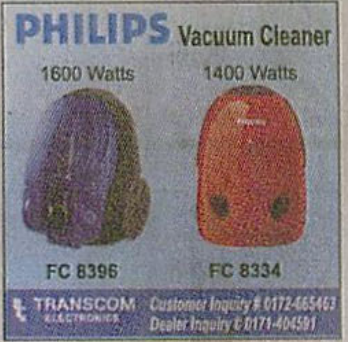




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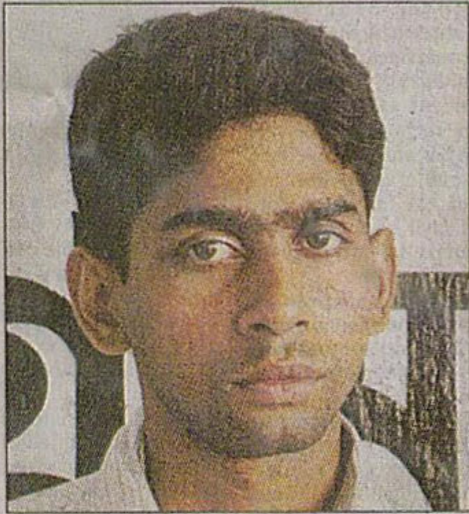
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Last two JMB Shura men captured

Saifullah held in capital, Salahuddin in Chittagong



Khaled Saifullah



Salahuddin

STAR REPORT

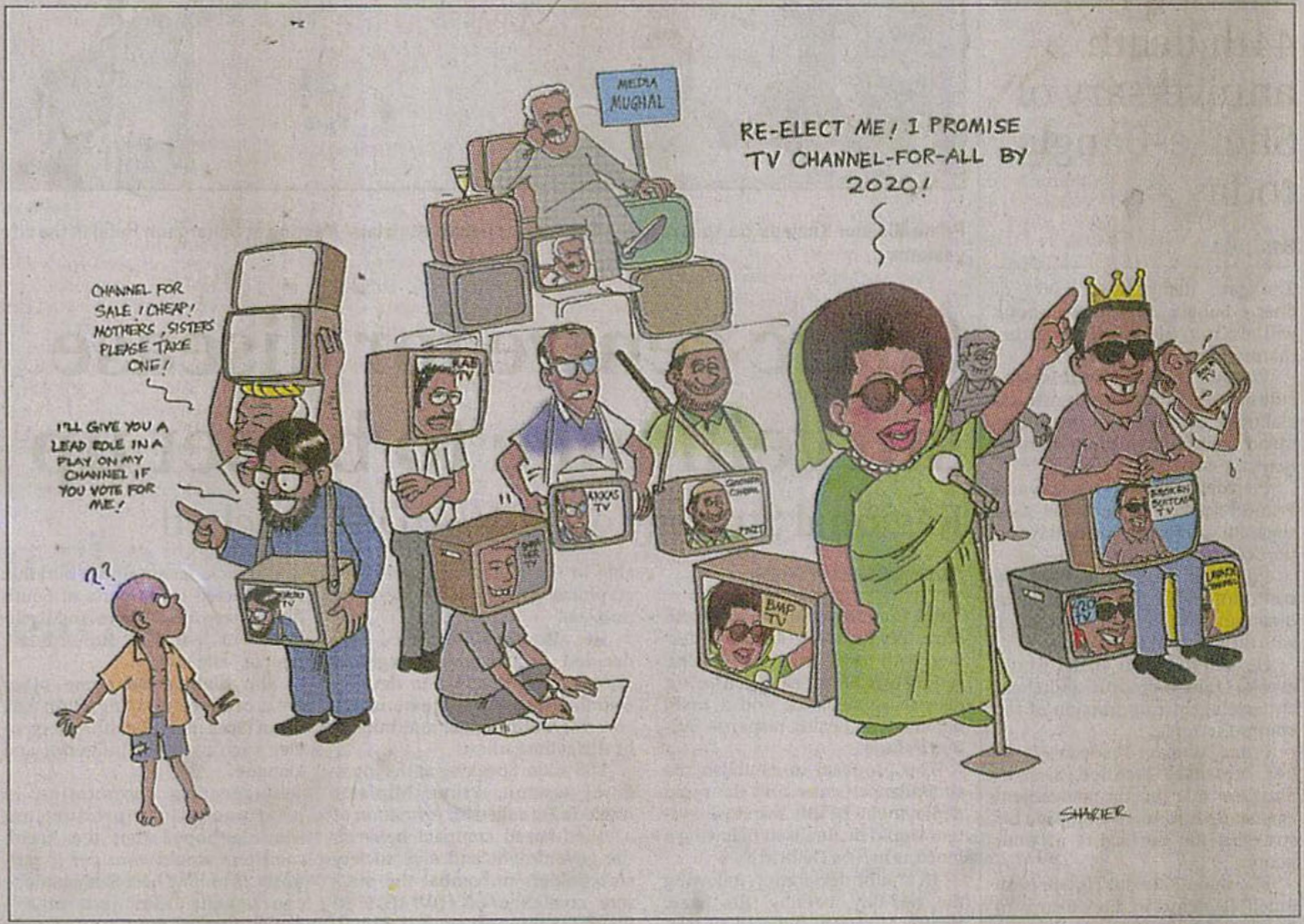
The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) captured Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Majlis-e-Shura members Salahuddin and Khaled Saifullah in separate operations at Pahartoli in Chittagong and Demra in Dhaka Tuesday evening and yesterday morning.

Before capturing Salahuddin, the Rab also arrested JMB Chittagong divisional commander Mizanur Rahman Shaon at a den where the Chittagong leaders of the banned militant outfit were scheduled to meet at a policymaking meeting, sources said.

Salahuddin alias Salehin, who was tasked with supervising JMB activities in Sylhet-Mymensingh region, was planning to initiate another round of militant attacks and had Tk 40,000 with him to distribute among his men for arranging the attacks, according to Rab.

Rab officials said they began operation in Noakhali and Chittagong five days ago and

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Butenis praises anti-terror measures

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis appreciated Bangladesh government's remarkable success in various fields, particularly in curbing bomb terrorism, and said the two countries are working together in different areas of common interest.

The newly appointed envoy made the remarks when she made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

As the envoy mentioned the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States as very close, the prime minister said Bangladesh wants to further "deepen the relations and work together in all areas of cooperation, including development and curbing terrorism, for the welfare of the two peoples".

Thanking the US government for its cooperation in various sectors, Khaleda hoped for increased

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

PRE-BUDGET DIALOGUE MPs oppose oil price hike apprehending ballot backlash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty lawmakers serving on parliamentary standing committees yesterday strongly opposed any price hike of petroleum products, especially diesel and kerosene, saying in that case they would not be able to face the voters in the upcoming general elections.

In a pre-budget discussion with Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman, they insisted on discussing the plan of fuel price hike in parliament, before taking any decision.

Except an Awami League MP and one of Jatiya Party (Ershad), the rest of the lawmakers present at the meeting in National Economic

Council auditorium belong to the ruling 4-party coalition.

Then, how will the government bear the huge loss it incurs by subsidising oil prices, Saifur asked the chairmen and members of parliamentary bodies in response to their objection.

The prime minister will decide whether the issue will be discussed in the House or not, Saifur told reporters after the meeting. "There can be discussion in parliament, but that won't be of any great use anyway," he remarked.

Saifur said he has already consulted with economists and lawmakers, and he is going to sit with others as well, about raising oil

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

How and when they were held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the arrests of Salahuddin and Khaled Saifullah in Chittagong and Dhaka Tuesday evening and yesterday, all the seven members of Majlis-e-Shura, top decision-making body of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) are now captured.

The law enforcers carried out a countrywide crackdown to arrest the top JMB leaders in an effort to cripple the banned outfit in the wake of growing panic due to repeated bomb attacks by the militants since August 17, 2005.

The law enforcers' first significant success came on November 18 last year when the police arrested Abdul Awal Sarker alias Adil alias Ashiq alias Arafat, a Shura member also son-in-law of JMB chief Abdur Rahman, from Thakurgaon old bus station. He was responsible for greater Rajshahi region.

As suicide bombers of JMB were continuing to carry out bomb

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Poll boycott will be dangerous

Cautions EU envoy, says 150 observers will be sent

UNB, Dhaka

Ambassador Stefan Frowein, head of EU delegation in Bangladesh, has disclosed that the European Union will send over 150 observers for monitoring polls in the country and suggested creating "right condition" for all parties participation in the upcoming elections.

The Ambassador cautioned that boycott of polls this time around would be perilous for Bangladesh and called for finding a quick solution to differences over electoral reforms through dialogue.

"Boycott is very dangerous--it may lead to other problems...if you don't participate, you take a risk of a situation that will be difficult to

control," he said during an exclusive interview with the UNB.

Frowein called for quickening the process of proposed government-opposition dialogue to reach consensus on electoral reforms for free, fair and transparent elections where people could freely cast their votes for a new government or for the incumbent.

The European diplomat observed that dialogue initiative "moves very slowly" while "time is running out" fast for the politicians to set the house in order before entering the run-up to the polls.

Political parties have only a few months in hand to resolve the problems before the caretaker

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Ignorance is not always bliss

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz has triggered fresh controversy due to his ignorance about the inherent powers of the Election Commission (EC) and preparation of voter list.

On the other hand, by blaming a certain 'vested quarters' and the media for 'undermining' democratic practices and 'destroying' true reflection of people's aspirations, the CEC has finally lined up with some senior ministers and echoed the government line.

Justice Aziz in his speech on Tuesday at a luncheon meeting organised by American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh also termed the EC's task of publishing

the election results a routine work and likened it (EC's task) with the functions of a 'post box'.

Assuming office on May 23 last year, Justice Aziz created enormous controversies centring the preparation of a fresh voter list by making contradictory remarks and showing his stubborn attitude in this regard. And he keeps on sparking controversies that also greatly tarnished the image of the EC.

Now, his recent remarks have virtually ignored the inherent powers of the EC concerning the election results and gave a partial information about the registration of voters in the electoral roll.

Is it true that the EC does not have any powers regarding the

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