

## Most JP lawmakers

**FROM PAGE 1** whatever decision Ershad might have to take, added the sources.

JP Deputy Leader in Parliament TIM Fazle Rabbi and two other lawmakers objected to JP teaming up with the ruling alliance as they said they believe the BNP-Jamaat will surely get a drubbing in the next election for their 'misrule, corruption and price hike of essentials'.

They said why JP should share the blame for the failures of the present government.

The party should not join any alliance now to keep intact its chance to bargain with the ones who will win the next election, they observed.

At the meeting, senior leader Tajul Islam MP and some other members called for disciplinary action against GM Quader for his "anti-party activities".

In reply, Ershad said he will not tolerate anyone opposing him, no matter who he is, sources said.

### ERSHAD-NAZIUR MEET

Nazir Rahman Manzur went to President Park, JP chairman's Baridhara residence, at around 1:00pm and stayed there for an hour.

## E Ahamed

**FROM PAGE 1** Ahamed however said, "We look forward to working with whichever government the people of Bangladesh decide to elect."

He said the people in India attack the highest importance to India-Bangladesh relations. "This sentiment is shared by all, cutting across party lines."

On terrorism, Ahamed said it poses the greatest danger to the peaceful and stable existence of nation-states in today's world. It is the open and democratic societies that are most vulnerable to the threat posed by extremism and terrorism.

He said the recent blasts in Mumbai and Srinagar have once again shown the kind of destruction such elements can cause and the extent to which these elements can go to impose their views and beliefs.

"We believe Bangladesh should and can set an example to others. It is in our mutual interest to cooperate and work to curb the rise of fundamentalist and extremist beliefs," he noted.

On disputes over various outstanding issues, he said as neighbours it is natural that differences will arise but these can be resolved only through dialogue and understanding.

"Once we are committed to meaningfully working together we can hope to work for resolution of complex issues," he said.

Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Bharat Maitri Samiti, Justice KM Sobhan, president of Bangladesh Bharat Sampriti Parishad, Maj Gen (Retd) KM Shafiqullah, convener of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Kalyan Foundation and Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri were, among others, present.

## Voter list

**FROM PAGE 16** Abdur Rashid Sarkar told reporters at this office.

The EC Secretariat on July 17 proposed allocation of Tk 40.86 crore for updating the voter list.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman initially refused to allocate fresh funds for the job. He later asked the EC to submit accounts of the previous expenditure of Tk 43 crore for preparing a controversial fresh voter list. The EC submitted the accounts.

The minister then said he would allocate funds.

The process of voter list updating began on July 1 with the job being done at the offices concerned. And finally, door to door visits for doing the job started on July 21. But the staffs temporarily recruited for the task are reluctant to do this from the very beginning due to uncertainty over their remuneration.

## Third ODI today

**FROM PAGE 1** The visitors however suffered a big blow before the match as captain Habibul Bashar has been ruled out for the rest of the matches of the Africa tour due to a fracture on his left fifth metacarpal.

Wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud will lead the team in the rest of the matches in Zimbabwe and for the three-match series in Kenya.

Bangladesh think-tank named almost an unchanged eleven for the third match yesterday with batsman Rajin Saleh coming in for the injured Bashar. This will be Saleh's first game in the series.

The Tigers had a two and a half hour's practice session yesterday and there was compulsory fielding for all the members in between the nets session and afterwards, as the visitors are yet to find their rhythm in this department.

Zimbabwe, meanwhile, are expected to bring in Terrence Duffin, the immediate past captain, in place of opener Justice Chibhabha who has not been anywhere near the form he had shown in the West Indies.

**TEAM** Khaled Mashud (Captain), Javed Omar, Shahriar Nafees Ahmed, Afab Ahmed, Mohammad Ashrafur, Rajin Saleh, Farhad Reza, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak and Shahadat Hossain.

Senior leaders of BJP accompanied him while leaders of JP including Raushan Ershad, Kazi Firoj Rashid, and ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader were present at the meeting.

The meeting sources said Nazir suggested that Ershad ensure all the cases filed against him are disposed of and seal the seat sharing before joining the ruling alliance. He also warned him about ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami.

However, a party insider said that Nazir met Ershad following a direction from the BNP high command to counteract Jamaat's opposition to the plan for JP coming into the ruling alliance fold.

"I have heard that you are going to join us. I welcome your decision because it will ensure our victory in the next election," a meeting source quoted Nazir as saying to Ershad.

"The four-party alliance will have the edge over others if JP joins us, and I hope you will keep staying with the alliance," he said.

In reply, Ershad said he has not finalised the decision yet. "I am very happy to see you here," he told Nazir and said, "I have placed some conditions to the government and we will continue discussion on those."

Later Ershad and Nazir had an exclusive meeting.

Dismissing the possibility of re-organising Jatuya Party, Nazir Rahman told reporters that they will not get back to JP. "We have only discussed his move to ally with the ruling coalition, and I think it will be a good decision if he joins hands with us."

Ruhul Amin Hawlader, secretary general of JP, told The Daily Star that it was just a courtesy call where the BJP chairman has welcomed Ershad on his possible return to the four-party alliance.

## Contempt rule

**FROM PAGE 16** and lawyers to the Supreme Court on June 11.

The HC in an unprecedented ruling on May 23, 2005 banned agitation on the premises of the Supreme Court or of any other court, and boycott of courts.

The eleven lawyers facing the contempt rule are – former Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Abdul Baset Mojumdar, Ozair Farooq, Mahbubey Alam, SCBA Secretary AM Amin Uddin, its former secretary Enayetur Rahim, Bashir Ahmed, SCBA Vice-president Abdul Mannan Khan, KM Saifuddin, Khondkar Mahbub Hossain, Subrata Chowdhury and Nurul Islam Sujon.

A division bench of the HC asked the eleven lawyers to submit their reply to the rule within three weeks.

Counsel for the petitioner advocate Abu Bakar Siddique said the HC on May 23, 2005 issued a suo moto ruling prohibiting gathering, congregation, picketing and laying siege to the entrance to any court. It also slapped a ban on boycotting or abstaining from attending any court on the basis of any decision of any bar association or Bangladesh Bar Council.

He said the eleven lawyers brought out processions, held rallies, obstructed judges' and lawyers' entry to the SC and boycotted the court, violating the HC's last year's suo moto order.

The Supreme Court became almost paralysed on June 11 as anti-government lawyers, angered by the HC's June 10 ban on 14-party opposition coalition's Dhaka-siege programme, boycotted the court under the banner of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), and carried out sit-in demonstrations at all court gates.

The agitators obstructed judges' and lawyers' entry to the court including the chief justice and the attorney general.

Advocate Shagor who filed the contempt petition also was the petitioner against the opposition's Dhaka-siege programme and advocate Abu Bakar Siddique moved for that petition too.

AL presidium members at a meeting prepared the programmes for July 30.

Jalil said they have discussed the latest political scenario at the meeting and the next course of anti-government agitation programmes to force the government accept the reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC).

He said they would announce their decisions today after a 14-party meeting at AL's central office at 4:00pm.

However, meeting sources said they also decided to start road march at different districts after August 15 where the ruling BNP is influential and hold a grand rally in the capital in the first week of the next month.

Jalil said they are at the peak of their anti-government movement. "We will announce fresh anti-government agitations which will involve thousands of people and will force the coalition government to accept electoral reforms," Jalil said without disclosing the programmes.

Chaired by AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzak, the meeting was also attended by Toftail Ahmed, Obaidul Quader, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Mainuddin Khan Badal, Hazi Abdus Samad, Nurul Islam, Pankaj Bhattacharyya.

## 2 killed in 'crossfire'

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Two criminals were killed in 'crossfire' during shootouts between their accomplices and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) men in Khulna and Sirajganj yesterday.

According to a Rab press release, Shafulqul Islam, 45, had two cases filed against him with a Khulna metropolitan police station and he was arrested at his home in Nirala residential area of Khulna city on Monday morning.

Following his confessional statement, Rab claimed they took him to Pabla Kanakpara Bridge area at Daulatpur in Khulna around 1:55am to arrest his accomplices and retrieve hidden arms. When Rab men along with Shafulqul reached the area Shafulqul's cohorts opened fire on them forcing Rab to retaliate.

During the exchange of fire Shafulqul tried to escape Rab custody but he was caught in the line of fire. He died on the spot. Two Rab men also sustained bullet injuries during the encounter.

Rab recovered two pipe guns and three shotgun shells which were abandoned by Shafulqul's cohorts as they fled.

Rab claimed in the press release that slain Shafulqul was a close aide to Asaduzzaman Litu who is the principal accused in the Daikin Janakantha journalist Shamsur Rahman murder case. He was also killed in 'crossfire' in Khulna city in October last year.

Meanwhile, another criminal was killed in 'crossfire' between Rab and his accomplices at Maliker Morh in Kamarkhanda upazila of Sirajganj early yesterday, a correspondent in Sirajganj reports.

Yakub Ali, 40, of Bagbari in Kamarkhanda upazila was accused in several criminal cases including nine murder cases and two rape cases filed with different police stations. A court had sentenced him to prison for 10 years but he was absconding.

Following information a Rab team raided Kandapura Bazar of Sadar upazila and arrested him along with his cohort Azam Ali, 35, on Monday noon.

Following Yakub's confessional statement, Rab members took him to Maliker Morh area to recover firearms and arrest his other accomplices around 2:30am.

When they reached the spot, Yakub's accomplices opened fire on Rab men in a bid to snatch him from the Rab custody.

Rab retaliated and during the gun battle, Yakub received bullet injuries and died on the spot.

Two Rab men were also injured during the encounter. Rab recovered a pistol and two bullets from the spot. The gang members however managed to escape.

The current chair of the SAARC Council of Ministers and Bangladesh Foreign Minister, M Morshed Khan, Indian State Minister for External Affairs E Ahamed and Saarc Secretary General Lympo Chenkyab Dorjee also spoke at the inaugural session.

## Richard Boucher

**FROM PAGE 16** Washington recently.

Boucher said the US also likes to find new avenues for economic prosperity of Bangladesh and effective fight against terrorism and keeping it from taking root in their own country.

Eithad Airways and Qatar Charity donated Tk 3250 to each returnee while the expatriates' welfare ministry donated Tk 500 on their arrival at IOM.

Neither IOM nor the expatriates' ministry sources could confirm if any other Bangladeshis in Lebanon registered to return home.

## 14-party

**FROM PAGE 1** opposition combine.

Jalil, also general secretary of the AL, said they would jointly hold a discussion on Bangabandhu on August 14 and observe grenade-attack-day on August 21. Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina came under grenade attack on August 21 in 2004, which left 24 AL leaders and workers dead.

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## Opposition coalition

**FROM PAGE 16**

the leader of the opposition in parliament, instructed senior opposition leaders to find out all possible expressions of democratic movements, which might involve larger participation to create pressure on the BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government to accept their proposed electoral reforms.

A team of senior AL leaders has been working to chalk out the next course of opposition action programmes at the very end of the four-party alliance regime. After finalising the anti-government agitation by the AL leaders with a view to involving larger peoples' participation, Hasina will sit with senior 14-party leaders within the first week of the next month to finalise the strategy for the final round of the movement before the alliance government hands over power to the caretaker government.

Workers Party General Secretary Bimal Biswas said, "People are the motive force of all movements and we are planning to mobi-

lise a huge number of people through our ongoing movement to create pressure on the alliance government to accept our demand for reforms."

He told The Daily Star that they might also hold a grand rally and an indefinite sit-in in the capital, and big rallies in different districts and upazila headquarters involving tens of thousands of people before October.

The opposition coalition has been demonstrating demanding reforms in the system of caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) since last year. They held a number of agitation programmes on the streets to press home the demand.

But the government remains indifferent despite programmes like Dhaka siege, grand rallies, road, rail and river transport blockades, hartals, and laying of sieges to the EC, Prime Minister's Office and the Secretariat.

## Saarc integration

**FROM PAGE 1** Asia, she noted.

"Globalisation is forcing nations to face multifaceted challenges individually and collectively. These require us to take hard and swift decisions and also to ensure their early implementation," the Saarc chair told the Council of Ministers.

She urged the foreign ministers to get down to finalising the document on Saarc Vision for the Third Decade for adoption at the next summit.

The prime minister requested the Saarc foreign ministers to accord the highest priority to this matter and to place their considered recommendations at the next summit, scheduled to be held in New Delhi.

She urged them to look for ways and means for addressing sustainable development to alleviate poverty in South Asia. In this context, it is also necessary for all Saarc member-states to achieve the goals laid down in the "Saarc Decade for Poverty Alleviation (2006-2015)".

Khaleda said a number of important decisions were taken at the Dhaka summit aiming to position Saarc on a robust platform. These are essential for moving South Asia towards swift socioeconomic growth and making the region a vibrant, dynamic and secure place for all.

The foreign minister welcomed the foreign minister of Afghanistan, representing Saarc newest member, and hoped that Afghanistan's formal inclusion in the Saarc family at the next summit would add a new dimension and substances to South Asian cooperation.

Foreign Ministers of Saarc countries were on the dais. Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta was also on the dais as a special invitee.

Ministers, MPs, diplomats, high officials and members of the delegations attended the inaugural ceremony.

## US, ROK, EU

**FROM PAGE 1**

Minister KP Sharma Oli, Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid M Kasuri, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera and Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta attended the informal meeting held at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The Council of Ministers, which will sit formally today, also considered various recommendations made by the Saarc Standing Committee that concluded its meeting yesterday.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin, who chaired the two-day Standing Committee meeting, told reporters they endorsed the Saarc budget for \$1.90 million and the Saarc secretary general's report.

He said the Standing Committee stressed the need for ratification and implementation of three trade related agreements – customs cooperation, arbitration and avoidance of double taxation – signed at the Dhaka summit.

The foreign secretary said the Standing Committee considered to hold Saarc Trade Fair and publish the reports on Saarc Social Charter and Multi-modal Transport Study.

The Standing Committee, comprising the foreign secretaries of Saarc member states, also considered the Conventions of Suppression of Terrorism and Additional Protocol and Narcotic Drugs.

It stressed the need for enacting necessary legislation by member states to implement these conven-

tions.

Hemayetuddin said the committee spent a lot of time to prepare its report over the dispute of India and Pakistan on Safta being operational. However, the report was prepared by containing separate observations of India and Pakistan on Safta.

The committee also considered the holding of Saarc Car Rally and decided to form an organising committee for coordination of the event to be held before the 14th summit in India likely next year. The first meeting of the organising committee will be hosted by India.

On issuance of Saarc visa, Hemayetuddin said the Standing Committee decided to hold a meeting of the Immigration Officials immediately to resolve certain problems in issuing Saarc stickers to certain category of people travelling the member states.

The meeting was attended by Bhutan's Foreign Secretary Yeshey Dorji, Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Sarin, the Maldives Deputy Minister Ms Aminath Mohammed Didi, Nepal's Foreign Secretary Bhagirath Basnet, Pakistani Foreign secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan, Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary HMGS Palihakkara and Afghanistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Saikal.

## Death reference

**FROM PAGE 1**

book before a death reference bench of the HC yesterday.

Although over 500 death reference cases still await paper book preparation and death reference hearing in the HC, the paper book of the seven JMB militants' death reference case has been prepared on priority basis for hearing.

A Barisal court on May 29 this year awarded death sentence to JMB chief Abdur Rahman, his deputy Bangla Bhai and five other militants in sensational Jhalakathi judges' killing case.

The others to walk the gallows are JMB Majlish-e-Shura members Ataur Rahman Sunu, Abdul Awal and Khaled Saifulah, suicide bomber Iftekhar Hasan Al Mamun and Asadur Rahman Arif. Of them,

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## 13 cases

**FROM PAGE 1**

makes the legal provisions for remedy of such irregularities ineffective, election experts observed.

The system encourages the candidates to ensure their victory by any means and they believe that they will remain as lawmakers once the election result is declared, the experts said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday former adviser to a caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan termed the existing legal provision for adjudicating election disputes as incorrect and said it does not serve the purpose.

"If a person manages to get elected by malpractice, or by force or coercion or by any other unfair means, he cannot be unseated from the parliament due to loopholes in the legal system," he said adding that the weak system encourages malpractice in elections. "There is no record of unseating a lawmaker for malpractice in elections," he added.

He suggested adjudication of election disputes within 12 months of filing through amending the legal provision. "Massive reform is required in the election laws for holding elections in a free and fair manner," he said adding, "But neither the government nor the Election Commission has made any move to bring reforms."

Former election commissioner M Munsef Ali echoed the same view. "The slow pace of adjudication of election cases has made the legal provision ineffective. If the legal provision is not made effective, there is no meaning of continuing to have the provision," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The former election commissioner who opposed the move to repeal the election tribunals in 2001 said, "We should not have introduced the system of lodging election disputes with the High Court as it is usually overloaded with cases."

Castro, who took control of Cuba in 1959, resisted repeated US attempts to oust him and survived communism's demise elsewhere, said he was temporarily handing over the presidency and the leadership of Cuba's Communist Party to his brother, Raul.

Raul Castro, Cuba's defence minister who turned 75 in June, also did not appear on television and made no statement on his own. For decades the constitutional successor to his brother, Raul Castro has assumed a more public profile in recent weeks.

Fidel Castro last appeared in public Wednesday as he marked the 53rd anniversary of his July 26 barracks assault that launched the revolution. The Cuban leader seemed thinner than usual and somewhat weary during a pair of long speeches in eastern Cuba.

"The operation obligates me to undertake several weeks of rest," Castro's letter read. Extreme stress "had provoked in me a sharp intestinal crisis with sustained bleeding that obligated me to undergo a complicated surgical procedure."

The calm delivery of the announcement appeared to signal that there would be an orderly succession should Fidel become permanently incapacitated.

Cuban exiles celebrated in the streets of Miami, but Havana's streets were quiet overnight as Cubans awaited further word on Castro's condition.

It was unknown when or where the surgery took place, or where Castro was recovering.

Ongoing intestinal bleeding can be serious and potentially life-threatening, said Dr. Stephen Hanauer, gastroenterology chief at the University of Chicago hospitals. He said it was difficult to deduce the cause of Castro's bleeding without knowing what part of the digestive tract was affected.