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## JS passes labour bill amid AL walkout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament yesterday passed Bangladesh Labour Bill 2006 amid strong protest from the main opposition Awami League (AL) followed by an AL walkout led by its leader Sheikh Hasina.

The main opposition walked out of the House yesterday protesting a parliamentary standing committee report on the bill which did not include a note of dissent of an AL lawmaker and failed to mention a subsequent walkout of the dissenting member of the committee from a meeting.

Abdul Kader Siddiqui of Krishak Samik Janata League also walked out of the House yesterday protesting the speaker's attitude. "The record of the note of dissent and the walkout of a member of the standing committee from the meeting must be included in the committee report and we will walk out of the House in protest if you don't include that before passing the bill," Kader Siddiqui told the speaker in the House.

Later, the parliament passed the bill without the presence of the

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## JMB leaders may not be executed in govt tenure

### Families now plan to appeal against 'worldly court' verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An uncertainty suddenly raised its head regarding the executions of seven condemned militants of Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh, as the government yesterday said it has no intention of executing them before Eid-ul-Fitr even if they do not appeal within seven days of signing of the death warrants.

Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed said yesterday that the government does not want to execute anyone during Ramadan.

Whether the executions can be carried out before the present government hands over power on October 28 has also become a topic of discussion as many are inquiring whether the government is going to shift from its previous position of favouring executions of the condemned Islamist militants before it hands over power to a caretaker government.

Asked whether the executions can be carried out before the pres-

ent government's tenure ends, Moudud did not reply directly but told reporters, "I'll discuss the matter with the home ministry."

Iftakhar Al Mamun, one of the condemned seven, already appealed against his death sentence, the inspector general of prisons told The Daily Star yesterday evening. Another one of them is on the run.

Family sources said two other condemned -- Khaled Saifullah and Abdul Awal are also preparing to appeal.

Meantime, Rafiqul Islam, brother of condemned Bangla Bhai, told reporters last night that a relative of them will appeal against Bangla Bhai's death sentence maintaining legal process.

Talking on the reason for not executing the condemned militants during Ramadan, the law minister said the jail code does not allow executions during Ramadan.

But, Inspector General of Prisons Brigadier General Zakir

Hasan said there is no such prohibition in the jail code. "But there is a government circular of the early 80's which says executions cannot be carried out during Ramadan."

He however said who among the condemned militants will not appeal during the stipulated time can be executed before the present government hands over power.

According to the rules, the condemned militants, to whom the death warrants were read out on Friday and Saturday, will be able to appeal against the death penalties confirmed by the High Court on August 31, within seven days of receiving the death warrants. The deadlines for appeals will end on September 29 and 30.

If any of them do not appeal by the stipulated time, he can be executed only after 21 days following the deadlines for appeals. "They can be executed not before three weeks and not after four weeks following the deadlines for

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## AUG 17 BLASTS Sunny, 4 other JMB militants jailed for 1 yrs

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) military commander Aatur Rahman Sunny and four others to 11 years' rigorous imprisonment and acquitted one in an August 17 bomb blast case.

The four other accused are Rezaul Haq Reza of Jamalpur, Habibur Rahman Habib and Abdullah Al Shohail of Gazipur and Mohammad Sagir Hossain of Dhaka.

Sunny, Reza and Shohail were present in the court during the delivery of the judgment while Habib and Sagir were tried in absentia.

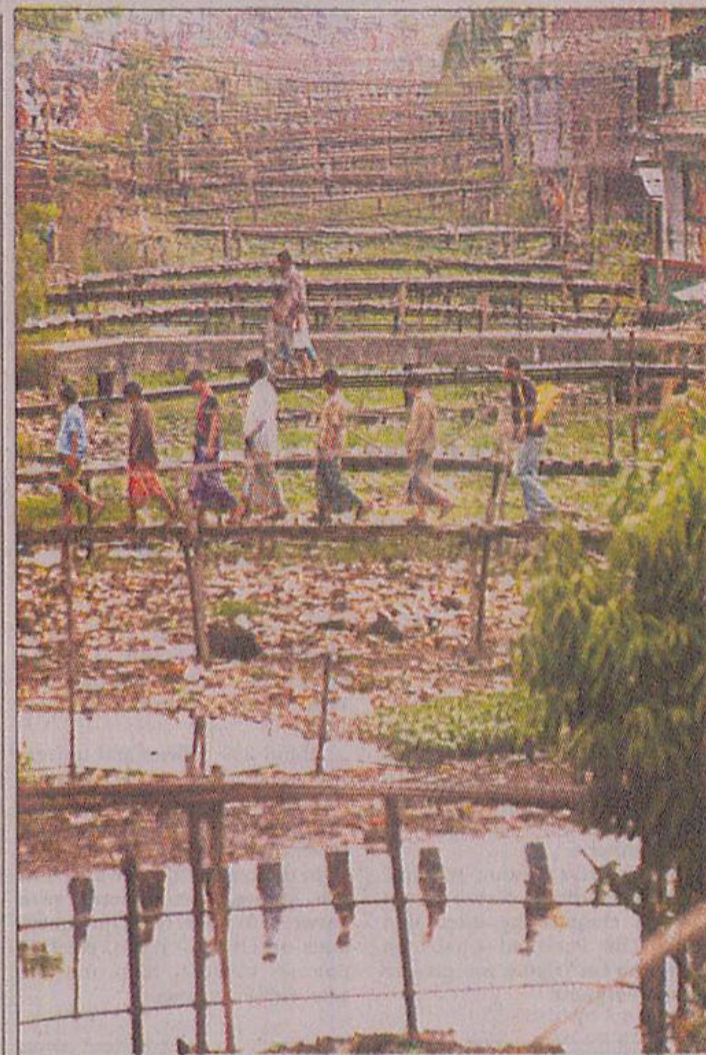
Judge SM Mojibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court handed down the verdict at a packed courtroom.

The court acquitted Mustafizur Rahman Musa of Naogaon as the charge brought against him was not proved.

The punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the judgement said.

Detective Branch (DB) of Police on November 24 last year pressed

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The sewage canal at South Doria in the capital is clogged with garbage leaving the locality in a polluted environment.

## PM goes to Saudi Arabia Oct 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to go to Saudi Arabia on October 12 on a 10-day visit, which will be her last visit abroad before handing over power to a caretaker government.

Meanwhile, the prime minister will visit different parts of the country in the month of Ramadan and address at least 15 public meetings.

"We have been asked to prepare the schedule of her (prime minister) tour of Saudi Arabia that is likely to begin from October 12," said a foreign ministry official, wishing anonymity.

Diplomatic and political analysts say prior to the next general election, the prime minister's visit to Saudi Arabia is significant. In the last few months, a good number of political leaders also visited Saudi Arabia.

During the visit, the prime minister will perform Umra. She will hold a formal meeting with Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz and discuss bilateral and other issues of common interest.

## 3 outlaws killed in 'shootouts'

STAR REPORT

Three members of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) were killed in 'encounters' with the law enforcement agencies in Pabna and Chuadanga yesterday.

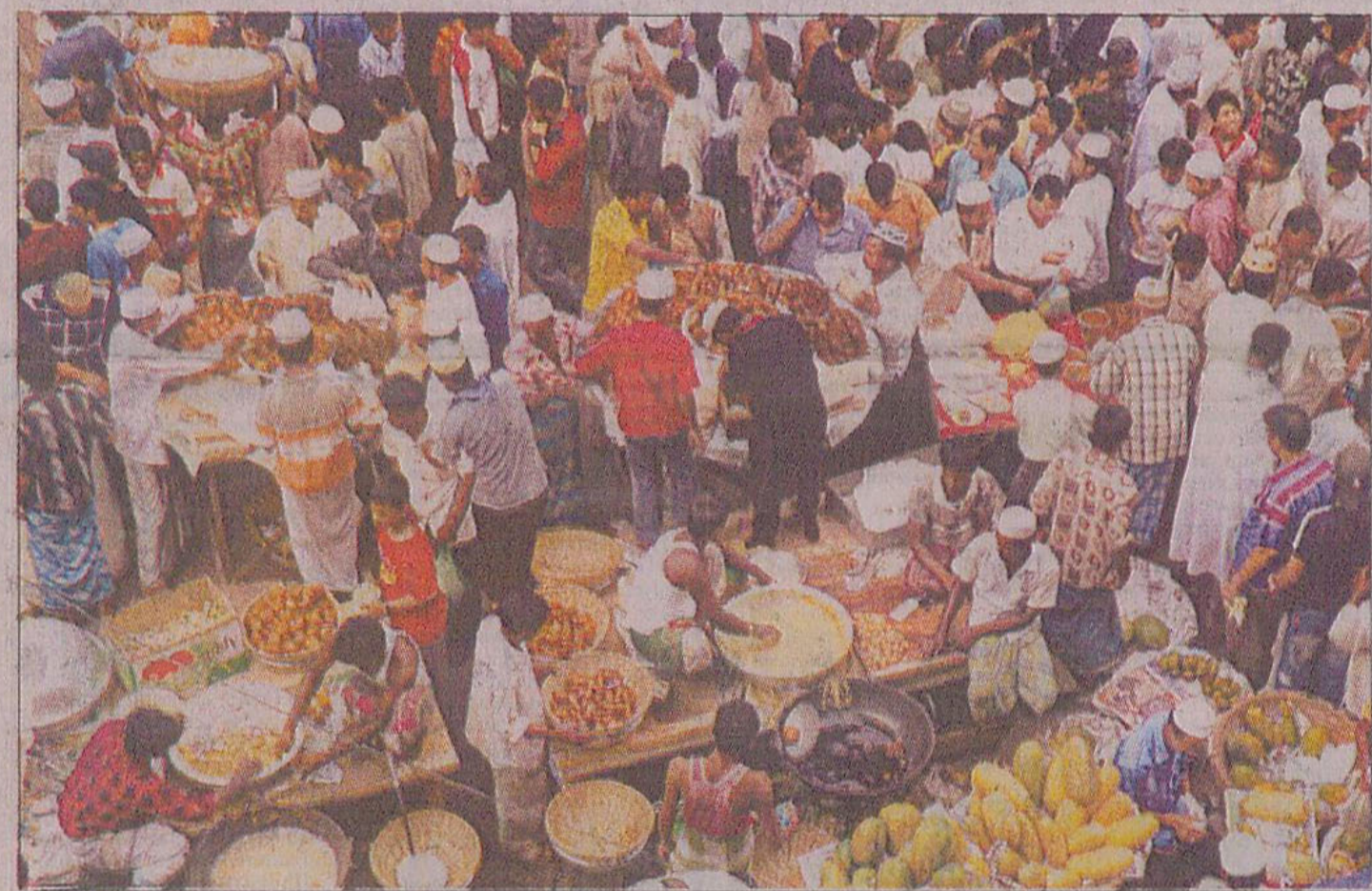
Our correspondent from Pabna reports, two top leaders of PBCP Janajuddha faction were killed during an encounter between their gangs and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Ataikula thana early morning yesterday.

The dead were identified as Bellal Hossain, 27, son of Mohsin Pramanik of Madhupur village and Moznun Sheikh, 30, son of late Goni Sheikh of Ariadangi village under Ataikula thana.

Rab 12 following a tip off raided a hideout of the outlaws at Charahati village under Ataikula thana at about 1:55am yesterday, a Rab press release said.

The criminals opened fire on Rab and Rab returned fire in defence. Bellal and Moznun were critically injured during the

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Fasting Muslims gather at Chawkbazar in the capital yesterday afternoon to buy Iftar on the first day of Ramadan.

PHOTO: STAR

## British envoy sees ruling, opposition parties easing up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury yesterday expressed his hope that all political parties will reach a consensus on the reforms issue to ensure free and fair general elections.

"We see some signs that both the ruling and the opposition parties are easing up... and it is not too late for coming to a consensus," he said while speaking as the chief guest at a dialogue on media and diaspora organised by Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unity (RMMRU) and British Council at the latter's auditorium.

The UK, as a close friend of Bangladesh, will do everything it can so that they (political parties) come forward for consensus in a bid to hold the forthcoming election in a fair manner, he said.

He hoped that the people of the country would continue to work together so that they could enjoy a fair election and uphold democracy to prosper.

The first ever Bangladesh born British high commissioner said opportunities were not always equal between the Bangladesh-origin British and the British,

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## CARETAKER GOVT

### AL toys with Mahmudul Amin as acceptable chief

ZAYADUL AHSAN

In case of a dialogue on the electoral reforms taking place, the 14-party opposition combine might propose the name of former chief justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury as the chief of the next caretaker government.

Sources said if the government really wants to settle the ongoing political dispute through talks and in the process, Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury's name comes

up as an alternative to Justice KM Hasan, the opposition might accept it.

The opposition parties have already decided to go for an intense non-cooperation movement in the form of an indefinite hartal from the day Justice KM Hasan would take the charge of the caretaker government.

They have also announced that they will not participate in, rather resist any election with Justice Hasan at the helm.

Senior opposition leaders said they would now seek to find by consensus 'a person acceptable to all' as the chief adviser in line with the article 58C (5) of the constitution. They will however accept the ex-chief justice, who retired next before the last retired top judge.

"We have reservations about Justice KM Hasan as he had been involved with the BNP and is still loyal to the party. But we have confidence in the judges who are

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## TENGRATILA BLOWOUT COMPENSATION

### Niko rejects govt claim, asks for int'l arbitration

SHARIEF KHAN

Rejecting the government's demand for compensation for losses from the Tengratila blowout, Canadian company Niko Resources last month formally asked the government to settle the issue through an international arbitration.

Sources said following the August 15 letter from Niko, the government is making preparation to take the matter to the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

The letter came at a time when the government is at the final stage of signing a Gas Purchase Sales Agreement (GPSA) for purchasing gas from the Fenil marginal gas field, jointly developed by Niko and Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex). The Petrobangla has been taking gas from the Fenil field from late 2004, without fixing a price and illegally paid Niko \$4 million in April 2005.

According to Niko Bangladesh Chief Brian Adolph, the GPSA that was finalised within two weeks. The Fenil field is producing gas at the rate of 15 million cubic feet per day.

Back in early 2006, the energy adviser had suggested several times before the press that Niko would be made to compensate for the Tengratila gas loss from its Fenil

gas production. However now it is clear that this is not happening.

The GPSA will give Niko a gas price tariff of \$1.75 per thousand cubic feet.

According to Petrobangla data, Niko's outstanding gas bill for sale of Fenil gas between November 2004 and March 2006 is \$14.34 million.

Sources said that on August 15, Niko sent its letter to the energy ministry, which was then sent to the law ministry for scrutiny. The law ministry recently gave its opinion in favour of going for international arbitration.

The performance of Bangladesh in international arbitration has been very poor. It loses most cases due to poor selection of lawyers and lack of seriousness. However, in the early nineties, Bangladesh won an international litigation against another Canadian company Scimitar when it proved that the company defrauded official documents to sell out an oil and gas block in Sylhet where it was a lessee. The Bangladesh litigation team included Dr Kamal Hossain.

The nineties saw a number of litigation in the energy sector where lesser-known lawyers were involved. The country lost hundreds of millions of dollars in these cases.

Oil companies working in Bangladesh often involve top

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## 70 killed in major Lanka sea battle

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's navy attacked a flotilla of Tamil Tiger boats off the island's north-eastern coast early yesterday, sinking at least nine rebel craft and killing 70 rebels, the defence ministry said.

A Fast Attack Craft of the navy detected the boats of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) off the coast of Mullaitivu and engaged them for nearly five hours, the ministry said.

"The Sri Lanka Navy's Fast Attack Craft taught the Sea Tigers a haunting lesson," the ministry said.

"On completion of the confron-

tation only 14 craft were seen fleeing... nine sank along with the crew," it said, adding it was "believed more than 70 Sea Tigers were killed and many were injured."

There was no immediate word from the Tigers about the confrontation, and a navy spokesman confirmed that they have not recovered any bodies of Tigers after the confrontation.

The defence ministry said that one of its own craft was "slightly damaged" and "five sailors suffered injuries and one was transferred to Colombo for further treatment."

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## STORM 6 more bodies picked in Bay

STAR REPORT

Six more unidentified bodies were recovered at Patuakhali yesterday raising the storm death toll to 97 while Bangladesh Coastguard said they have given up hope of finding the missing Bangladesh Navy officer.

Bangladesh Coastguard announced at a press conference yesterday that they have no hope of finding Lt Commander Firoz Kabir alive, a private TV channel reports. Commander Firoz has been missing since Tuesday night.

Sarowar Zahan Nizam, director general of Bangladesh Coastguard

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**BERGER AWARDS FOR STUDENTS OF ARCHITECTURE, BUET (BASAB)**

BERGER PAINTS BANGLADESH LIMITED (BPBL), IN COLLABORATION WITH BANGLADESH UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY (BUET), IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE FIELD OF ARCHITECTURE.

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