# The Baily Star

# NEWS

# Grand alliance

#### EDOM DACE 1

Samaitantrik Dal (JSD) will contest in four constituencies, Gono Forum in three and Workers Party in four constituencies under the auspices of the grand electoral alliance.

According to the primary decision JSD will contest in Kustia-6, Chittagong-10, Panchaghar-1 and Sunamganj-4 constituencies while Gono Forum will contest in Cox's Bazar-1, Dhaka-3 and Manikganj-3, and Workers Party will contest in Barishal-2, Rajshahi-2 and also in a constituency in Shatkhira district.

Zaker Party will contest in Faridpur-4 and Islami Oikkyo Jote will contest in Narail-2.

AL is also continuing its discussion with Jana Sanghati Samity, and Krishok Sramik Janata League to bring them into the fold of its grand alliance based on similar seat sharing

Sources said during almost twohour long discussion Sheikh Hasina and HM Frshad finalised around 35 constituencies for JP to contest in and decided to continue their discussion on seat sharing as JP top leaders placed demands for a few more seats.

However, they failed to reach a decision regarding what constituency Ershad's dissident wife, Roushan Ershad, will contest in. According to the sources, Ershad wanted two seats for his wife but Sheikh Hasina wants to give Roushan only one. JP leaders said they will talk again with the AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil on Friday night.

The two leaders also discussed the matter of forming the next government if the people vote them to power, the sources added. Ershad, however, drove away grand alliance's ongoing move-

being accompanied by JP leader Anisul Islam Mahmud, without briefing reporters on the upshot of the meeting that ended at 11:00am.

## Poll observers

FROM PAGE 16 conduct and punishing those who break it."

The former adviser was speak ing at the inauguration ceremony of a two-day foundation workshop and training for election observers organised by Brotee at the Biam auditorium. The project is being supported by the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

Although the government is primarily responsible for ensuring a free and fair election, Hafiz said the election observers must play a role to make the government accountable to this task.

He also stressed the need for polls observers' being neutral and transparent not only in their work. but also in the manner they present themselves to the public while on duty.

Brotee Chief Executive Officer Sharmeen Murshid said 30 percent of the 85 organisations in 30 constituencies where Brotee is working to update the voter list have a low or unacceptable standard of work. "We are willing to train organisations which are willing to correct mistakes and are ignorant of proper procedures," she said.

The former military ruler has been getting renewed public attention since he joined the December 18 grand rally that ended with announcing the formation of the

grand electoral alliance. But, Abdul Jalil told the reporters following the summit that they discussed the latest political situation, strategies for the ongoing movement, and the electoral preparations

"Nothing is certain. We may or may not participate in the election." Jalil told the reporters when asked about the possibility of them participating in the upcoming election.

He also said. "There will be no election in the country without a flawless voter list," reiterating his grand alliance's demand for a fresh election schedule following scrapping of the current one.

Later, LDP Secretary General Major (retd) Abdul Mannan, Anwar Kabir Talukder and Firoje M Hasan met Abdul Jalil in the evening in his Gulshan residence and discussed seat sharing. Sources said, during the meeting

LDP-led Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) asked for 60 seats. No decision was FROM PAGE 16 taken in the meeting which is to

continue, the sources added. 'The grand alliance won't take part in the election under the prevailing situation... We won't take part without a level playing field even if 14-party does," Abdul Mannan told reporters after the meeting. The sources also said after

finalising the list of constituencies for LDP leaders, LDP chief also a former president of the country, AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, might meet AL President Sheikh Hasina to discuss strategies for the

### ment. Guantanamo

#### FROM PAGE 1

In his forwarding report, Investigation Officer (IO) Sub-Inspector Masud mentioned that Mobarak said he had gone to Pakistan for studies in 1998 and taught in a madrasa in Karachi after

completion of his two-vear study. But the IO did not find any documents about his study in Pakistan. So, Mobarak might have a militancy link, the IO said.

## Sonia

FROM PAGE 16 The home ministry confirmed in a statement that an advisory had been issued to strengthen security arrangements for "protectees", but said "such advisories are issued regularly and need not give rise to inaccurate or speculative news reporting.

'The Ministry of Home Affairs carries out periodic threat assessment for all its protectees," the statement said. "A similar exercise was taken in view of the forthcoming festivals, Republic Day functions and assembly elections in four major India celebrates its Republic Day national holiday on January 26 "On the basis of the threat assessment received an advisory was issued to all concerned to be vigilant and strengthen security arrangements." the statement said. Intelligence sources told the Times of India that Gandhi's security was already raised to the highest level possible in the wake of a series of blasts at a mosque in western Maharashtra state that killed 37 people in September.

of life" in 2006, the report said.

added

ment to stop the killings has given

credence to the view that the state

itself is complicit in these killings," i

respect for human rights and the

rule of law, were set back many

years with the return to power of the

military in September.

of law". AHRC said.

In Thailand, the report said,

In Pakistan, the media was

under threat in 2006, the report

said, with more that 20 journalists

killed, tortured or disappeared.

More than 90 cases of threats

More than three FM radio sta-

In India, torture remains

violence also continued while huge

"In short, the neglect of justice in

'India's democracy, in fact, is

India is of such a proportion that it

challenges India's claim of being a

vibrant democracy," the report said

fundamentally flawed and is unable

to maintain the right of its ordinary

people. The powerful, for the most

more misery for the victims.

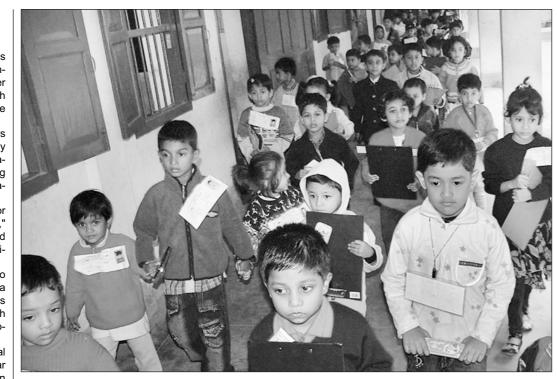


PHOTO: STAR Admission seeking kids enter Chittagong Ispahani School as around 2,000 contested for 100 seats at the renowned institution.

#### Land policy Investment

companies ignoring the national FROM PAGE 16 interests and policies on energy.

Bangladesh: New Horizon of "International energy companies Development" are working to systematically grab In his paper, Prof Barkat said the our energy resources and foreignnumber of landless families has aided development projects are increased three-folds in the last five helping them to achieve their goal." decades with only 6.2 percent families said Prof Anu Muhammad of holding 40 percent of the total land of Department of Geology, the country.

Pointing out that 91 million of the 140 million population of the country are poor, he said if the government distributes the khas land among the landless people, every family will get more than one acre land comprising both cultivable and wet land.

signed with the Australian company He said at least 25 lakh landrelated cases are running at present and the number is 77 percent of the "The coalmine contract was transferred to Asia Energy from total running cases. Around 12 crore BHP in 1998 but no government names of people, including the plaintiffs and defendants, their family gazette notifving the people of the matter was published then," he said members and witnesses, are related adding that most of the contracts to these cases, he added. were signed secretly ignoring

Barkat observed that the Enemy Property Act has affected at least one million Hindu (khana) families, who have lost 21 lakh acres of land, 53 Muzaffer Ahmed said the demand percent of the total Hindu land ownerdously and if the Third World War

His study revealed that pirates ever happens, it would probably be have encroached upon 95 percent of 12 lakh acres of khas wetland while the rich and influential people have grabbed around 88 percent of the 12 with the issues of the energy sector lakh acres of khas land that have so far and the first task of the institution will been distributed among the poor.

be to formulate a national pro-Advocate Sultana Kamal, former people and pro-environment energy adviser to the present caretaker government, said she learnt during her Awami League Agriculture brief stay in the government that the Affairs Secretary Dr Abdur Razzak very idea of "distribution" is nonsaid the BNP-Jamaat alliance existent in the minds of the powerful government invested around Tk 18.000 crore but failed to produce government officials.

"Their minds are always occupied even a single megawatt of addiwith the thought of grabbing people's resources," she said, adding, "They Prof Nazrul Islam presented a

#### sacrifice something for the people only when they face tremendous pressure.

Sultana, however, expressed hope, saying, "We common people, who are not in the government, have more power than the government. So. we can force the government to change the state policy."

Citing Prof Rehman Sobhan's study, Dr Mainul Islam of Chittagong University said Prof Sobhan proved after studying 36 developed countries that all those countries brought reforms in their land policies and made them pro-people before developing.

Zafrullah Chowdhury, project coordinator of Gonashastho Kendro, Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kari Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adibashi Forum, Shykh Seraj, director (news) of Channel i, MA Kader, executive director of Samata, Syed Yusuf Hossain, former secretary,

Shamsul Huda of ALRD delivered

#### Army men FROM PAGE 1

Police said Jewel and Hira were arrested on allegations of involvement in criminal activities in the town

Duty officer of Kurigram Sadar Police Station told this correspondent that the two were being quizzed at the army camp at Kurigram Circuit House.

The deputy commissioner of Kurigram, however, told this correspondent that he knew nothing about army drive in the district town He further said the army did not

even inform him anything about the arrest of the two.

#### 2 file nominations

FROM PAGE 1 Candidates of the BNP-led fourparty alliance are yet to file their nomination papers in any of the eight constituencies except Dhaka-11.

So far, 16 candidates, mostly independent ones, have filed their nomination papers for the constituencies of Dhaka city.

Four-party alliance candidate SA Khaleque submitted his nomination papers for Dhaka-11 constituency on Thursday at Zila Election Office, Agargaon

However, Abdul Kader Mollah, assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, filed his nomination papers for Dhaka-4 constituency. He told The Daily Star last night that he filed the papers as a Jamaat candidate not as a fourparty alliance candidate.

Another, Jamaat leader Mir Kashem Ali also filed his nomination papers for Dhaka-11 constituency but he did not reveal his political identity in the papers, said officials of the Returning Officer's (RO's) Office.

Six independent candidates filed their nomination papers for different constituencies of Dhaka city on the first day, December 20. Eight candidates filed their nomination papers on the second day.

Election officials of the RO's Office said the much-expected enthusiasm in submitting nomination papers is still missing as the 14party alliance is yet to declare whether they would participate in the elections.

## 3 outlaws

FROM PAGE 1 during the "shootout" and died instantly. The members of the elite force caught one of the gang named Idris, while others managed to flee. Idris was taken into Rab custody for guizzing.

Police said Sabur was wanted in eight cases including three for murder

In Pabna, PBCP leader Nazrul Islam was killed in an encounter with Rab in Ataikula upazila at about 3:00am, according to our correspondent

A team of Rab-12, Pabna, raided Shibpur village of the upazila on information that some cadres of PBCP Janajuddha faction were holding a meeting at the village

Sensing the presence of the elite force, the outlawed party men opened fire, forcing the Rab to return fire.

Rab sources said Tufan was shot during the "shootout" and died on the spot, while others fled the scene

Tufan was an accused in 14 cases including six for murder, the sources said. A sub-machine gun and 40 bullets were recovered from the spot.

gic agreement" to avert all-out war. Our Sirajganj correspondent as British troops seized Iragi police adds: PBCP regional leader

# Russia seeks delay in Iran sanctions vote

UN resolution won't halt nuclear drive, says Tehran

Churkin said he offered sugges-

tions about how to ensure that the

proposed sanctions target only

prohibited sectors, such as Iran's

enrichment-related and reprocess

To overcome Russian objec-

But Churkin also wants to dilute a

Iran says its nuclear programme

Iran yesterday played down a

"We should tell foreign enemies

-riday prayer sermon in Tehran

tall to the end," Janati said as major

powers worked in New York on

reaching a Security Council consen-

"Our people will resist and stand

Iranian President Mahmoud

nead with its nuclear programme.

Qatar's Ambassador Nasser

Abdelaziz al-Nasser, who chairs the

worried about this matter. We live

province

ution that could lead to sanctions

ing activities.

AFP, United Nations/ Tehran

Russia is pushing for a one-day delay in a planned vesterday vote on a UN resolution sanctioning Iran for pursuing its nuclear programme, diplomats said here.

tions, the sponsors Wednesday In a last-minute exercise of watered down a contentious probrinkmanship diplomacy, envoys of the 15-member council's five vetoposal for a travel ban on 12 officials wielding members -- Britain, China, directly linked to Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. France, Russia and the United States -- plus Germany are set to meet early Friday for final negotiaproposed assets freeze that would arget 11 entities involved in Iran's tions on whether to hold the vote or postpone it

učlear and missile programmes. Western countries want to On Thursday they huddled for what was supposed to be a last mpose sanctions on Iran over its refusal to suspend uranium enrichbargaining session ahead of the ment, fearing the programme would help Tehran develop nuclear weapcrucial vote.

But Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin emerged from the meeting, saying he wanted the is peaceful, aimed at providing council vote put off to at least energy for a growing population. Saturday. "We believe there should be a

pending UN Security Council resopostponement (of the vote) to Saturday," he said. "We'll need over its nuclear programme, insist-ing that the Islamic republic will (Friday) for further discussions. A Western diplomat close to the

resist to the end. talks said that France, Britain and Germany, who sponsored the text, still plan for a Friday vote. that this is the Iranian nation. whether you adopt a resolution or The Europeans have the deci-

sion on this," said US acting Ambassador Alejandro Wolff, whatever hostile act ... our people will withstand it " senior cleric Ayatollah Ahmad Janati said in a hopeful there would still be a Friday vote Wolff said the six countries were carried live on state radio.

'getting closer to a final text," but cited lingering "issues we are con-cerned about," without elaborating. Asked if the United States would

sus over a European draft resolution accept a Russian abstention, he replied: "We are hoping for a conmandating UN nuclear-related sensus resolution but we want a sanctions against Iran. tough resolution that will actually Ahmadinejad vowed Thursday that demonstrate to Iran that the internanothing would stop Iran pushing tional community is not going to accept their continued violations of "The bullying powers today, in confronting Iran's peaceful nuclear their obligations.

In Washington, US Secretary of technology, are faced with a sea of State Condoleezza Rice said her courageous people," Ahmadinejad said in a speech in Gilan-e Gharb government was seeking lastminute changes to the document. town, in Iran's western Kermanshah The draft resolution calls for a

ban on trade with Iran in goods related to its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

council for December, expressed It warns that if Tehran refuses to misgivings about sanctions. "We comply with demands that it halt don't know how the Iranians are sensitive nuclear fuel work, the going to react," he said. Security Council "shall adopt further "The Middle East is going through difficult times. We are appropriate measures under Article 41 of Chapter Seven" of the UN charter, a reference to economic sanctions. The draft document there." he said. slaps financial restrictions on persons and entities involved in proliferation-sensitive nuclear and mis-

sile programmes.

ance

as the weekend.

positive direction

part of the plan.

100 lives a day.

here in Baghdad.

sideline him.

high.

tion.

US navy to control

FROM PAGE 16 place a committee to discuss the outside Baghdad, the crackle of gunfire could be heard in the dis-Earlier US Defence Secretary

left Iraq after striking "a broad strate-

said Gates at the US military head-

quarters in Iraq after a three-day

fact-finding visit, as the crackle of

ounfire and roar of military aircraft

government had put forward con-

war-shattered country, but gave no

details. Nor would be say whether

sending more US troops to Irag was

is at an all-time high in Iraq where

deadly bombings, shootings and

kidnappings claim an average of

discussed improving security with

Iraqi leaders, including Prime

Minister Nuri al-Maliki, said he had

been impressed with their under-

standing of the problems and their

about the best path forward in terms

of improving the security situation

"We've talked with the Iraqis

"And I think we have a broad

strategic agreement between the

Iraqi military, and the Iraqi govern-

But Iragi-US cracks were only

too apparent over attempts from the

Maliki administration to woo radical

anti-American cleric Mogtada al-

Sadr's movement back into the unity

coalition, despite US attempts to

have helped US officials angling for

an end to his influence by withdraw-

ing his 32 MPs and six ministers

from the coalition in protest at

Maliki's decision to meet Bush for

tramped down to the Shia holy city

of Naiaf to talk to Sadr's allies and

But this week Iraqi politicians

crisis talks in Jordan.

US officials have made it clear

ment and our military," he said.

eagerness to take charge.

The defence secretary, who

Insurgent and sectarian violence

"But I believe, based on what I

could be heard in the distance.

Sadr current's return to parliament and to government." the leader of Sadr's parliamentary bloc. Nasser al-Rubaie, told AFP.

The Pentagon has explicitly blamed Sadr and his Mahdi Army militia for much of the sectaria

also spoke at the seminar. the welcome note.

AMA Muhith, former secretary, Dr

Hinting at the organisations that deliberately do not correct the mistakes in the voter list, she said Brotee will not train those.

She also observed that the poll monitors are part of the political crisis in Bangladesh as they are also required to incorporate the principles of equity and transparency in their work

Brotee is training 324 people to take part as monitors in the ninth parliamentary elections.

# Human rights

#### FROM PAGE 16

report said "a hapless ordinary pedestrian may end up in jail for months simply for crossing the road at the wrong time and in the wrong place: namely, where police were present.

Basil Fernando, executive director of AHRC, said extrajudicial killings, often called "encounter killings" where police shoot down alleged criminals, has been one of the biggest sources of human rights abuses in these countries.

"The right to life in terms of respect for due processes have given way to a very direct form of eliminating people without the normal processes of going through courts." Fernando told Reuters by telephone from his office in Hong Kong.

'Ĭt's happening in the harassment and attacks on journal-Philippines, in India -- by way of ists and their offices were also encounter killings. One of the worst reported. examples is Sri Lanka where it is happening in many forms," he tions and a television station were added. banned by the government's regu-

Sri Lanka, the report said, is the latory agency, it said. most violent place in Asia at the moment and the state has not endemic in the criminal investigataken any serious steps to bring it tion system, the report said. Caste under control. delays in the justice system meant

"The violence in Sri Lanka that presently afflicts the country has been aggravated by the collapse of the rule of law for a considerable time," the AHRC said. There is an institutional collapse

of the policing system; the judiciary is faced with a serious crises and the government lacks the capacity to carry out its functions of protection.

part, are still above the law," it In the Philippines, extra-judicial added.

Towards a pro-people and proenvironment energy strategy for Bangladesh". Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, Communist Party leader Muzahidul Islam Selim, Prof Badrul Imam, Prof Hossain Mansur, Prof MM Akash, Engineer Sheikh

tional electricity in last five years.

proposal "Resolution on energy:

Jahangirnagar University.

Talking about the Phulbari coal-

mine, he said according to the

contract signed with Asia Energy,

Bangladesh was supposed to get

only six percent of the production as

royalty while in the original contract,

Eminent economist Prof

for energy is increasing tremen-

He said a strong institution

should be set up immediately to deal

BHP, the royalty was 20 percent.

national interests.

over energy and water.

policy

Muhammad Shahidullah, Engineer Nurul Islam, Dr Sarwat Chowdhury, Prof Mahbuba Nasrin and Prof Nim Chandra Bhoumik also spoke at the seminar.

## Press reports

FROM PAGE 16 What can I do if someone sells a CNG-run three wheeler at Tk 10,000 higher cost in the free market economy? Was it a crime to allow import of 10,000 CNG-run three wheelers to make the city pollution-free?" Huda, also chairman of the advisory council of BSEHR, asked.

"But the media alleged that I was involved in the CNG scam and doing killings became "a common feature the same still now." he said urging "The absence of a credible the audience to stand against such allegations. policy on the part of the govern-

About allocation of railway land to the BSEHR, he said he applied to the governments of Awami League and Jatiya Party for a piece of land for his organisation to establish a shelter home for the victims of human rights violations, but no government responded. Established in 1977, BSEHR has

During 2006. Burma continued now 385 branches across the to be characterised by "wanton criminality of state officers at all country and a headquarters was badly needed for it, he noted. vels and the absence of the rule

When my party came to power and I became the communications minister, I applied to the Railway Board for a piece of land for my organisation [BSEHR], but the board suggested me to apply to the prime minister.'

Nazmul Huda said he then applied to the prime minister (PM), who, in reply, said it was not a PMlevel job, rather a minister-level job. "I then allocated a railway land to BSEHR, but the media wrote that I gave the land to my wife Sigma Huda.

Sigma Huda is secretary general of BSEHR.

"This is our media. It is really an unfortunate situation." Nazmul Huda said, adding that he needed to clarify his position on the allegations against him, as his organisation BSEHR has decided to focus on corruption this year

The senior BNP leader said he is both a political leader and a human rights activist. "I am above partisan character during my human rights activities.

# Charges pressed

FROM PAGE 1 are Rokanuddin Mahmud, Enayetur Rahim, Subrata Chowdhury and

Sheikh Awsafur Rahman. "Apart from the four FIR (first information report)-named accused, nine others have been included in the charge sheet as their involvement in the vandalism was found during investigation," the IO told The Daily Star yesterday.

The SCBA also investigated the incident but did not find involvement of any lawyers.

An eight-member SCBA probe body in its report on December 18 said they talked to 120 SC staff. lawyers and witnesses. But none of them said any lawyer was involved in the vandalism, the report added.

In his complaint, Omar Sadat said Rokan asked the accused lawyers and outsiders to vandalise the chief justice's chamber, courtrooms and other public property, and also to threaten the attorney general

Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah later recorded statement of the complainant and directed Shahbagh police to investigate the allegations and register an FIR if those are found true.

On investigation as per the court directive, Shahbagh police registered the complaint as an FIR on December 5.

The vandalism on the SC premises took place after chief justice stayed the proceedings of three writ petitions minutes before a High Court bench was about to issue a rule on a writ challenging the legality of the president's takeover as chief adviser to the caretaker government.

Leaders of the 14-party alliance and other political parties filed the writ petitions which also challenged the chief adviser's activities, and announcement of the schedule for the next general election.

The IO said prosecution witnesses saw outsider Habibur Rahman torching the vehicle of the former state minister for law parked on the SC premises.

Sources said a former state minister, complainant of the case Sadat and another BNP leader monitored the whole process of preparing and submitting the

charges. And they dictated the police involved in the investigation about who are to be chargesheeted.

The three BNP leaders on Thursday went to Hawa Bhaban, BNP's Banani office, with a draft copy of the charge sheet, the sources said, seeking anonymity. Reaction

Eminent lawyer Barrister Rafigul-Hag told The Daily Star last night that filing of the case and submission of charge sheet are politically motivated and have malafide intention behind.

None of the accused lawyers were present on the spot when the incidents took place, he said.

Dr M Zahir, another renowned lawyer, said, " The case has caused a great setback to the unity we had in the SC Bar... I do not believe that such prominent lawyers committed such offence."

President of the SCBA and an accused in the case Amir-UI-Islam said it is definitely a politically motivated case, and an attack on freedom of the Bar. "I think a vested quarter is persistently trying to destroy the independence of the judiciary," he said.

Replying to a guestion, he said he was briefing journalists at his SCBA office room at the time of the incident.

son of Chand Mahmud of village Maizbari under Ghatail upazila of Tangail, and Mohammad Ripon, 14, son of Saburuddin of village Gayabari under Dimla upazila of Nilphamari.

around 11:45pm and arrested the three

Police said the arrestees belong to the outlawed Hizbut Touheed. They also seized several books on jihad, two mobile phones and membership forms from them.

Police said the three were shown arrested under Section 54 and sent to Panchagarh jail. They will produce the arrestees before the court today with a prayer for remand.

Razzak Mondol, 42, of Shuborno Shara village in Belkuchi upazila died at Sirajganj General Hospital early vesterday.

Rab-12 personnel arrested Razzak, an accused in two murder cases, at his house at 7:00pm on Thursday and took him to their camp for interrogation.

After quizzing, Razzak was handed over to Belkuchi police at 11:00pm, Rab sources said.

As the outlawed party leader fell sick at the police station, he was rushed to the hospital where he died at around 3.00am yesterday. Police filed a case.

BNP ticket

FROM PAGE 1 placed railway tracks and set fire

to wooden sleepers, said police, locals and railway station sources. Rail and road communications were disrupted from 8:00am to 2:00pm.

Bajitpur Officer-in-Charge (OC) Monwar Hossain said he with a police team removed barricade on Kishoreganj-Dhaka highway at around 1:30pm and deployed police there.

The news of Mojibur Rahman Monju's getting party nomination angered the supporters of his rival Shekh Mojibur Rahman Iqbal, Bajitpur upazila Krishak Dal President Abu Taher said.

Mojibur Rahman Monju won the parliament elections with BNP ticket in 2001 and 1996. In 2001 Monju defeated AL candidate Zillur Rahman who was also the then AL general secretary.

But other BNP nomination seekers, who said Moniu was accused of corruption and killing a few party leaders, vowed to resist him in several public meetings.

Taher Uddin Tahu, Nikli upazila vice-president of the party, was killed on October 10 this year and the next day Tahu's wife Josna Akter filed a murder case with Bajitpur Police Station accusing the then BNP lawmaker Mojibur Rahman Monju, sources said.

Recently in a public meeting, Monju's rival faction led by Prof Tofazzal Hossain, Shekh Mojibur Rahman lqbal and engineer Golam Mohammad formed a committee styled 'Save Bajitpur BNP from Monju'.

accused of carrying out a massacre. violence enaulfing the country. Gates, under massive pressure

When asked if he had received a to come up with a plan to pull Iraq commitment from the government out of chaos and bring 129,000 US to deal with Shia militias responsible troops home, said he would report his findings and impressions to for murder. Gates said he had been President George W. Bush as early told that no group was exempt from the need to crack down on law-"This is a very difficult situation." breakers

But after his Thursday meeting with Gates, the Shia premier insisted that Sunni extremist groups, rather than Shia militias, were the main problem.

Many Iraqi police forces are have heard and seen both from known to be infiltrated by Shia American commanders and the militias, which use police uniforms Iraqis, that things are moving in a and weapons to pursue private Gates said the embattled Iraqi political battles, and carry out sectarian killings against the country's crete plans to restore security in the Sunni minority.

In Iraq's second city of Basra deep in the Shia heartland, more than 1,000 British troops backed up by tanks captured police officers accused of leading a death squad that slaughtered 17 police trainers.

Under cover of thick fog, the soldiers were able to approach several addresses in the port city of Basra undetected and seize seven suspects without a shot being fired military spokesman Major Charlie Burbridge told AFP.

"The purpose of this raid is not ust to apprehend this individual, but t is a precursor to disbanding the Serious Crimes Unit of the Basra police," he said by telephone from the restive southern city.

Burbridge said that British forces, with the support of Iraqi leaders, had found evidence that the unit was involved in "death squad activities" and had decided to wind it up, starting with Friday's dawn raid

On October 29, unidentified gunmen ambushed a bus carrying 17 employees of a British-run police training academy back to their homes in Basra.

that they favour a realignment in Iraq's unity government, which The passengers were massawould exclude Sadr and his Shia cred and their bodies dumped in militia, with the violence of Iraq's what was seen as an attempt to vicious sectarian war at an all time intimidate local residents and as a direct challenge to the British mis-Last month, Sadr appeared to

sion to pacify the region. Another four Iraqis were killed on Friday in a series of bombings on the weekly Muslim day of rest and prayer, security sources said.

The US military also announced that four troops had died in a single attack in western Iraq, bringing the number of US fatalities in the country since the 2003 invasion to 2,959 according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

encourage him back into the coali-"The Shia coalition has put in

Acting on a tip-off, a police team led by Office-in- Charge (OC) Jamiruddin of Boda Police Station, raided Baradeshwari Bazar at

I hree suspected FROM PAGE 1