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NEWS BRIEFS

Businessman shot
dead in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 25: A businessman was shot dead last night at West Chittagong village under Bokalhali thana. Police said Baktiar, 25, was killed by armed terrorists after returning home from his shop at Boxirhat in the city as he helped the police arrest local mafias.

Police recovered the body today. However, none was arrested so far.

**Attack on Inquilab
Editor's house**

A group of youths hurled bombs and fired shots at the Barani residence of Daily Inquilab Editor A M M Bahauddin yesterday. Witnesses said about five youths from a white private car fired shots and hurled bombs aiming at the editor's residence at about 10 pm. Police rushed to the spot but could not trace the car, reports UNB.

**Mine blast kills
2 Kashmiris**

MUZAFFARABAD, Feb 25: Two Kashmiri youths were killed when an anti-tank mine exploded in a border village in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, state officials said today. The state's chief executive Sardar Abdul Qayyum claimed that agents from India's secret service had planted the mine, which exploded in the village of Sohana Saturday, reports AFP.

**11 die in Egyptian
accidents**

MINYA (Egypt), Feb 25: Two accidents took the lives of 11 people today in the south Egyptian province of Minya, most of them when a passenger van collided with a cement truck, police said. Eight passengers were killed and the remaining seven injured when their minivan tried to pass a cement truck on the main highway headed south to Sohag province, police said.

200 hurt during non-cooperation

Courts attacked, rly property damaged

By Staff Correspondent

Courts in Dhaka and Rangpur came under bomb attacks and over 200 people including 8 policemen were injured in other incidents of violence as Opposition activists clashed with police while damaging railway signal and other property at Tongi, set fire to the TNO office at Dhunot in Bogra, attacked the TNO and BNP offices at Kazipur in Sirajganj and banks at Barisal. A 6-hour hartal has been called at Barisal town for today in protest against arrest of some Opposition leaders.

Normal life remained paralysed and communications snapped while the Opposition activists staged militant demonstrations demanding dismissal of the "illegal" government.

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In the capital, Opposition activists hurled several bombs

inside the premises of the Session Judge's court and clashed with police at Bangabandhu Avenue, Jatrabari, Demra and Mohakhal. Police fired rubber bullets and lobbed tear gas shells leaving at least 25 people.

The angry activists clashed with police while damaging railway signal and other property at Tongi, set fire to the TNO office at Dhunot in Bogra, attacked the TNO and BNP offices at Kazipur in Sirajganj and banks at Barisal. A 6-hour hartal has been called at Barisal town for today in protest against arrest of some Opposition leaders.

Ten of the injured, including Amanullah were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

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Pickets hurled bombs during clashes with police in Tongi yesterday.

—Star photo

Nasim, Moudud, Manju sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent

The police hunt for the leaders of the mainstream opposition political parties continued for the second day yesterday.

Police looked for Amir Hossain Amu, AL president member at his city residence yesterday and his wife said that police also produced orders for his arrest and detention.

Meanwhile, when contacted, many leaders of the Opposition were not available at their residences till late last night apprehending arrest.

Talking to The Daily Star last night wife of Nasim said that plainclothes police along with police in uniform came to their Dhammendi residence and picked up her husband showing a 30-day detention order.

Wife of Moudud Ahmed said police cordoned-off their house and produced a detention order before picking up her husband at around 1:15 am Sunday.

Raids were also carried out at the residences of AL leaders

Hasina condemns arrests of Nasim, Matiya

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday condemned the arrests of two party stalwarts and police raids on the houses of several others.

In a statement, Hasina said the ruling party has resorted to arrests and assassinations of opposition political workers in its bid to cling to power.

She said Mohammad Nasim and Matia Chowdhury were arrested while the residences of Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Razak, Tofael Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta searched.

She accused the government of violating Article 65 (2) and (3) of the Constitution and pointed out that the ruling party has lost its legitimacy by unilaterally holding the February 15 parliamentary elections.

The AL president said the armed cadres of the BNP have attacked opposition workers across the country during the peaceful non-cooperation movement.

"Now the only way out of the crisis is the immediate resignation of the BNP government and a fresh poll within 90 days under the residual power of the President," she added.

According to latest central bank provisional estimate, the excess liquidity of the country's commercial banks stood at Tk 1381.82 crore which is 3.66 per cent lower than that

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Forex reserve down, food import & inflation up

By R M Titumir and Inam Ahmed

The country's foreign exchange reserve continued to decline in the first six months of the current fiscal year while the food import bill and inflation rate increased.

According to Bangladesh Bank (BB) statistics till January 14 of the current fiscal (1995-96), domestic credit climbed up by Tk 2158.87 crore or 5.98 per cent while it had dropped by Tk 220.57 crore or 0.72 per cent during the corresponding period of 1994-95.

Government borrowing from the banking system increased by Tk 114.15 crore or 1.12 per cent during the period while it had plummeted by Tk 923 crore or 9.49 per cent over the same period of 1994-95.

The private sector credit increased by Tk 2044.72 crore or 7.89 per cent as against Tk 702.43 crore or 3.35 per cent during the same period of last year.

According to latest central bank provisional estimate, the excess liquidity of the country's commercial banks stood at Tk 1381.82 crore which is 3.66 per cent lower than that

which would be about 0.8 million tonnes more than the imports of 1995.

Official figures placed inflation at 5.77 per cent in September, but it may have underestimated the real rate of inflation, economists point out.

The country's foreign exchange reserves stood at 2.24 billion US dollar, equivalent to four months import. The amount was at a peak of 3.4 billion dollars in April, 1995.

Economists apprehend that government borrowing figure may increase further as substantial upward revisions have been made to the food import bill.

According to the Rice Situation Update of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the season is considerably lower than the poor crop in the previous year, and a postponement of anticipated deliveries in December 1995 to the current year, the country's food imports in 1996 are expected to remain high.

Reflecting these new developments, the FAO's forecast for Bangladesh's import was raised to 1.6 million tonnes.

Banks have increased interest rates to contain monetary pressure.

According to economists without further information, they estimate that the inflation rate is running at around 8.0 to 9.0 per cent and additional expenditure during the election may fuel more inflation.

Broad money supply growth continued and was up by Tk 166.85 crore till January 14.

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Other questioner who asked about the agenda of his talks with politicians.

But the US lawmaker, who will report back to Congress on Bangladesh, made it clear that the problems here will have to be solved by the people and the leaders of the country.

"Bangladesh is an important country and we are curious about it," said Richardson, who is visiting Bangladesh for the first time.

The US Congressman, who was in Pakistan and India, said that in Kashmir he had discussed with the local leaders the "hostage issue" and humanitarian aspects of the situation in the troubled valley. "One of the hostages is American," he said.

Director General of the American Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ashrafuddoula, who greeted Richardson at ZIA, described the visit as "important."

He hoped that it would further strengthen the Dhaka-Washington relations.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: Bill Richardson will also

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Emeka's fresh move

Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaoku sent letters to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina with an offer to mediate between the two for resolving the country's deepening political crisis, reports UNB.

BBC in its late night news quoted a source at the Commonwealth headquarters as saying that Emeka had once again offered his good office to end the staggering political stalemate in Bangladesh.

Str Ninian Stephen, former Governor General of Australia, came to Dhaka as a special envoy of the Commonwealth Secretary General in 1994 and made an abortive attempt to resolve the crisis through government-opposition dialogue.

He told reporters at the ZIA International Airport that he would discuss Bangladesh's current political situation with both government and opposition leaders today.

When asked if he would mediate in resolving Bangladeshi's nagging political problems, Richardson said: "I will have a first hand knowledge of the situation... I will express my views. I will have a suggestion."

"It is now immature to tell anything about it," he told an

US Congressman meets Khaleda, Hasina today

US Congressman Bill Richardson arrived here yesterday afternoon to discuss the current political situation with leaders to help Bangladesh resolve its political impasse, reports UNB.

A Democrat lawmaker, he is on the last leg of his visit to some countries in Asia and Europe to discuss US policy on different issues. His last port of call was Kathmandu, Nepal.

Richardson is due to meet Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and other opposition leaders today.

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23 killed as bomb goes off in Jerusalem bus

JERUSALEM, Feb 25: Twenty-six people were killed today and more than 70 wounded in two bombings by suspected Islamic radicals in Jerusalem and the southern city of Ashkelon, police said, reported AFP.

A total of 23 people were killed and more than 50 were hurt when one bomb exploded in the middle of a crowded Jerusalem bus during morning rush hour, they said. It was the deadliest single attack in Israel since 1972.

A second bomb attack against a group of soldiers hitchhiking outside Ashkelon left three dead and some 25 injured, the police said.

Police said the dead could include two suicide bombers, but they had yet to confirm this.

A caller to Israel Radio claimed the Islamic resistance movement Hamas was responsible for the two blasts.

Israeli Radio's Arabic-language service said the callers claimed the explosions were carried out by the Hamas-Qassam brigades on the 50th-anniversary of the killing of master bombmaker Yahya Ayyash and the second anniversary of a Jewish settler's massacre in Hebron.

Sunday was the first suicide bombing since an August attack by Hamas in East Jerusalem bus which killed four people.

Peres also said he had asked Arafat to cancel a visit planned later today to the West Bank city of Nablus.

Arafat condemned the attacks and said: "It is not a military operation. It is a terrorist operation. I condemn it completely and I condemn any force behind it. It is not against only civilians but against the whole peace process."

Peres suspended all negotiations with the Palestinian authority today after the bombing.

Israeli state radio reported that Peres had instructed General Ehud Barak, coordinator of Israeli activities in the Palestinian territories to suspend all talks with Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority.

It said Peres instructed all his aides involved in talks to freeze them.

Shah had already met with Ahmed Korei, the main Palestinian negotiator, to inform him of the decision.

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In another incident, a group of miscreants kidnapped one Liton, 22, son of Mansur Ali, from Kazi Para yesterday evening. They demanded Tk. 50,000 as ransom for his release.