

# Another container missing from Chittagong Port

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two incidents of theft of imported goods from a restricted area of the Chittagong Port have been reported recently.

In the first of the two incidents occurring in close succession, a container of imported goods disappeared from the Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) yard, a restricted area of the port.

The incident, believed to be a case of pilferage, was reported only yesterday although the container, one of the three imported from Singapore by the same importer, had gone missing ten days ago.

Sources said three 20-foot-long containers said to be loaded with garment raw materials arrived at the Chittagong Port by MV Uni Wealth along with other containers on December 3 and were kept at the CCT yard.

However, the C&F agents of Enam Enterprise who went to take delivery of the three containers on December 11, were unable to find one of the containers.

Although the C&F agents later took delivery of the remaining two containers, the other one remained unaccounted for till yesterday.

A CPA (Chittagong Port Authority) official concerned said that they were hunting for the lost container at the container depot and other places of the port and hoped to know something about the matter within the next three or four days.

The authorities concerned formed a two-member committee headed by Assistant

Director (Security) Tariqul Islam to investigate the matter.

CPA officials reportedly suspect involvement of C&F agents concerned with the container's disappearance.

They alleged that two truckloads of contraband shaving blades seized around two years ago were

falsely declared by the same C&F agents as garlic.

Some informed quarters also suspect involvement of some corrupt security personnel in such incidents of pilferage from the well-secured area of the port.

They also blamed lack of stern punitive measures against those involved.

Meanwhile, a day after the first incident, some goods were reported stolen by breaking another container at the same CCF yard on December 12.

A three-member committee was formed to probe into the theft of goods from that container that reached the port from Singapore on November 22. The container was likely to be opened yesterday in presence of the importer and C&F agent concerned.

## 3 JSD activists kidnapped in Laxmipur

UNB, Laxmipur

Miscreants beat up six activists of Jatiya Samajtrantik Dal (JSD) and abducted three of them at Azadnagar in Ramgati upazila yesterday.

The miscreant, stopped a passenger bus on the Ramgati-Laxmipur road in the evening and roughed up six JSD men who were travelling by the bus.

They abducted three of them to unknown place while local people rescued three others - Sheikh Farid, Ferdous and Kanchan and sent them to Sadar hospital.

Ramgati police was informed about the incident.

## 15 hurt as BNP factions clash in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

At least 15 people were injured, three of them seriously, in a clash between two rival factions of BNP at village Umra in Mohammadpur upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said, two groups of BNP one led by Phool Mian and the other by Lal Mian clashed over establishing supremacy in the area.

Both the groups used sharp weapons and sticks during the clash.

The seriously injured persons identified as Golam Sarwar, 35, Asad, 25, and Hafizur, 30, were

## AL candidates

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Badruddoza Chowdhury while the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina vacated the remaining three seats.

Name of the candidate for Faridpur-1 constituency, which was vacated by party presidium member Abdur Razak, will be announced shortly.

The board meeting was attended among others by party secretary general Zillur Rahman, presidium members Syeda Sazed a Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Mohammad Abdul Jaill and organising secretary Mohammad Nasim.

The BNP-led ruling coalition finalised the list of candidates for all

## Jubo Dal leader held in Bagerhat

UNB, Bagerhat

Plainclothes men arrested a Jubo Dal leader from his house at Rahimabad on Thursday night in connection with the killing of district BNP vice-president and former upazila chairman MAAwal.

The arrested was identified as Moazzem Hossain Sabu, president of Bagerhat Sadar thana Jubo Dal.

With this, four people have so far been arrested in connection with the killing of Awal.

Awal was gunned down by terrorists at Jatrapur Bazar in Sadar upazila on December 5.

## De la Rúa

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Still smarting from the Peronist refusal to participate in a new Cabinet that would have allowed him to stay on, De la Rúa said angrily: "That's the way they decided to exercise power."

De la Rúa resigned late Thursday and flew from the government palace in a helicopter, driven out by deepening economic troubles, riots in the capital and looting of homes and supermarkets across Argentina.

It was Argentina's worst unrest in a decade, but the protests had largely subsided late Thursday in the capital though looting continued nationwide.

# New Afghan govt

FROM PAGE 1  
sharing administration is being constituted.

Karzai will speak immediately before being sworn in, followed by incoming interior minister Yoonis Qanooni, according to the latest official programme.

Rabbani and Sayyaf, who is head of a Mujahed faction based on the austere and strict Wahabbi creed of Saudi Arabia, were both sidelined in the Bonn talks.

Karzai said this week he had held discussions with Sayyaf to resolve their differences, which also included problems with the deployment of the international peace-keeping force.

But while the world has been queuing up to be involved in reconstruction of the country, international representation at today's ceremony looks like being limited to a handful of UN officials and foreign ministers.

Defence minister-designate Mohammad Qasim Fahim said on Wednesday that "at least 20 foreign ministers" are expected.

So far only Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi and his Pakistani counterpart Abdul Sattar are mooted to attend.

Some residents of Kabul have warned Sattar to stay away, blaming Pakistan's former support for the Taliban for bringing them five years of misery before the Islamic regime was swept away last month.

Brahimi's deputy Francesc Vendrell will also be at the ceremony.

US special envoy to Afghanistan James Dobbins will represent Washington while Roger Cooper, Prime Minister Tony Blair's envoy to

the country, will represent Britain.

Amid fears that the power-sharing administration could unravel as quickly as it was stitched together, the international community appears to have adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude before getting too close to it.

Karzai will hold a press conference in Kabul at 4:00 pm today.

## Hamas

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witnesses and security officials said. Police fired in the air to repel the demonstrators, who chanted slogans against arrest of Hamas activists. No casualties were reported.

In the West Bank town of Tulkarem, Palestinian police prevented militants from firing at Israeli soldiers, and the militants fired at the police instead, the Palestinian governor said. Two people were wounded as they tried to separate the two sides, he said.

Late Thursday, Hamas backers confronted police on a Gaza City street, preventing them from arresting Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi. Hundreds gathered in the street opposite police wielding clubs and shields. A riot was averted when the police withdrew, as officials tried to persuade Rantisi to surrender.

Arafat's representatives offered Rantisi a house arrest arrangement like the one imposed on Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, officials said. Fatah secretary Ahmed Hillas, handling the contacts, was confident a deal could be worked out. "We are all in the same boat," he said.

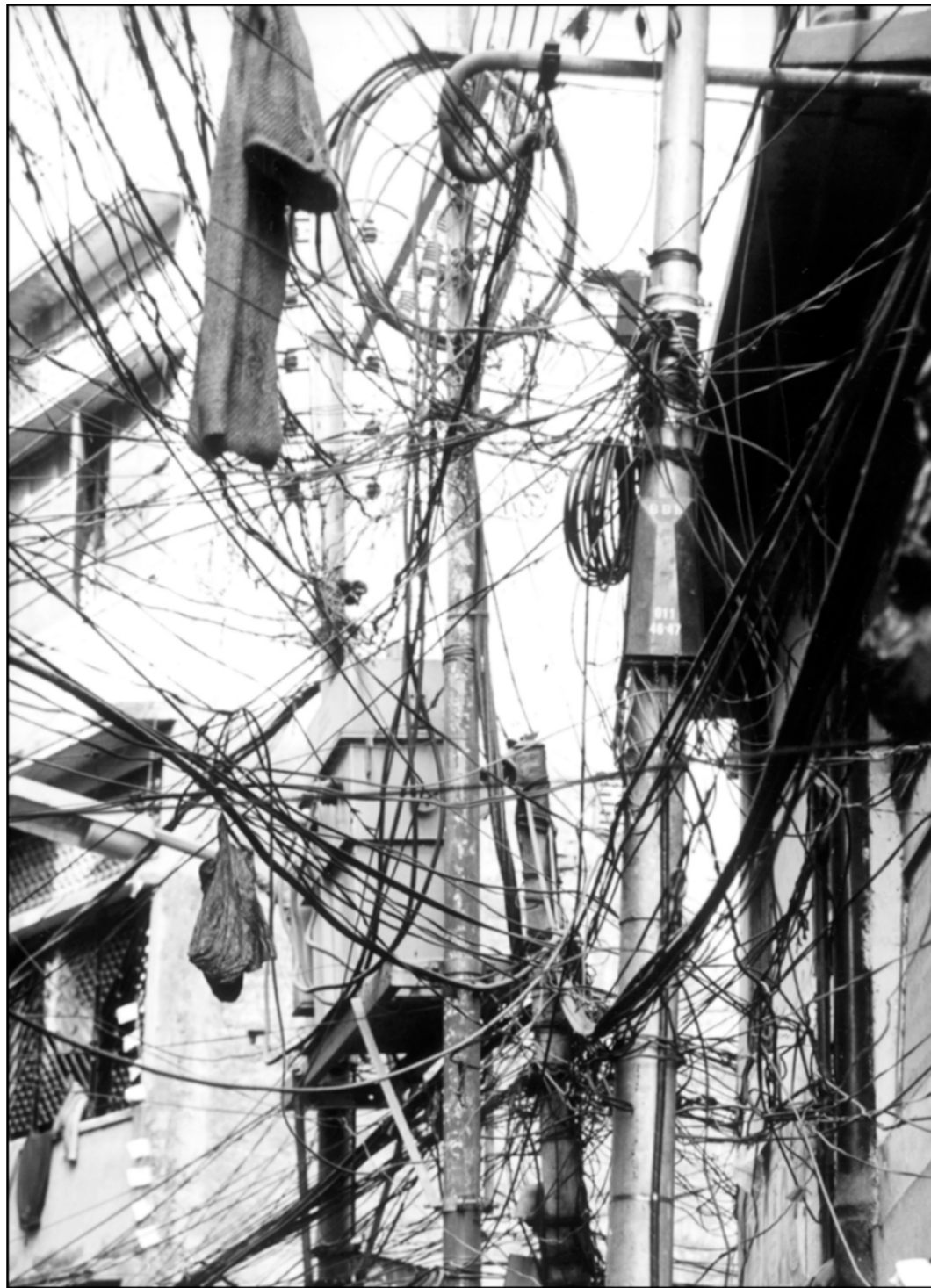


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN  
Cobweb of cables...a power transformer crisscrossed with electric and telephone lines has turned into a potential danger at 29 Rakhal Chandra Basak Lane in the city.

# India to recall HC to Pakistan

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Both countries have moved extra troops to their common border and put their respective armed forces on a state of high alert.

The United States, China and Russia have all appealed for restraint from both sides, amid concerns that rising tensions could spark a full-fledged conflict between the nuclear-capable South Asian rivals.

Meanwhile, India has stepped up the tempo of its diplomatic offensive to persuade the international community to pressure Pakistan to act against the two terrorist outfits.

Indian Foreign Secretary Chokila Iyer on Thursday met the ambassadors of France, Britain and Germany and handed over to them the evidence investigators have gathered so far showing the involvement of Lashkar and Jaish in the attack.

Interestingly, Britain, France and Germany are key members of the US-led international coalition against terrorism.

But there is disquiet in New Delhi

about the remarks emanating from the US State Department in Washington in the last few days. Secretary of State Colin Powell and State Department have asked India to share with Pakistan the intelligence gathered about the people involved in the attack on Parliament.

What has also not gone down well in India is State Department spokesman Richard Boucher's demanding "proof" about the involvement of Lashkar and Jaish, both Pakistan-based militants, in the assault on Parliament even after India came up with "credible evidence" of the culpability of these two outfits.

The disquiet and a certain amount of frustration filtered through in the speech Prime Minister Vajpayee made in Parliament on the last day of its winter session on Wednesday last. Without naming the US, Vajpayee spoke about the "double standard" adopted by certain countries in viewing the threat of terrorism which he said was not confined to Afghanistan alone.

The Prime Minister also asked the countries advising a "restrained" Indian response to the attack on Parliament to counsel Pakistan to stop the terrorist groups operating from that country from carrying out strikes in India.

Official circles in Delhi are piqued by the remarks emanating from Washington especially when the British High Commissioner to India Rob Young told reporters after a meeting with Indian Home Minister L K Advani that Britain recognises Lashkar and Jaish as terrorist outfits and banned them.

India's ruling BJP is on record as disapproving Powell's suggestion that India share with Pakistan the evidence about the perpetrators of the attack on Parliament.

That Washington too is sensitive of the growing criticism of the remarks by Powell and Boucher was brought out by the fact that American ambassador to India Richard Blackwell met a group of BJP parliamentarians Thursday night and sought to assuage their feelings.

## 13 hurt as villagers clash in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

A clash between two groups of villagers on the outskirts of the town yesterday left some 13 people injured.

Police and witnesses said the people of Janpur and Databari locked in a clash over sharing of gambling money at about 8 pm.

Later, police rushed to the spot and dispersed the feuding groups by charging baton.

Two of the injured - Ibrahim and Shawkat -- were admitted to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

## Ferry capsizes

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Survivors said a Patharghata bound ferry carrying 25 passengers aboard sank in the river after it was hit by a trawler.

The other passengers swam ashore. The damaged ferry was later salvaged from the river.

## Local traders

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arrangement would give Bangladesh a chance to introduce its merchandise to bordering seven northeastern Indian states.

Initially, the cross-border trade will continue for six months on an experimental basis and if found viable, it will be extended further, the commerce minister added.

"What's wrong if both the government and the private sector can benefit out of it," he said, making it clear that the arrangement is "completely different" both in concept and practice from transit and transshipment.

He also denied that only one transport company has been given the business, saying that those who applied had been given the initial chance, and their performance would decide whether and how long they would continue.

# Second Round Block Bidding

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another PSC with US company Pangaea for Block 8 on March 20 but Pangaea left Bangladesh without showing any clear reason.

Unlike Unocal's PSC for Block 7 signed in April last year, the PSCs signed with both Shell Oil and Maersk were designed to conduct seismic survey and drill some exploratory wells. Unocal's PSC gives a five-year moratorium on oil and gas exploration in Block 7. It says the company will start exploration only when it will be sure that there is enough market for gas in Bangladesh.

While Unocal's PSC was signed at a "super fast pace" to mark US President Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh in March last year, the process for approval of PSCs of Shell and Maersk progressed at

snail's pace. Shell's PSCs were signed in July last.

The PSCs signed with Maersk focussed on conducting three-dimensional seismic survey in 500 kms in each of blocks 19 and 20 in the first five years. Bangladeshi exploration and production company BAPEX was supposed to get a 10 per cent carried over interest in these blocks.

Blocks 19 and 20 are spread over more than 200 kms in the Bay of Bengal. Maersk's exploration activities in the first five years is supposed to be limited to 200 meters of water depth.

As per the guideline of the Model PSC, Maersk had also proposed that it was interested in exporting gas in the form of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

On the other hand, the Tullow-

Petronas negotiation is in an uncertain situation. Petronas had proposed that it should be given 60 per cent equity share in Block 11, its Bangladeshi partner Bapex 20 per cent equity as carried over interest and Tullow oil the remaining 20 per cent.

On the other Tullow had proposed that it should be given 45 per cent equity share, Petronas 45 and BAPEX 10 per cent. Tullow also wanted to be the operator.

Though Petrobangla termed Petronas' proposal "very much acceptable", the energy ministry favoured the Tullow formula.

"The Irish company was favoured by government high ups in the Second Round Bidding, resulting in delay in decision in the whole bidding process," one source said.

## SAARC members

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zero tariff access for 25 category of items to Indian market, which is tagged with transshipment of Indian goods through Bangladesh territory.

The FBCCI president said, in the face of the emerging trend in global trade, countries in South Asia have pursued trade liberalisation policies in varying degrees, independent of requirements for regional and sub-regional co-operation. In addition, certain liberalisation measures were initiated after launching of the SAPTA.

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka went for extensive trade liberalisation but this was not reciprocated by their bigger trading partner, India. "This has resulted in huge trade imbalance against Bangladesh. India's exports to Bangladesh rose from US \$ 350 million to US \$ 3 billion while its imports from Bangladesh reached US \$ 350 million from 15 million," the FBCCI president said.

He said the reason for such huge trade gap is due to unfavourable trade policy regime and non-tariff and para-tariff barriers in India against imports from Bangladesh. Goods from Bangladesh can not enter the Indian market and the export volume remains stagnant, he said.

## Powell plays down

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stantly reviewing our plans."

"But I think it's too much of a leap to say, 'This worked here let's see how it lines up in a similar fashion with respect to Iraq,'" said the secretary of state, who served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President George Bush during the Gulf War, which drove an Iraqi invading force from Kuwait a decade ago.

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## US to freeze

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had abetted bin Laden's quest for weapons of mass destruction.

"UTN claims to serve the hungry and needy of Afghanistan, but it was the UTN that provided information about nuclear weapons to al-Qaida," alleged the president, whose order also covers three UTN directors.

The White House said in a fact sheet that Thursday's action brought to 158 the number of individuals and organisations whose assets are to be frozen under a presidential directive first issued September 23.

Meanwhile, Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh yesterday welcomed Washington's decision to freeze the assets of Lashkar-e-Taiba blamed by New Delhi for last week's attack on the Indian parliament.

"It was long expected. I am glad that the Lashkar-e-Taiba is now included in the list of terrorists prepared by the United States," said Singh.

In October this year, the United States and Britain announced a similar block on funds to Jaish-e-Mohammad, the other militant group implicated by New Delhi in the December 13 parliament attack.

India has been pressing the United States to use its leverage with Pakistan to force it to crack-down on both Lashkar and Jaish.

## Karwan Bazar

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High Court that issued an injunction on the newly built market.

A children's park just to the south of the DCC's Zone6 office at Karwan Bazar was gradually occupied by a section of wholesale traders. At present, no park exists in that place; rather whole sellers are running their business there in full swing.

A High Court bench issued a permanent injunction on the land in 1994 following a writ petition filed by Khudra Arat Babosayee Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity. Tohere has been another court injunction on the plot to the north of the zone office at Karwan Bazar.

Sources in the DCC alleged that the existing situation could have been avoided had the DCC taken effective measures before the places were occupied.

## BIMSTEC

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ies," he told reporters at a press conference.

"Myanmar's participation in the grouping is particularly significant as it serves as a physical link between Southeast Asia and South Asia," he said, adding that the military-ruled state could boost the energy sector.

Despite the global slowdown and the economic consequences of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the four-year-old grouping is aiming for significant economic growth, especially through international funding.

"There is a clear need for BIMSTEC to redouble its efforts to further enhance economic, commercial and technical cooperation among the member countries, both at the government and private sector levels," it said.

"We continue to recognise the threat posed by terrorism to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, their economic growth and development, and international peace and security," the joint statement said.

Sri Lanka offered to host the next year's BIMST-EC meeting.

# Palestinians in Gaza think only God can help them

AFF, Gaza City

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who say they harbour no illusions over international action to help them, are bitterly criticising the "shameful" position of Arab countries and say they now have only God as an ally.

In the muddy roads of the al-Shateeh camps, which hold 70,000 people in Gaza, Thursday's meeting in Cairo of Arab foreign ministers reinforced many people's feelings of isolation.

The ministers and representatives of the 22-member grouping affirmed their support for Palestinian

## Pakistan to keep envoy to India

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan said yesterday it will maintain its ambassador in India and "keep channels open" with its arch rival, refusing to reciprocate for India's withdrawal of its envoy from the Pakistani capital.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan said Pakistan regrets India's diplomatic step, which followed New Delhi's claims of Pakistani responsibility for an attack by militants against its Parliament last week.

India announced earlier Friday that effective Jan. 1, it will sever rail and bus links with Pakistan, a symbolic measure recalling the dramatic decline of relations from the optimistic days in 1999 when a new New Delhi-Lahore bus service was opened.

"Pakistan does not intend to respond in kind," Khan said, reading a government statement.

India has persistently accused Pakistan of allowing militant groups to operate freely in its territory and to cross the frontier.

## 2 murdered

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Hira told newsmen that she could not identify the armed killers.

Police quoted the neighbours as saying that Hira has been having an affair with the victim's nephew, Liton, for almost five years. The issue strained her almost 11-year married life with Rahman. Police believe that the killing is a sequel to the conflict.

Victim's brother, Badiuzzaman Bulu, filed a case with Mohammadpur police station. The police picked up Hira for interrogation.

The case was handed over to Detective Branch of Police last night.

In a separate incident, Mahboob, 36, a resident of Greenway, Nayatola was shot dead when he got stuck in a crossfire at Amtoli, Maghbaraz in the city's Ramna area on Thursday night.

The incident took place when 'Seven Star' Subrata group and Jishan-Rani group locked in a clash over drug trading and extortion at Phensy Lane in the area. Sources said the armed Subrata group was returning through Phensy Lane of Amtoli when the Jishan-Roni group blocked their way. At one stage they began to exchange fire.

Mahboob, a driver by profession, was passing the area when he was shot at about 10 p.m.

He died on the spot.

Police recovered his body and sent it to DMCH for autopsy.

# 200 journalists

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which has been delayed by three years.

The summit level annual conference of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) scheduled to be held in 1999 was postponed indefinitely due to tensions between arch-rivals India and Pakistan.

"We have set aside a big hotel with five-star standards to provide accommodation exclusively for foreign journalists," said DD Khatiwada, Director General, Department of Information.

He said no distinction would be made between journalists belonging to government and private media.

"Every journalist would get our full co-operation during the Summit."

Khatiwada said a media centre would be opened at Hotel Sheraton in Katmandu to provide information and phone, fax and e-mail facilities to foreign journalists.

"There would also be regular press briefings about the outcome of the conference," the DG said while talking to a group of visiting Bangladeshi journalists about a week ago.

He further said the government of Nepal was fully determined to hold the SAARC Summit despite the prevailing state of emergency in the country. "We have been doing our best to make the 11th SAARC summit a grand success," he said.

Some difficulties might arise out of any emergency but that would not

leader Yasser Arafat and called for a boycott of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, but did not mention the Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

"It is a disgrace. What kind of leaders are they? We are being massacred daily and the most they can do is condemn the situation," said one resident of the refugee camp, a 32-year-old tailor named Barhum Shahin.

"They condemn anti-Israeli operations more energetically than anti-Palestinian massacres," he said.

"We are used to these shameful attitudes. It is neither the first nor the last summit to end with nothing more than familiar-sounding condemnations," he complained.

"The condescend to deal with Arafat, when they should be standing in the same trench as him," Shahin said.

"My future and that of my children lies in the hands of God. The Palestinians have only him to defend them," said the father of four.

He considers a bare "minimum"

## 38 Hindus

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disclosing their names and the party they belong to," Dipa Biswas said.

A thorough investigation will be made to reveal under what circumstances these Hindu people went to India. Probably they were made victims of post-election dirty politics, said a senior official of Sathkira police.

## AL leader assaulted in Gazipur

UNB, Gazipur

A local leader of Awami League was injured in an attack by ruling party-backed miscreants at Kaliakoir bus stand yesterday.

The attackers beat up Habiluddin Sikder, owner of a filling station and joint convener of Kaliakoir upazila Awami League in the morning. Sikder blamed BNP for the attack.

In another incident terrorists fired three gunshots targeting Kamal Hossain, convener of Gachha union unit of Chhatra Dal in Sadar upazila, in front of Board Bazar Agrani Bank at noon.

Kamal, who escaped unhurt, blamed Awami League activists for the incident.

## Laden, Omar

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did not know where he was at the time.

US special forces and Afghan militiamen are still searching the numerous mountain caves and tunnels at Tora Bora in which al-Qaida fighters took refuge.

"There are many other caves in the mountains," Ali said yesterday.