

Shazneen case

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during the cross-examination for over three and a half hours.
After the cross-examination by Shahid's lawyer, Simeen was cross-examined by the lawyers of accused Hasan, Minu and Parvin.
The court then adjourned the hearing till noon tomorrow.
The court also directed the prosecution side to produce another witness before the court on that day.
During the cross-examination, Simeen told the court that all the accused in the case were present at the spot on the night of April 23, 1998 when Shazneen was raped and murdered. But Shahid was missing. Later, Shahid was arrested and he was taken to the place of occurrence on September 27, 1998, she said.
Simeen also told the court that prior to the incident Shazneen was talking to her boy friend Abed over telephone.
The witness told the court that investigation officers (IOs) recorded her statements on May 2, 1998 in the Shazneen murder case and on October 5 in the same year in the Shazneen rape case.
Shahid voluntarily confessed to the rape and the killing and he was not forced to do this, Simeen said.
Simeen further said Humayun, another accused (now dead), was taken to her parents' house to recover the chisel, used to hit the victim.
"After the incident, I thought that my father should have been informed what Shazneen had told me on April 3 about Hasan. On that day (April 3) Shazneen told me that Hasan had grabbed her at her bathroom on April 1 with an ill motive. Later I was convinced that Hasan was the mastermind behind the killing", Simeen said.
Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence in the city on

Saber

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Mirza Hossain Haider granted bail to Saber.
The authorities filed four cases in connection with the Mymensingh blast on December 7.
Saber Chowdhury was arrested on December 8 under Section 54 without any specific charge. On December 28, he was shown arrested in one of the Mymensingh blast case. Saber got bail from this case from the High Court afterwards.
Saber was released as per a High Court order yesterday.
However, anticipating that the government might try to arrest him in the remaining three cases, Saber moved bail petitions in the High Court.
The other bench of Justices Hamidul Haq and Salma Masud Chowdhury ordered the authorities not to arrest or search Saber's residence and business establishments without proper warrant.
Saber pleaded to the High Court yesterday that the police yesterday raided his house twice and harassed him.
Advocate Mahbubey Alam moved the petitions on behalf of Saber.

Meanwhile, Awami League Presidium member Tofail Ahmed yesterday got bail in a murder case from the High Court division bench of Justices Syed Amirul Islam and Mirza Hossain Haider.

Tofail was arrested on December 8 without any specific charge. He was placed under a one-month detention. The authorities later showed him arrested in a murder case. After Tofail's one-month detention expired, the authorities put him on another three-month detention. He is in Kushtia jail now.

SUST teachers

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petition in this regard.
On the other hand, university authorities claimed that the appointments of the two teachers were yet to be included under the revenue budget and as such there were no legal provisions to let them go on a study leave with salary. However, they were granted study leave without pay on humanitarian grounds, the authorities added.

BDR, police on alert

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said a high official of the home ministry, preferring anonymity.
A counter-intelligence will keep eyes on the RAT to see whether its members are involved in corruption. Assignments have already been prepared to be handed over to the RAT members.
Sources said all the DIGs, SPs, NSI, DB, SB and other officials concerned and units have been instructed to keep vigil round the clock so that the listed criminals, who went into hiding during the joint drive, cannot reorganise and commit any crime.
BDR have also been asked to keep an eye on the borders so that the criminals who have taken refuge to the neighbouring country cannot come in through the border. They have been asked to arrest suspected persons while leaving or entering the country.
Meanwhile, talking to The Daily Star State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar said the joint drive has brought much relief to public life. "We will try our best to

maintain the situation so that people can live without any fear."
He said the joint drive is very much on and it will continue as long as necessary. The government is determined to maintain law and order at any cost, he added.
About press reports that criminals have become active immediately after army withdrawal, he said some newspaper carried exaggerated reports. The authorities concerned verified those reports with police and local administrations and found them untrue.
Babar said steps have been taken to bring necessary reforms to the police force to enhance their skill and performance. The government is trying its best to enhance logistics supports and is arranging regular, modern training of the law enforcers.
"Our intention is good...we really want a peaceful situation in the country and so we are proceeding with a lot of things to ensure peace and security in public life," he added.

BB loan portfolio

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statements transparent and acceptable," Dr Fakhruddin said.
"Internationally, writing off of bad debts which are full provided for is a recognised practice. However, as the country's banks are reluctant to use this practice, their books of accounts are becoming unnecessarily and artificially inflated," said the governor.
Meantime, the bankers welcomed the move, saying it would bring a positive change in the banking system.
Managing Director of Mercantile Bank Ltd. M Taheruddin said, "The write-off provision would help the banks have a healthy portfolio. Also, the provision to pursue legal actions against defaulters even after writing off loans would help restore discipline in the banking system." He also termed the new guideline for loan rescheduling a reasonable one.
The BB said the banks will immediately have to start the process of writing off bad debts and the oldest bad debts will have to be disposed off first.
If the bad debts are not fully provided for, then the banks may deduct required funds from their current year's income to write them off, the BB instruction said.
Even after the write-off, the borrowers would still be identified as defaulters and the banks will have to have a constant effort to

realise the loans. The banks will set up their own 'debt collection units' to realise the written-off bad debts and may also appoint other institutions to realise them.
Also, the banks will continue legal procedures against the borrowers. And if cases do not exist against any bad loan, the bank will file one before writing it off.
The banks will have to maintain separate ledgers for the written-off loans to be shown in the annual reports.
In its new guideline for rescheduling term loans, the BB said while rescheduling loans for the first time, the borrower will have to deposit 15 per cent of the defaulted instalments or 10 per cent of the total outstanding amount, whichever is less, in cash. And in case of rescheduling more than twice, the borrower will have to deposit 50 per cent of the defaulted instalments or 30 per cent of the total outstanding, whichever is less, again in cash.
Earlier, there was a provision to reschedule loans time and again paying only 10 per cent of the defaulted dues in cash.

Bogra DC transferred, stand-released

UNB, Bogra

Deputy Commissioner Safiuddin Ahmed has been transferred and stand-released.
Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Rafiqul Mohamed took over the charge of DC on Sunday.
Safiuddin Ahmed was made Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the Ministry of Establishment. The cause behind his transfer and stand-release could not be known.
Sources said Ahmed had a strained relation with local politicians and journalists ever since he joined as DC of the district.
Finally, a 'distance' developed between Ahmed and the local MPs.

Security deposit

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workers who come back home or become jobless abroad," he said. The deposit of Tk 15 lakh is not enough for compensation, he said.
BAIRA Secretary General Ghulam Mostafa told The Daily Star, "We are seriously disappointed at the move, as it will create a monopoly of bigger recruiting agents."
Although the government's intention to lower the migration cost is good, the process is wrong, he said.
The government should have discussed with the BAIRA before taking any such step, he thinks.
By contrast, the state minister told The Daily Star that he wanted to discuss with the BAIRA several times before, but the association leaders did not turn up.
Mostafa fears that 40 to 50 per cent of the recruiting agencies would close down if the government implements the decision.

Re-export

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process," said a participant of the meeting. The meeting also discussed the negative aspects and ways of retaining control over the re-export system.
Three local companies, Union Trading Company Limited, Taher Imprex, and Nitan have sought permission from the commerce ministry for importing wheat, boulder salt and mustard seed declaring their quantity.
After processing and packing in the country, these products would be re-exported to other countries and the companies would be able to retain 50 per cent value addition, the meeting was told.
Value of import and export would be settled against back-to-back bank L/Cs provided by the buyers. Local importers will have to produce bank guarantees for releasing raw materials for their duties and taxes and get back the guarantee after re-exporting those goods.
If the exporter fails to re-export goods in time, the government would collect the duties and taxes from bank guarantee.
As per the existing export policy, exporters are not required to seek permission from the commerce ministry in case of re-export on case to case basis. The value addition requirement has been reduced to five per cent from 10 per cent, the meeting was told.
If these three firms succeed, the companies willing to re-export would not be required to seek permission from the ministry in future, said a source who attended the meeting.
The exporters would not be allowed to use the name of Bangladesh as the country of origin and the goods to be re-exported will have to be tagged with a statement that these items were imported temporarily.
The commerce ministry earlier in December 2001 okayed a proposal for transshipment of Indian fruits and related products through Bangladesh to the northeastern Indian states.
As per the decision, Bangladeshi traders were supposed to import Indian goods and then re-export them to the northeastern states. But the finance minister later turned down the proposal.

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HC verdicts

FROM PAGE 12
effect from March 20, 1991. But the Public Service Commission (PSC) recommended that their promotion be effective from January 28, 1998.
The ASPs recruited directly by the PSC went to the Administrative Tribunal against the order. The tribunal in its verdict said the promotion was not sustainable. Then the government and the officiating ASPs took the case to the Appellate Tribunal, which also upheld the verdict.
The officiating ASPs and the government then filed two leave petitions against the order with the Appellate Division. After hearing, the bench upheld the judgement of the Administrative Tribunal.
Dr Kamal Hossain, Advocate Khadakar Mahbub Uddin and Advocate Mahbubur Rahman moved the petition for the directly recruited ASPs. Barrister Moinal Hossain and Wadud Bhuiyan stood for the departmental ASPs. Additional Attorney General Abdur Razzaq represented the government.
Sources said 85 of the officiating ASPs were made Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) during the period.
They said the move created rancour among the directly recruited ASPs as the departmental Assistant SPs became Additional SPs superseding those who were directly recruited by the PSC much earlier.

Gas gap keeps yawning

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trial production in Savar Export Processing Zone, Manikganj, and Joydevpur industrial belt. The Power Development Board (PDB) has been forced to cut power generation by about 300 MW since Sunday.
Over 20 localities in the city are affected by low gas pressure, or almost nil gas flow during daytime. However, gas supply improves at night.
Every winter the gas supply falls, on varying degrees, as low temperature reduces the gas-flow capacity of the pipelines. A severe cold and an increase in gas consumption worsened the crisis from Sunday last.
Against a gas production of 1103 mmcfcd Sunday, the consumption was 1163 mmcfcd. This extra gas came from storage inside the 1200 km of pipelines. As the consumption was higher than the supply, the gas flow pressure fell, said GTCL sources. The condition remained unchanged yesterday.
The gas flow was less than usual Sunday also because three wells in Kailashtila gas-field were

shut down for maintenance. Instead of producing 60 mmcfcd, Kailashtila supplied only 4 mmcfcd Sunday. However, it resumed normal production yesterday.
The Titas gas system is facing extra pressure because the PDB has launched operation of the Ghorashal power unit 4. Combined with five other power plants, the Ghorashal units were producing 890 MW power Sunday consuming, at the rate of 8 million cubic feet per hour, 192-mmcfcd gas. But by the evening the gas pressure fell down to 6.5 million cubic feet per hour and power production came down to 600 MW, said a PDB source.
Titas could have had augmented gas supply from Sangu field in Chittagong, as the Rauzan 210 MW power plant remains inoperative for maintenance. However, due to lack of pipeline facilities, the Sangu gas could not be diverted, GTCL sources said.
Worse still, some industrial consumers in Narayanganj --with the help of a section of unscrupulous Titas meter readers, ledger writers and officials-- were steal-

ing a huge quantity of gas. The Titas management and the energy ministry are well aware of these criminal activities, but they refrain from punishing the criminals because of their 'political connections', said a Petrobangla source. "The pilferage is depriving genuine customers of gas," he noted.
Khaleda
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many foreign workers had stayed back upon expiry of their contracts and did not seek any permission in this regard.
Last year, in a massive crackdown on illegal foreign workers, more than 20,000 Bangladeshi workers were deported.
However, the government did renew the work permits of more than one lakh Bangladeshi workers whose tenure had expired last June.
Malaysia has complained that higher migration cost prompts Bangladeshi workers to hop from one job to the other and proposed a \$1,000 ceiling.
While the government has accepted the proposal, there has not been any response from Malaysian on resumption of fresh recruitment as yet.

Sachs: High population

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladesh's human capital was poor. The assistance should increase at least by five times to help the country achieve millennium goals in health and education sectors.
The level of public investment in human capital growth in Bangladesh is too low to achieve the millennium goals, Sachs said. "It is only six dollars annually while it is \$2,000 in developed countries. It should be \$35 to \$40 as per the World Health Organisation's minimum standard."
He identified poor performance on the part of donors, not the government, in setting big targets from small spending, especially in the health sector.
Development of energy is another strategic goal for the country and there is no sense in keeping energy under the ground for more than 20 years, the economist said. "What is important is to do things transparently. Use it and develop it - it is very important to generate power and boost export."
He also forecast that arsenic

could emerge as a big problem in near future. "Around 130 million people don't have safe drinking water. This is not a small problem and it is continuing for 15 years."
He said Bangladesh needs to take up a very realistic strategy, with sufficient assistance from donors, to achieve the millennium goals that include halving poverty and hunger by 2015.
"But setting goals alone doesn't produce results," he said, recalling previous records of failures in achieving health and education for all by 2000, and calling for a different approach this time.
Stressing the need for science and technology development, Sachs said even a poor country needs a science and technology development policy. Science and technology development is needed for the country to substantially raise per capita income.
"Unplanned urbanisation is probably the biggest challenge for Bangladesh," he observed adding that zoning and medium-size cities should be a high priority here.

RAT to turn elite

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The sources said the government believes an elite force to contain crime and violence is imperative in the context of an alarming rise in local, regional and global crime and terrorism.
In this regard, they referred to the United States that has commissioned a home security force in addition to the Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies to cope with the post-September 11 realities.
Most developed countries have elite forces to handle special security issues and work as backup for existing law enforcement agencies, they said.
According to the proposal, the mooted civil security force will have two helicopters, sophisticated weaponry, powerful wireless system and modern vehicles.
The proposal also envisages higher salaries and allowances for the members, at least double of what a regular police personnel

gets, so that they are not drawn into corruption.
It is also proposed that the force be put directly under the home ministry as it may prove inefficient and ineffective under the police authorities.
There will however be no magisterial power for the civil security force and counterintelligence has also been suggested to keep the force dynamic, honest and sincere.
The major task of the mooted force will be to ensure internal security, arrest arms and drug traffickers, and notorious criminals and speedy inquiry into sensitive cases.
A high police official on condition of anonymity said formation of the civil security force would depend on the performance of the RAT, which will start operations on January 17.
The cost for formation of the force is estimated to be Tk 70-80 crore, the official said.
Meanwhile, the passing out of the first RAT batch takes place on January 16. The contingent of 133

policemen has had para-commando training at the Rajendrapur cantonment for 10 weeks.
Initially, the first batch of the RAT will be segmented into 11 teams and would operate in the capital only.
One hundred and fifty police have also been selected for the second batch and will soon be sent for training.
The selected personnel have been cleared by all intelligence agencies and their performance, track records, age and efficiency have taken into consideration in selection.
The first RAT batch will work under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner. The home ministry, in consultation with the government policymakers, will also assign them as and when required.
A hostel for the RAT members has already been arranged at Lalmatia in the city and the home ministry has requested the finance ministry for Tk 12 crore to support the RAT operations.

Shibir wants to spread wings

FROM PAGE 12
Sangha) in the killing of intellectuals during the War of Liberation. A large number of the intellectuals killed at that time were of Dhaka University. The ICS was floated in 1977.
It has also established dominance in Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, the Islamic University, Kushtia, and the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) in Sylhet. ICS did not pursue its activities in public until recently at Dhaka University fearing backlash from general students.
ICS has boasts 2,500 members at the DU and of them, about 1,000 are residing in different residential halls, according to its leaders.
Besides, the ICS has some dozens of residential houses around the campus from where they pursue 'covert politics' at Dhaka University. They also conducted political activities from the Kataban Mosque which was built illegally on the DU campus.
Replying to a query about ICS-sponsored violence in some educational institutions, Nurul Islam Bulbul said, "If anyone loses their eyes with the scratch of our hands we have nothing to do." "We do this only when our back is against the wall."
He said there could be no meeting of the Paribesh Parishad leaving the ICS out as the four-party alliance government is in power.
However, various student organisations have protested the ICS demand to sit in the Paribesh Parishad meeting.
Talking to The Daily Star, leader of

the ruling BNP's student wing Jatayatbadi Chhatra Dal Shafikul Bari Babu said the ICS demand was 'irrational' as it is not active on the DU campus.
President of the Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) Sharifuzzaman Sharif said there is no room at Dhaka University for any communal organisation.
General Secretary of the DU unit of the Awami League's student front Bangladesh Chhatra League Hemayet Uddin Himu also vowed to resist any ICS move on the campus.
Meanwhile, a group of about 60 ICS leaders including central and DU unit office bearers recently met the vice-chancellor (VC).
DU observers believe the meeting was part of the ICS' current policy to expand its activities on the campus. Sources said the ICS leaders sought cooperation of the DU VC so that they could start their activities with full vigour.
Professor SMA Fayedz told The Daily Star that the ICS leaders came to greet him on his becoming the vice-chancellor of the university like other student organisations. He also denied having discussed the politics of the ICS on the campus.
The ICS contested in the last Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) elections in 1990. It was their last and only open activity on the campus, said a teacher of the university on condition of anonymity. "The All-Party Students' Unity ousted the ICS leaders and activists from the

campus at the time when they tried to take out a procession in favour of the ICS candidates in the DUCSU."
Campus observers said after the October 1, 2001 elections, which the AL lost, the JCD took over the residential halls as the BCL left those. At the time, large numbers of ICS activists entered the residential halls in the guise of the JCD men. Afterwards, they pursued their politics more vigorously than ever before.
A top JCD leader said, "The ICS is emerging stronger in the educational institutions including Dhaka University, mainly capitalising on the BNP's alliance with Jamaat."
The ICS had banners hung on the campus in December 2001 and January last year welcoming admission seekers. However, left-leaning student wings torched the banners with the passive support of most JCD men.
It was not long ago when the JCD was engaged in intense rivalry with the ICS, which unleashed a series of attacks on the activists of the former in different educational institutions, particularly at Rajshahi University and Chittagong University in the 1990s.
But the JCD leaders now say they are left with no choice but to maintain 'friendly ties' with their former foes due to the alliance of the BNP with Jamaat.

Joy for Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1
The hosts also scored an identical 1-0 win against Nepal on Friday.
With this win Bangladesh topped Group B with six points. Pakistan was the first team to confirm their place in the last four from Group A.
Earlier, in the first match of the day, Nepal blanked newcomers Bhutan 2-0 to stay in the title race. The booters of the Himalayan kingdom will now have to battle it out with Maldives on Wednesday to determine who join Bangladesh in the semifinals from the group.
Defending champions India on the other hand face Sri Lanka today to decide the other semifinalists in the eight-team meet.
Back to the day's fast-paced match, Bangladesh enjoyed a better first half with midfield playmaker Arman Miah operating like a true general. His wonderful dribbling, probing crosses and silky touches definitely showed his true class.
Bangladesh could have taken the lead as early in the second minute had not Parvez Babu's scorching grounder missed the mark by an inch.
The home team came close to scoring again in the 32nd minute when ace striker Alfaz, who scored

the winner against Nepal on Saturday, delivered a low cross from the right. But both Parvez and Joy failed to take a clean hit in front of the goal.
But Maldives, who remained busy defending inside their own half for much of the time, still created the best opportunity in the match.
Mohammed Nizam fired a spectacular 30-yard curling free kick but Bangladesh custodian Aminul flung to his right to tip it over for a corner.
Aminul's brilliance came into play again in the 58th when the country's number one keeper fisted a close shot by Abdul Ghani over the bar.
Yellow cards: Rajani, Hasan al Mamun (Bangladesh), Hussain Habeeb (Maldives).
TEAMS
Bangladesh: Aminul, Hasan al Mamun, Rajani, Nazrul, Sujon, Parvez, Motiur Munna, Arman, Joy, Kanchan and Alfaz (Farhad).
Maldives: Imran, Ibrahim, Fazeel, Nizam, Ismail (Luthfy), Assad, Ahmed Naaz (Azeem), Habeeb, Jameel, Hussain and Shiham (Umar).
Referee: AD Silva (Sri Lanka).

BGMEA polls deferred

FROM PAGE 1
merce ministry to defer the election, as a state minister and some other influential BNP lawmakers 'were against' the January 26 schedule.
The commerce ministry in its order mentioned "the election was supposed to be held in the last week of February but the BGMEA board fixed January 26 for holding it. In order to hold the election according to the original schedule (in February), February 25 has been fixed for it."
But BGMEA leaders said there was no bar in the BGMEA constitution on holding the election early and the schedule was announced in line with the constitution of the association. BGMEA leaders alleged that deferring the election would create a problems for voters as well as candidates, as many of them will perform Hajj and stay abroad for a long time.
Despite repeated attempts, Kutubuddin Ahmed, BGMEA president, could not be reached till filing of this report at 8.15pm last night.
But Annisul Huq, leader of the joint panel, Sammilito Parishad-Forum, and also a director of the board, in his reaction said: "We are surprised by the government order. There is no instance of the government interfering in the BGMEA election so far."

Mimi

FROM PAGE 1
oration of her condition.
Mimi's elder brother Captain AS Masud Parvez blamed Babu and Arif for burning his only sister in a bid to kill. He filed a case with the Tejgaon Police Station against the two.
But police could not arrest any of them yet. Sources said Babu and Arif had fled the capital soon after the incident and went into hiding.
Mimi engaged herself with Babu, former strike bowler of the national team, last year.
Since her brother asked her to walk away from the relationship and concentrate on study, she was trying to talk Babu into forgetting her.
"We lost our only sister...we wanted to save her but enough," Parvez told The Daily Star.
Mimi's body was sent to the DMCH morgue for an autopsy. The body will be taken to Jamgara in Savar for burial, family sources said.

Tigers fly off

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In South Africa, Bangladesh will also play two lead-up matches on February 3 and 5 before taking on Canada in their opening Pool B match on February 11 at the Kingsmead cricket ground in Durban.
Prior to their departure, coach Mohsin Kamal and captain Khaled Mashud revealed that their initial mission in the World Cup was to win against Canada and Kenya and look for another upset win against any one of the pool's big teams -- Sri Lanka, West Indies, South Africa and New Zealand.

Cold wave

FROM PAGE 12
across the Tangail, Mymensingh, Faridpur and Khulna divisions would continue.
Quoting unofficial sources, our Sirajganj correspondent informed that the severe cold wave claimed at least 18 lives in past few days. Most of the victims were old aged and children.
Meanwhile, several organisations have been donating warm clothes and cheques to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's donation fund to help the poor and destitute.

UP polls: Security

FROM PAGE 1
discussion, 20 officials from Rajshahi division expressed opinions on different issues. The commission has a meeting with the officials from Khulna division today.
They talked about election preparation, security arrangement, law and order, vulnerability of some polling stations, unwanted pressure of certain quarters and limitations in performing election duties.
The secretary to the EC briefed them on the legal cover.
Akhter Ali Sarker, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of northern Thakurgaon, painted a dismal picture of law and order and sought army deployment during the polls. He told the meeting about an attack by extortionists on his way to Dhaka.
Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi Azir Uddin Ahmed said untoward incidents are common during the local body polls. He suggested that polling officials be recast and strict laws be enforced to avert such incidents.
Sultan Mahmud, UNO of Ishwardi Upazila, demanded deployment of troops saying: "We need guns to kill tigers, or the tigers will kill us."
Returning Officer Atahar Ali of Sathia Upazila in Pabna sought measures against those who threatened his life. The officer, who identified himself at the meeting as nephew of former CEC Abu Hena, filed a general diary with local police

in connection with the threat.
"I appeal to the Election Commission to deploy army for peace and security during the election," said Gourango Kishore Mostafi, returning officer of Gobindaganj, Gaibandha.
Local Government Secretary AYBI Siddique also spoke at the meeting. Among the invitees, inspector general of police, deputy inspector general of Rajshahi and superintendents of police (SPs) could not attend the meeting, as they were busy with the police week programme.
The UP polls will have 198,704 candidates, according to official figures.
The EC has finalised the list of the candidates, 21,376 of them for chairman, 137,909 for member and 39,419 for member reserved for women.
Those seeking election have filed candidature for 54,964 posts in 4,228 Union Parishads, each with one post of chairman, nine general members and three posts of woman members.
On the last date of nomination filing, the EC counted a total of 218,908 nomination papers submitted. It found 14,530 nomination papers invalid during scrutiny. The rest kept them away from the election race.
According to unofficial sources, 777 candidates have come out unopposed in the absence of rivals.