

# Plane with Georgian defence minister shot at in Iraq

## Bomb blasts kill four

AFP, Tbilisi

A plane carrying Georgia's Defense Minister David Tevzadze was shot at as it took off from Baghdad's airport to return to the Caucasus country overnight, but no one was hurt in the attack, officials said yesterday.

"The plane made a maneuver and coalition helicopters opened return fire," Koba Kobaladze, Georgia's national guard chief travelling with the minister, told reporters upon returning to Tbilisi.

"I was sleeping at the time and

didn't notice anything," Tevzadze said.

Tevzadze flew to Iraq for one day to inspect Georgian soldiers who are serving as part of the US-led peacekeeping force there.

Georgia sent 70 elite troops, doctors and mine-clearing experts to Iraq in August. They are due to return in February, to be replaced by 200 troops who will include special forces.

Another 300 soldiers are due to arrive before mid-2004.

A Baghdad report adds: A 15-

year-old boy was killed and five people injured yesterday when a bomb exploded on a busy street in central Baghdad as US soldiers and Iraqi police were trying to defuse it, police and medics said.

"People stayed near the bomb, people wouldn't leave, the Americans put something on the bomb to cover it when the soldiers backed off from the bomb, someone detonated it by remote control," said Sergeant Mohi Naimi.

Haidar Khodayr, 15, had been

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## US tightens security at embassy in Dhaka

AFP, Washington

The United States has tightened security at its embassy in Bangladesh and imposed travel restrictions on its diplomats there in response to recent multiple threats against the mission and US interests, the State Department said Thursday.

The department did not cite specific details of the threats, but advised US citizens in Bangladesh to boost their security precautions and be on guard for potential danger while in public places.

"The US government has recently received information regarding several possible threats against the US embassy in Dhaka and other US interests in Bangladesh," it said in a statement.

"The embassy has taken a number of measures to ensure the safety and security of its staff, including

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Another blast victim dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Another person, injured in Monday night's bomb blast at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA), died

at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in the early hours of yesterday, raising the death toll to four.

The victim was identified as Safar Ali, 25, of Sylhet Sadar upazila.

Safar was among the 50 people injured in the explosion that killed two on the spot.

Earlier on Tuesday, another injured, identified as Gani Miah, 35, son of Shahed Ali of village Islampur under Takerbazar Union of Companyganj upazila of Sylhet district, succumbed to his wounds at the hospital.

On Thursday, police took Reazul Islam, 25, son of Muhibul Islam of South Surma on a three-day remand for quizzing on Monday night's blast at the shrine. Kotwali police took him into custody on Wednesday night from Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, where he was admitted as an injured after the blast.

# Hasina for judicial probe into Sylhet shrine blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has demanded a judicial probe into the bomb blast at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) recently.

"We demand unearthing the facts behind the incident and exemplary punishment to the criminals involved," she said.

She made the demands while addressing a gathering at the main gate of the shrine after the Juma (Friday) prayers yesterday. Later, she joined a special prayers on the shrine premises, organised by the city and district units of the AL.

The explosion left four people killed and about 50 others injured.

Hasina, also leader of the opposition in parliament, regretted that the elements involved in the blast

targeted the holy shrine for such a heinous act when the annual 'urs' (a religious function) was going on.

She thought people who poisoned Gazar fish in the pond at the shrine last month are also involved in the blast. They committed these crimes in a planned way.

The bomb exploded at the shrine was similar to the ones blasted in the past at Ramna in the capital, Udichi function at Jessore and at Narayanganj and Mymensingh, Hasina said.

The opposition leader also referred to the killing of journalist Manik Chandra Shaha in Khulna on Thursday and said the country is now the grip of bombers, abductors, murderers and other criminals. Violence is spreading fast threatening peace and security in public life.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Anti-Ahmadiyya group's new programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chairman of the Islamic Oikya Jote, a partner of the ruling coalition, threatened that the country would turn into a province of India if the government did not declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim.

"Beware, Bangladesh will no more exist and will become India's province if you do not declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim immediately," warned Fazlul Haq Ammini MP.

Amini was addressing an anti-Ahmadiyya grand conference organised by International Majlis-e-Tahafuz-e-Khatme Nabuwat Bangladesh (IMTKNB), an international outfit of anti-Ahmadiyya diehards, at Paltan Maidan after Juma prayers yesterday where they announced a 44-day ultimatum to meet their 11-point demand.

The IMTKNB will observe a countrywide demonstration day on January 23 and march towards the Jatiya Sangsad and submit a memorandum.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

## THE STRENGTH WITHIN



Indranath Pal, a middle-aged potter, and his wife, right, in Bamunkushia village in Tangail have stepped beyond grinding poverty by producing ring slabs of clay, left, a cheap alternative to cement slabs used for sanitary latrines.

# Potters' wheels keep spinning in Bamunkushia

BIMAN BIHARI DAS

"Good days are back again," sings Indranath Pal with a happy giggle, standing in front of a row of tin-sheds owned by potters in his village that is a sure sign of rural prosperity.

Prosperity has erased frustrating stagnancy for potters like Indra, a middle-aged member of the pal community in Bamunkushia village, four kilometres east of Tangail town.

"The change you see now began only five years ago," explains Indra, who pioneered the change. Thanks to a rise in the installation and use of sanitary latrines by the government and NGOs (non-governmental organisations), Indra and his fellow potters in the village reinvigorated their occupation by linking up with the sanitary product boom.

When he first saw the ring slabs of the sanitary latrines to be put in sanitary wells, it occurred to Indra that potters could make ring slabs with clay instead of cement.

Pursuing the idea, he found the cost of clay slabs would be less than those of cement. His next step was to campaign in the neighbourhood to attract buyers.

His campaign yielded the expected result and customers gradually began to put in orders. Once there was a steady flow of orders, other potters joined in. Chhidam Pal, Anil Pal, Lalchan Pal, Jogesh Pal, Gouranga Pal and Govinda Pal -- all started making ring slabs as well as flower tubs and small pots for seedlings.

"Some families have migrated to India. Some changed their profession. Ten years ago, I also thought of becoming a rickshawpuller. But eventually I

couldn't leave my ancestors' occupation like many of my community. We are artisans. Art is in our blood. It's not so easy to leave it," Indra remembered the hard days for his community before the new work became available.

The people in this ancient occupation have been having a hard time for years. The demand for clay utensils has diminished over time due to the availability of cheap, handy alternatives, made of aluminium or glass or plastic. The trade has also been hurt by the migration to India of many of the Hindu community.

In such a context, the success story of Bamunkushia stands as an exception.

Making ring slabs is not really new for the potters. "We used to make the same things for the dug wells which are no more in use," Indra said. "This is only a new use

of the old things."

"Our second daughter is now in class five," said Jharna, Indra's wife. She recalled they could not send their first daughter to school due to poverty at the time. "Children from other families also go to school now," she added. Indra said the potters were making refrigerators with clay that keeps perishables like vegetables or food as long as a month. "It is still at the experimental level," he said.

Potters from Basakhanpur, Inatpur and Taratia villages are also making clay slabs now. More orders keep coming in.

Seventy-year-old Chhidam Pal, one of the senior potters in Bamunkushia, happily observed the tin-shed: "We have done it with our own merit and labour."

"But getting fuel to burn the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

# Scrap Modhupur eco-park project

## Environment activists ask govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment activists at a protest rally yesterday urged the government to stop construction of the eco-park in the Modhupur Garh forest which they fear will dislodge the indigenous people from their natural habitat and cause environmental hazards.

They said the proposed eco-park under the National Park Development Project will upset the forest's bio-diversity as well as destroy the distinctive lifestyles and cultures of the Garo and the Koch who are its integral parts.

Speakers at the rally, convened

by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) in front of the National Museum at Shahbag, also called upon the funding agencies to review their decision to support such a project.

"It's an evil effort of a certain clique to evict the indigenous people and destroy their natural grove," said BAPA General Secretary Abu Naser Khan. "Our movement seeks to save both."

"Any development initiative should be undertaken only after consultation with the people likely to be benefited and affected by it. But the government has been carry

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

# People now want a change: Dr Kamal

DU CORRESPONDENT

Gano Forum President and Convenor of Oikya Prachesta, a socio-political forum, Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday called upon the people to join a mass movement to establish people's right.

He called upon the countrymen to carry the movement forward with the same commitment shown during the Language Movement in 1952 and in the Liberation Movement in 1971.

He also urged for an alliance of patriots for saving the country from the grip of black money, terrorism, corruption and wayward politics.

Dr Kamal was addressing as chief guest a view-exchanging meeting in front of the Oikya Prachesta central office at

Arambagh in the city. Jatiya Chhatra Dhara, a progressive students' organisation hosted the meeting on 'How to bring order in the educational institutions.'

"People want a change, an end to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Prayer Timings		
January 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-40	5-46
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation