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Probes wilt under raging political blame game

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The political stereotypes of jumping to conclusions before the fog of major incidents clears makes probes the prime casualty.

Before the full story of the largest ever arms cache seizure on the Karnaphuli coast in Chittagong on Friday emerged, top political leaders jockeyed for shifting blame onto each other, throwing investigators in shaky straits.

Within hours of the seizure of 10 truckloads of modern weapons including rocket launchers, rockets, submachine-guns and Ak-47 rifles, State Minister for Home Affairs

Cop in question to probe gunrunning

Fertiliser factory security men receive threats, OC denies involvement with smugglers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police officer at the heart of accusation of helping gunrunners in unloading the largest-ever arms cargo on the Karnaphuli coast on Friday was tasked with a probe in what Chittagong residents called 'a

pernicious turn'.

Police on Saturday lodged two cases with Karnaphuli Police Station in connection with the arms haul. In both of the cases, Ahadur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station, is the plaintiff and has been assigned as the investigating officer.

Residents of the port city expressed despair as the news of his probe duty broke, and many of them said he might divert the focus of probe.

Witnesses to the arms offloading at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser

Babar mum on police presence during arms offloading

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuluzzaman Babar yesterday avoided commenting on unloading of a huge amount of arms and ammunitions in presence of police at the jetty of a fertiliser factory, saying a body formed by a prime ministerial directive would investigate the matter.

The high-powered probe body headed by the home secretary has already started working to find out

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Dhaka, Yangon sign MoU on direct road link

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Myanmar yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on establishing a direct road link between Dhaka and Yangon.

The next-door neighbours also signed two other MoUs on cooperation in agriculture and related fields and waiver of visas for Bangladeshi diplomats and government officials after official talks between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and visiting Myanmar Prime Minister General

Khin Nyunt at her office.

Under the first MoU, Dhaka and Yangon agreed to set up joint technical and financial taskforces to determine the details for early implementation of the road-link project.

The constitution of the taskforces follows the statement of intent signed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on her visit to Yangon in March last year to construct the direct road link as a part of the Asian Highway.

Bangladesh will assist in the construction of a bridge over Naaf

river to link the two countries.

The Myanmar premier will watch the laying of the foundation stone for the direct road link at Ramu in Chittagong today.

During the official talks, Dhaka and Yangon also agreed to release Bangladeshi and Myanmar citizens from each other's prisons as a gesture of friendship. Myanmar currently holds 39 Bangladeshi citizens in its prisons.

The two PMs discussed trade, agriculture and repatriation of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

CTG ARMS HAUL AL demands Interpol probe

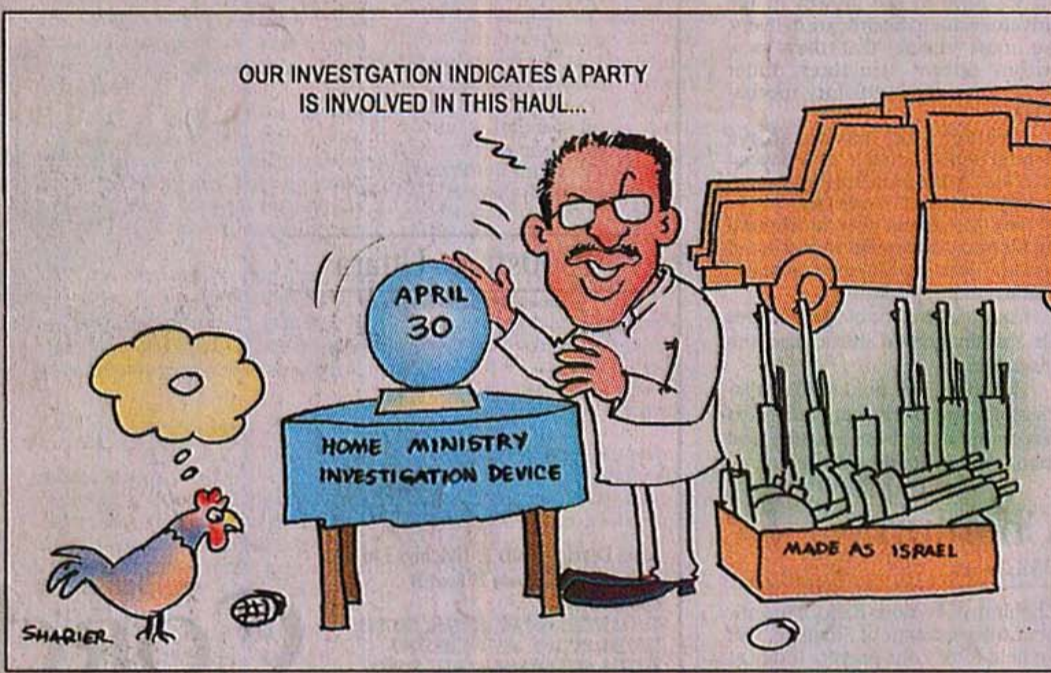
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded that the government ask Interpol to open an investigation into the largest arms haul in Chittagong for security of Bangladesh.

"Industries Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami's statement justifies our demand for the international probe as he said a mafia gang has links to it," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said at a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office.

The AL leader wanted explanations for the observations Nizami.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



"Were these arms the big surprise?" asks Bhuiyan

UNB, Dhaka

Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday termed the Chittagong arms seizure as 'great success of the government' and said Awami League (AL) had started making

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2ND TEST FROM TODAY Moin sidelined

REUTERS, Lahore

Pakistan will be without wicketkeeper Moin Khan when they attempt to fight back against India in the second Test, starting on Monday, after being beaten in the opening match last week.

The 32-year-old former captain, a veteran of 68 Tests and 205 one-day internationals, is suffering from a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Two cases filed against owners, staff of trawlers, truck drivers

Trawler owner Firoz nabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police lodged two cases on Saturday with Karnaphuli Police Station in connection with the seizure of huge arms cache from the jetty of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Beijing still worried about Taiwan's office

UNB, Beijing

A top Chinese government minister has voiced concern about Taiwan trying to set up a trade office in Bangladesh-- a move he said is designed to destroy the Dhaka-Beijing friendly relations.

"This is a political plot hatched by Taiwan... Taiwan is seeking political agenda in the guise of economic and trading agenda,"

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

AL leaders walk Old Dhaka streets for govt's quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League leaders yesterday urged the party workers to prepare for tougher programmes ahead to oust the alliance government by this month.

Braving the incessant rain and hailstorm, leaders and workers of the main opposition Awami League (AL) and its front organisations took to the Old Dhaka streets yesterday demanding that the BNP-Jamaat-led-coalition government step down immediately for what they said was the ruling alliance's absolute failure to deliver.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

JS bodies ask for more authority

Accuse ministries of non-cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chairmen of some parliamentary standing committees yesterday demanded amendment to the constitution and the rules of procedure of parliament to give the bodies more power.

They accused the ministries concerned of not providing in time the documents they ask for and reluctance and neglect in executing their recommendations, to cite a few forms of non-cooperation.

The chiefs of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) committees made the demand for a constitutional amendment at a seminar titled, 'Parliamentary oversight and government accountability

in Bangladesh: the role of the standing committees on ministries.

The Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-organised the seminar under the UNDP-funded 'Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy Project' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The standing committee chairs said they are frustrated with inadequate logistical support, funds crises, ministries' negligence and certain limitations the rules of procedure imposed on them.

They demanded immediate steps to remove the irritants to help the committees function more

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Chandrika wins Lankan polls

BBC ONLINE

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's party has won the country's parliamentary elections, but without enough seats for a majority.

Final results showed the United People's Freedom Alliance party had 105 seats, compared to 82 for Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe's party.

Kumaratunga's party is expected to hold talks with smaller parties to form a coalition government.

The poll focused on the president's criticisms of the peace process.

The two are long-standing rivals. Wickramasinghe's United National Party won narrowly in December 2001, making him prime minister with a mandate to negotiate peace with the rebels.

But the president says he has jeopardised national security by offering too much ground to the rebels.

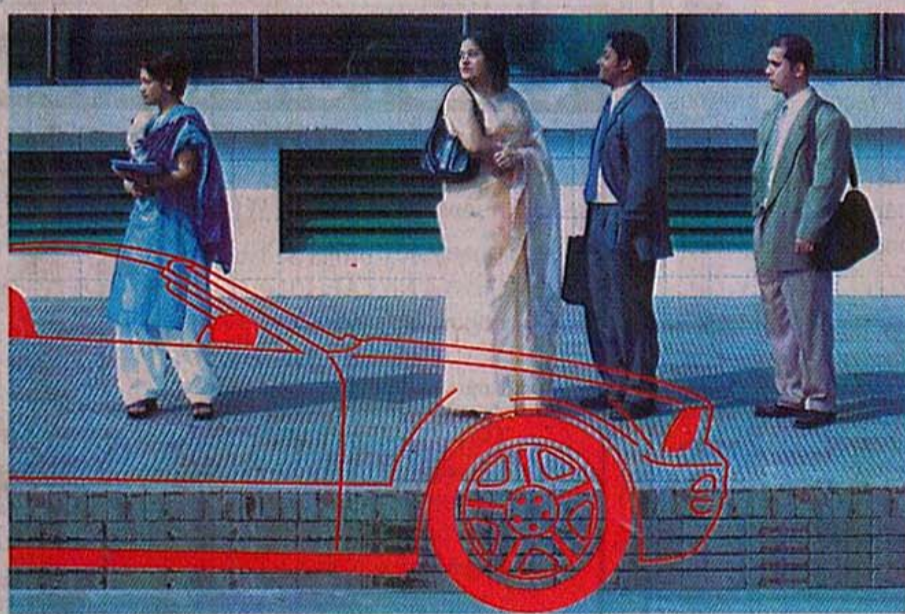
Many voters have also complained that, despite two years of ceasefire, they have not seen any peace dividend, with the cost of living constantly rising. The picture is emerging of a much more divided Sri Lanka.

The majority Sinhalese community appears lukewarm about the peace process, which has been stalled for months.

Tamils in the north and east of Sri Lanka appear to have overwhelmingly backed the party supported by the rebels, the Tamil National Alliance.

Any future coalition government may contain smaller left-wing or religious parties opposing any

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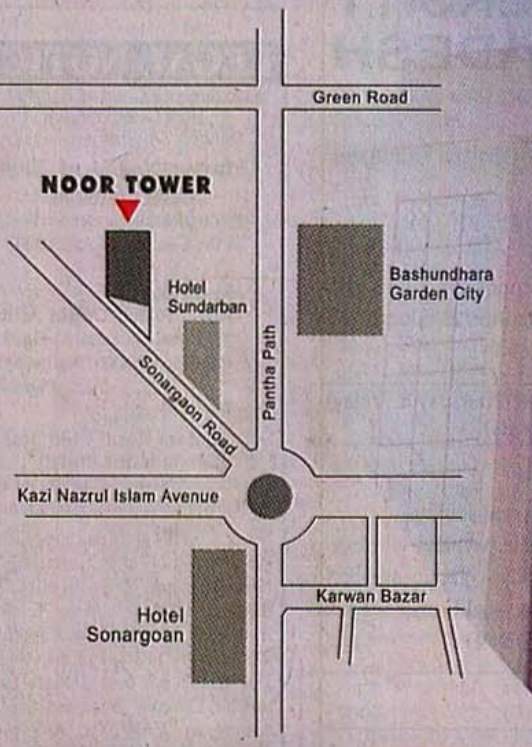
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