

# Cut defence budget

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explaining why some of the government pledges could not be fulfilled." The budget also should explain the results of the government steps taken earlier, he added.

Meeting sources said, a former finance minister raised the agenda of downsizing defence spending. He said, instead of purchasing Mig fighters, the government should spend to equip the police, increase their salary and enlarge the police force. His suggestion met with instant support from the other economists present.

In response, Saifur reasoned that "the army also earns a lot of foreign exchange. It's not true that spending for the army do not generate income."

"But, that is a very costly way of earning," quipped one of the consultants, adding, "If we invest more for the police, it will improve the law and order, and people will do better business. Ultimately, the whole nation will eat its fruits and the economy will prosper."

Meeting sources said, at this point, the finance minister agreed with the view. But, he said he had no power to change the present structure of defence spending, sources added. He also said, "I don't want to say anything in this regard."

The economists then discussed on how to put priority projects in the Annual Development Programme (ADP). They observed that a huge number of road-building and other construction projects were already there in the pipeline and, so, the government should not take up any

such new schemes until the current ones were completed.

Atiur pointed out that there had been virtually no investment for port and railway development for the last several years and some important sectors like agriculture and health did not receive due priority. Focussing on agriculture, he said, "You're talking about prioritising agriculture. But in the new ADP, agriculture is not among the top four priority projects."

Dr Mohammad Yunus then told Saifur, "Look at Chandrababu's fate (chief minister of Tamil Nadu, India)," implying that though Chandrababu revolutionised the IT sector in his province, his negligence of the agriculture sector led to his fall.

Yunus urged the government to emphasise agriculture and diversify the sector.

In reply, with bitter humour, Saifur said, "Our agriculture ministry does have a large number of agriculture scientists. But all that the ministry does is demand subsidy loudly. I'm here with money, but they cannot even give me a plan."

Rehman Sobhan urged the final minister to file a performance evaluation report on the state-owned enterprises that have been privatised.

The meeting was also attended by Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, former cabinet secretary Mujibul Haq, economists Abu Ahmed, Mahbub Ullah, M Saiduzzaman and Motiul Islam.

# Hasina demands

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brothers broke into tears as she reached there.

A large number of people wearing black badge lined up both sides of the road to the late lawmaker's house, adjacent to Noagang MA Majid Mian High School, where he was teacher all his life.

Hasina also met parents of Ratan, who was also killed in the firing that left the legislator killed, and family members of two others killed in law enforcers' firing on a crowd protesting the killing. Top leaders of the main opposition party and its front organisations accompanied her.

At the Hyderabad rally held near the lawmaker's grave, Hasina said instead of arresting any of the killers of Ahsanullah, the government has resorted to mass arrest of AL leaders and workers and other people to put them on speedy trial. Police were searching the houses of Awami League leaders and harassing their family members, she alleged.

Hasina demanded an immediate end to this trend and compensation to people injured by law enforcers while protesting their leader's killing.

The opposition leader urged people to unite and launch a tough movement to unseat the alliance government. "People don't want to see this failed government cling to power any more," she said.

The AL chief announced they will bear the expenses of the family members of Ahsanullah.

Senior AL leaders and youngest son of the lawmaker Javid Ahsan Soheli also addressed the rally, demanding punishment of killers.

Earlier, Hasina offered 'fateha' at the grave of the legislator.

At the ZIA, Hasina told newsmen at the airport her party legislators joined the discussion on obituary reference on Ahsanullah in parliament Wednesday so that the ruling alliance lawmakers could not make a false statement there.

Asked whether her party will continue to attend the House session, she said a decision on the issue will be taken in a couple of days.

Meanwhile, Hasina will address a mourning at Tongi on May 17 and another rally at Joydebpur on May 20.

# Biman pilots

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official and reinstatement of captain Nasimul Haq, president of Bangladesh Pilots' Association (Bapa).

The pilots of Biman have to work extra hours as the number of pilots is less than the requirements. Biman currently has 163 pilots against the requirement of 205.

The authorities yesterday transferred Biman's Deputy General Manager (Public Relation).

A meeting between Bapa and the Biman authorities was going on till filing of the report.

The Biman authorities and Bapa held separate press conferences yesterday.

Bapa at its press conference in the morning reiterated its resolve

not to work extra hours until facilities according to the pact were increased. Bapa also asked the authorities to reinstate Captain Nasimul.

Nasimul and captains Zamil and Captain Mahtab were present at the press conference held at Dhaka Reporters Unity office.

The Biman authorities at their press conference said they had been working towards meeting the demands of Bapa.

Akhter Hossain Khan, managing director of Biman, said: "Captain Nasimul Haq resigned as he was sick. So only one point demand remains to be resolved."

He said they would continue to negotiate with the pilots to reach an agreement to work out the crisis.

Director Waliul Khandakar, Captain Kamal Mahmud and Captain Mahmudur Rahman attended the press conference held at the head office of the Biman.

# BNP rally at Paltan May 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP will hold a grand rally at Paltan Maidan on May 19 to observe the 23rd death anniversary of its founder, late president Ziaur Rahman, on May 30.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to address the public meeting as chief guest.

The rally was earlier scheduled for May 1, but in view of the wake of the Awami League's (AL) April 30 deadline to topple the government, the ruling party shifted the date.

The BNP held a meeting at its party central office yesterday evening and expressed deep concern at the murder of AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, who was killed by unknown assailants in Tongi on May 2. It also strongly criticised the violence unleashed by AL activists following the killing.

Party Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan chaired it.

The meeting formed a coordination committee headed by Sadeque Hossain Khoka MP, city BNP president and mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, to make the May 19 rally a success.

It formed another committee headed by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman. The committee sits on Sunday at 11:00am to coordinate all programmes for the rally.

# EC to provide

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of education in the formal primary education sub sector.

In addition to EC, Asian Development Bank, United Kingdom Department for International Development, the Netherlands government, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Sida, Cida, World Bank, Jaica, AusAID and Unicef are other development partners of PEDP-II, said a press release.

# 12 killed

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A helicopter fired missiles at a group of armed militants in two separate incidents at the same spot," an Israeli military source said.

Israeli troops later shot dead a 19-year-old Palestinian during a push into Rafah, where 10 homes were demolished witnesses and medics said. Israel often raids the camp to uncover tunnels used to smuggle weapons from Egypt.

On Tuesday, six Israeli soldiers died when their armored vehicle hit a land mine during a raid in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood, a militant stronghold.

Israeli forces pulled out of Zeitoun early yesterday in what Palestinian sources said was an Egyptian-mediated deal under which militants returned the remains of the servicemen.

Palestinian medics said 16 people, including militants and bystanders, were killed and 185 wounded in the two-day siege.

# Tk 11 lakh

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broke the window by the rifle butt and then fired a blank shot signalling us to stop the car. Three others encircled the car and took away the money at gun point."

He said the muggers exploded a cracker before fleeing the scene in a CNG auto-rickshaw parked nearby. He described the muggers as smartly dressed and fair complexioned youths.

"A team of patrol police rushed in and chased the muggers but in vain," Nurul further added.

Despite raids in different places none could be arrested, said Mohammad Shanjahan, sub-inspector of Panchlaish Police Station.

The same distributor was robbed of Tk 10 lakh some two years ago.

# Politicians hail

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Party of Bangladesh.

"This is a rejection of the communal ideals of BJP and its allied parties and their free-market policies," said Selim.

On the back-to-back win of left-parties in the bordering states, Selim added, "I am very happy that on both sides of Bangladesh, in West Bengal and Tripura, the communist party and left parties have strengthened their hold."

"This is a victory for democracy in the region. Such a powerful reaction against communalism will also strengthen the movement against communalism in Bangladesh," said Rashed Khan Menon.

Md Kamaruzzaman assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner in the BNP-led coalition government, said, "India is a large democratic country, [the Indians] have established a long tradition of forming government through elections. We heartily congratulate those who are going to form the government after the latest elections."

# Up tobacco tax

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speakers said around 13 percent of the children working in bidi factories in Bangladesh are below nine. About 40 percent of child workers of the factories, aged between 5 and 15, had never been to school.

The CAT president alleged low-grade bidis are being manufactured, posing a serious hazard.

He also said about two lakh hectares of land in Bangladesh is used for tobacco cultivation and other related purposes every year.

About the proposed tobacco law, he said it should aim at long-term benefits and not short-term gains.

National Professor and President of Adhunik Nurul Islam and Kamrul Islam, secretary general of CAT, were present at the function.

# BCL leader

**FROM PAGE 12**  
The JCD men also beat up Saleh Ahmed, leaving him seriously injured. He was admitted to the upazila health complex.

Zakaria is the President of Bhojpur Union BCL and his brother Osman Gani was a BCL activist and degree student of Fatikhchhari College.

Protesting the killing, BCL activists put up a barricade on Bhojpur road, disrupting traffic.

BCL Chittagong district unit blamed JCD for the murder and attack and demanded arrest of the JCD cadres involved.

A case was filed with Fatikhchhari Police Station.

# Congress triumphs

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India's historic rival Pakistan expressed hope that the new government will proceed with a dialogue between the two countries initiated last year by Vajpayee, who declared he was on his last bid to make peace in South Asia.

Congress spokesman Anand Sharma told AFP the party "is committed to working towards creating lasting peace in the region."

But Islamic militants in Pakistan rejoiced, calling the election pay-back for bloody anti-Muslim riots two years ago in the BJP-ruled western state of Gujarat -- where the Hindu nationalists lost seats yesterday.

Hindu hardliners also reacted sharply, saying the BJP lost by shunning its right-wing past in favour of a more moderate image stressing tolerance towards India's 140 million Muslims.

The United States, which had a warm relationship with Vajpayee, offered India congratulations on the election and pledged to work with the next prime minister, a US official said.

At the headquarters of Congress, a huge balloon shaped as an open palm, the 119-year-old party's symbol, dropped to the ground as supporters lit firecrackers.

"Long live Congress! Down with the BJP!" they shouted.

Sonia and Rajiv's son, Rahul Gandhi, became the fourth-generation MP from the dynasty.

The 33-year-old former financial consultant, who spent much of his 20s in Britain and the United States, won from the family's stronghold Amethi in Uttar Pradesh.

More than 370 million people voted in the national election, held on five dates from April 20 to allow poll workers, police and soldiers to fan out to the nearly 687,500 voting stations.

**ALLIANCE**

Leftist parties, which have promised to support a Congress-led government, also appeared to be doing well and they could give the opposition the edge it would need to take power.

Congress has been working to cement alliances with the Communist Party of India-Marxist and smaller regional parties, particularly in the most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, which sends 80 MPs to New Delhi.

Uttar Pradesh's populist leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, has insisted he is not interested in becoming prime minister but has been seen in repeated strategy sessions with Congress leaders.

Wrestler-turned-politician Yadav enjoys wide support from low castes and the Muslim minority. The BJP has little support among Muslims, even though in the election it played down its past support for right-wing Hindu causes.

A potential government of Congress, Mulayam and the communists would likely be less enthusiastic for some of Vajpayee's defining policies, such as privatising state-owned companies and building ties with the United States.

However, a left-leaning alliance would need to thrash out a common agenda to sort out myriad differences -- not least of which is who would be prime minister. Yadav's maverick election platform calls for India to be known officially in English by its Hindi name Bharat.

**POLITICAL UPSETS**

It was one of the most dramatic political upsets since Indian independence almost 60 years ago.

"We have not got the mandate of the people," said Venkaiah Naidu, president of BJP. He said the decision to concede the race was made at a 90-minute meeting of the party and its coalition partners.

It was an embarrassing defeat for the Hindu nationalist-led government, which had called elections six months early because it felt confident of winning an even bigger majority in parliament, based on the roaring economy and prospects of peace with Pakistan.

Gandhi has pushed for a secular India in contrast to the BJP's Hindu nationalist message. The Gandhi dynasty dominated Indian politics since independence from British colonial rule in 1947.

# Tigers start with win

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ened to change the complexion of the game. However, Rajshahi mashes Khaled Mashud and Mushfiqur Rahman kept their heads and put on decisive 50 runs for the seventh wicket to see the Tigers home in the last ball of the 40th over.

All-rounder Mushfiq, who hit the winning runs with a square cut off left arm paceman Pedro Collins, remained not out on 25. Mashud was taken by his Board XI counterpart Carlton Baugh Jr off a Jermaine Lawson delivery just four runs shy of victory.

Fast bowler Lawson made a solid if not spectacular return to competitive cricket after a year out with injuries and controversy regarding his bowling action which was reported by match-referee Mike Proctor following the Test match against Australia in Antigua in May, 2003. The 24-year-old, who has remodelled his action a little, returned with figures of two for 23 off eight overs.

New ball partner Collins had made the early inroads by dismissing both openers. Shahriar Hossain (0) missed an in-swing and was adjudged lbw in the very first over while Manjural (7) fell to a spectacular diving catch at widish mid-wicket by Wilkinson after he had featured in a 44-run partnership with skipper Habibul Bashar. The score was soon 53 for three as Ryan Hinds pushed Rajin Saleh (1) at square leg with a two handed dive. Wavell Hinds was the bowler.

# PM calls

**FROM PAGE 12**  
usually there is not much change in its foreign policy-- and there is no possibility of any adverse impact on Bangladesh's foreign policy.

Asked if the bilateral relations would see any improvement with a new government in India, Khan said peoples of the two neighbouring countries want to make their economic advancement through mutual cooperation.

About bilateral disputes, he said both the sides had identified the problems, which he hoped would be resolved through discussion.

Asked about the Congress-led secular government in New Delhi, the foreign minister said India is a secular state and a matured democracy and it has good relations with the Muslim world. "We'd worked with Congress for many years since this party had been in power for long in last 50 years. We know them and they know us," he told a questioner.

In reply to another question, Khan said, "There is no scope for talking about religious divide, mosque or temple. It's important to achieve economic advancement and reach its benefit to the people... We don't believe that religion could be an obstacle to the relation between the two countries."

Asked if there be any impact on India-Pakistan peace talks with a new regime in New Delhi, the foreign minister said it's the compulsion for both the governments in Pakistan and India to continue the peace process as peace is precondition to any economic development.

# Student abducted in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A gang abducted a college student from Thanapara in Kushtia town on Wednesday.

A gang of seven picked up Amitav Kundu Shah, 18, son of Dr Sukumar Kundu Shah, from near their Thanapara house at about 9:00pm when he was returning home, relatives said.

Members of the victim's family alleged that the gang men are their neighbours. Amitav is a second year student of Kushtia Government College.

The gang has demanded Tk 20 lakh for his release.

"None if any case with us, so we don't know anything about it," said Sub-inspector Ayub Sharif of Sadar Police Station last evening.

Police, meanwhile, failed to recover schoolboy Nayan Rahman, kidnapped from Monohorpur in Kumarkhali on Monday, till 6:00 yesterday evening.

# US asstt secy Rocca arrives May 18

STAR REPORT

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca will visit Bangladesh May 18 on a three-day visit to discuss trade, investment, human rights and minority rights.

She will also bring a group of 50 Peace Corps volunteers with her to help Bangladesh in various development fields.

"We are excited about her visit," US Ambassador Harry K Thomas told The Daily Star yesterday. "It is a good news that Peace Corps operation will be increased here."

Next year, another group of 35 volunteers will come to teach English in rural schools.

# City breeding

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monly known as E. coli, is a rod-shaped bacterium which inhabits and attacks the large intestine of both humans and animals causing severe diarrhoea. "If we don't go for immediate corrective measures, an alarming rise of water-borne diseases may soon beset the city dwellers. The situation may even explode into raging epidemics," Akhter Hossain warned.

According to the Wasa chief executive, the sewerage system of the city has almost broken down and in urgent need of overhauling, upgrading and expansion to cope up with the rapidly rising population.

Akhter's revelation that the water and sewerage authority he runs at present is able to meet only 10 percent of the city's current sewerage needs shocked everyone attending the session.

The garbage with which the low-lying areas of the city are being filled up is yet another source of spreading disease germs, he added.

Akhter said, although the government was keen to do something to contain the menace, lack of required resources killed their initiatives.

Professor Mujibur Rahman of BUET said it was high time to rethink and refashion the management of excreta. People now waste as much as 18,000 litres of water to flush every thousand kilograms of faeces and 450 litres of urine, whereas these can be made into a source of large income if used as fertiliser, he pointed out.

According to Rahman, people in the country produce about 17 million tonnes of faeces and 57 million tonnes of urine a year, while the country spends US\$ 600 million each year to import chemical fertilisers. "If we convert the excreta into fertiliser, we can also save a good many millions of foreign exchange."

# JS probe

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Khan, Hanif Sheikh, Mahsin Mia, Mozaffar Hossain, Mokter Hossain, Sheikh Motaleb, Ibrahim Khalil, Kamruzzaman, Abu Al Hossain and Ishag Mia.

The committee pointed out that the country's extractable gas reserve currently stood at 15.032 trillion cft after the use of 294.859 billion cft up to February this year.

Committee chairman Shihidul Islam presided over the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, also attended by committee members and officials concerned.

# Fertiliser traders

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domination and saving importers and vessel owners from their exploitation," said AZ Feroz Kabir Chowdhury, chairman of Coastal Ship Owners Association.

He claimed the new charges were fixed following discussions with Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI).

Kofli said the association wrote to the ministries of shipping and agriculture, seeking their initiatives for a dialogue with the vessel owners to fix rates acceptable to both parties.

BFA chairman, however, ruled out the possibility of a fertiliser crisis and said there was no shortage of urea fertiliser during the last peak season and the prices in the retail markets were also stable.

"We did not get any report of urea fertiliser prices going beyond Tk 300 a bag during the peak season from anywhere in the country."

The prices however may go up beyond Tk 300 next season due to increased transportation cost, he warned.

# Spectacular win

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particularly the DMK, has announced its support from outside to the party.

If this was a battle between Vajpayee and Sonia, she has won hands down. Her 'foreign origin' did not matter with the electorate although this was a poll issue raised by the BJP. Even the Bofors scandal did not evoke any attention. Even otherwise, corruption is not the topic which raise hackles because people have come to live with it. The number of scams during the BJP government runs into a dozen or so. Therefore, the party could not even contend that no corrupt deal took place in its time.

What has, however, cost the party dearly, is its inability to improve the lot of the people. People expected jobs and basic amenities like water, electricity and roads. But even after giving the promise of a government which would be 'different' than the ones earlier, the ruling BJP was not seen as an improvement on others. The only plus point of the party is the roads it is constructing North with South and East with West.

The BJP must be patting itself on the back for inroads it has made in the South. It has done well in Karnataka, both in the Assembly and in the Lok Sabha polls. It cannot form the government in Karnataka even though the BJP has won more seats than the Congress. The second place has been taken by the former prime minis-

ter Deve Gowda's party which has promised to give support to the Congress in the formation of the government.

With the fall of the BJP's government goes the diabolical scheme of linking rivers in India. Whether Congress takes up the scheme is yet to be seen because the Rajiv Gandhi government found it unworkable. There is also a relief that the writing of history which was undertaken by education minister Murli Manohar Johsi will die its natural death because he has been defeated. In any case, the Congress has been strongly opposed to such a venture.

Whether or not the BJP will go back to its own agenda of Hindutva is difficult to say because the soft type of saffronisation of the society in the north has been going on relentlessly. The RSS is, however, unhappy that the BJP abandoned the Hindutva line and its plea is it should go back.

The Muslims once again have voted against the BJP by and large. This is the biggest dilemma before the BJP because it cannot ignore the 15 percent of the electorate they constitute but at the same time it cannot change its basic Hindutva character. No party can ride two horses at the same time. Still the BJP or any other can ignore the Muslims who are now asserting themselves to have a say in political, economic and social fields.

# Rumsfeld makes

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Guantanamo Bay prison on Cuba -- mounts, General Richard Myers, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff who visited with Rumsfeld, said: "We absolutely have the high moral ground."

Once notorious as Saddam Hussein's torture chamber, Abu Ghraib has become a symbol of the United States' failure to win over many Iraqis despite ridding them of Saddam a year ago. With just seven weeks to go until Washington hands sovereignty back to an Iraqi government, that is a serious problem for Rumsfeld.

He denied on the secret, 15-hour flight from Washington that the Pentagon was trying to cover up the scandal, which emerged when proceedings were opened in January against seven military police, who have now been charged, but exploded into a global issue with the release of soldiers' photographs two weeks ago.

"If anybody thinks that I'm (in Iraq) to throw water on a fire, they're wrong," Rumsfeld told reporters on board. "We care about the detainees being treated right. We care about soldiers behaving right. We care about command systems working."

Other US defence officials said the sudden trip by Rumsfeld and Myers was triggered by the photographs.

In the holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala, where US troops are facing an uprising by a Shia militia loyal to radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, there was renewed fighting.

A US soldier was killed in

# New images shock

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just can't take it any more.

"I still cannot believe that this happened without the knowledge of those at higher levels," Durbin added.

Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned last week the pictures could worsen a scandal that ignited international outrage and shook US global prestige as the United States seeks to stabilize Iraq.

Senators and members of the House of Representatives had a chance over several hours to look at some 1,600 images in separate secure rooms in a presentation conducted by the Pentagon, which kept custody of the material.

Many lawmakers said the images were similar to photographs shown around the world of naked prisoners stacked in a pyramid or positioned to simulate sex acts at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, but they said some were even more shocking.

Lawmakers said they did not see examples of outright rape, murder or abuses of children.

Sen. Peter Fitzgerald, an Illinois Republican, said "many of the same people were involved over and over" in the photographs.

Ahsanullah murder

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incident -- Kana Hafiz, Anu, Salam and Sohag -- while Jabbar said he identified Kana Hafiz, Salam and Dulal.

Khalequzzaman said yesterday they raided different places in Tongi yesterday and the night before with no result.

UNB adds: Business leaders yesterday appreciated the role of the ruling alliance and opposition lawmakers during the discussion on obituary reference on Ahsanullah Master in parliament on Wednesday.

The appreciation came when leaders of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry met Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office.

graphs. "I didn't see different characters than the ones who have been in the newspapers," he said.

Durbin described a picture of a man with half his head "blown off," lying on the ground in blood and gore, but said there was no explanation of where that was taken.

**BRITAIN SET TO DISMISS PHOTOS**

AFP reports from London that the British government was to denounce as fake pictures showing British troops allegedly abusing Iraqi prisoners.

Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram was to tell parliament that an investigation into the Daily Mirror photos has concluded that they are not genuine, the BBC and the Press Association quoting defence sources as saying yesterday.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman told the news agency that Ingram would be speaking in the House of Commons after 1:00pm (1200 GMT) about "personnel matters".

# DB men raid

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any staff go out," said an official of the NGO seeking anonymity. Around 100 policemen stood guard outside during the raid, he said, madding that seized items could number more than 40.

The raid came a day after Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ashrafu Huda and the DC, DB visited Proshika headquarters.

Law-enforcers raided the NGO headquarters on Tuesday, arrested two and picked up 11 other Proshika staff on charges of attacking some of their disgruntled colleagues, who went to the Proshika head office in a procession.

Police on May 2 sealed the people's culture wing of Proshika and seized documents in a raid on its headquarters to find proof of the NGO's alleged antigovernment activities.