#### AHSANULLAH KILLING

# Fourth accused escaped arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There was yet another accused in the Ahsanullah Master murder case holed up in the North Badda house from where police arrested three on

Kabir Hossain, the owner of the house, who is now on a five-day remand, disclosed it yesterday while being quizzed by the fourmember Criminal Investigation Department (CID) team formed to probe the killing of the opposition lawmaker and a schoolboy.

CID officials, however, declined to divulge the identity of the fourth accused who managed to evade capture during the raid.

On May 14, CID officials raided a house in North Badda and nabbed Mahbub, Monir and Dulal -- all named accused in the First Information Report (FIR) of Ahsanullah Master murder case.

Kabir, who also owns an advertising firm in Badda, had always maintained good contacts with the local criminals, said police.

The CID will produce the four suspects -- Nasiruddin, Suman, Oli Mian and Qaiyum -- before a Gazipur court today on expiry of their six-day remand.

On May 11 police picked up the four, the alleged drug-peddlers and associates of Ahsanullah's killers, from their houses in Tongi.

any clue to the killing, head of the CID team Assistant Superintendent of Police Khaleguzzaman answered in the negative.

Kishoreganj police, meanwhile, raided the house of Kana Hafiz's uncle Rashid Mia in Badhber village in Kishoreganj on Monday night.

Kana Hafiz is another accused named in the FIR of the case Sources in the CID said they are sure of Kana Hafiz's involvement in

"Most of the eight arrestees said Hafiz first opened fire," said a CID

The CID on May 12 attached property of Kana Hafiz and top accused Nurul Islam Dipu, his brothers Shahidul Islam Shipu and Ohidul Islam Tipu to force them to

UNB adds: Father of late Ahsanullah Master MP, Alhaj Abdul Kader Pathan (Pir Saheb), in a statement yesterday demanded immediate arrest of the killers of his son and called for release of those who fell victim to indiscriminate arrest. He also urged the government to withdraw cases filed against them under the Speedy Trial Act.

Pathan said his son was killed in broad daylight and the incidents of protest at the heinous killing showed the love of people for their leader.

### PM warns rivals

'terrorist', and asked the people to stand guard against their activities.

"They are not discharging their responsibility in parliament, rather they are burning public property," she

She regretted that the party (AL) "has never played a responsible role whether in office or in the opposition". The prime minister was addressing a public meeting at Paksey

### Tigers

FROM PAGE 1

announced by the Tigers team management on Tuesday after he showed no signs of returning to form in the three outings so far in the tour. The 20-year-old from Sylhet made three against the West Indies Board XI and then had dismal scores of five and one in the first two ODIs.

"We feel he (Kapali) needs a break," said tour operations manager and chief selector Farugue Ahmed.

With the series already lost, the Tigers team management was thinking of drafting in one or two totally fresh faces in the playing eleven.

Left-handed batsman Faisal Hossain and left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak are in the 12 and both could make their debuts.

Opener Shahriar Hossain is still nursing the back injury suffered during fielding in the first one-day international and is out of contention. He'll have an X-ray on Tuesday to have an idea of the extent of damage before a decision is made whether to keep him for the Test series or send him back home.

The West Indies will be without skipper Brian Lara who is still recovering from a finger injury. They have kept the same 13 from the first two games with Ramnaresh Sarwan as captain.

The match is scheduled to start at 9:30 local time (7.30 pm BST) but rain has been a problem recently and the West Indies team had to get back under the roofs by cutting short their practice on Tuesday following a heavy downpour.

BANGLADESH: Habibul Bashar, Mohammad Ashraful, Hannan Sarker, Faisal Hossain, Raiin Saleh Mushfiqur Rahman, Khaled Mashud, Khaled Mahmud, Manjarul Islam, Mohammad Rafique, Tapash Baisya and Abdur Razzak

Railway Ground after inaugurating the newly-built Lalon Shah Bridge, the second largest bridge of the country, on the river Padma at Paksey-Bheramara point yesterday.

Presided over by local BNP President Sirajul Islam Sardar, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami, State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman and State Minister for Communications Salauddin Ahmed

The prime minister alleged that the AL, while in office, did nothing for the people. Citing the closure of North Bengal Paper Mills in the district, she said mills and factories were closed down during its rule.

She accused the opposition party of handing illegal arms to their activ ists and said there was no justice for killing during their rule. "We have recovered a lot of arms, but some are still there," Khaleda said, claiming that the BNP-led coalition government had ensured justice.

"Our only aim is to educate the people and create employment," the prime minister said and referred to the programmes in the education Khaleda was also critical of

Awami League's coffin procession "How can you expect something good from a leader who seeks ten dead bodies against one?" she

### Bomb scare at DU turns a hoax

**DU CORRESPONDENT** 

Moviegoers at the Teacher Student Centre (TSC) auditorium of Dhaka University yesterday felt the chill down their spines from a bomb alarm, which was proved a hoax.

An unknown caller phoned a member of Dhaka University Film Society (DUFS), which organised screening of the movie, over cell phone at about 4:00pm, triggering panic among the viewers, sources

The spectators scurried out of the TSC gallery. Police reached there at about 4:30pm only to find it was a hoax, sources added.

The DUFS organised the screen-

ing of Bangla movie 36 Chowrangi Lane as part of its week-long film festival, which started on May 11.

## Criminals clash with cops

that engaged in the skirmish with the law enforcers and Akhtarul is the boss of the other.

According to police, both of the rival gang leaders have been engaged for long in various criminal activities, including drug dealing, abduction, robbery and mugging. Each of them is named in at least 10 criminal cases filed with the Kushtia Sadar and Kumarkhali police stations, they added.

Police said the battle ensued at a place near the shrine of famous Baul saint Lalon Shah when Hamidul's gang, spotting the incoming joint force members, opened fire. The law enforcers retaliated by firing back.

According to police, at least a hundred gunshots were traded during the hour-long shoot out that left a gangster, Rabiul, 25, dead on the spot and 20 others, including various degrees of bullet injuries.

five joint force members, sustaining Police nabbed eight critically wounded gang-members. Two of them -- Rezaul 27, and Shafiul, 32 died at Kushtia General Hospital at noon and yet another, Shawkat, 24, succumbed to his injuries in the evening.

The other injured arrestees Rokon 30. Bilal. 30. Monobar 38. Safigul, 31, Reza, 22 -- and the two critically injured BDR men --Asaduzzaman, 34, and Joinul, 26, -are all being treated in the same hospital.

Police recovered six firearms including three .22 rifles, one local rifle and two shutter-guns, four bombs and 185 bullets from the

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Abdul Aziz Sarker and BDR Kushtia Sector Commander Lt Colonel Sarwardi Hossain visited the spot. Sarker told the newsmen that they would take all necessary steps to round up the rest of the culprits.

A tense situation now prevails in the area, where additional forces of police and BDR are deployed.

### **ARSON ATTACK**

### **UCBL** phone operator remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed a telephone operator of the United Commercial Bank Limited (UCBL), who is reportedly an associate of the car driver who allegedly set fire to a female employee of the bank Saturday.

Motijheel police produced Abul Kalam Azad, who was held on Monday afternoon, before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Shafig Anwar with a five-day remand prayer. The court, however, granted one-day remand, sources

Condition of the victim, Shaila Chowdhury Irani, telephone operator and receptionist of the UCBL, remains critical as 95 percent of her body was burnt, said Dr Shahidul Bari of City Hospital Limited at Panthapath where she is undergoing treatment.

'Azad introduced my wife to driver Raniit Barua and they are also roommates." said Irani's husband Rezaul Haq Syed Raja.

Azad even phoned Irani on Friday, the day before the incident, and asked her to go somewhere, he said, adding, "But, I didn't let her go."

'We arrested Azad on the basis of statement provide by Irani," said Sub-Inspector Akhteruzzaman, investigation officer of the case.

The telephone operator also tried to persuade her to start an affair with Ranjit, and used to disturb her during and after office hours, he said quoting Irani as saying.

Ranjit committed suicide under a running train at Khilgaon Rail Crossing an hour after the incident.

### Saitur

FROM PAGE 12

charge of issuing the coupons to the farmers will issue them to nonfarmers and other favoured people, Saifur remarked.

He asked the NGOs to draft a proposal outlining the mechanism for delivering such direct subsidies.

Among the NGOs represented in the meeting were Brac, Save the Children, ActionAid, ASA, Care, World Vision, Caritas and Gono Sakkhorota. The NGO leaders urged Saifur to

ower the interest rate on loans aiven by the aovernmentsponsored Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) by 1 percent.

The PKSF provides loans to small NGOs at 3.5 percent interest rate and to big ones at 7 percent. The NGOs, in their turn, lend this money to farmers and other borrowers charging a 15-percent interest. Recently, the PKSF has instructed the NGOs not to charge their borrowers more than 12.5 percent interest from July 1. The NGOs' request for reduction of the interest rate on PKSF loan was made in this context.

The finance minister brushed aside the request saying, "The spread between your cost of fund and interest on loans is wide enough - from 8 to 10 percent. So, you should rather consider narrowing

the spread.' The NGOs also suggested to Saifur that a part of the annual budget spending on social, education and health sectors might be utilised through the NGOs in order to get better results.

The finance minister promised them to look into the proposal.

"The PKSF is already there to support you. In addition, we are working on setting up the NGO Foundation." he noted.

"Through the PKSF and the NGO Foundation, the government can give funds to NGOs for safety net programmes and education, health, nutrition and sanitation projects. We do want to increase our nvolvement with NGOs," he said.

### Mysterious death

FROM PAGE 1 apparently after it slid down the stairs to the water tub on Sunday

The reason for the death was not confirmed, however. One source claimed that it died from infection in the front right leg that he had been suffering since April. He added that the authorities pushed a 1000 cc injection through the vein near its left ear.

Yet another source blamed the death on the scorching heat. The zoo officials were not available for comments.

The authorities have formed a three-member committee to probe the death. The zoo sources said the body of the four-metre long, 36-inch tall rhino weighing 2,000 kilogram will be buried at the zoo premises after autopsy. The late Nepalese King Raja

Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev gifted the rhino couple to Dhaka zoo back in 1992 when they were six months old. Zoo sources said his partner,

Kanchi, has become depressed about the death and is not eating anything since then. The rhinos reached adulthood at seven but have no offspring.

## Sonia turns down

incoming MPs of her party.

"I must abide by the principles that have guided me all alone. I appeal to you to understand the

force of my conviction," she said. "There is no threat to me from anywhere. I want to give India a secular government that is strong and stable.

"Mv aim has always been to protect the secular foundations of our nation.' "We have waged a successful

battle but we have not won the war.

That is a long and arduous struggle and I will continue it with full determi-The withdrawal by the heir of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty -- India's equivalent of America's Kennedys -had earlier triggered anguished

press her to change her mind. One man stood on the roof of a car, held a homemade gun to his head and waved a stick to deter people trying to calm him.

scenes outside her New Delhi home

as hundreds of supporters rallied to

"Call Sonia Gandhi! Tell her I will kill myself if she doesn't become nrime minister!" he said before beina disarmed.

Others lav down in the street or

torched effigies of Gandhi's Hindu nationalist opponents, who have run a bitter campaign targeting her Italian background after their humiliating election loss last week. "Congress has informed us that

Mrs Gandhi will no longer be leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, and they are meeting to elect a new leader." said Sitaram Yechuri. a leader of the main Communist Party of India (Marxist), which has pledged its support to a Congress coalition government LAWMAKERS MEET

#### Congress leaders had made frantic

last minute efforts to persuade Gandhi to stay on and become India's first foreign born prime minister and the fourth from the

Her withdrawal, and the prospect of Singh leading Asia's third-largest economy, spurred markets. helping stocks on the Bombay exchange post their second-biggest daily rally just a day after the worst plunge in the exchange's 129-year history.

At Gandhi's residence,

Congress leaders, some beating their chests, urged her to ignore what they called the ousted Bharatiya Janata Party's "racist" "She feels the country comes first, she does not want the country

to be faced with this," said Congress official Salman Khursheed. "We are stunned, it is shocking, I just can't see the Congress party accepting such an outcome. Left-wing parties, with more than 60 seats, were supporting Gandhi

without formally joining her coalition, but have spooked markets with anti-privatisation comments. As news of Gandhi's possible

withdrawal filtered out, the stock market rebounded sharply and recorded one of its biggest gains. "The market has gone up because of news that Sonia is reluctant to be PM." said Bharat

Shah, director of Vikram Kenia Securities. "This means that Manmohan Singh, who is very reformist, will become prime minis-Gandhi, an Indian citizen, and Singh met President Abdul Kalam earlier yesterday to open talks about

later she would meet Kalam again Kalam invited Gandhi to meet him as leader of the biggest party in the new parliament, and is likely to accept Congress' claim to power in

forming government. Gandhi said

the world's largest democracy. (Reuters, AFP and BBC)

# Govt to give up power

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told newspersons on Monday that a bill seeking an amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1958 to that end would be placed before the cabinet soon for approval. The commission will use the Criminal Law Amendment Act to prosecute the accused in graft cases

The government kept the provision for withdrawal of a case -- even at the trial stage -- apparently under wraps when it passed the independent Anti-Corruption Commission bill on February 17

The Daily Star at the time highlighted the provision as contrary to the spirit of the independent commission and reported that Section 10 (4) of the criminal law reads: "No prosecution under this act against any person either generally or in respect of anyone or more of the offences for which he is being tried shall be withdrawn except under the order in writing of the government.

Donors and civil society members who repeatedly underscored independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission raised the issue with the government, prompting the law ministry to draft an amendment withdrawing the government's power of non-prosecution.

Sources said the move to amend the law came despite reservation of some ruling party stalwarts about empowering the commission to withdraw graft cases

A five-member selection body was formed on May 9 to pick a sixmember panel for the president to select three of the six to form the commission. But the selection body did not hold any meeting until now and is unlikely to sit by this month, sources said. Five members of the selection

body are Justice MA Aziz (Appellate Division), Justice Nazrul Islam Chowdhury (High Court Division), Comptroller and Auditor General Asif Public Service Commission Chairman Tahmida Khatun and immediate past cabinet secretary Akbar Ali Khan. Pressed by the donors and the civil society, the government tabled

the Anti-Corruption Commission bill in parliament in July last year but came under immediate fire for designing the law in a way that would present a drag on the formation of a truly independent commission. After seven months of discussion

### and arguments, the bill was passed on February 17 and gazetted on May 9.

OC dies

FROM PAGE 12 and collapsed on the ground, vomit-

ing blood," police sources said. The OC was rushed to Samarita Hospital where the doctor declared him dead.

In the morning, Muhiuddin's Namaj-e-Janaza was held at Razarbagh Police Lines.

The body was sent to his resi-

## NCBs to collect

The chairmen and managing directors of the NCBs Sunday held a meeting with the central bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed regarding the MoU and discussed the targets.

The central bank's earlier effort to improve performance of the NCBs by signing MoUs with them achieved mixed results.

The first such MoU was signed in June 2003 outlining specific targets to be achieved by December 2003. In December last, the NCB default loan stood at Tk 10,575 crore

with the top 80 defaulters holding Tk

3,172 crore. But the NCBs could

recover only Tk 16.40 crore in cash. "Because of such poor cash recovery, the new MoU emphasises cash recovery this year," a central bank source said.

The NCBs were to cut their operating cost by 10 percent, according to the last year's MoU. But none of them could do it. Instead, their cost increased by 5.38 percent between 2002 and 2003. Of them, the operating cost of

Sonali Bank rose by 1.93 percent

Janata 8.36 percent, Agrani 6.31 percent and Rupali by 7.6 percent. In this context, the Bangladesh Bank says that the NCBs will have to cut their cost by reducing transport. electricity and telephone costs

where waste is plenty.

However some NCB officials told The Daily Star that this strategy is not realistic. "Cuts in transport. electricity or telephone costs will not lead to 5 percent reduction in operating costs. To really attain this goal the NCBs may have to cut 2,000 jobs, close some loss-making

branches and take other measures," an official said.

The Bangladesh Bank told Agrani Bank authorities that a new private management body will take over the bank in a few weeks. Therefore, the central bank will have a different set of goals for Agrani.

Like the previous one, the new MoU will also limit the growth of loans to a maximum of 5 percent.

The draft MoU will soon be sent to the NCBs for approval by their boards, sources added. another ministry was formed by

## Outlaws slaughter

The PBCP cadres slaughtered homeowner Rashid, 36, son of Abdul Jabbar, and Nazrul Fakir, 36, son of Nazim Uddin. The gang later looted the houses

same village before setting them on Deputy Commissioner Golam Mortuza and the superintendent of police of Naogaon visited the scene yesterday morning.

The bodies were sent to

Naogaon Sadar Hospital for autopsy. Nurnabi, 36, Momtaz, 55, Abdul Matin, 27, Majid, 37, Jewel, 27, and Litu, 30, were injured in the Our Staff Correspondent Anwar Ali reports from Rajshahi that senior police officials claimed that Bangla

Bhai, dreaded operations com-

mander of the JMJB, was no longer in Raishahi But police officers working in the troubled areas said Bangla Bhai has been staving alternately at camps in Bagmara in Rajshahi and Naldanga

### MP murder

the support of the government and termed it as 'vigilante activities' of the government," said Zafar Ullah.

Emerging from the meeting, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told reporters that the AL chief briefed the US assistant secretary about her party's stance on going back to the House and said the main opposition did not boycott parliament. "We are in parliament and took part in the obituary reference discussion on slain Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master on May 12," Jalil quoted Hasina as saying.

"Rocca expressed profound shock over the killing of Ahsanullah Master and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members," said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, a political secretary to the AL chief.

On the issue of the party's comeback to parliament, Saber said, "We informed her about the atmosphere in the House where Awami League lawmakers submitted about 1.400 notices on different issues including price spiral of essentials, slide of law and order and unabated corruption, but none of the notices was accepted.'

"Moreover, the speaker did not accept any of the 900 questions of Awami League lawmakers raised for the prime minister's question hour," he

expressed grave concern at the recent emergence of Islamist militants in the country and 'government-sponsored oppression on opposition forces'. US Ambassador in Bangladesh Harry K Thomas aided Rocca during

the meeting but did not respond to

The AL leaders at the meeting also

queries of the journalists. A number of women leaders and activists of the AL's women front shouted anti-government slogans during the arrival and departure of the visiting US assistant secretary.

### Maj Mannan

FROM PAGE 12

by-elections who also addressed the press conference, demanded army escorts for Abdul Mannan and troops deployment at all voting centres in Dhaka-10 and Munshiganj-1 constituencies during election. Mahi rushed to Dhaka from

Munshiganj upon hearing the news of attack on Mannan's motorcade vester Mannan alleged that ruling BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) cadres

attacked his motorcade at Tejgaon

Railway Colony, Tejgaon Truck Stand

and East Rajabazar, injuring several activists and damaging nine vehicles. He said the attackers snatched two loudspeakers and banners, and attempted to set fire to a jeep in the motorcade. They also prevented him from using loudspeakers during his campaign at East Rajabazar, Mannan alleged. "Had it not been for my security men, I'm afraid I would have been

with the EC, but to no effect. He also alleged that police are not allowing him to lodge general diaries (GDs) or cases in connection with the attacks. Atiqur Rahman, duty officer of

Mannan said he lodged complaints

Tejgaon Police Station, however, said no-one went to the police station to file any case or GD. In an earlier statement. Mannan alleged intelligence agencies of the

government were preparing a list of his

party workers who joined BDB's

election campaign. He brought allegations against the BNP candidate for the Dhaka-10 constituency of violating election rules by printing colour posters and hanging

billboards. Mahi and Mannan said the government was planning to rig the polls sensing BDB's victory in the by-

### 6 JS bodies

to recast them.

FROM PAGE 12 ministries have remained vacant for a long time, but no initiative was taken

No meeting of the standing committee on labour and employment ministry was held since the death of its chairman Ahsanul Haque Mollah on December 12 last year. Retired army major Abdul Mannan, chairman of the standing

committee on home ministry resigned from parliament on March 10. Since then, its members held just one meeting just to scrutinise a bill. During a cabinet reshuffle on May 6, the food and the relief and disaster management ministries were merged into one ministry while

merging the jute and the textile ministries. But the standing committees on the four previously separate ministries are still there and cannot hold any meetings unless they are recast

accordingly. Officials at the parliament secreof Shamsher and Chayan in the tariat are embarrassed to invite some ministers to certain committee meetings as they are no longer members of those committees since their portfolios changed during the reshuf-Former home minister Altaf

Hossain Chowdhury has been made commerce minister, but he is not a member of the standing committee on commerce ministry. Similarly new Information Minister M Shamsul Islam, Forest and Environment Minister Tarigul Islam, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman and State Minister for Land Ukil Abdus Sattar are not members of the standing committees on their ministries. Under the circumstances, parlia-

ment officials are still inviting the former ministers to committee meetings while the new ministers are being invited as special guests.

# AL, BNP leaderships

three-day visit. Representatives of the diplomatic missions in Dhaka and leading businesspeople also attended it. AmCham President Aftab ul Islam delivered the inaugural speech.

Earlier, Rocca arrived in the morning and after the luncheon meeting met Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury at the foreign ministry. She raised the issue of Chittagong arms seizure among other bilateral issues and expressed the US concern over the huge weapons cache.

She offered the services of US customs department for the ongoing probe into Chittagong arms haul. "If needed. we will seek their help,' Shamsher said. At the AmCham meeting, Rocca

said. "Corruption is rampant, law and order is poor and doubts about Bangladesh's political and economic future propel many Bangladeshis to seek their future abroad.' Criticising the current practice of

political dissent, Rocca continued, Street agitation, violence, intimidation and general strikes belong to a bygone era and have no place in a democracy". "Hartals serve only to aggravate the suffering of Bangladeshis She reiterated the US belief that

parliament should be used by all members, including the opposition, to pursue their political agenda. "We hope to see greater effort to

end attacks on journalists and deaths n police custody," Rocca added. She obliquely referred to the government actions against the Ahmadiyya sect in January and said, "In keeping with Bangladesh's constitution, religious minorities must be

protected, not stigmatised or victim-

ised by book banning and attacks on

their places of worship. "Measures to undermine social and religious equality and promote disharmony are viewed with greater concern from outside Bangladesh," contributing, in the end, to what she termed was a 'cloudy outlook' on Bangladesh.

Rocca is scheduled to visit the Ahmadiyya complex in Bakshibazar today, talk to sect leaders and see the complex that was attacked by Sunni nardliners in January

### Two students held on charge of abduction

DU CORRESPONDENT

person.

Police raided Sir AF Rahman Hall of Dhaka University (DU) in the early hours of yesterday and arrested two students for allegedly abducting one

a second year student of the DU. and Junaid, a student of Jagannath College Both are activists of Jatiyatabadi

The arrestees are Abul Hossain

Chhatra Dal (JCD), the ruling BNP's student wing. Sources said the two students along with a fourth year DU student, Ziaul Haque Zia, kept a manpower exporter, Pavel, confined in a room at the hall on Monday night. They said Pavel had taken Tk 20.000 from a relative of Ziaul long ago but did not give it back despite repeated

Hall unit JCD leaders alleged Pavel is a fake manpower exporter and cheated people in the name of sending them abroad for job.

Ramna police said they raided the hall on information that one person was kidnapped and kept there. They picked up three students including Ziaul. A number of JCD workers later

activists. Police however released Ziaul only. A case under Speedy Trial Act was filed against Junaid and Abul

went to Ramna Police Station and

demanded release of their fellow

#### Representing the biggest foreign investor in Bangladesh with a total investment of \$1.3 billion, Rocca cautioned that new foreign investment is going down and said to reverse the trend, deregulation, privatisation, export diversification, financial sector

ments are essential She, however, hoped that quick activation of an independent and effective anti-corruption commission and separation of the judiciary would

reform and major infrastructure invest-

attract more foreign investment. The US assistant secretary stressed the need for prompt democratic, legal and economic reforms and said, "It is up to the leadership of

sustainable development." She said that South Asia "is now, and will long remain, at the forefront of

On the US role in the Kashmir conflict, she said, "We do not seek to impose ourselves as a mediator [but] to urge them toward reconciliation by peaceful means."

Shamsher also said in the meeting

that the US economic assistance

programme in Bangladesh has increased to \$109 million, a big improvement from last year. Later, emerging from the meeting with the foreign secretary, Rocca told reporters, "We talked about a broad

Bangladesh are close so we talked frankly about the issues." Shamsher informed reporters that they discussed issues concerning trade unions in the export processing zone, the progress of Tifa (trade and investment framework agreement) and Saarc. He also received assur-

ances from Rocca that the two sides

will continue talks on trade issues.

range of all bilateral issues ... US and

### **Ershad**

FROM PAGE 12 the 12 lawmakers who voted in favour of the bill of violating party decision.

At a presidium meeting Monday

the party chief made a counter accusation against Kader, also of violating party decision by reacting in a bad way. Ershad also showcaused him for misbehaving with fellow party leaders. Expressing his reactions, Kader yesterday told The Daily Star that he would not reply to the warning letter.

"I have nothing to do with this warning letter, as I did not make any derogatory remarks against any party leader. The allegations raised against me are baseless," he claimed, adding, "I have decided to observe the current situation and will decide what I should do after some days.

Kader said he did not violate the party's decision and expressed his own opinion about the bill only after the JP had seconded the bill. On the situation prevailing in the

party, another JP lawmaker named the pending cases against Ershad as a major problem. "If there was no case against our chairman, Jatiya Party would be able to act independently, without favouring any party," said yet

another lawmaker to The Daily Sta requesting anonymity. During the previous BNP regime from 1991 to 1996, Ershad did not get bail in any of the cases. He was granted bails in those after Awami League (AL) took over the power in 1996 and came out of prison. But, as soon as Ershad became vocal against the AL government, he was sent back to jail in Janata Tower

30 hurt

under control.

FROM PAGE 12 faction led by Sheikh Muhammad Shafi from a room at the hall. Workers of Munna group attacked their rivals with machete, hockey

sticks and iron rods as they protested ouster of their fellow activist. On information, police rushed to the hall and brought the situation

# 13 Palestinians die

Palestinian witnesses said the four, in their twenties and thirties, had gathered for pre-dawn prayers at a mosque set ablaze by the missile strike. Israeli military officials said the missiles hit a band of gunmen. Six Palestinians, at least one of

them a gunman, were killed in street

fighting, medics said. About 20

people were wounded in the air

attacks and street fighting of "Operation Rainbow.' "We will die and they will die, but we are Muslims and we go to heaven. They will go to the fires of hell," said 30-year-old Palestinian policeman Ashraf al-Jamal

Palestinians fired rockets and set

off hidden bombs in the cinderblock of 90,000 people, a hotbed of militants who attack soldiers patrolling the Egyptian border. Hundreds of civilians bundled away belongings on donkey carts, fearing their houses would be

destroyed. Some slept in the streets. The army said three buildings were demolished on Tuesday. The planned raid drew UN and European Union criticism over fears t could make thousands of Palestinians homeless. Israel's main ally, the United States, also

said it was concerned. "We call upon the whole world to mmediately intervene to block

Israel's military escalation." said Palestinian cabinet minister Saeb Erekat Bloodshed has surged in Gaza

since Israeli Prime Minister Ariel

Sharon proposed evacuating troops

and Jewish settlers in a plan backed

by most Israelis and the United

States, though held up by opposi-

As Tuesday's operation got

under way, a Palestinian fighter was

chief Moshe Yaalon, "After we tried

tion from ruling party hard-liners. Militants want to claim as a victory any Israeli pullout, while the army is determined to smash militant groups first.

killed in an accident preparing a bomb in his house. "Rafah has become a gateway for terror through which rocket propelled grenades and other weapons have passed." said army

this ourselves."

keep forces in the border zone safe 1,500 displaced people.

#### (unsuccessfully) to persuade the Palestinian authorities to stop this activity, we were forced to prevent Yaalon said on Sunday hundreds of houses would be demolished to

from gunmen and thwart tunneldigging. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) set up tents to take in

Bangladesh to put it on the path to America's foreign policy concerns."