

Country's first & only Mega Shop
For WOMEN'S LINGERIE
Lingerie, nightwear
Brand cosmetics
Beauty corner
Sweet Dreams
House 29, Road 07 - Dhanmondi

COMMITTED TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XIV No. 122

DHAKA MONDAY MAY 24, 2004

JAISTHA 10, 1411 BS

RABI-US-SANI 3, 1425 HJRI

20 PAGES PRICE: TK 7.00

www.thedailystar.net

7 dead, 240 missing as 2 launches capsize

Search on for bodies on Meghna

STAR REPORT

At least seven passengers, four of them children, were killed and more than 240 feared missing after two double-decker launches capsized during a pre-monsoon storm on the Meghna river near Chandpur early yesterday.

The MV Lighting Sun sailing from southern Madaripur to Dhaka sank with about 250 passengers on board and rescuers have so far retrieved seven bodies.

At least 35 passengers swam ashore after the launch was overturned by a strong squall near

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP

The overturned hull of the launch that sank in the Meghna in Chandpur yesterday.

PM leaves for Shanghai today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia today leaves for Shanghai in China on a four-day visit.

During her stay, she will attend China and the World Bank (WB) organised Global Learning Process and Conference on Scaling up Poverty Reduction.

The three-day international conference begins on Tuesday and Khaleda will address it the next day, sources said.

Different countries will discuss various measures taken up in poverty alleviation sector and share their experiences. It will also discuss millennium development goals and PRSP (poverty reduction strategy paper), they added.

It will also give an opportunity to project various successful Bangladeshi organisations in poverty alleviation and empowerment of women and common people.

The PM is also expected to hold talks with the Chinese premier, the presidents of Brazil and Uganda, WB

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Scotland Yard in city to probe shrine blast

UK HC goes to London today to see family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of the UK police service, Scotland Yard, arrived in Dhaka yesterday to investigate Friday's deadly bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet that injured British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury among 70 other people and killed three.

Police confirmed that the five-member team would start work immediately after arrival in the northeastern city of Sylhet this morning and several teams of local police would provide the investigators with security.

Official news agency BSS reports that the British high commissioner, who was under treatment at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka for injuries, leaves for

London today to spend time with his family.

The investigation goes multi-pronged as Sylhet police, intelligence agencies and Scotland Yard members with the help of local law enforcers will investigate the second bomb blast in five months at the 700-year-old shrine, said a senior police officer, who would not give his name as he said the incident is highly sensitive.

The British police team will visit the shrine mosque where the Bangladesh-born envoy said Friday prayers shortly before the bomb exploded on impact bouncing off his abdomen. The investigators will also visit the environs of the scene and talk to local people to find leads to the attack.

On how long the UK team will stay in Sylhet, a police officer, seek-

ing anonymity, said: "It depends on how quickly they can wrap up their investigation."

Talking to The Daily Star, Abdul Hai Khan, president of the District Bar Association, quoted his grandchild Choudhury as telling him by phone that a Scotland Yard team would visit Sylhet.

Earlier in the day, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday told newsmen in Dhaka after a special meeting on law and order that Bangladesh would take assistance from the UK police service if it wanted to help probe Friday's blast.

Choudhury's visit to the shrine came barely 18 days after his new assignment as envoy. His appointment in Dhaka is notable as he is the first Briton from an ethnic minority

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

LAUNCH DISASTERS

Probe reports still behind screen

RAFIQ HASAN

The government has not made public any probe reports on dozens of launch mishaps that left thousands killed and a similar number missing but punished only a few responsible people.

Sources in the Department of Shipping said in the last one decade, launch disasters killed more than 4,000 people, including more than 600 in one single mishap.

However, official figures show around 3,000 died in 260 ferry accidents since 1977.

The sources said in most of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Bangla Bhai men stage showdown in Rajshahi

Issue death threat to journalists, meet DC, SP, DIG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Several thousand activists of Islamist death squad Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) armed with bamboo poles and hockey sticks staged a showdown in Rajshahi city yesterday afternoon, issuing death threats to journalists.

They also asked the administration and the media to support it in eliminating outlaws.

The demonstration was held

after a half-day hartal called by the main opposition, Awami League (AL), and the 11-party demanding arrest of Bangla Bhai, the commander of JMJB blamed for killing at least eight outlaws in the country's northwest since April 1 and spreading panic.

JMJB men on hundreds of motorbikes, three minibuses, 60 buses and half a dozen trucks entered the city at 3:00pm in deviation of their earlier announcement that the rally

would be held in the morning.

The killer group came down heavily on journalists in two meetings at Shaheb Bazar Zero point and Gourhanga Rail Crossing and handed over memorandums to the deputy commissioner, superintendent of police and deputy inspector general of police of Rajshahi.

The home ministry had ordered police to arrest Bangla Bhai only last week in the wake of his lawlessness

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Top business leaders condemn shrine blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The leaders of the country's leading business bodies yesterday demanded immediate probe into the blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine and stern action against the culprits.

"We strongly condemn such a barbaric attack because acts like this not only threaten potential investors but also disrupt peace and go against the spirit of democracy," read a press release signed by the top business leaders yesterday.

Expressing shock at the post-Juma prayers explosion that killed three people and injured 70 others,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Kashmir blast kills 28 soldiers

AFP, Srinagar

Twenty-eight Indian soldiers were killed and 10 people were injured yesterday when a massive landmine planted by Kashmiri rebels exploded on a key Kashmir highway, an official said.

The attack came less than a day after Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was sworn in as head of a new left-leaning government that has pledged to find a peaceful solution in Kashmir.

A bus was carrying troops of the paramilitary Border Security Force

(BSF) from the summer capital Srinagar to the winter capital Jammu when it was torn apart by the landmine and then caught fire, a BSF official said.

He said the impact of the blast hit a civilian bus that was following the troops.

Twenty-eight soldiers were killed, BSF deputy inspector general K. Srinivasan said. Another seven soldiers and three civilians were injured.

The bus that went over the mine, planted under a culvert, was carrying 35 BSF personnel.

I am not hopeful about the injured. They are badly injured. I have little hope for them," Srinivasan told AFP.

Srinivasan said about half of those who died were killed by the blast and the other half died in the fire that it sparked. The three civilians injured had been travelling in the other bus.

"The entire area has been sealed off and a massive search is under way (for those who planted the mine). We are not going to spare them," Srinivasan said.

Traffic was immediately stopped

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

1.14cr Proshika beneficiaries in uncertain days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The future of about 1.14 crore beneficiaries and 9,000 staff of Proshika has plunged into a crisis after the arrest of the leading NGO's president Kazi Faruque on Saturday.

Reports of Proshika beneficiaries and staff forsaking the NGO around the country were pouring in at the Proshika head office yesterday following the arrest of the president and his deputy, sources say.

"We were told today (Sunday) that beneficiaries were refusing to repay their weekly instalments

against their micro-credit loans sensing the uncertainty over the organisation's future," said another Proshika official, requesting anonymity. "The area offices are also reporting very low attendance."

Unnerved by the continued clampdown by the government on Proshika for its alleged political link, beneficiaries and workers, especially in the rural areas, became worried further by Faruque's arrest.

Director General of the NGO Affairs Bureau Mizanur Rahman last night declined to comment on the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Qazi Faruque remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proshika President Qazi Faruque Ahmed yesterday was placed on three-day police remand in two corruption cases filed by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC).

Police produced Faruque before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka at around 2:45pm with two separate prayers, each for a five-day remand.

CMM Shamim Ara Khatun placed the Proshika chief on a three-day remand in each case. But, the remand period will be three days in total, as the court ordered for the remand to run concurrently.

The CMM also rejected the bail petitions submitted by Barrister Tania Amir representing Faruque, who heads one of the largest non-government organisations (NGOs)

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

US pounds Iraq mosque, 20 die

AGENCIES, Kufa

US tanks, ground troops and aircraft have launched a major offensive against the Iraqi Shia militia, killing about 20 in one raid on a mosque and pounding other positions around the holy city of Najaf.

The fiercest fighting in the area for weeks killed at least 34 people and wounded dozens, including civilians, overnight and seemed a definitive answer to a tentative truce offer made by an aide to the cleric leading the Mehdi Army, Moqtada al-Sadr.

Pools of blood lay inside the green-domed Sahla mosque, one of three main shrines in Kufa just

outside Najaf, and spent cartridges littered the courtyard on Sunday. A tank had smashed down the door of the building, where US troops said they found weapons.

US commanders say they are trying to avoid inflaming religious passions but will attack mosques used in combat.

Sadr, a young firebrand preacher from a respected clerical dynasty, has irritated much of the Shia establishment with his use of holy places in his revolt. Some Shia leaders have also demanded the Americans show restraint in the shrine cities.

"An estimated 20 Mehdi militia were killed after firing on coalition

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Opposition gives 1-week ultimatum to nab Bangla Bhai

Demands ban on JMJB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition political leaders and members of intelligentsia yesterday issued a one-week ultimatum to the government to outlaw Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and arrest its operations commander Bangla Bhai, or face tough agitation.

The ultimatum was the principal outcome of a dialogue on the recent rise in acts of violence by extreme fundamentalist and communal forces, organised by Workers Party of Bangladesh (WPB) at the Jatiya Press Club. Prominent leaders of 10

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Tigers toiling

RABEED IMAM, from Grenada

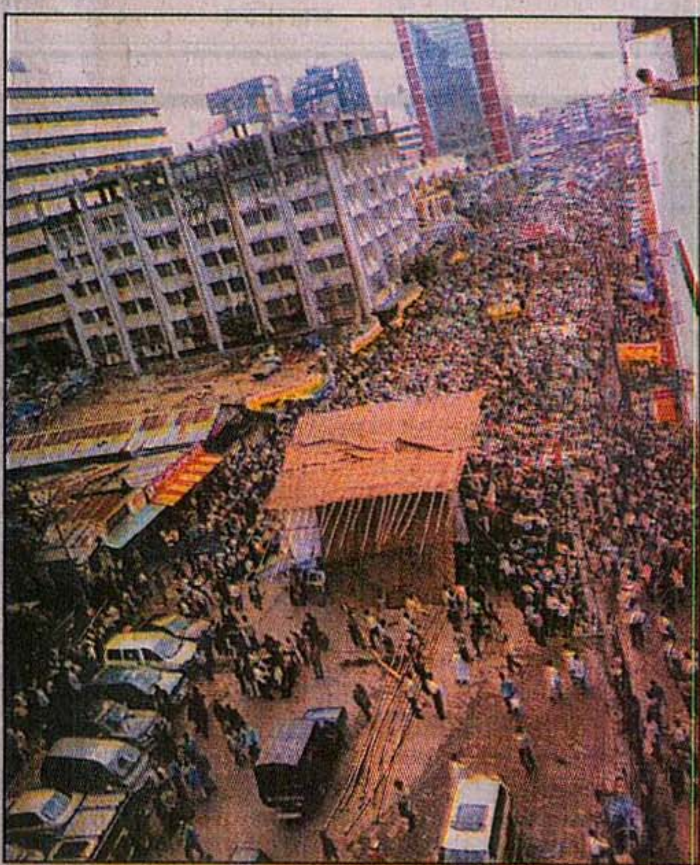
Sylvester Joseph cracked a hundred while Dwayne Bravo was on the brink of his ton as the West Indies Board XI took full control on the

second day of the three-day match against touring Bangladesh at the Queen's Park Stadium.

The match started half-an-hour early to compensate for the lost time

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Standard Chartered
I believe my credit card carries my cricket passion
Call: 9565153-4 (Dhaka) 714896 (Chittagong)



Falu breaks law to hold rally, causes traffic misery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance prohibits holding public meetings on city's thoroughfares, a huge election meeting in support of Mosaddaq Ali Falu for Dhaka-10 by-poll was held yesterday halting traffic on the main road in Karwan Bazar.

An organisation of city residents hailing from greater Noakhali organised the meeting that filled the road between the BTMC and Progoti Insurance buildings with several hundred supporters and a gigantic podium at the Hotel Sonargaon end.

In reply to a query about the permission, Patrol Inspector Rashid said, "The police commissioner is empowered to give permission for public meeting to take place on the street."

A high official of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP-South), however, seeking anonymity, said, "Yes, the DMP commissioner may issue the permission to hold meeting on a city street but only if a very

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Mosaddaq Ali Falu, BNP's by-polls candidate for Dhaka-10 constituency, holds his election rally in the middle of Karwan Bazar road, violating law yesterday.

Bashundhara Apartment

Where Architectural Beauty Meets Nature's Green

at Bashundhara Baridhara Project
LUXURIOUS APARTMENT
Minimum price Tk. 1350 per sq ft.

Booking only at Tk. 25,000/-
the rest amount is payable on 50 long-term installments

Apartment will be handed over within 3 years

RAJUK APPROVED

As much as 46% of land mass is allocated for garden, children's park, and open playground to ensure the healthy growth of your children.

Our Exclusive Features:
Our building is designed as a RCC frame structure with slab, beam & Column as per American Concrete Institute (ACI) and Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC).
● All apartments are south-facing ● Most of the apartments having 5 verandas
● Modern sports zone close to apartment zone ● Uninterrupted power supply
● Jam-e-Masjid is within the apartment complex ● Long term installments facility

DBH & National Housing loan facility is available

Please contact for booking:
EAST WEST PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT (PVT.) LTD
An Enterprise of Bashundhara Group
Sena Kalyan Bhaban (4th Floor), 195, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
Phone : 9552329, 9553999, 7122612, 7123188, 9569792-4, Fax : 9569172
E-mail : ewpd@bol-online.com Website : www.bashundharagroup.com
Dhanmondi Office : House # 402 (Old), 12 (New), Road # 27 (Old), 16 (New)
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1209, Phone : 9111635, 8115921, 8114506, 8113182
Bashundhara Site Office : Plot # 12, Block-A, Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka-1229
Phone : 8814061, 8818728, 9896895, Fax : 9886041
River View Site Office : Hasnabad, Keraniganj (Near Bangladesh China Friendship Bridge-Buriganga Bridge-1), Dhaka, Phone : 7419942-6