

## Probe body draws

**FROM PAGE 1** Surveyors are directly responsible for ensuring the safety and security of launch passengers. They are the ones who are to make sure that vessels with faulty design and inadequate safety measures do not ply.

The probe committee has been asked to submit its report within 15 days.

"An independent cell, which does not have any involvement with shipping business should probe such incident. Otherwise, it would never be possible to dig out the actual cause of the accidents," said Khairul Islam, a professor of the Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering in Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

"How come, a person who belongs to the department and was directly responsible for ensuring safety of the passengers would find out the causes of the accident," he wondered.

According to him, 80 percent of launch mishaps could be avoided if the expert knowledge in this regard is applied. "Blaming launch mishaps on storms shows a mere ignorance about the sector because the passenger ships would have to be built keeping the possibility of such storm in mind."

Shipping experts and the shipping ministry officials were astounded to see the name of Fakhrul Islam as the chief of the probe committee.

"A person who himself was the surveyor of the very vessel that capsized, can't be the investigator here," said a shipping expert adding a deliberate cover-up by this committee is very much likely because faulty design of the vessels and inadequate safety measures

He said, "It's simply a mockery because this committee's report would never be neutral, as it would be inclined to ignore all the respon-

sibilities that lies on none but on the surveyors."

Like all other probe committees, this probe committee report would never see the light and the vested quarter in the department who are mainly responsible for the ferry disasters in the country, would escape the liabilities as usual, the shipping experts said.

The Director General of Shipping, AKM Ahsanul Azim, while contacted by phone yesterday declined to comment. "It's not the time to talk to any journalist," he said in anger and hung up immediately.

Ismael Zabiullah, the shipping secretary could not be contacted, as he was busy over his trip to Malaysia.

UNB reports, police arrested three crews of the MV Lighting Sun that sank in the Meghna, with some 250 people on board. They are Abul Kalam, Noor Alam and Manik Khan.

Chandpur district administration formed another one-member committee with Assistant Deputy Commissioner Kamal Siddiqi in the lead. This committee was asked to submit report in a week.

The Naval Transport Department filed a case against the owner of the launch. Zonal Inspector of the department Motaleb Hossain filed the case.

Meanwhile, till Sunday night 11 bodies were handed over to the district administration of Madari-pur, from where the launch sailed for Dhaka.

The Dhaka-bound launch capsized in the river at Anandabazar here when a storm broke in the early hours of Sunday, leaving scores dead. So far, 49 bodies were recovered.

Meanwhile, a two-member committee was formed to enquire into another ferry mishap when MV Digonto sank in the Meghna, 2 km north of Anandabazar, almost at the same time.

## Bangla Bhai

**FROM PAGE 1** The authorities also directed police stations and camps to beef up security with additional deployment of police.

"We have information that the outlaws, now much more active, have gathered sophisticated firearms, including AK-47 rifles, to attack the police stations and camps," a top Naogaon police officer said.

Naogaon Superintendent of Police Fazlur Rahman told The Daily Star that he got information about the outlaws marking the police stations for attacks.

Police received the order on Monday to arrest the dreaded lynchin of Islamic militant outfit JMJB, blamed for killing at least eight outlaws in vigilante action in the northwest since April 1.

"But we could not trace him (Bangla Bhai) after we received the order," a police officer said, asking not to be named.

Another police officer said he had information that Bangla Bhai holed up in Naogaon. Asked why he was not arrested, the officer said: "We are not launching any hard-line operation to arrest Bangla Bhai for now as it will be tough for us to control sarbaharas (outlaws)."

### CONFLICT AND HIT LIST

A conflict between a state minister and his brother over the JMJB

vigilante action hit a new high.

The state minister wants the JMJB to continue its action to fight outlaws, but his brother wants him to mount pressure on police to arrest Bangla Bhai as the JMJB last week included him and his assistants on a hit list of seven.

The JMJB listed the minister's brother, a former legislator and five others including four Naogaon union parishad chairmen -- Goutam, Janbox, Shahidul and Abdul Hakim -- for punishment for their alleged links to outlaws.

JMJB men based the list on confession from underground operative Badshah, whom they bludgeoned to death on Thursday, that the seven directed him to kill up 50 people in the region.

The JMJB attacked the houses of Janbox and alleged outlaw operative Dulal and demonstrated in Atrai and Raninagar yesterday.

Khejur picked up and beaten up by the JMJB men in Atrai on Wednesday for outlaw links is still missing. But locals say the JMJB men secreted his body 20 feet underground after killing him.

Police on Saturday rescued Bashar, another outlaw whom the JMJB beat the same day and left on the road presuming him dead. Bashar is now in jail.

## British envoy off to London

UNB, Dhaka

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Anwar Chowdhury, who was injured in a bomb attack in Sylhet on Friday, left here for London yesterday.

Informed sources said the injured high commissioner, who was under treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka, would spend time with his family.

A special flight of British Airways carried the high commissioner to London. He boarded the aircraft straight from the CMH at about 8:40am.

## Nazrul's birth

**FROM PAGE 1** Socio-cultural organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to mark the day.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia gave separate messages on the occasion paying homage to the great poet.

The president in his message said Nazrul's songs and poetry were source of inspiration for all during the War of Independence.

He said the poet always voiced against all forms of injustice, repression and evil design through his writings.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said Nazrul's multifaceted literary works enhanced the status of Bengali literature and culture.

"A poet, lyricist and musician, Nazrul had created his own distinct style in Bengali literature and music through his creativity and realism," the prime minister said.

She observed that Nazrul Islam was conferred upon national honour for his contribution to literature, national, social and cultural life.

A three-day programme has been taken up to celebrate the day at national level.

The main discussion and cultural function of the programme will be held at Darirampur in Trishal of Mymensingh at 11:00am today.

President Iajuddin Ahmed will attend the function as chief guest while State Minister AKM Mosharrar Hossain as special guest. State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman will preside.

Besides, a two-day discussion and cultural programme will be held at Bangla Academy and Nazrul Institute in Dhaka (May 25-26).

A three-day book fair will begin at Nalinikanta Bhattachali Exhibition Hall of the National Museum today.

Separate programmes will be held in Comilla and Chittagong by the district administrations.

## Khaleda flies

**FROM PAGE 1** a bouquet while the senior most Vice-Mayor of Shanghai City Yang Slong and World Bank Representative Christina Wallich along with other high officials received her at the airport.

Bangladesh Ambassador to China Ashfaqur Rahman and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Chai Xi were also present at the airport to receive Khaleda.

The prime minister is accompanied, among others, by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Education Minister Osman Farruk, Adviser for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Kamaluddin Siddiqi.

## 4 PBCP men

**FROM PAGE 12** Police Station said the underground operatives were preparing draft of PBCP handbills on the second floor of the market.

Two drafts, one hand-written and another computer-composed, were recovered from there.

Police said Razzak and Tarek are regional publicity commanders of Rajshahi and Khulna, while Shafi is computer operator of PBCP (Lal Pataka).

## Ahsanullah killing

**FROM PAGE 12** "We also had lengthy discussion on the killings of 11 members of a family in Banskhalai and gave directives to quickly dispose of the case," Babar said.

The meeting found that many cases could not be proceeded due to delay in submission of autopsy report. It ordered health ministry officials present at the meeting to set guidelines for submitting the reports in time, sources added.

Sources said as many as 1936 murder and unnatural death cases were filed with different police stations across the country from January to March this year. Of them, 935 autopsy reports are yet to be prepared.

The meeting also reviewed progress in sensational murder cases of Air Commodore Golam Rabbani, businessman Shamsul Haque, his son and their driver, Rina, Monir, businessman Zakir Hossain.

Among others, secretaries for cabinet, home, establishment and law, the inspector general of police attended the meeting.

## 2 Britons die

**FROM PAGE 12** Killed and 12 wounded in fighting between US troops and militia loyal to radical Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr in Baghdad, hospital sources said yesterday.

But a US military officer based in Sadr City said 26 militiamen were killed and four wounded in various incidents involving attacks on US patrols between 6:00 pm Sunday and 6:00am Monday.

"It is a bunch of small sporadic events that add up," Captain Brian O'Malley of the 1st Brigade Combat Team told AFP.

## GDP grows over last

**FROM PAGE 1** Manufacturing that claims 16.25 percent of GDP will see 0.41 percentage point more growth from last year to 7.41 percent. This is the highest growth that this leading light is going to embrace in the last six years. But economists point out that this increment was largely due to a better readymade garment performance and did not have a broad base.

Transport performed far less than was expected. With a sectoral share of about 10 percent of GDP, its growth dipped to 6.64 percent this year from last year's 6.85 percent.

Wholesale and retail trade with a sectoral GDP claim of 14 percent increased marginally by 6.54 percent or 0.45 percentage point over last year.

Real estate activities will see a growth of 3.81 percent from last year's 3.52 percent.

As the figures emerged, economists feel that the economy, although outgrow last year's, is not growing fast enough to meet many of the poverty targets.

"We need 8-9 percent growth a year to meet our commitment towards Millennium Development Goal (MDG)."

Dr Zaid Bakht, research director of the Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies (BIDS), said. "But this 5+ percent growth has been there for quite some years and not enough to make any headway."

He pointed out that the manufacturing growth came mainly from the readymade garment sector, which could tap a new market in Canada.

"If garment faces difficulties in the post-MFA period, then the manufacturing will have no way out," he said.

Bakht said the import substitute

industries are not doing well because of weak demand, low purchasing power and bad law and order and politics.

He also pointed out that a slow development programme implementation had its effect on the transport sector.

On farm sector performance, M Asaduzzaman, research director of the BIDS, said government spending on agriculture has dipped. About 3-4 percent of the ADP is being invested in agriculture which should be at least 8-10 percent.

Utam Kumar Deb, researcher of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said boro production was hampered in the hooz areas because of excess rain. Bird flu scare also dented the poultry industry leading to lower growth.

## UN examines

**FROM PAGE 12** will control oil revenues and enables the interim government to discuss Iraq's debt with international financial institutions.

The official said an enhanced role for the UN would be subject to a "circumstances permitting" clause, which means the UN will only be there if security is good.

Member states might be called on to provide soldiers for a new force to protect UN personnel, he said.

In terms of security, the official said, the MNF force will have a regular "status of forces" agreement with the Iraqi government so that it does not fall under local law.

However, detailed negotiations about its control will have to await the appointment of the interim government, due to be named by UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi before the end of May.

## Bac under pressure

**FROM PAGE 1** under the Bac for questioning in two graft cases.

Police also asked the Bac to send a physician for him during interrogation by the joint cell, comprising army and police personnel.

The Bac, placed under direct supervision of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), told police a court placed Faruque on remand under it and that it could not hand him over to any other authorities legally.

The Proshika chief however was in Dhaka Central Jail till yesterday. Bac sources declined to say when and where he would be questioned.

The Bac did not take a single person, other than Faruque, on remand in the last few years, an intelligence source mentioned.

The National Security Intelligence arrested him on Saturday although it usually does not make such arrests.

Earlier, the Bac had filed 15 cases against the Proshika chief with the Pallabi Police Station. Moreover, the NGO Affairs Bureau had filed a graft case with Pallabi police against Faruque and 11 others but they got bail from the High Court.

When Faruque was arrested, a quarter in the government tried to place him under the Detective Branch (DB) of Police. But the DB did not agree as none of the cases against him was filed with it or by it. He was then sent to Pallabi Police Station.

## UK police launch

**FROM PAGE 1** to the police officials, local people including some eyewitnesses. They also took some of the evidence collected earlier by the Sylhet police.

The other members of the team are sergeants Neil Laurel and Neil Powl. Allan Shaw, head of the political section of the British High Commission in Dhaka, and a CID official accompanied the UK investigators to Sylhet.

In the latest development, the home ministry yesterday suspended Sylhet SP Shahadat Hossain for what it said was his failure to provide adequate security during the visit of the British envoy to the shrine.

Police yesterday evening, meanwhile, detained one Shamim, an alleged local member of the Islamist outfit Harkatul Jihad, in Subidiazar, but released him after interrogation.

The deputy inspector general (DIG) and superintendent of police (SP) of Sylhet and officials of Rapid Action Battalion, Bangladesh Rifles, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, National Security Intelligence and Special Branch and Criminal Investigation Department were present during the two and a half hours of investigation in the 700-year-old shrine area.

The shrine remained out of bounds to public during the investigation and afterwards, paramilitary BDR members used metal detectors on the devotees before letting them in.

The DIG and SP of Sylhet updated the Scotland Yard on the status of the investigation in the case and two army intelligence officers narrated the grenade attack on the British envoy.

The detectives took fingerprints from the veranda on the upper stairs of the main gate, where the grenade is suspected to have been hurled from, and some snaps and videos of the shrine premises and areas close by.

They enquired about the activities in the shrine, the gathering on the day of incident and the type of people who usually attend gathering in the shrine and in the mosque of Hazrat Shahjalal.

Gurdip Singh declined to comment, but Allan Shaw said the team has just started its job and they are not in a position at the moment to make any comment. "The British police here are helping the Bangladesh authorities in the investigation...we're trying to work with them," he said. He added that information would be available from the British High Commission.

Earlier, on arrival in the morning,

## Police traced hotel five Indians stayed at

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police traced the hotel the five Indian nationals, who were arrested from a Bangladesh Biman aircraft Saturday, checked out before leaving for Hong Kong.

Police took the five to the guest-house-like hotel in Gulshan after they disclosed the information during questioning at Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) yesterday, a police officer said preferring anonymity.

However, police could not arrest anybody as the hotel was locked.

Pargas Singh, Nirmol Singh, Manjeet Singh, Mangas Singh and Sandeep Singh, all Sikhs, first came to Dhaka from Kolkata by road last week. They went to Hong Kong on May 16 and flew back Friday night.

Police said the arrestees protested innocence during yesterday's quizzing at the JIC, saying they came here after a gang had given assurance to send them to London in exchange for a hefty sum of money.

A police officer of the North Zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said there are inconsistencies in the statements of the arrestees. He said the arrestees disclosed the name of another Indian national of Kolkata, who played a big role in bringing them to Bangladesh.

"We started the probe yesterday. It's too early to say anything about their motive," said a DMP police officer.

The five were placed on a 10-day remand Sunday.

## PDB revives

**FROM PAGE 12** PDB to make the contract effective. But the ministry thought better of issuing the guarantee letter considering TPE's failure to complete construction of Siddhirganj plant.

The TPE, in turn, tried to impose the project on the government by unilaterally importing 1400 tons of power plant equipment. However, the authorities did not officially accept equipment despite pressure from some PDB officials, as it did not have builder's guarantee.

These loopholes prevented the contract from being implemented despite pressure from lobbyists and political parties.

## Tarique serves

**FROM PAGE 12** his legal notice that Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and General Secretary Abdul Jalil were making comments against him with intent to damage his personal, social and political positions.

Ashik Islam, a spokesman for Hawa Bhaban, BNP chairperson's political office, said the legal notice was mailed to Sudha Sadan, the residence of the opposition leader, and Jalil's Gulshan residence.

## Ex-BTTB boss

**FROM PAGE 1** charges against them were not proved.

The government asked the BTTB to set up a PABX and landline phone system and other communication links in Ganges, Kobodak, Gomati and Teesta projects of the Water Development Board for Institute of River Research in 1988-89.

Without inviting tender, the former BTTB chairman in under-hand dealings with others asked Bangladesh Telecommunication Limited, the local agent of UHF system of US Motorola company, to set up the system. Maksud misappropriated Tk 10 crore instead of implementing the projects.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed six graft cases with Ramna Police Station, accusing Maksud and three others on May 16, 1991. The court recorded statements of 24 prosecution witnesses during the trial.

## Sramik League

**FROM PAGE 12** supporters of AL and its front organisations in Gazipur following Ahsanullah's assassination.

"As the seven-day ultimatum from AL chief Sheikh Hasina for the arrest of the killers expired on Sunday, we are compelled to announce the shutdown," Matinsaid.

Sramik League leaders demanded international probe into bomb attack on the British envoy to Bangladesh at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet and punishment to the criminals.

They also threatened to enforce a 72-hour road blockade programme across the country in the last week of June if their demands were unmet.

Among others, Sramik League leaders Abdus Salam Khan, Fazlul Haq Montu, Hasan Ali, Chandu Sardar, Tofail Ahmed, Aminul Haq Faruk and Jamaluddin Ahmed attended the press briefing. Dhaka city unit of Sramik League announced to hold a rally at city's Muktangan tomorrow protesting the murder of AL lawmaker.

Unknown assailants gunned down AL lawmaker Ahsanullah, who was also executive president of Sramik League, during an Awami Sechchasebok League rally at Tongi in Gazipur on May 7.

## Meghna launch death

**FROM PAGE 1** do not have required money," he added.

But shipping minister Akbar Hossain told journalists the government would do everything to send the bodies home and compensation will be given to their families.

About MV Lighting Sun, leader of the salvage team Aminur Rahman said, "The launch was not designed properly and was unfit to ply in this season."

Rostam strated salvage operation early Sunday and then topped due to low tide and exhaustion of the resuers. It resumed operation yesterday morning and continued till the afternoon.

The rescue ship was supposed to go to the salvage another cap-sized launch M V Diganta following rescuing of the M V Lighting Sun.

The river police filed a case and arrested three of the launch crew from hospital.

About 1,700 people were killed only in six launch disasters in Chandpur area in the last 10 years, local sources mentioned.

Our Barisal correspondent reports: Salvage operation of MV Digonto was not started till the filing of this report yesterday evening.

Witnesses claimed about 40 passengers were missing in the launch capsized.

The vessel had left Torki Ghat of Gournadi upazila for Narayanganj with about 60 passengers on board, most of them from Kalkini upazila of Madaripu and Agailjhara, Gournadi and Muladi upazilas of Barisal.

Mahfuzul Huq, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Gournadi, however said only one passenger was missing.

## Outlaws gun down

**FROM PAGE 12**

once was involved in underground politics of Sarbohara. He used to lead the Zia group and established supremacy over his rivals by killing Kamrul Islam, leader of the rival faction, in 1991.

Amid a growing popularity with the people of Jalla, Satla, Bagdha, Harta area Aboni soon entered the local politics. Attempts at his life never ceased as the followers of slain Kamrul and defeated UP chairman candidates were allegedly active to bump him off. He managed to escape death twice in 1994 and 1995.

In 1995 he was arrested in the special operation of police and later was released from jail after the case against him was dismissed.

For the last few years, he was involved with Awami League and after the general election of October 2001 he took shelter in Kotalipara of Gopalganj district.

Following an understanding with the local ruling party leaders, he returned to the area and was re-elected UP chairman of Jalla.

Locals yesterday brought out a condolence procession in the area and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

This was the seventh killing of Sarboharas after the unsuccessful attempt to persuade them into surrender in December 2003.

In a separate incident, three people including two females from a same family were slaughtered in Krishnapur village of Galachipa upazila in Patuakhali district.

The victims were identified as Abdul Ali Chowkidar, 60, his second wife Hasina Begum, 45 and daughter Tahmina, 13.

Locals and police said a gang of assailants broke into the house of Abdul Ali at the dead of night and butchered them.

Neighbours recovered the bodies in the morning and informed the police.

Police said land dispute between Abdul Ali and his son with the first wife might have something to do with the killing.

## Veterans grab key

**FROM PAGE 1**

ministry charge to reform-friendly Palaniyappan Chidambaram, defence portfolio to senior leader Pranab Mukherjee and water resources portfolio to Priyaranjan Dasgupta.

Seasoned diplomat K Natwar Singh became the new external affairs minister, a portfolio he had earlier held as a junior minister under PV Narasimha Rao.

Natwar Singh yesterday sought to deepen a growing friendship with Pakistan, saying he would use his experience as ambassador to Islamabad to steer complex ties between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

He also called for a steady relationship between New Delhi and Washington and "not episodic" ties, referring to new warmth between two countries who were once on opposite sides of the Cold War.

"We will further strengthen, widen and deepen our relations with Pakistan," Natwar Singh told reporters after taking office.

"I myself served as ambassador to Pakistan and have some personal knowledge of the complexities and subtleties of India-Pakistan relations," he said.

Investors cheered Harvard-educated 58-year-old Chidambaram as he was made the finance minister after weeks of chaos and volatility in financial markets.

But differences came up on the first day Manmohan Singh's communist-backed coalition government opened for business. The rift is not seen as a major threat, but underlines the difficulties in bringing cohesion to the alliance.

The seven ministers of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party refused to report for their jobs yesterday, a day after portfolios for the 67-member council of ministers were announced.

## Tigers stare

**FROM PAGE 1** players off the field. The Tigers still trail by 163 to the Board XI's first innings score of 320 for five declared.

First to go was Alok Kapali, who was looking good at 19. The right-hander, under pressure for his poor run of form, started the day with a square drive for four off Lawson. But he then played forward defensive to a ball from Banks and it came