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Madrasa man with 'Taliban link' under sharp watch

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK, from Sylhet
A madrasa principal with a history of working to establish a Taliban-style rule in Bangladesh came under sharp intelligence watch in the wake of Friday's bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet.
Mowiana M Habibur Rahman, who runs Jameya Madania Madrasa in Kazirpar in the northeastern district, is believed to have had close ties to the now-routed Taliban in Afghanistan for years and travelled to the southwestern Asian country during its Islamic militant rule, sources say.
Police turned the spotlight of investigation on several Islamic institutions, including Rahman's, after the bomb blast injured British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury and killed three.
A special bulletin, Islamic Revolution, published Rahman's interview in 1998 after he returned from Afghanistan.
"Only the Taliban ideology and a
SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Interview of Mowiana M Habibur Rahman published in an Islamist bulletin.

3 days gone, no rescuer comes for MV Digonto

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal
While all eyes were focussed on MV Lighting Sun, one of the two launches capsized in a stormy Meghna Sunday, no salvage operation commenced for the other motorboat, MV Digonto, three days into its sinking.
Abul Hossain Peyada, a leading businessman of Gournadi, told The Daily Star yesterday morning, "We have decided to block the Barisal-Dhaka Highway and close Gournadi and Torki river-ports, if the salvage operation of Digonto does not start within 24 hours."
A twister caught the 125-foot double-decker vessel and overturned it in an area between the river-ports of Ekhaspur and Kanudia at 3:30am Sunday, 12 hours after it had left Torki of Gournadi upazila for Narayanjanj with about 60 passengers on board. Witnesses claim at least 40 passengers of the launch remain missing.
Local people are vexed over the lack of coverage of Digonto mishap by the press and a complete black
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RMG sector sends SOS to face quota-free regime

Central bonded warehouse seen vital to shrink lead time for survival
M ABDUR RAHIM
The readymade garment manufacturers have sent an SOS to the government for setting up central bonded warehouses in the export processing zones (EPZs) to improve lead time in export, a crucial factor for the sector to survive in the quota-free regime from next year.
The warehouses will push down the lead time in export to 60 days from the existing 90-120 days, placing Bangladesh on par with its rivals in the world apparel market to survive the post-market-fibre arrangement fallout.
With the raw materials ready in the warehouses, the exporters will be able to slice off weeks from the time-consuming process for sample approval by buyers.
They suggested the areas of EPZs be set up in restrictive areas of EPZs so that the government does not have to worry about tax dodging and inventory pilferage.
"The exporters said such a warehouse might be set up as a private venture with permission to supply materials to units within and outside the EPZs. The government should give permission for setting up another bonded warehouse outside the EPZ if the central one performs satisfactorily."
The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) meanwhile played down the opposition of textile and spinning industry owners, who warned that bonded warehouses for RMG raw materials would lead to closure of their units.
"Protecting a weaker sector at the expense of stronger one goes against the broader interests of the country," argued the BGMEA in a report to Prime Minister's Office recently.
The International Finance Corporation, The Asia Foundation,
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Shrine blast Scotland Yard team leaves Sylhet

Police nab 3, hunt a suspected beggar
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet
The three-member Scotland Yard team left Sylhet yesterday afternoon, after a two-day investigation into the Friday's bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine, while police nabbed three and were busy hunting a shrine beggar.
Before their departure, the British criminal investigators held a one-hour meeting from 12 noon with Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Sylhet Range Ali Imam Chowdhury in his office.
During the meeting, the DIG
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Rescue ships lack salvation ability

15 more bodies found floating on Meghna
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Death toll in the twin launch disaster in Chandpur tallied to 76 as 15 more bodies were found floating in the Meghna river yesterday.
However, identity of the victims could not be confirmed as the bodies decomposed beyond recognition, sources said.
Rescue ship MV Rustam has started to search for MV Diganta. Rescuers have found its location, but gave up their operation due to lack of proper equipment, they added.
Divers of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) failed to continue their work due to heavy current in the river. The BIWTA yesterday sought help from naval forces, another source said.
The steel cables tied to the
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Grameen Bank Managing Director Professor Mohammad Yunus is flanked by French President Jacques Chirac (R) and Bangladesh Ambassador to France Jahangir Sahadat at Elysee Palace in Paris on May 18. Chirac awarded Prof Yunus the Legion d'Honneur at the reception.

Yunus wins Nikkei Asia Prize

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Grameen Bank Managing Director Professor Mohammad Yunus has won this year's Nikkei Asia Prize for Regional Growth.
Japan's prestigious economic daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei) awards Nikkei Asia Prizes annually to individuals or institutions from Asia Pacific region. Prizes are awarded for outstanding contribution to regional growth, technological innovation and culture.
Prof Yongyuth Yuthavong of Thailand and Prof Albert Wendt of New Zealand are the other two recipients of this year's Nikkei Asia Prizes in technological innovation and culture categories.
Dr Yunus is selected for this
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Akbar cites fund crisis for launch safety failure

RAFIQ HASAN
Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday said he would not step down admitting his failure in ensuring safety of marine passengers because, "My hands are tied and I cannot do anything due to lack of funds."
Rather, he demanded an allocation of at least Tk 200 crore a year to "make everything all right."
"I shall resign if a major (launch) accident occurs after such an allocation is made," the minister said while talking to a group of journalists at his ministry office.
The shipping ministry must also be fully-empowered to take up projects and use funds according to its requirements, he added.
The minister said this when asked about his resignation against
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US wants to knock down Abu Ghraib

Gen. Karpinski suspended; 8 Iraqis, 1 GI killed in Iraq
AP, Washington
The army general who was in charge of the US prison guards accused of abusing Iraqis has been suspended from command of the 800th Military Police Brigade, officials said yesterday.
Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski and other officers in her brigade were faulted by army investigators for paying too little attention to the prison's day-to-day operations and not acting strongly enough to discipline soldiers under her command for violating standard procedures.
Karpinski's suspension, which has not been announced by the army, was the latest in a series of actions against officers and enlisted soldiers implicated in the abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad.
In an interview on MSNBC Monday night, Karpinski said she has been told of her suspension by "several sources, but I have nothing in writing." The paperwork will cite the reason for her suspension, she said.
Meanwhile, US President George Bush Monday called for the demolition of the infamous prison.
"Under the dictator (Saddam Hussein), prisons like Abu Ghraib were symbols of death and torture."
"That same prison became a symbol of disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonored our country and disregarded our values," Bush said in a speech at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.
America will pay for a new maximum security facility, he said.
"When that prison is completed, detainees at Abu Ghraib will be
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Plight of UK visa seekers prolongs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
No fewer than 300 UK visa applicants of Sylhet have been left stranded as the visa facilitation office in the northeastern city remains closed after Friday's bomb attack on the Bangladesh-born British envoy at Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine.
The applicants who had their interview appointments in the British High Commission in Dhaka on May 23 and 24, the two days when the High Commission remained closed, have also been told to go back to the Sylhet visa office for a rescheduled date.
The Sylhet office, which processes 150 applicants for interviews a day, is the only office to have been
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22 NGOs spotted for fund theft

PRIMARY, MASS EDUCATION
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The primary and mass education ministry has blacklisted 22 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and relieved 40 others of their designated tasks for low performance and alleged fund embezzlement.
A meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on primary and mass education ministry at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, revealing the latest development, recommended stern action against the NGOs, including money refund, registration cancellation and legal action, if necessary.
"The ministry has warned other NGOs to make them work better. If they fail, they will also be blacklisted," Professor Jahan Ara Begum, advisor to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on mass and primary education, told The Daily Star after the meeting.
Ministry officials told the meeting that the local NGOs in 23 districts were designated to provide educational material, teachers' salary, training and furniture for teaching centres, but the quality of
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HC stays remand of Proshika chief

NGO's management team formed
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed a lower court remand order of Proshika President Qazi Faruque Ahmed for eight weeks.
A Dhaka court on Sunday placed Qazi Faruque on a three-day remand in two corruption cases filed by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac). Police arrested the Proshika chief and his Senior Vice President David William Biswas on Saturday.
The Division Bench of Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Farid Ahmed, which stayed the remand order, also issued a rule upon the government to explain in four weeks why the remand order
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Faisal awaits Test cap

RABEED IMAM, from Grenada
Left-handed batsman Faisal Hossain looks set to win his Test cap for Bangladesh in the first Test against the West Indies in St Lucia starting May 28.
The Chittagong batsman, who made his one-day debut on May 18 here, has a clear edge over his main
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PM, WB president meet in Shanghai

BSS, Shanghai
World Bank President James D Wolfensohn has highly appreciated Bangladesh's success in microcredit programme and said the success can be a role model for other countries of the world.
Wolfensohn made the observation at a meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the VVIP suite in the Shanghai International Conference Centre yesterday.
The World Bank chief said Bangladesh has proved its worth in breaking a new ground in poverty reduction through an effective and successful microcredit programme.
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia who flew in here Monday to attend the World Bank-sponsored microcredit
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