

## 9/11 probe finds no Saddam ties

AP, Washington

Bluntly contradicting the Bush administration, the commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks reported yesterday there was "no credible evidence" that Saddam Hussein helped al-Qaeda target the United States.

In a chilling report that sketched the history of Osama bin Laden's network, the commission said his far-flung training camps were "apparently quite good." Terrorist trainees were encouraged to "think creatively about ways to commit mass murder," it added.

Bin Laden made overtures to Saddam for assistance, the commission said in a staff report, as he did with leaders in Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere as he sought to build an Islamic army.

While Saddam dispatched a

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## 4 cops jailed for mugging

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced four policemen, a police informant and an Ansar to various terms of imprisonment for mugging Tk 2 lakh from two traders at Goran in the capital last year.

Mir Ali Reza, first class magistrate of the Speedy Trial Court-6, awarded Sub-Inspector (SI) Shamsul Haq and police informant Delwar Hossain alias Joyal five years' rigorous imprisonment while police constables Helal Uddin, Azhar Ali, Habibur Rahman and Ansar member Azad Hossain were ordered to serve three years' term.

The convicts are now in police custody.

The court also fined the SI and police source Tk 10,000 or three months in jail while the others were fined Tk 5,000 or two months of imprisonment.

The court acquitted SI Shahjahan Sabuj and police constables Abul Khair Mollah and Mohammad Faruq of the charges i

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## NOAB slams new duty on newsprint

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) has strongly protested the proposed increase in import duty on newsprint in the proposed budget from 22.55 percent to 25 percent at a time when the newspaper industry is already struggling hard to survive.

In a statement on behalf of the NOAB Executive Committee, President Mahfuz Anam and Vice-President Golam Sarwar feared the new tax proposals would substantially increase the cost of newsprint and seriously affect the newspaper industry and those working in it as a

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### Announcement

As the 96-page Anniversary issue of the Star Weekend Magazine is due on 25th June, tomorrow's issue of the SWM has been dropped. We regret the inconvenience.

# Tourist plan in critical ecological areas in Cox's Bazar rejected

REZAUL KARIM

An inter-ministerial meeting yesterday rejected a proposal to hand over two ecologically critical areas in Cox's Bazar to Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) for building exclusive tourist centres.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism made the proposal to hand over to the BPC the tiny Sonadia and Cheradia islands but the inter-ministerial meet turned it down to protect the bio-diversity and reserve forests of the two areas, meeting placed sources said.

Sonadia, an island of 2,965.37 acres of land located in Kutubjhum under Moheshkhali upazila of Cox's Bazar, has already been officially declared an ecologically critical area.

## Living in death traps

Century-old dilapidated buildings, unplanned structures put thousands in Old Dhaka in danger

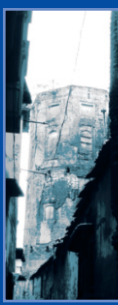
PINAKI ROY

While all eyes are focussed on Shankhari Bazar following last Wednesday's tragic casualties in a building collapse, thousands of others continue a precarious living in century-old decrepit buildings, including some archaeological sites, in other parts of Old Dhaka.

It was found yesterday, a madrasa has housed its juvenile students in the South Plaza of Bara Katra, part of an a r c h a e o

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# WORN OUT BUILDING STATISTICS



WARD NO 71		WARD NO 72	
AGE RANGE	TOTAL COUNT	AGE RANGE	TOTAL COUNT
30 - 50	2	30 - 50	34
51 - 100	35	51 - 100	151
101 - 150	72	101 - 150	131
151 - 200	60	151 - 200	135
201 - 250	19	201 - 250	04
251 - 300	13	251 - 300	0
301 - 350	00	301 - 350	0
Total	201	Total	455

STAR GRAPHICS



PHOTO: STAR

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER: One of the run-down buildings stands threateningly in Shankhari Bazar in Old Dhaka.

## Rab at ZIA to check terror threats, human trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday ordered deployment of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) at Zia International Airport (ZIA) to check human trafficking and carry out primary probe into any possible terror activity.

Currently, 19 intelligence and security agencies are deployed at ZIA, but they proved largely ineffective.

A meeting at the ministry with State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar in chair made

the decision.

The minister said if any citizen goes abroad using fake passport and visa, he or she is subject to harassment and deportation. Such an event also tarnishes the image of the country, he told the meeting.

Babar instructed the elite force to monitor the ZIA and inform authorities prior to any possible terrorist attack.

The government is ready to stop people travelling abroad with fake passport and visa, Babar said, adding, they are serious to check human trafficking.

Home Secretary Omar Farooq, inspector general of police (IGP), chief of RAB Anwarul Iqbal and high officials were present.

The US on Monday blacklisted Bangladesh among 10 nations for failing to adequately fight international sex trafficking, opening the way for possible sanctions.

It said Bangladesh is not doing enough to combat human trafficking and will be subjected to sanctions unless the country demonstrably improve its records by October.

But Nasiruddin argued the island has bright prospect for t o u r i s m

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## Tk 2,738-cr supplementary budget passed

Home, defence ministries take lion's share

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday approved a Tk 2,738-crore supplementary budget for the current fiscal, with home and defence ministries coming off as the two highest additional revenue spenders.

The extra expenditures were made in around 60 sectors under 44 ministries and departments. Of them, 14 ministries needed the money for development schemes.

"Budget revision is nothing new in Bangladesh. During the Awami League regime, the government used to demand even bigger supplementary budget," said Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in his concluding speech in the House on the supplementary budget.

He reported that the Tk 51,980-crore original budget for fiscal year 2003-04 ultimately came down to T

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## Singapore PM due June 23

BSS, Dhaka

Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong will arrive in Dhaka on June 23 on a three-day official visit.

He will visit Dhaka as part of his three-nation tour, which will begin from Pakistan and conclude in Sri Lanka, an official source said yesterday.

An advanced team of Singapore is now in the capital. The team held meetings with Bangladesh officials to finalise the details of the tour programme.

The official talks between the two sides are expected to take place on June 24. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will host a banquet for her Singaporean counterpart Goh Chok Tong.

During the visit, Goh is scheduled to call on President Iajuddin Ahmed.

## Two suspects held for attack on Tarana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday held two alleged leaders of an organised gang of thieves in the capital, suspecting their involvement in the attack on TV artiste Tarana Halim.

The detainees are leaders of notorious Akkas-Nantu gang of syndicated burglars, police said.

Sub-Inspector Mostaq Hossain, investigation officer of the case, said they nabbed Akkas in Jigatola and Nantu in Mirpur in pre-dawn raids.

"We've arrested Akkas and Nantu as Tarana suspect they might have attacked her to avenge handing over of some gang members to police when they looted her gold ornaments two months back," he added.

Tarana suffered cuts in her fingers when three masked criminals knifed her in her parents' house in Dhanmondi early Monday.

## Abducted man rescued from DU hall, JCD men held

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday rescued an abducted man and arrested three students including a Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader from Surya Sen Hall of Dhaka University (DU).

Acting on a tip off, a team of Ramna police carried out a pre-dawn raid on the hall and rescued Ranju Ahmed Khan Bashar, a resident of Pallabi, from room No. 2004. Police also arrested Kamal Mahmud Shohag, a JCD leader of the hall, Al-Mamun and Shafiullah.

Sources said some JCD leaders including Shanta of Salimullah Hall and Salahuddin and Soheli of Surya Sen Hall abducted Bashar and beat him up at room No. 211 of the hall. They demanded Tk 50,000 for his release and threatened his family members to kill him if they did otherwise.

Bashar, who owed money to Mamun, went to the DU hall for the sum when the JCD leaders confined him in a room, the sources added.

Bashar's family, meanwhile, learnt about his fate and informed

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# Ankara wins OIC top post race

Turkey's Ihsanoglu bags 32, SQ Chowdhury and Malaysia's Agam bag 12 votes each

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh lost its bid for secretary-general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) late Tuesday night despite its much-talked-about 'strong' campaign, as Turkey's candidate Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu was elected with 32 of 56 votes by first-ever secret ballot.

Bangladesh's candidate Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Malaysia's Tan Sri Hasmy Agam received 12 votes each in the election where all member countries, except for Guinea-Bissau, were present.

As Ihsanoglu was short of six

votes to get a two-thirds majority needed to win, Bangladesh and Malaysia decided to withdraw and allow him to hold the post for a four-year term from January next year.

"The Bangladesh candidate was the first to announce his withdrawal," Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Maher, who proposed the formula of withdrawal, told AFP.

The OIC members voted on the second day of the International Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) of OIC in Istanbul, the largest city of Turkey.

Elected rather than selected by

consensus as before, Ihsanoglu, a 61-year-old historian, will succeed Morocco's Abdelwahed Belkeziz, whose mandate expires at the end of this year.

"It is the first time that the OIC has voted in a secret ballot to elect its secretary general," AFP quoted Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul as saying and describing it as a sign of democratisation.

The result came as a shock to Bangladesh that launched a one-and-a-half-year campaign, with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan repeatedly claiming that

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## How they see Dhaka's defeat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political parties, former diplomats and social organisations have slated the government for what they said is wasting an opportunity for Bangladesh to secure the post of secretary-general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) by nominating a 'controversial person' for the post.

The government's 'misdirected and failed' foreign policy deprived Bangladesh of the prestigious post. It wasted state funds on the campaign for an 'unacceptable candidate' and tarnished the image of the country, they said.

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina said, "Due to narrow political considerations, the coalition government nominated an unacceptable candidate, who is anti-liberation and is accused of unlawful activities." That is why Bangladesh could not secure the post, she added.

The former prime minister said during the tenure of the AL government, they had received assurances from the OIC about B a n g l a d e s h

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