

## Cops bar locals

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known as sarbaharas. "Yet we met a very few people who were tortured by JMJB men and we think they could tell a little of their sufferings before police," he said.

Reports from Naogaon say police allegedly prevented the victims of JMJB vigilante activities relating their ordeal to the US embassy officials.

Police reached Bargachha village and Bheti village in Raninagar hours before the US team arrived there and made sure the officials do not reach the families victimised by the JMJB, locals alleged.

The team met the family of Khejur Ali, killed and buried near their Bheti camp allegedly by JMJB men.

In the excessive police presence, sisters of Khejur could say no more about the horrific tale of the murder than they found the body in pieces.

The embassy staff visited and took photographs of Jagannath's house in Baragachha village, which was demolished by Bangla Bhai's cadres in a vigilante operation.

They then went to Bhetigram where Bangla Bhai set up a camp to torture suspected members of the banned Purbo Banglar Communist Party and Mozaffar Hossain in the same village told the officials how

he was tortured by outlaws.

The family of Abdul Quiyum Badsha, killed and left hanging from a tree by the JMJB men met the officials in the Parjatan Motel and handed them a written statement. The family members told reporters that they came to Rajshahi, as police barred them to meet the team in their village.

Muhammad Musa, a school-teacher and brother of Badsha, told Ague and Modley that Badsha was not a criminal as police and JMJB men branded him before killing. "He was killed on an order of a ruling BNP lawmaker."

"My brother was willing to contest the next parliamentary election and was working to that end," Musa told reporters, indicating the killing was politically-motivated.

Musa alleged Bangla Bhai and his associate Shahidul Islam damaged his house in Shafikpur village on May 8 before kidnapping Badsha on May 19. The operatives killed Badsha in public after announcement by microphone.

Musa alleged police implicated Badsha in false cases to link him to crimes before his death. He referred to an extortion case the police filed against Badsha on February 30, 2001 as part of a scheme to harass him.

## BNP asks JCD president to step down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling BNP's high command yesterday asked Shahabuddin Laltu, president of the party's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), to step down.

Sources said the BNP high-ups called on Laltu and asked him why he gave statement in favour of a hall unit leader who was involved in criminal activity.

The high command criticised Laltu and said his comment in favour of Tanjilur Rahman Tanjil, president of Jahurul Haq Hall of Dhaka University, has tarnished the party's image, sources said quoting one of the top leaders.

The BNP leaders are not pleased with top JCD leaders as they have failed to run the front properly, the sources added.

When asked, Laltu yesterday declined to make any comment.

## Bangla Bhai's wing kills 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Members of the newly formed *Shanti Raksha Committee* (peace committee) in village Kujail under Raninagar upazila allegedly killed an ungrounded operative on Thursday morning.

The 19 member-new committee was formed recently after activities of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) reportedly came to a stop on June 8.

Police and family sources said Afzal Hossain Hirok, a Sarbahara Party activist, was picked up from his sister's residence on Wednesday night by some committee members led by Khairul Islam Montu.

Sources said that, earlier the committee had publicly put Hirok's name on their hitlist.

Locals said they found Hirok lying unconscious on the ground near a culvert. They rushed him to the Baragacha Police Station. Police took him to Naogaon Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

## BNP men

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Mannan, a retired army major, in Teigaon for the July 1 by-election to Dhaka-10 constituency. Mannan, a former BNP lawmaker, hails from Noakhali.

Witnesses said as the procession led by Mannan reached Modhyakuni, some people came out of an election office of ruling coalition candidate Mosaddek Ali Falu and attacked the procession. They started beating up AL leaders Mohammed Ali, central committee member Mohammed Hanif, Golam Mahiuddin, Ekramul Karim Chowdhury and former chairman of Noakhali municipality Rabul Hossain Kachi with hockey sticks.

Mannan later resumed his campaign from Begun Bari.

AL lawmaker Mohammed Ali at a hurriedly called press briefing condemned the attack by 'the government people' and said the ruling coalition has failed to even ensure the safety of lawmakers.

He said the AL leaders were the target of the attackers. Other injured AL leaders were present at the press conference.

## Flash flood

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Ganges-Padma also registered further rise at all points. Most rivers in the Meghna basin recorded rise while south-eastern hill basin rivers recorded fall except at Halda and Narayanhat points.

Significant rainfall was recorded at Bhairab Bazar, Serajganj, Habiganj, Bogra, Panchpukuria, Parshuram, Dhaka and Jamalpur yesterday.

## 2 shot, IBBL car hijacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals yesterday in separate incidents shot a travel agency owner in Motiheel and in Mohammadpur carjacked by shooting its driver.

Rezaul Bashar, 35, of Basabo, Sabujbagh, reportedly owner of a travel agency, was crossing the road in front of his New Paltan office when two appeared by a motorcycle and opened fire on him.

Bashar with bullet-wounds in his right thigh was rushed to a local clinic and to National Institute of Traumatology & Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor).

Motiheel police, however, could not say anything about the incident at 7:30 last night.

In Mohammadpur, criminals hijacked a car of the Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd. (IBBL) after shooting its driver.

Driver Abdur Rahman was waiting for IBBL Director Shahidul Islam at PC Culture Housing Society at 9:15am when four criminals asked him to yield the key of the car (Dhaka Metro-Ga-14-4876).

Refused, the criminals shot at his right thigh and drove off in the car.

IBBL Vice-president Rezaul Karim filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station on behalf of Rahman.

Demra police, meanwhile, recovered the rotting body of a woman of about 25 from a pond in Sarulia yesterday at 12:05am and sent it to Mitford hospital for autopsy.

## Expulsion will not impede party agenda: Menon says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expulsion of five central leaders will not hinder the Workers Party's (WPB) course on current anti-government movement and left-leaning agenda, party chief Rashed Khan Menon said yesterday.

"The expelled leaders are trying to make an impression on the public in vain that the party has suffered a division," he told a press conference at Shahid Tajul auditorium in the city.

WPB General Secretary Bimal Biswas said while reading out a statement that the five leaders were expelled according to WPB constitution, as they resorted to harming the party's image. He described the incident as unfortunate but inevitable.

Of the 40 members of the WPB central committee, claims of the five that 31 district units are with them are baseless, the statement said.

"Just five cannot charge us with moral deterioration, the entire party will determine that," Menon said responding to an accusation the expelled leaders made, "It's them who have deviated from morality by going against the party."

Among the central leaders, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Fazle Hossain, Abul Basar, Mahmudul Hasan Manik, Abdul Motin, Safiuddin Ahmed, Iqbal Kabir and Anisur Rahman and representatives from the party's 51 organisational districts were present.

## Cops raid

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at the hall following a kind of rental arrangement with the JCD leaders.

The raid continued from 1:45am to 4:00am while many of the students were in the TV room to watch Euro 2004 football.

Police broke opened all the locked rooms of the hall including that of Tanjil but could not find anything except some books and clothes, police said.

They seized a motorbike from the hall and Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station, described it as suspicious-looking.

Police the same night arrested Raqibul Huda Rakib, an MA student of Management of Jagannath College near the Shahidullah Hall at about 4:00am.

Meanwhile, arrested Shima on Wednesday in her statement identified herself as wife of Shahidul Islam Idul and sister of Bhuiya Babu, police said.

Inspector (Detective Branch) Nurul Amin has been investigating the case.

A letter signed by Tanjil said he had resigned from the post for the greater interest of the party. He claimed he was not involved in the Sunday afternoon shootout with police in Motiheel.

The copies of the letter typed on the pad of the Jahurul Haq Hall unit JCD were sent to the JCD president and general secretary and also to the Dhaka University Journalists' Association yesterday.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Aminul Islam and Havilder Liakat Ali of Cobra-7, the elite police team, died in a shootout with dreaded Idul Gang in Motiheel when the thugs were leaving the place after looting a money exchange shop.

A murder case was filed with the Motiheel Police Station accusing seven including Tanjil.

## Dhaka to erase

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Chowdhury and Singapore's Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs Bilahari Kausikan signed the MoU.

Chowdhury later briefed the press on the official talks at Sonargaon Hotel. He quoted the Singaporean PM as telling his Bangladeshi counterpart, "There is a perception in the west that identifies Islam with terrorism and Singapore would like to work with Islamic countries to remove the misperception."

"Bangladesh welcomed this noble initiative from a non-Muslim nation as it is an initiative for peace and accepted the offer," said Chowdhury, adding that it would promote the modern and tolerant ideals of Islam.

The foreign secretary said the eight-nation NSC would be made up of four Arab countries and as many countries from Asia, but he would not disclose the names of the other countries.

Chowdhury said the first NSC meeting will be held in Singapore in the end of the year, although the committee is still in the conceptual stage as Singapore is talking with other countries for bringing it into being.

Bangladesh has also agreed to a Singapore proposal to share intelligence and information as the first steps to combat terrorism in the region and beyond together.

"Bangladesh and Singapore are signatories to several UN resolutions that provide scope for close co-operation," said Chowdhury, adding UN involvement does not rule out bilateral collaboration between Dhaka and Singapore.

When asked if the proposal for the NSC has the US vetting, Chowdhury skirted the issue, saying it is a matter of Singapore.

Singapore is one of the closest US allies in Southeast Asia and has recently signed several agreements on fighting against terrorism in the region.

Speaking to the BBC Bengali Service after the briefing, Chowdhury said the NSC is not an alternative to the already existing mouthpiece for Muslim nations, the Organisation of Islamic Conference, and keeps true to the main aims of the OIC.

He added the involvement of non-Muslim nations like Singapore only strengthens the effort to project the tolerant side of Islam in the West.

Trade and investment between the two countries are also set for a boost after Dhaka and Singapore signed an "Investment Guarantee" earlier to protect and promote

investment in both countries.

Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami and Singapore's Minister for Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs Lee Yock Suan signed the agreement after the prime ministerial summit.

Premier Goh also proposed a free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries, while Dhaka proposed long-term plans for increasing trade to narrow the trade gap between the countries. Both sides agreed to discuss the matters.

Goh said businesspeople from both countries could raise trade and investment if they wish as Bangladesh has established itself as a reliable partner in business, Chowdhury told reporters.

Earlier, Goh told private news agency UNB he has been briefed on sector-wise business operations in Bangladesh and said, "I can help promote investment in Bangladesh, at least from Singapore." Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan also quoted Goh as telling the UNB, "Bangladesh is the right country to come and invest in."

The Board of Investment (BoI) figure shows that Singapore currently has \$1 billion worth of investment on the ground and in commitments.

Relaxation of visa processing for Bangladeshis was also raised during the talks, with Singapore promising Bangladeshi businesspersons and medical patients will be issued visas within three to four days of filing their application, Chowdhury said. The Singapore visa procedures are uniform for all countries and is not prejudiced against any country, he quoted Singapore officials as saying.

Before formal talks, the two prime ministers had a brief meeting where they discussed strengthening of relations in different sectors and expansion of trade and commerce. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, the foreign minister, Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar and State Minister for Overseas Employment and Expatriates Welfare Kamrul Islam Chowdhury were present at the formal meeting from the Bangladesh side.

The Singaporean side included the minister for the Prime Minister's Office and second minister for foreign affairs, Minister for Home Affairs Wong Kan Seng and Minister for Manpower Ng Eng Hen.

## Sangu gas reserve

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fields got depleted by 100 mmcf. Of this, 60 mmcf depleted at Sangu. It means we have made a net gas supply gain of 164 mmcf."

Now a technical committee comprising Petrobangla and Cairn experts are assessing the reserve at Sangu field, 35 km off Chittagong coast.

A source close to Cairn says the British company is once again trying to re-perforate an existing well to increase gas production up to 160 mmcf.

Sangu's gas is most expensive in Bangladesh as it charges around 2.7 dollar per thousand cubic feet (mcf). The government sells it to bulk consumers in Chittagong at around 1.2 dollars per mcf.

But despite such high price, Petrobangla is willing to buy Sangu gas due to the supply shortfall.

Gas demand is growing by at least seven percent a year while it can take years to ensure new supplies.

The earliest new supply of gas is likely to come from US company Unocal's Moulavibazar gas field in January next-- 35 mmcf. Bangladeshi company Bapex is expected to add 25 mmcf from Fenchuganj-3 well before June.

A recent discovery of gas in block-9 by Irish company Tullow has not yet received attention because it is being considered a small reserve.

Meanwhile, Cairn has told Petrobangla it was not negotiating with any foreign oil company to sell out Sangu. Local newspapers yesterday reported, quoting Indian daily Telegraph, Cairn was negotiating with Indian oil company ONGC over Sangu. Cairn however explained to Petrobangla the reported negotiation was an event of the past and it is no longer on.

"Given the poor health of Sangu, it is highly unlikely that any company will buy it now," said a Petrobangla source.

Cairn struck Sangu gas in 1996 and its success encouraged other oil companies to participate in the second round block bidding for oil and gas exploration in 1997. The medium-sized gas field has a reserve of 720 billion cubic feet (bcf) as per Petrobangla's estimates while Cairn puts the figure at 800 bcf.

## Dhaka signs

FROM PAGE 1

Thai Commerce Minister Watana Muangsook and Myanmar Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Thu and ambassadors from the other five countries will sign the protocol.

Free-trade negotiations among the BIMST-EC countries are expected to begin next month and wrap up by December 2005, to ensure the FTA's projected implementation in July 2006.

## Rivals slaughter

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by outlawed communist groups in Chuadanga. About seven underground political outfits with at least 1,000 armed members grouped into 20 gangs are active in the district.

The nine camps of the joint forces set up in the district to check outlaws so far have failed to make any significant headway in netting their targets, locals said.

## Govt mum

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A cabinet committee meeting on law and order on April 28 decided to include details of the 'plot' in government's reply to the court rule in line with intelligence reports of the home ministry.

The ministry sent the Attorney General's Office some documents, including secret agency reports, on the antigovernment 'plot'.

Police launched the nine-day dragnet in the run-up to the April 30 deadline of the main opposition Awami League (AL) for unseating the BNP-led coalition government.

"Mass arrests violated fundamental rights of people. The arrest of people right on their arrival in Dhaka without charges is arbitrary," Dr M Zahir, senior lawyer, said then, appearing for the petitioners. "Fear gripped the nation in the wake of the raids."

## Voeller quits

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down after reflecting on his team's poor performances.

"I would have loved to have guided Germany to the World Cup but I am not the right man," said the former international striker. "I would never cling to my job if results were poor."

"My successor now has two years to build a team and I am sure we will have a good side for 2006."

The president of the German football federation, Gerhard Mayer Vorfelder, said: "We regret this decision but we respect it."

Mayer Vorfelder confirmed that former Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld was in the running to take over.

Germany drew two of their matches and lost one in Portugal, scoring just two goals in total and finished third in Group D behind the Czechs and the Netherlands, who beat Latvia 3-0 on Thursday to book their place in the quarter-finals.

Draws against the Dutch and tournament debutants Latvia left the Germans needing to beat the already-qualified Czechs to qualify for the last eight.

But despite taking the lead with a Michael Ballack goal, they missed a host of scoring chances, allowing Marek Heinz to equalise before Czech substitute Milan Baros scored the winning goal 13 minutes from the end on Wednesday.

Voeller took over as coach from Erich Ribbeck following a disastrous Euro 2000, when Germany failed to win a match, although he was initially only 'warming' the seat for the under-contract Bayer Leverkusen chief Christoph Daum.

## Vehicle

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"A microbus for destitute children was also requisitioned by traffic police in Mohammadpur," alleged Zakaria, who lives in the area.

The police will not have to resort to requisition, if 1,000 new vehicles are provided for the police force, the home ministry official said.

"We have an instruction to use vehicles at will and we are just following it," an on-duty sergeant told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Requisition has become a means of financial benefit," another home ministry official said, adding the traffic police let go vehicles after taking money from owners.

"My driver showed me a requisition slip and said he will have to go with the police to drive," Mohammad Jafar, a businessman, said of intimidation by law enforcers.

Senior police officers reason out that they are far short of vehicles and requisitioning vehicles in times of emergency.

## 75 killed

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Many of the fighters wore yellow headbands bearing the name of a Muslim militant group "Saraya al-Tawhid and Jihad" (Battalions of Unification and Holy War). They handed out leaflets warning Iraqis not to 'collaborate' with Americans.

"The flesh of collaborators is tastier than that of Americans," the leaflets said.

Arabic television channel Al Jazeera showed hooded fighters brandishing their weapons in Baquba and saying they were followers of Zargawi. Bodies lay in the streets nearby.

Zargawi's Jama'at al-Tawhid and Jihad group has claimed responsibility for many attacks in Iraq, including this week's beheading of a South Korean hostage.

Witnesses said an Iraqi hospital director and his driver were killed on a road near Baquba. A police car burned nearby.

In Ramadi, insurgents fired mortars at two police stations and the house of a security official in Ramadi, 68 miles west of Baghdad. They also clashed with U.S. troops.

Fierce clashes raged for two hours between U.S. Marines and rebels in Falluja, west of Baghdad, and U.S. planes dropped 500-pound bombs on guerrilla positions, a Reuters

photographer with the Marines said. The Marines later withdrew and local officials said a cease-fire agreement had been reached.

### HELICOPTER DOWN

A U.S. Cobra helicopter was shot down during the Falluja fighting but the crew walked away unhurt, Marines said.

Under a truce agreed last month, U.S. forces pulled out of the city and handed control to an Iraqi brigade led by army officers who had served under former President Saddam Hussein.

Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of operations for the U.S. army in Iraq, said clashes in a number of Iraqi cities had subsided by noon.

"With the exception of what we are seeing in Baquba, most seem to be under control right now," he told reporters.

A senior U.S. officer said Saddam loyalists, not Zargawi followers, were likely to have staged the attacks, but did not explain the reason for this assessment.

Eight British naval personnel seized by Iran when they strayed out of Iraqi waters Monday were released and put on a plane to leave the Gulf region, British diplomats said.

## Legal work permit

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published in the Federal Register.

"However, we are discontinuing the reissuance of visas in these categories because of increased interview requirements" and regulations that require new visas to include so-called "biometric indicators" such as fingerprints, it said.

Some 50,000 foreign workers applied to have their visas reissued in the United States last year but the department maintained the new rules would not likely pose significant inconveniences for most people.

For one, the expiration of non-immigrant US visa does not necessarily mean the holder must leave the United States, officials said.

Most foreign workers are allowed to remain in the country, even with an expired non-immigrant visa, for as long as they retain the status under which the visa was initially granted and meet the terms of their admission, they said.

However, if they leave the United States with an expired visa and wish to return, they must apply for a new visa to be re-admitted, the officials said.

"If these persons depart the United States and require new visas to reenter, after July 16 they must seek adjudication of a new visa application at a US embassy or consulate abroad," the department said.

## Hasina blames

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Ahsanullah Master MP. "The killers of Ahsanullah Master MP are still at large because state minister for home affairs and some other influential leaders of the BNP are involved with the killing," AL chief said.

She alleged the government has set free some 70000 listed criminals to perpetrate violence against AL leaders and workers all over the country.

Hasina also accused the BNP for harbouring the fundamentalists.

"Though a freedom fighter's wife, Khalefa Zia has joined hands with the anti-liberation elements and that's why the government can't take action against the extremists," the former prime minister observed.

"Activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal have grown so desperate that they don't hesitate even to kill police personnel," Hasina said adding, "A bodyguard of Dhaka's mayor and some other ministers are involved with the murder of cops."

Speaking at the discussion, AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta accused the PM of making a blueprint for killing the opposition leaders and workers.

The discussion meeting was addressed by, among others, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed, Zillur Rahman, Abdur Razzak, Barrister Amirul Islam, Editor of the Daily Sangbad Bazlur Rahman and Dhaka University Professor Dr Harunur Rashid.

## Iran releases

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Iran's atomic program but British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw insisted on Thursday he still backed a policy of engagement with Iran, despite the arrests.

"I am in no doubt at all that our policy of engagements with the government of Iran ... is the best approach," Straw said in London, shortly after the eight were released.

"We have worked hard on diplomatic relations with Iran ... Sometimes the relationships are complicated."

Diplomats had been locked in negotiations deep into Wednesday night, deliberating over the return of the men's equipment -- an issue which remained unresolved on Thursday. "That's another matter and is subject to further discussions," Straw said.

The eight were held in the sweltering province of Khuzestan in Iran's oil-rich southwest where they were seized on the Shatt al-Arab waterway along the Iran-Iraq border.

Diplomats visited them on Wednesday and said they had been well looked after. Television showed them lounging on beds with bright quilts and the semi-official Fars news agency quoted Revolutionary Guards saying they had given their guests a traditional diced-meat stew.

"At least now we can be pleased that they're happy and released. And I'm told that they are in very good spirits and well cared for," Straw said.