

## US envoy worried at bomb blasts

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Harry K Thomas yesterday expressed concern over the security of citizens because of 'continued bomb blasts' in the country.

"It is not only me, but all the citizens in the country today are insecure due to continued bomb blasts," said Thomas responding to a question if he was not afraid of going out of Dhaka for visits to Sylhet, Chittagong, Rajshahi and elsewhere.

During a visit to Presidency University in the capital, the envoy said US and the international community are sincerely trying to work out how to combat terrorist activities in Bangladesh.

"Sitting back in the office is not enough to understand a society, its people and their culture. Rather, I must understand the way of their life if I really want to cooperate with them in their journey to development," Thomas said.

Appreciating the curriculum and

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(L) Policemen harass journalists on duty in front of a makeshift court (near Dhaka Central Jail) set up for the verdict on the Jail Killing Case yesterday. (R) BDR members keep a vigil at the entry to the court.



PHOTO: STAR

## Judgement in tax graft case against Ershad today

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

Judgement in the income tax corruption case against former president HM Ershad will be given today.

Judge Rezaul Karim Khan at the Special Court for Dhaka Division will deliver the verdict at 11:00am, court sources said.

The judgement of the case was adjourned twice following time petitions by the defence lawyers.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac) filed the corruption case accusing Ershad and three tax officials on July 27, 1992.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) gave Bac a nod to press charges against Ershad and three tax officials on November 30, 1992, but on the same day it decided to

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## 40 Iraqis, 5 GIs killed as Sadr City erupts again

**AFP, REUTERS, Baghdad**

Baghdad governor escapes assassination, Mosul governor's son slain

Iraq was steeped in blood yesterday as a fledgling truce in a Baghdad rebel bastion was shattered by fresh fighting that officials said left 40 killed and scores wounded, while five GIs killed in separate roadside bomb attacks pushing the US death count near the 1,000 mark.

Fierce clashes were raging in Sadr City, an AFP correspondent said, reporting that smoke was rising from some areas of the overpopulated Baghdad slum while US fighter jets were flying overhead.

The health ministry said 40 Iraqis were killed and more than 270 wounded in overnight clashes between US forces and combatants loyal to rebel Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr.

Sadr Lieutenant Sheikh Naim al-Qaabi said 15 of his movement's Mehdi Army fighters were killed and 62 wounded.

"Last night was the most intense shelling of Sadr City since the Americans arrived in Iraq," he said, adding heavy aircraft fire lasted from 11:00 pm (1900 GMT) to 4:00 am.

US army spokesman Lieutenant Colonel James Hutton reported several bomb and small arms attacks on US forces in Sadr City overnight and said one US soldier was killed in an ambush there on Tuesday.

US tanks rumbled around the neighbourhood and automatic fire

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## 11-party won't join AL's oust-govt agitation

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The left leaning 11-party alliance yesterday decided not to join the main opposition Awami League (AL) in its oust-government movement now, rather it will seek to strengthen the alliance to develop an alternative political stream.

The decision came following a severe discord within the alliance on question of launching a unified movement with AL for ouster of the government. The decision apparently hints at the success of the ruling party's move to keep AL isolated from minor parties.

The leaders of the left alliance, however, expressed opinion that any component of the alliance could join hands with the main opposition at its own discretion.

They also decided the alliance would consider observing programmes in sync with the main opposition on different issues. And any declaration in this regard will come after a thorough discussion, sources at the meeting said.

"We decided to launch anti-government and anti-fundamentalists movement under the banner of 11-party," Hazi Abdus Samad, the left alliance coordinator, told The Daily Star after the meeting was adjourned.

Referring to a unified movement with the main opposition, he said, "The possibility remains remote."

Against the backdrop of the August 21 grenade blasts that killed 19 people and injured over 200 at an AL rally, a fresh move to launch a unified movement to oust the four-party alliance government was initiated. Combining the left alliance with AL was central to the initiative.

The main opposition and the left alliance jointly called three days of

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## Unesco finds literacy rate 14pc lower than government's claim

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A UN organisation yesterday said the country's literacy rate stands at 41 percent, 14 percent lower than the government's figure derived through asking people if they can write their names.

The United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) revealed the figure through a press briefing.

Unesco Country Representative Wolfgang Vollmann speaking at the briefing at Dhaka Reporters' Unity office yesterday said the literacy rate was mentioned in a report of the Unesco Institute for Statistics. It was calculated by examining sample respondents whether they can actually write or read. But the government's figure is based just on interview of the respondents.

Vollmann said unlike the government Unesco does not consider a person literate if they can only write their names. Instead, the person has to know how to read and write simple texts.

He further added that had the government figure of 65 percent

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## Two Italian women kidnapped in Iraq

**REUTERS, Baghdad**

Gunmen have stormed a building in central Baghdad and kidnapped two Italian women working for a humanitarian group and two Iraqis, witnesses said.

A spokesman for the aid group called "Bridge to Baghdad" on Tuesday named the two Italians as Simona Pari and Simona Torretta.

A spokesman in Rome for another Italian aid group named Intersos, which shares offices with Bridge to Baghdad, said the two Iraqis seized by the gunmen were a woman who worked for Intersos and an engineer who worked for Bridge to Baghdad.

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## Nationalised banks get six new MDs, pay commission two members

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The government yesterday promoted six deputy managing directors as managing directors of nationalised commercial and specialised banks, besides appointing two new members to the National Pay Commission.

Among the promoted bankers, M Tahminur Rahman was made the MD of Sonali Bank, Sonali Bank DMD S M Aminur Rahman the MD of Janata Bank and Janata Bank DMD Dewan Mujibur Rahman as Kamshangshon Bank MD.

M Ziaul Haq was promoted from DMD to MD of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank, M Shamsul Alam appointed as Bangladesh Commerce Bank MD and AH Iqbal Hossain as Basic Bank MD.

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## Ctg port to become costlier from Sept 16

**M SHAMSUR RAHMAN**  
from Chittagong

Stevedores decide to hike charge 15pc

The cost of cargo handling at Chittagong Port will increase by 15 percent as stevedores decided to raise their fee from September 16, 2004.

Bangladesh Master Stevedores Association (BMSA), a body of the cargo handling contractors, in a meeting yesterday decided to increase the charge for both bulk and container handling by 15 percent. They cited increase in remuneration of the staff as the rationale behind the decision.

Importers and exporters say the rise in handling cost will adversely affect the trade. Consumers too will feel the effects as Bangladesh presently imports, among other goods, a large volume of essentials like wheat, rice, various types of peas, salt.

The association has already communicated its decision to the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and directed all their members to implement the new rate.

Chairman of BMSAAHM Manzur Alam told The Daily Star that the new rate will not have much effect on imports as the productivity level of goods handling has been upped by 100 percent by installing advanced machinery in place of manual labour.

"A year ago, we used to take 20 to 25 days to clear a ship, whereas now we take only 8 to 10 days," Alam claimed.

Importers, however, said ultimately the general people will have to bear the additional cost, as they (importers) will charge the consumers extra to retain the profit margin.

Abul Bashar Chowdhury of Mashud and Brothers, a leading commodity importer, said the

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## AL lodges case over August 21 grenade attack

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday filed a case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka accusing some ruling alliance leaders and 'their patronised terrorists' of the August 21 grenade attack on an AL rally.

After hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Emdadul Haq took the case into cognisance and directed authorities concerned to send the case to Motijheel Police Station to add to the FIR (first information report) lodged earlier on August 22 in this connection.

Jalil in his complaint mentioned some ruling party leaders and their cadres were instrumental in the grenade attack on the AL rally at

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Two teenage workers receive treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital after they suffered injuries in Gulistan when two homemade bombs hidden in piles of rubble went off yesterday.

## Israel hits Hamas camp in Gaza, 14 killed

**REUTERS, Gaza**

Israeli tanks, helicopters and warplanes pounded a Hamas training camp yesterday, killing 14 militants in the deadliest attack in Gaza for nearly four months, as Israel struck back after a double suicide bombing.

A barrage of tank shells and missiles struck a militant training base in the town of Shijaia, a stronghold of Hamas, the Palestinian faction behind nearly simultaneous blasts that killed 16 people on two Israeli buses in Beersheba last Tuesday.

The 14 Palestinians killed in the strike were being trained by Hamas's military wing in guerrilla-tactics at a soccer field used at night as a training base for militants, locals said.

Gaza's main hospital was overwhelmed by casualties, many of them militants in camouflage with masks covering their faces. More than 20 people, including several bystanders, were injured, medical officials said.

"This ugly Israeli crime... will not pass unpunished," Hamas spokesman Mushir al-Masri told Reuters. "It is an open war between the Zionists and us."

Hamas said all 14 dead were members of the militant group which is sworn to Israel's destruction.

The growing spiral of violence could further complicate Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw troops and settlers from the occupied Gaza Strip by the end of 2005.

Militants are determined to claim any Israeli pullout as a victory,

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The giant Arctic ice thaws alarmingly for global warming.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

## High-speed chase through the sky to catch piece of Sun

**AFP, Washington**

In a plot line worthy of a science fiction blockbuster, Nasa scientists have hired Hollywood stunt pilots to stage a high-speed chase through the sky over Utah in a daring bid to catch a piece of the Sun before it crashes to Earth.

The helicopter pilots take off Wednesday to intercept a capsule from the Genesis spacecraft, which has travelled three years and 32 million kilometers (20 million miles) to capture atomic bits of solar wind that Nasa hopes will help scientists understand what the Sun is made of and how the solar system began.

"We are bringing a piece of the Sun down to Earth," said Charles Elachi, director of Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

Two helicopters will try to catch

the returning Genesis capsule before it hits the ground, which scientists fear could disrupt the solar particles. The capsule is set to enter Earth's atmosphere at 11:55 am (1555 GMT) Wednesday over an air force base in the western state of Utah.

When it is 33 kilometers (108,000 feet) above ground, a drogue parachute will open to slow the capsule down. The main parachute will open six minutes later at an altitude of 6.1 kilometers (20,000 feet).

Then the two helicopters, each with a team of three people, will scramble to catch the capsule in midair.

The lead helicopter will deploy a six-meter (18-foot, 6-inch) pole with a giant, high-tech hook to catch the

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## GRENADE ATTACK PROBE

**Judicial body seeks 3-week extension**

**BSS, Dhaka**

The one-member judicial commission on the August 21 grenade attacks on Awami League (AL) rally has urged the government to extend its tenure for another three weeks.

Sources close to the commission told the news agency yesterday that besides the request made for time extension, it has sent letter to the Leader of the Opposition seeking her cooperation in unearthing the truth behind the attacks. It is the third letter sent to her by the

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Prayer Timing		
September 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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