

## 9 Iraqis, 2 GIs killed in attacks

### Italian journalist kidnapped, 3 French militants detained

AFP, REUTERS, Samarra

Insurgent attacks in a region north of Baghdad left eight Iraq civilians and one rebel died while two US soldiers killed in separate incidents, police said yesterday.

A roadside bomb yesterday killed three civilians driving in a truck carrying vegetables at Ishaki, about 100km north of the capital, police said.

Two other civilians were killed by booby trap bomb as they drove behind an Iraqi army convoy.

On Thursday night, two Iraqis were killed in a similar attack near Baiji, an oil refinery 200 kilometers north of Baghdad, police said.

An Iraqi soldier and a rebel died in a clash at Dhuluiya, which erupted after an insurgent attack on an Iraqi army patrol, the military said.

The US military announced earlier that two American troops were killed in security operations on Thursday.

Earlier a US soldier was killed by a roadside bomb near Mosul while a second soldier attached to a Marine unit died during an operation south of Baghdad, the US military said yesterday.

The attack south of Mosul occurred early on Thursday morning during a convoy patrol. Another soldier was wounded and taken to hospital.

Three French nationals are being held by the US authorities in Iraq after being captured in last year's offensive against Islamic insurgents in Fallujah, Le Figaro newspaper reported Friday.

The newspaper named two of the men as Chekou Diakhabi, 19, and Peter Cherif, 22, both of them from the same neighbourhood of Paris where last week French intelligence agents made a series of arrests of suspected Islamic militants.

Meanwhile a female Italian journalist was kidnapped by armed men in central Baghdad near the city's main university on Friday, just minutes after she had called her office to say she was fine.

"The Italian journalist was kidnapped today around 2 pm (1100 GMT) in the district of al-Jadriya near Baghdad university," an Iraqi interior ministry official said.

## JU resident student dies of cerebral malaria

JU CORRESPONDENT

A female student of geological science department of Jahangirnagar University (JU) died of cerebral malaria at a private hospital in the city yesterday.

Momena Deen Monira, a resident student of Jahanaur Imam Hall, contracted the disease several days ago when she was on a tour at Tajindong of Bandarban.

Family sources said at first she was admitted to Crescent Gastro Liver Hospital and then to Al-Baraka Hospital. But doctors in both the hospitals failed to diagnose properly and gave treatment for renal condition. Later as her condition deteriorated she was taken to Ibn Sina Hospital where she died.

Momena, daughter of Monsoor Ali, former engineer of Adamjee Jute Mill, hailed from Kachuli of Kalihati in Tangail district. She and her younger sister were enrolled at the same department under 1998-99 academic session and both obtained first class in the third year final examinations.

Her namaz-e-janaza was held after Juma prayers at the central playground of the university. She was buried at her home in the evening.

## Spontaneous protest

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The name of so-called investigation," read another placard carried by the Kibria family while another one read: "Nation wants to know the motive of killing Kibria... People want security of their lives".

Many participants carried black banners and waved small black flags while others held portraits of Kibria and placards inscribed with slogans demanding the trial of the killers.

Rabeya Khatun, an 84-year-old freedom fighter, came from the Lalmonirhat to join the protest and said, "I am here only to protest the killing of a freedom fighter."

"We will be in streets along with Asma Kibria," said one demonstrator from Mirpur. "We're here because we want the government to realise that people are really upset."

Awami League lawmaker Faruq Khan said, "We want to show the government that people of Bangladesh are not insensible, they want a change of this type of rule."

Waiving a small black flag, Rafiquzzaman from Mohammadpur joined the protests along with his wife and four-year-old son Dinar. "This gathering sends the message to the criminals that we are united," he said.

His wife Naznin added, "I don't know if it will have any impact. But we at least want to show that this can't be given up easily."

Eminent artists Hashem Khan and Kaiyum Chowdhury, Prof Anisuzzaman, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, AL lawmakers ASHK Sadique, Rahmat Ali and Dr Abdur Razzak joined the programme in front of Kibria's residence.

Former Dhaka University (DU) Vice-chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, DU Teachers Association President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and General Secretary Dr Akhtaruzzaman and dozens of DU teachers joined the protests carrying a black banner.

Leading women rights activists Hamida Hossain, Sultana Kamal and Shirin Akhter also expressed solidarity with the unique protest.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) leaders wearing black badges and carrying black flags took part in the programme in front of party office in Purana Paltan.

Leaders and workers of the Workers Party of Bangladesh stood also in Purana Paltan.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) staged a human chain in front of GPO, while Jatiya Nari Jote and JSD front organisation leaders joined the protests on Satmasjid Road.

At a brief rally before the programme, JSD President Hasanul Huq Inu called upon all to take a bold stand against the anti-liberation forces.

Sammilito Peshajibi Parishad, a professional body, stood in silence at Jigatola while members of Sylhet Division Development Action Council carried a symbolic coffin at the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque with black flags in their hands.

The organisations that participated in the protests are Sammilito Ainjibi Samonnoy Parishad, Prajanma '71, Swadhinota Chikitsak Parishad, Dhaka Theatre, Awami Sangskritik Forum, Sonar Bangla Jubo Forum, Muktiyoddha Prajanma Command, people from Habiganj residing in Dhaka, Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Mahila Awami League, Jubo Mahila

League and Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists.

**FRESH PROGRAMMES**

At the end of yesterday's demonstration, Asma Kibria announced fresh programmes to protest the grisly killing of her husband and four others.

She called upon all to take part in a similar programme in districts across the country for half an hour from 4.30pm on February 12.

Asma Kibria also urged the Bangladesh expatriates in different countries to observe one-hour 'black flag demonstrations' on February 13 peacefully.

Addressing a press briefing at her residence, she also announced a mass signature campaign and urged people to form 20-member committees at all districts to collect signatures.

The programmes will be coordinated from late Kibria's Dhhanmondi residence.

**OTHER PLACES**

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong reports: Responding to the call of Asma Kibria, people staged a peaceful protest against the Habiganj grenade attack here yesterday.

After joining the 30-minute demonstrations from 3:00pm, they also held rallies and brought out processions in different parts of the port city.

People from different walks of life as well as political activists and professionals spontaneously took part in the programme carrying black flags.

The leaders and activists of Awami League and its allies stood on the road stretching from Shaheed Minar to Darul Fazal Market.

The protesters also formed the human chain in Jamal Khan and GEC crossing area.

City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, AL leaders Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, MA Mannan, Engineer Mosharrar Hossain led the party activists in the programme.

Eminent personalities including Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam, Dr Anupam Sen and Dr Abu Yusuf Alam also took part in the demonstration.

A condolence meeting was held on the Shaheed Minar premises while a mourning procession was brought out that paraded different roads of the city.

Journalists of Chittagong also took part in the protests in front of Chittagong Press Club.

Our JU correspondent reports: About a hundred teachers, students and journalists of Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday stood on the Dhaka-Aricha highway for 30 minutes to protest the killing of Kibria and countrywide attacks on the progressive forces.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reports: Leaders and workers of Awami League, left-leaning parties and professional bodies joined the protests at the call of the family of Kibria.

AL leaders and workers held a protest rally at Laxmipur crossing in the city while city AL staged a sit-in at Shaheb Bazar blocking the road for an hour.

Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, pro-liberation Doctors' Association, Muktiyoddho Pathagar and various social and cultural bodies also staged demonstrations at Shaheb Bazar.

The protestors brought out a huge procession at 4:00pm to mourn the death of Kibria.

## Police refuse to record GD for Bahauddin Nasim: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday said Dhhanmondi police refused to record a general diary (GD) for issuing a threat to kill Bahauddin Nasim, president of Shech-chhasebok League, in crossfire.

On January 28, Farhad Hossain of Rajair reportedly asked to kill Nasim, putting him in crossfire, at a union-level activists' get-together attended by Tarique Rahman in Gopalganj.

AL leaders said the duty officer at the police station refused Nasim's lawyers to file the GD Thursday afternoon, saying he had instructions from higher authorities.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil condemned and protested the refusal.

Asked, Zafar Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Dhhanmondi Police Station, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We're not likely to record any GD or case if the incident takes place at another place."

"If anyone has threatened them, they are likely to file a GD or case at the concerned police station," he added.

## 36-hr hartal

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examination of video footages, to identify the miscreants involved in street vandalism," DMP commissioner Mizanur Rahman told the news agency yesterday.

Plainclothes police have been deployed in various parts of the city to closely monitor the movement of suspected elements.

"We can't sit idle when miscreants are setting fire to vehicles and injuring the innocent passengers in the name of political activities," said the DMP commissioner.

He said no vandalism on the streets will be tolerated and police have been asked to ensure the safety and security of life and property of the people by any means.

About 8,000 police and paramilitary BDR men have been deployed in the capital. Instructions have also been sent to the police superintendents to maintain law and order during hartal.

## Govt trying

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and curbing political terrorism and activities of the fundamentalist groups."

Jalil regretted that seven days have already passed after the murder of Shah ASM Kibria, but the government could not yet arrest the killers.

Top leaders of the party including Abdus Samad Azad, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Obaidul Quader were present at the press conference.

## Nutrition project

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already earmarked Tk 240 crore for fiscal 2004-05 and Tk 152 crore for fiscal 2005-06 to continue the NNP activities.

The health ministry launched the three-year HNPP in July last year without establishing the role of nutrition component.

Originally, Tk 650 crore NNP ended in June 2004 and finding a delayed start the World Bank withdrew Tk 148 crore in June 2003 leaving Tk 502 crore including government's own contribution of Tk 70.34 crore with the project at a stand-still at that time.

One nutrition centre for every 1,500 people in a union is intended to benefit population of the area. Female contract workers under non-governmental organisations are working as community nutrition promoters, supervised by community nutrition organisers.

## BRTA

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is only 250, he said.

He stressed the need for maintaining separate lanes for rickshaws and motor vehicles. He added that the private bus sector would remain non-profitable until different lanes or roads for rickshaws and buses were set up.

Engineer Ashiqur Rahman, director of Sino-Dipon — the company that introduced over 50 percent of the CNG-run buses in the city — said if the government really wants to promote CNG-run vehicles, they must give preference to the CNG-run buses over diesel-run buses when giving routes.

"The government says it wants to promote CNG-run buses on the city roads. But, on the other hand, BRTA causes us a lot of hassles when we seek permits to run buses especially on the routes where passengers' demand is relatively high," he alleged.

"It's very hard for the CNG-run bus owners to compete with the diesel-run bus operators, as a CNG bus costs much higher than a diesel-run bus does," Rahman observed.

The BRTA chairman and director could not be reached for comment despite repeated attempts by The Daily Star.

Deputy Director of BRTA Abdul Motaleb, however, said the BRTA has not received any allegation of irregularities regarding issuing route permits.

But employees of the BRTA of Mirpur office said its officials do not hesitate to give route permits when they are bribed.

## England 267/8 against S Africa

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth

Vikram Solanki led the way with 66 as England made 267-8 in the third one-day international against South Africa here Friday.

Solanki put on 50-stands with Geraint Jones (39), Andrew Strauss (35) and Kevin Pietersen (33) as England's batsmen made good starts after opting to bat.

South Africa's bowlers, however, kept their discipline, England scoring 58 runs off the last 10 overs while losing four wickets. Andre Nel and Mahkayha Ntini finished with three wickets each.

England led the seven-match series 1-0 after the second game ended in a tie. South Africa have won one of their last 14 one-dayers.

## It is fun to shoot

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he intended to reflect the unfortunate and harsh realities of war," Hagee said.

"Lt. Gen. Mattis often speaks with a great deal of candor. I have counseled him concerning his remarks and he agrees he should have chosen his words more carefully," Hagee added.

Maj. Jason Johnston, a Marine spokesman at the Pentagon, said Hagee did not plan disciplinary action against Mattis. Johnston declined to specify how Hagee had counseled Mattis.

During a Pentagon briefing, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld did not criticize Mattis' remarks, saying, "I have not read his words. I don't know what he said precisely or the context."

Marine Gen. Peter Pace, vice chairman of the military's Joint Chiefs of Staff, lauded Mattis' record and leadership.

Without explicitly criticising Mattis, Pace told the briefing, "First of all, all of us who are leaders have a responsibility in our words and our actions to provide the right example all the time for those who look to us for leadership."

Mattis, formally promoted to three-star general last month, heads the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, at Quantico, Virginia.

In November 2001, Mattis proclaimed, "We have landed and we now own terrain in south Afghanistan," after Marines took over a desert airstrip. The comment ruffled feathers at the Pentagon,

where officials were uneasy with a US general talking about owning Afghanistan.

In Iraq, he commanded the 1st Marine Division during the 2003 invasion and subsequent counterinsurgency operations.

Mattis was ordered to lead an assault on the Iraqi city of Falluja in April 2004 after the slaying and mutilation of four American contractors, but US leaders halted the offensive and withdrew his Marines before a decisive showdown. He wrapped up his service in Iraq in August, a spokeswoman said.

In November, Marines under different command seized control of the city after the US presidential election.

Ford has been pegged to play the role of Mattis in the film version of an upcoming book "No True Glory," an account of the April battle for Falluja written by Marine veteran Bing West.

Senior Pentagon Intelligence official Lt. Gen. William Boykin referred in 2003 to the struggle against Islamic extremists as a battle with Satan. In a speech, Boykin referred to a Muslim fighter in Somalia, and said, "Well, you know what I knew, that my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol."

The Pentagon inspector general concluded in August that Boykin should face "appropriate corrective action," and a senior Army general said in October said unspecified action had been taken against Boykin.

## Afghan jet

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Afghan Transport Minister Enayatullah Qasimi refused to comment when contacted by AFP, while officials from the privately-run airline could not be reached.

Nato-led peacekeepers and Afghan forces launched a search for the plane in the country's mountainous terrain after hopes that it had managed to divert to Pakistan were dashed.

Nine Turks and three Americans are thought to be among a number of foreign passengers on the 737 while six of the eight crew members were Russian, officials said.

## AL mourning

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power, killers of AL leaders and workers will remain at large," he said.

The ruling alliance is killing opposition leaders and workers in a bid to cling to power, Jalil said.

AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed criticised the government for blaming the opposition for postponement of the Saarc summit. "If AL is so strong as to stop the summit, then the ruling coalition should quit power immediately," he said.

Another presidium member, Suranjit Sengupta, said rise of fundamentalism in the country will bring disaster for the nation.

This government cannot ensure security of people as well as members of parliament, and this shows its failure to run the country, he said.

Party presidium member Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, MP, Joint Secretary Obaidul Quader and city AL President Mohammad Hanif also addressed the rally.

The mourning procession started from Mukltangan and ended at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Some participants in the procession threw brickbats at a vehicle of ntv, a private television channel.

A large number of police personnel were deployed in and around Dhaka University area to avert any untoward incidents. Police restricted movement of vehicles on the roads passing through the area.

At the Shaheed Minar, AL leaders and workers pledged to continue the anti-government movement until it steps down.

## Book lovers crowd fair

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did not allow traffic inside the university area due to processions on the campus. No processions, however, were seen in the afternoon.

Sixty-nine new books came out at the fair yesterday. Publishers said the number of new books would increase after the first week. They said that targeting the first weekend yesterday they brought a large number of new books and already sold a good number of them.

Osman Gani of Agamee Prakashani said demand for books penned by late Professor Humayun Azad, who was grievously injured in a machete attack last year and later died in Germany, was amazingly high. Most of the book lovers asked for Azad's 'Pak Sar Zamin Saad baad' and 'Amra Ki Ey Bangladesh Cheyalciaat?' Besides, the sale of newly published 'Bhasha Andolon: Sahittick Patobhumi' was good.

Last year on the fourth day of the fair Dr Azad was seen at the Agamee Prakashani signing autographs for his admirers and said, "I feel happy when I see huge crowd at the fair."

Crowd was thick especially around the Nazrul Mancha at the centre of the academy premises. Publishers said most book lovers asked about the new books at their stalls and as the evening fell the sale rose rapidly.

Books by Humayun Azad, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Humayun Ahmed, Emdadul Haque Milon and some new writers sold, publishers said.

Agamee Prakashani, Shirin Publications, Mihji Publications and Pearl Publications each published five new books on the fourth day of the fair while Shirin Publications and Jagriti Prakashani published three books each. Ichhamati Prakashani,

Annya Prakash, Shatom Publications, Parijat Prakashani each published two new books.

At the Lekhak Kunja, noted writers and artists yesterday unveiled covers of a number of books.

The fair remains open from 3pm to 9pm on weekdays while on Friday it opens at 11am to continue till 9pm with a two-hour break from 12 at noon. On February 21, the International Mother Language Day, it will start from 8am and continue till 9pm without intermission.

A traditional discussion on 'Fiftieth anniversary of the Bangla Academy: Its role in compilation of dictionary' was held in the afternoon and a painting competition for children presided over by Artist Ivy Zaman in the morning.

## JMJB attacked jatra

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restrain them from staging such shows," Shafiqullah was quoted as saying during police interrogation before he was sent to the Joint Interrogation Cell on Thursday.

JMJB operatives exploded two bombs in the attack leaving at least 15 people injured.

Activists of the militant outfit had made a similar attack on a jatra show at Gabtali bazar in Bharta union under Sarisbari upzila that left around 10 people injured, the arrestee said.

The bombs were hurled from speeding motorbikes, he said, adding that he was not linked to any of the attacks.

Police however arrested Awami League (AL) activists and supporters in connection with the incidents.

Asked about the August 21 grenade attack on an AL rally in Dhaka, Shafiqullah told police that he knew nothing about it. "JMJB men were involved in most of the bomb attacks carried out across the country, and no grenade attacks," he said.

According to police, the arrestee said members of JMJB bomb squads have specified jobs. His task was to connect electric device to bombs and switches of remote control bombs.

The squads comprise separate people to hurl bombs and supply bomb-making materials. But he does not know the identity of the others, he said.

JMJB chief Abdur Rahman, its operation commander Bangla Bhai and other top leaders could provide information on the other bomb attacks in different places in the country, Shafiqullah told police.

On Rahman's whereabouts, Shafiqullah only said he sometimes visits the madrasa at his village home in Jamalpur.

Meanwhile, in an interview with journalists at a government office at Bagmara in Rajshahi a few months back, Rahman said he returned to his Jamalpur home about seven years ago after his retirement from Bangladesh embassy in Saudi Arabia.

Claiming himself as a follower of Osama bin Laden, Rahman said he planned to form an organisation in 1997 along with some others having

the same ideologies, and it came into being as Jama'atul Mujahidin.

Police raided a meeting of the organisation at Maheshpur of Kheltal upzila under Joypurhat district before it was formally launched, where Siddiqur Rahman alias Bangla Bhai was also present, Rahman told journalists.

As the situation changed, the organisers changed the name of the organisation to JMJB, he said.

A top official of Bogra police said the operatives, involved in the bomb attack on a jatra show in Laxmikola village on January 14 that killed one and injured 40, are yet to be arrested.

Police are hunting for JMJB operatives — Joynal, Osman and Wajed alias Mamun of Gaibandha — believed to be involved in the attack, said the police official.

## Ghulam Azam

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Bangladesh as it always conspires against Bangladesh to dominate in every aspect and members of RAW are hatching up plots to stall the development of our country," Ghulam Azam said.

Criticising AL, he said that Sheikh Hasina is desperate go to power with the help of the Indian government.

Expressing satisfaction with the activities of the ICS he said that the relations between Jamaat and ICS are like those between a father and a son.

Rafiqul Islam, president of the Dhaka Metropolitan unit Jamaat-e-Islami, said that ICS could play a vital role in developing new leadership based on Islamic ideology.

Shahidul Islam Masud, general secretary of the ICS, said "Our next goal is to capture all the educational institutes including Dhaka University in the capital. The authorities and teachers of these institutions have already assured us of their support."

Later ICS brought out a procession from the Baitul Mukarram protesting the postponement of the Saarc summit.

## Astronomers find 'hot spot' on Saturn

AP, Honolulu

Astronomers using a giant telescope atop a volcano have discovered a hot spot at the tip of Saturn's south pole.

The infrared images captured by the Keck I telescope at the W.M. Keck Observatory atop Mauna Kea on the Big Island suggest a warm polar vortex, a large-scale weather pattern likened to a jet stream on Earth that occurs in the upper atmosphere. It's the first such hot vortex ever discovered in the solar system.

The team of scientists say the images are the sharpest thermal views of Saturn ever taken from the ground. Their work will be published in Friday's editions of the journal Science.

This warm polar cap is believed to contain the highest temperatures on Saturn; the scientists did not give a temperature estimate.

On Earth, the Arctic Polar Vortex is typically located over eastern North America in Canada and plunges cold arctic air to the northern Plains in the United States.

Polar vortices are found on Earth, Jupiter, Mars and Venus, and are colder than their surroundings. The new images from the Keck

Observatory show the first evidence of a polar vortex at much warmer temperatures.

"Saturn's is the first hot polar vortex that we've seen because it's been sitting in the sunlight for about 18 years," said Glenn S. Orton, a scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., and lead author.

Saturn, which takes many earth years to orbit the sun, just had its summer solstice in 2002.

"If the increased southern temperatures are solely the result of seasonality, then the temperature should increase gradually with increasing latitude, but it doesn't," Orton said. "We see that the temperature increases abruptly by several degrees near 70 degrees south and again at 87 degrees south."

"A really hot thing within a couple degrees of the pole is something I don't understand at all," he said.

Scientists may learn more from the data coming from the infrared spectrometer on the Cassini spacecraft currently orbiting Saturn, information that is expected to complement the Keck discovery, Orton said.

## Koirala urges people

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The rebels have given no signs of being willing to talk. After the king seized power, Maoist leader Prachanda denounced him as a "national betrayer" and called for a broad political front with those opposing "feudal autocracy."

The Maoists are battling to topple the monarchy and install a communist republic in an increasingly savage conflict that has claimed over 11,000 lives.

The army chief's threat came as telephone, mobile and Internet links remained cut for a fourth day. Censors were in place in domestic media newsrooms to vet reports of Nepal's once lively media and scores of people remained in detention.

Deuba, along with Koirala and two other ex-premiers were under house arrest.

Gyanendra, who has installed a handpicked 10-member cabinet of loyalists, has pledged to restore democracy in three years.

Nepal's foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey, the highest-ranking minister, said Gyanendra had dismissed the government and imposed emergency rule "to establish peace and security."

"It's high time now to end this (Maoist) problem," he told AFP.

Apart from tight security, there was no sign of the political crisis in Kathmandu. The ancient capital's winding streets were jammed with traffic and schools, shops and businesses were open.

Some expressed indifference over the king's actions.

"I'm really not interested in politics. It doesn't matter who comes to power. They're all the same, nobody cares about the country's situation really," said businessman Mahesh Bahadur Thapa.

Army spokesman Brigadier Dipak Kumar Gurung said the crackdown was helping security forces battle "terrorism as they don't have to deal with rallies, strikes, protests due to the state of emergency" in the former hippie haven wedged between China and India.

But the information blackout meant there was no knowledge of events on the ground in the army's battle with the rebels. Army spokesman Gurung said the communications shutdown had hurt the Maoists' ability to communicate.

"Due to this, their assault plans have become damp squibs... dependent upon pre-paid mobiles."

## Security blanket

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emergency meetings where they decided to put police on high alert and intensify security measures at TV and radio stations, power supply stations, bus stands, educational institutions and all other key installations in the districts.

Additional Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police (Khuina range) Sohrah Hossain visited the establishments in Jhenidah Thursday. He directed the law enforcers to remain on high alert against any unwanted situation.

Our Kushtia correspondent reported that the DIG ordered round-the-clock monitoring of security measures and combing operations to track down the extremists.

Apart from alerting five police stations and 22 outposts of Jhenidah, police in Khuina, Jessore, Magura, Kushtia, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Sathkira, Bagerhat and Narail were also asked to increase the number of forces to intensify security at important installations.

The police alert also followed last week's threats to seven journalists of Sathkira. Janajuddho, a faction of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (BPCP) issued the threats.

For writing against them and for 'not writing against the killings of their operatives in crossfire'.

After Wednesday's meeting, police picked up a woman the same day from Jhenidah town on suspicion of her being a member of suicide squad. But the woman, who was ill during her arrest, claimed innocence and was released later.

It is learnt that the outlaws have

prepared a hit-list of 'class enemies' who include two journalists from Kshulnaton.

Earlier on December 22 last year, the seven outlawed parties held another secret meeting on Jhenidah Bscic estate premises. They formed 'several killing squads' for operations in ten southwestern districts and six northern districts, according to sources.

The parties are PBCP, Janajuddho and Red Flag factions of the PBCP, Gono Mukti Fouj (GMF), Biplobi Anuragi, Bangladesh Socialist Party (BSP) and Jashad Gono Bahini (JGB).

The meeting was held on the heels of the death of Mofakkar Hossain Choudhury, founder of the P B C P.

Speakers at the meeting claimed 80 outlaws were killed by the law enforcers in the name of crossfire.

GMF chief Sabuz in a press release later blamed the BNP-Jamaat-led government for the 'killings'.

The leaders at the meeting said 'killings' in the so-called crossfire are a violation of human rights and they would take revenge, the press release said.

Our Khuina correspondent adds: Additional forces have been deployed at TV and radio station, power supply stations and all other key installations of the city.

All police stations, outposts and camps in Khuina division were put on high alert since Tuesday.

Police were raiding different hideouts of the underground operatives in Khuina to arrest them.

## Pre-emptive strike

**FROM PAGE 12**

its growing population.

Some European editorial writers have warned Iran could spark a divisive replay of the American-led Iraq invasion, which caused the worst US-European split for decades.

While Europe wants more engagement and has negotiated a freeze in some of Tehran's nuclear work, Rice pressed the US tactic of confronting and isolating the Islamic republic.

"The Iranian regime's human rights behavior and its behavior toward its own population is something to be loathed," she said.

US anger at the EU's plan to lift an arms embargo on China and differences over where to try war criminals from Sudan's conflict in Darfur could cloud Rice's visit to eight European capitals, but ties are improving.

Rather than continue a diplomatic spat with Washington over a war that major allies such as Germany and France opposed, European govern-

ments have vowed to focus on stabilizing Iraq — especially since Sunday's elections there.

And in probably the most important foreign policy area to the Europeans, the United States has won applause for its push for peace between Israelis and Palestinians since the death of Yasser Arafat.

"This is now a process that is moving and moving effectively," said Rice.

European diplomats hope Rice's trip will finally put an end to the shrill tone in relations over Iraq and allow the sides to seek common ground.

Rice, who visits Germany on Friday and makes a speech on shared values in France next week, echoed the conciliatory sentiment.

"What is important is that we have an atmosphere in which we can express our concerns and do that with partners willing to take each other's concerns into consideration as they make policy decisions."