

# Khulna reporter flown

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Khulna Medical College and Hospital (KMCH) immediately after the powerful explosion that also grievously wounded three other newsmen, including the press club's president.

His face, stomach and legs were seriously burnt and his left eye was extremely injured, said doctors at the KMCH, who amputated his left hand on Saturday night. They later referred him to the CMH failing to improve his condition even slightly.

Belaluddin was helicoptered to Dhaka at 1:00pm yesterday. Doctors attending him at the CMH said his condition was still 'critical'.

Belaluddin's wife Tanjila Belal, a lecturer at Islamic Intermediate College in Khulna, Dr Moniruzzaman of Islamic Bank Hospital, and two other people accompanied him in the Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) chopper.

Khulna City BNP President M Nurul Islam MP, local journalists, high officials of local civil and police administrations, and a large number of leaders of Jamaat, BNP and Awami League were present at the Khulna heliport when the chopper took off at 12:00noon.

On the other end, Social Welfare Minister and Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid, Khulna City Mayor Tayebur Rahman and Ali Asgar MP received Belaluddin, who also is the Rokon of Khulna City Jamaat, at the old airport in Tejgaon.

A board of medical experts yesterday examined him. He is in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), CMH sources said.

Among the other three victims, the condition of Daily Jugantor Staff Photographer Zahidul Islam has not improved yet. He, too, was severely injured hit by splinters all over the body. He is undergoing treatment at Khulna Surgical Clinic in Sonadanga.

Khulna Press Club President and Prothom Alo Khulna Bureau Chief Sheikh Abu Hasan and The News Today Khulna Correspondent Rafiqul Islam Tutul have been released after primary treatment at a local clinic adjacent to the press club.

**PROTEST PROGRAMMES** Journalists of Khulna brought out a procession yesterday noon in the city condemning and protesting the dastardly attack. A rally was held after the protest procession on the press club premises.

Speakers at the meeting bitterly criticised police for their failure to provide security for Khulna journalists despite frequent death threats given by extremists.

They demanded immediate removal of Khulna Police Commissioner Javed Patwary and also an impartial enquiry to find out why security forces were withdrawn from the press club on Saturday, which is believed to have made ample opportunity for the terrorists to launch a remote-controlled bomb attack on the club.

The assembled journalists also strongly condemned the termination of the investigation into the unsuccessful grenade attack on January 4 on Dip Azad, Khulna bureau chief of Dainik Jugantor.

Speaking at the rally, Dainik Purbanchal Editor Alhaj Liaquat Ali expressed his deep concern at the rampant and ceaseless attacks on journalists in Khulna. He said the failure of police to track down the killers of journalists Haroon, Manik Saha and Humayun Kabir Balu has made this latest attack on newsmen possible.

Khulna Press Club President Sheikh Abu Hasan, Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ) President Makbul Hossain Mintoo, Daily Tribune Editor Begum Ferdousi Ali, MUJ Acting President Anisuzzaman, Khulna Press Club Secretary Feruque Ahmed and KUJ Secretary Mohammad Shahab Ali also addressed the meeting.

Local units of BNP, Awami League, Jamaat and Jatiya Party in separate press statements strongly condemned the attack on press and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the attackers.

# Security upped

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Apart from the agitation programmes, the meeting would discuss party lawmakers' joining the parliament session that will resume on the same day, party insiders said.

"Counter programmes by the ruling alliance is nothing but attempts to cause anarchy in the country," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday told a press briefing. He said if the four-party alliance men attack the 'peaceful protests' of the opposition, AL along with other parties would be forced to take tougher programmes.

"Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will announce fresh programmes on February 8," Jalil said.

Meanwhile, ruling alliance sources said after holding rallies across the country today they will take up a series of programmes to face the AL and other opposition parties on the streets. "We won't allow Awami League any chance to take control of the streets," said a BNP leader adding that programmes of the party will be set after examining AL's next programmes.

"We will face conspiracy and anarchic politics of the opposition politically. We are now observing programmes individually, but soon

The political leaders expressed their solidarity with all programmes to be undertaken by the journalist community against the bomb attacks and murders.

Khulna Press Club, KUJ and MUJ will form a human chain today from 11:00am till 12noon in front of Picture Palace cinema hall protesting the bomb attack.

Journalists of all local newspapers will abstain from work tomorrow to stop publication of the February 8 issue.

A protest rally will also be held Tuesday morning at the press club.

## PROBE & SECURITY

Khulna police yesterday arrested two persons -- Habi Shaikh, 35, and Khokon, 32 -- in the violence-stricken southwestern city in connection with the bomb attack. A special team of police officials is quizzing the two arrestees.

No complaint or case was filed with Khulna Sadar Police Station in connection with the bomb blast until filing of this report yesterday evening.

A nine-member team of army explosives experts headed by Major Khaled from Jessore cantonment came to the press club yesterday afternoon to collect evidence. Earlier, on Saturday night, Rab officials also visited the spot.

A one-member committee comprising a deputy commissioner was formed to find if police neglected in their duty during the incident. The team was scheduled to submit its report yesterday night.

The police authorities have deployed around 250 policemen at the local newspaper offices and the press club to provide round-the-clock security.

## Jalil accuses Moudud of creating political instability

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday accused Law Minister Moudud Ahmed of fanning up political instability in the country.

Earlier on Saturday, Moudud told reporters that the AL will have to shoulder full responsibility for the postponement of the Saarc summit and pay the price for it.

In reply, Jalil asked Moudud not to give any lesson to the people.

At a post-hartal briefing at the party's Dhanmondi office, Jalil blamed the BNP-led alliance for destroying the achievements of the Liberation War.

"If the four-party alliance government stays in power, it'll destroy democracy, rule of law and Bangladesh's political environment," Jalil added.

He alleged the government has created an anarchic situation and is trying to push the country towards conflict and confrontation.

The AL lawmaker said no-one is safe in this suffocating situation as the government is trying to snatch away people's constitutional rights of peaceful demonstrations.

"We demand of the alliance government to step down in a bid to establish a people's government and rule of law through an election under a neutral caretaker government," he said.

Jalil condemned police actions and arrest of his party activists during hartal hours and demanded their immediate release.

Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Mustafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Obaidul Kader, Asaduzzaman Noor, MP and Nazma Rahman, among others, were present at the press briefing.

We'd announce united programmes of the four-party alliance," Health Minister and BNP's standing committee member Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain told newsmen yesterday.

BNP sources said they have plans to make today's rally at Muktangan a grand gathering by mobilising a huge number of activists from different parts of Dhaka and adjacent districts.

"Our programmes are not meant to collide with the opposition's programme," Abdus Salam, general secretary of Dhaka city unit BNP, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides BNP, its allies would hold rallies today. Jamaat-e-Islami will hold a rally at North Gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque and IOJ led by Mufti Amini at the South Gate of the mosque.

Referring to government's decision to face them on the streets, AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said if the government take any repressive measures against the opposition parties, they would opt for an all-out 'action programme'. 'Programmes like hartals, road blockades, laying siege to the Secretariat and rallies are on the cards to force the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition to step down,' he added.

## Bangla Bhai

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said yesterday.

They said he is likely to fly to a Muslim country.

The sources also said the dreaded JMJB operations commander was staying in Sylhet when the grisly grenade attack on the Habiganj Awami League rally was made killing former finance minister SAMS Kibria and four others.

According to sources, the patrons of Bangla Bhai have advised him to stay abroad for a short while until the shock waves of the Habiganj killing subside.

It has also been learnt that Abdur Rahman alias 'Shai Bhai', the JMJB chief, will stay on in the country and look after JMJB operations.

The sources said, a few days ago, Bangla Bhai was preparing to go to Rajshahi to avenge the killing of three JMJB activists including Abdul Baki of Bogra. But before reaching Rajshahi, he came to know that 66 JMJB operatives had been arrested in the meantime and he might face the same fate as soon as he enters the city.

The sources also said a number of JMJB bomb squads are active in Naogaon and Rajshahi districts. A few days ago, a member of a bomb squad was injured while making bombs at a Rajshahi village.

## JMJB men

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But, Sources said, Mustafizur Rahman Mustaque, reportedly the second in command of the Islamist terrorist outfit, though was also remanded in police custody, is yet to disclose any information.

They said it is so because police have not been interrogating Mustaque as per an order of a top police official.

But Bagmara Police Station Officer in-Charge ABM Golam Kibria denied the allegation.

Meanwhile, Forman Ali, the leader of the 12 Islamist militants arrested in Natore, told police that a middle aged bearded man named Abdul Quaiyum used to be Natore regional leader of Jama'atul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB).

But Ali could not give any more details about Quaiyum and said he used to meet them only when he thought it to be necessary.

"Our party (JMB) is active in almost all areas in Natore and we do nothing but study the holy Qur'an and Hadith and call people to follow us," a police official quoted Ali as saying.

Ali also told police that they hate NGOs, as "they are spoiling our women and plotting to control our country. We should all resist them."

## Jubo League leader

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Begum, his wife.

"Bellal ran away from the house and police and the BNP cadres chased him. Since then he went missing," Hasina told reporters at the DMCH.

"I had searched for him everywhere, from our relatives' houses to Dhaka jail and the DMCH morgue in vain," she added.

Hasina found her husband's decomposed body floating in the waterbody near the slum at around 12:30pm yesterday.

Bellal hailed from Barajalia village in Hija zapazila in Barisal and had two children -- Nasir, 7, and Dulali, 2.

## POLICE VERSION

Deputy Commissioner (South Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Khan Sayeed Hasan said the cause of Bellal's death will be known after autopsy.

Police filed an unnatural death (UD) case yesterday, he said.

He added that if the autopsy report suggests he did not die an unnatural death, the case would automatically turn into a murder case.

## Hasina

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police protection," said the AL chief.

She added: "There were complaints that the police were posted on duty during the hartal without badge, only to facilitate the Chhatra Dal cadres in police dress to curb the hartal."

Hasina further alleged that though the BNP-Jamaat government speaks of facing its opponents politically, they were using goons to obstruct the movement.

She said hartal is a peaceful constitutional means of public protest, but the "government mercilessly beat up" opposition leaders and workers, MPs and women workers on the street.

"Pregnant women are being tortured in police custody while infant's mother was tortured inhumanly after arrest," she complained.

"Is it a duty of the government to suppress the peaceful protest and deny the constitutional right to hold meetings and processions?" asked the opposition leader.

She wanted to know why police protection was not given at the public meeting of Shah AMS Kibria MP, 'Ahsanullah Master MP was shot dead in daylight. Being a parliament member, he was not given police protection at his meeting? Had there been police protection, these two elected members of parliament would not have been killed," she said.

On Saturday's bomb blast at the Khulna Press Club resulting in injuries to four journalists, Hasina said police was assigned there after the killing of journalists Manik Saha and Humayun Kabir Balu. "But why police was withdrawn at the time of bomb blast last night? I want to know if the police was lifted to facilitate the bomb attackers."

# Exploitation, abuse

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training courses to educate women about cultural and working conditions abroad and requiring recruiting agencies to compensate female workers in the even of exploitation or lost wages.

The repeal of the ban has led to an appreciable rise in the number of women migrating abroad for work, experts and official sources say, adding that the increase is good for the country and good for the women themselves. "Women tend to better utilize and send home more of their earnings as compared to men," said Tasneem Siddique, chairperson of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), citing a 2001 report published by her organization, 'Transcending Boundaries: Labor Migration of Women from Bangladesh. "Employment abroad affords women economic independence and social empowerment," Siddique added.

Lower migration fees are another benefit of female labor, since in most cases women pay only Tk 40,000 to 60,000 to arrange their trips abroad, as compared to at least Tk one to two lakh for men. As a result, women have less debt to repay and therefore more money to send home.

Women working abroad offer tremendous economic and social prospects for Bangladesh. But lack of training and illegal migration makes them vulnerable to the system of exploitation underlying migratory labor.

The difficulties often begin even before they leave their native land since I most cases they must pay a recruiting agency Tk 60, 000 to arrange their trip, including their visa and a place of work abroad. Often they sell their land or borrow heavily to pay the exorbitant fees, hoping to recoup the losses after they've arrived abroad. But many are not that fortunate, and find that they are forced to work long hours for less pay than they were promised. Some are not paid at all. The least fortunate are beaten or verbally assaulted on a regular basis.

Despite these hardships, many women are unable to simply leave or return home, since they often do not have money, are confined to their employer's home, or do not speak the language well enough to find for themselves.

This is a story repeated many times over Baliarpur village of Kunda Union, Savar, where many of the residents have worked abroad. One of them is Shamsunnahar, 35, who went to Bahrain in 2000 to work as a domestic worker. The prospect of a better life cost her dearly: Tk 60,000, which she borrowed from her relatives at the interest rate of one hundred percent. One of her aunts, Piara, who has been working for a Bahrain family since 1988, arranged her visa with the lucrative offer that she could refund the borrowed money within a short time and then send back money for her children at home.

But Shamsunnahar's hopes evaporated almost immediately after she arrived in Bahrain, when she learned she could not follow the language of her employers. "My madam orders me to bring a bowl; I give a glass. Or she orders me to wash the toilet; I start sweeping the room," says Shamsunnahar, mother of two sons and a daughter. "So, my sir and madam were very unhappy with me. They scolded, and even sometimes beat

me up. My aunt lived far from me, but still tried to help me learn the language, but it was quite impossible for me, and so I finally decided to return. It was only a one month and 8-day stay there," she wails, sitting on the veranda of her one-room makeshift.

Shamsunnahar returned home with no money, three mouths to feed and unimaginable amount of debt. This is a tale repeated many times over by women in Baliarpur village who have returned from Middle Eastern countries. Illegal migrants often face even harsher conditions, such as those suffered by Jamila, a domestic worker in Dubai whose tragic fate was chronicled in The Daily Star.

However, BMET director general S.M. Wahiduzzaman said BMET provides mandatory training for all workers, including women, to explain the customs and traditions of respective countries, as well as the nature of work and proper treatment abroad.

Illegal workers are not afforded the benefits of such training, rendering them vulnerable to exploitation, the DG said. "All who go for jobs must secure clearance from BMET," he said, adding, "The government cannot do much for those who go through illegal channels."

Some migration laborer advocates, however, said the orientation provided by the BMET is not adequate for the unskilled domestic workers, since most of them hail from remote areas and lack the education training to understand the orientation. More than that, corrupt officials create opportunities for migrant workers, including women, to pay bribes so that they can receive clearance without actually attending pre-departure orientation classes, the sources added.

Migration advocates insist the system of female migratory labor is worth protecting, but needs more oversight and better training for workers.

"We want the women of our country go to other countries for work and contribute to Bangladesh's economy, but at the same time they must be well prepared, and their vulnerability and exploitation must be considered," said Syed Saiful Haque Asif, Chairman of the Welfare Association of Repatriate Bangladeshi Employees (Warbe), which operates 13 centers in the country helping Bangladeshi repatriates to rehabilitate.

## Nipah virus

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The CDC experts have found at least two patients to be carriers of the deadly virus after examining both of the samples.

Meanwhile, a joint team of experts of Health Directorate and International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) has visited the infected area recently and collected more samples.

"The joint team will again visit the infected area very soon and collect samples from different animals and plants to identify how the disease is transmitted to the human body," said one of the sources from Directorate of Health.

# Cop killed, 80 hurt

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Saturday's bomb attack on the Khulna Press Club premises where four journalists were injured.

Police and paramilitary troops patrolled the boulevards of capital Dhaka and other main cities.

They arrested at least eight women opposition activists including Marufa Akhtar Poppy, vice-president of Bangladesh Chhatra League, from the Dainik Bangla crossing following a scuffle with police at about 11:45am after a procession led by Tofail Ahmed and Asaduzzaman Noor MP tried to move towards the Shapla crossing.

Elsewhere, a cocktail was hurled near a police bus at Kalabagan at about 3:00pm, police intercepted activists of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) when they tried to bring out a procession from its central office on the Bangabandhu Avenue.

In the old part of the city, one small trader sustained burn injuries when some picket allegedly sprayed kerosene and lit up the rickshaw he was travelling by.

At Tongi, nearly 40 people, including a policeman, were injured as pro-hartal activists clashed with members of law-enforcement agencies at Notun Bazar at around 12 noon. The trouble erupted when police prevented a procession led by local lawmaker Zahid Ahsan Russel.

In Rangamati, at least 20 opposition leaders and activists were injured when ruling BNP cadres attacked them with sticks and bricksbats in Bonorupa Bazar at around 11:30am, reports our correspondent.

It was alleged that BNP district unit secretary Zahir Ahmed and town unit BNP president Shah Alam led the attack with a gang of 50, riding on 18 motor bikes.

They mercilessly beat up Chhatra League leader Naton Kumar Tripura, who was later admitted to the Rangamati general hospital. The ruling party men also harassed a police SI during the

attack. Meanwhile, the district unit of AL will enforce a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Rangamati today in protest against the attack.

In Sylhet, police arrested nine opposition activists in the city. About 20 persons including the Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badat Uddin Ahmed Kamran and district AL president ANM Shafique sustained minor wounds when police baton-charged and lobbed three teargas shells near Surma Market.

In Nilphamari, police virtually sealed off the district AL office and restricted a gathering of more than five persons anywhere in the district, writes our correspondent. Also police arrested former Chhatra League district general secretary Mizanur Rahman from his house during a raid on Saturday night.

## Speaker

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in a grenade attack in Habiganj on January 27.

The critically injured AL lawmaker was rushed to the Birdem Hospital in the capital in an ambulance and pronounced dead on arrival.

"Dr Reza Kibria accused me of lying and fraudulent practices. In a civilised society, no-one uses the word 'liar'; rather the word 'untrue' is used. So, his statement is devoid of courtesy," he said.

Dr Reza, son of Kibria, on Saturday accused the speaker of lying about his father's killing.

Sircar said, "I had served as minister in six cabinets in the past, but no-one has ever accused me of lying or fraudulent practices."

"He's a doctorate and should behave like a doctorate," Sircar added.

Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury was present during the press briefing.

# Saifur refutes press reports

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday protested the statement made by the family of former minister Shah AMS Kibria quoting him as saying that Kibria's murder was 'part of regional killings'.

An official release said Saifur was 'surprised' reading the statement in some newspapers yesterday morning. He denied having made any such comment anywhere after the assassination of Kibria.

Saifur said, "Being aggrieved, I've conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family of Shah AMS Kibria in different statements through the press and also demanded justice and proper investigation into the killing."

He termed the insinuation in the statement 'imaginary' and 'baseless', and 'totally motivated and contradictory'.

## Hartal at Ctg

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atrocities on AL leaders and journalists on Saturday," he said.

But he warned the government of tougher agitation if it continues to attack on leaders and activists of opposition parties. Mohiuddin also demanded apology from the Chittagong police administration for Saturday's repression on opposition.

Earlier, leaders of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh (TTAB), Clearing and Forwarding Agents Association and Shop Owners Association met with the 14-party opposition alliance at the AL office at Darul Fazar Market to withdraw the hartal for the sake of economy.

CCCI Vice President MA Latif and BGMEA Director SM Nurul Haque urged the AL and other opposition parties to reconsider the fresh hartal call to save economy struck with a series of strikes recently.

"The whole country has already suffered terribly for hartals, and a fresh programme will only serve crippling blow to the economy," they said.

The business leaders also condemned the brutal killing of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, terming his death an irreparable loss to the country. They demanded proper investigation into the killing and exemplary punishment for the culprits.

Meanwhile, operations at the Chittagong Port were greatly disrupted due to yesterday's hartal.

Though cargo handling did take place to some extent, no delivery of goods could be made.

## Body decides

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The meeting informed that a special tribunal would be set up to have the land-related cases settled rapidly. A draft on the formation of the special tribunal is now being prepared by the land ministry.

The committee, formed in February 2004, has so far recovered about 265 acres of land worth about Tk 634 crore in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj districts.

## Govt ready

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Another home ministry source said Interpol, which has been investigating the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka, has already been given 'full access' to all relevant evidence and witnesses when a two-member delegation of the agency visited Bangladesh last week for need assessment.

"Interpol will come here soon to begin a full-length investigation and the government agreed to give them all-out support," the source added.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday Babar said the government has given top importance to the investigation into the August 21 and January 27 attacks to identify the criminals.

"The government will not spare anyone irrespective of their party affiliation after the investigation," he said.

Babar said he talked to the US ambassador immediately after the Habiganj attack and sought 'good investigators' from the US to investigate the incident.

"I have not mentioned the name of the FBI or any other agency in my request. I have asked for expert investigators. They have many detective and investigation departments and it is up to them whether they send the FBI detectives or detectives from any other department," he added.

He said the US ambassador assured him of informing the US government's decision once he gets any message from Washington.

About terms of reference and the demand for full access to evidence and witnesses, Babar said these will be fixed once the government gets official response from the US government.

# 4 Egyptians abducted

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assisting the US military. In September, insurgents captured a dozen of its employees but later released them.

In violence a US marine was killed in action Saturday in an area south of Baghdad which includes the so-called "Triangle of Death", the US military announced yesterday in a statement.

"A Marine assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action yesterday, while conducting security and stability operations in the North Babil Province," the statement said.

Iraqi security forces clashed with armed Sunni villagers south of Baghdad yesterday leaving four dead and nine wounded in a region dubbed the triangle of death, medics said.

The gunbattle erupted after the Iraqi army and police raided the village of Albu Mustafa, 20km northwest of the provincial capital of Hilla.

Two soldiers, a police officer and a gunman were killed, police and medics said. Four soldiers and five gunmen were wounded.

"Clashes erupted between the security forces and the armed men which lasted two hours," a police officer told AFP.

Anti-US insurgents have won widespread support in Sunni areas immediately south of Baghdad that border Shia southern Iraq, earning the region its notoriety.

In the capital, the interior ministry reported two new insurgent killings while a bomb blast in the centre of the main southern city of Basra wounded one person.

An employee of the Baghdad provincial government was shot dead in the street by gunmen on Saturday morning, a ministry official said.

About an hour later, another man was killed in similar fashion in the same district of eastern Baghdad, the official said.

The blast in the normally calm Shia city of Basra came one day after a booby-trapped motorbike killed four soldiers there.

To the north, three Iraqis were killed in shootings and a bomb blast, while the body of businessman was discovered, security sources said.

A soldier and a civilian died when Iraqi troops and rebels clashed in Samarra, raided by US-led troops last October in a bid to rid it of insurgents ahead of the January 30 elections, said Captain Assad Amjad.

Another seven people were wounded, including four children, in a nearby gun battle between insurgents and security sources, said a hospital doctor.

Near Balad, a civilian was killed and four soldiers wounded when a homemade bomb exploded as a military convoy went past, said police.

# BNP closely observes

"Police took him away saying that they wanted to ask him some questions. But I have not heard from him or the police for over two days now," said Afroza.

She met BNP Secretary-General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at his house on Saturday night and submitted a written request to him for assistance in the search for her husband.