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People's Right to Know

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# JMJB firm on attacks to herald revolution

#### Arrested activist confesses to magistrate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), an ultra-militant Islamist outfit, is determined to carry on attacks on all forms of anti-Islamic activity until an Islamic revolution takes place in the country, an arrested JMJB operative told a magistrate here Monday evening.

A band of trained militants is scattered across the country with a mission to bomb cultural programmes, including one on the Valentine's Day, said a source, as JMJB considers such activities as violations of the Islamic Shariah. However he refused to speculate whether Monday's bomb attack on a Valentine's Day party at Dhaka University was carried out by JMJB.

The JMJB operative, Shafiqullah, arrested with explosives in a fellow operative's house on January 16, in his statement given to First Class Magistrate Mostaffiur Rahman Mridha also revealed details about a Rajshahi University (RU) teacher, who he said is leading JMJB.

"Dr Asadullah Al Galib, a teacher at the Arabic department of RU, is involved with JMJB and is leading it towards an Islamic revolution," said Shafigullah, also a member of the IMJB bomb squad.

Dr Galib earlier had denied a similar allegation made by Jama'atul Mujahidin operatives arrested in

Our staff correspondent in Natore reports: Seven of the 12 Jama'atul Mujahidin members in their confessional statements to a magistrate here on Monday confirmed that JMJB chief Abdur Rahman Shahi Bhai is their leader

They also confessed to their involvement with an Islamic revolutionary movement spearheaded by

Police and court sources said Farman Ali, one of the arrestees, admitted that he was one of the leaders of Jama'atul Mujahidin in

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6





coalition supporters woman

activist at Shyamoly, top, while police boot and beat former AL MP Hazi Selim at Azimpur, bottom, when they took out pro-hartal processions in the city yesterday.

### Tifa draft finalised

Dhaka and Washington through a two-day negotiation ending yesterday finalised the draft of Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (Tifa) paving the way further for creating a platform to talk bilateral trade issues.

The draft now requires approval of the two governments before formal signing of the agreement aimed at promoting bilateral trade and investment.

Emerging from the four-hour talks in the boardroom at commerce ministry yesterday, leader of the US side Betsee E Steelman said, "We've made good progress in the last two days' discussions. We've no dispute now. I now need to go back and talk to the government on development in Dhaka for the final agreement."

She declined to give any details of the final draft, saying, "As we're still in the negotiation process, we don't like to disclose the contents of the

Steelman, a senior US trade policy advisor for Asia and the Pacific, who is on a five-day visit to Bangladesh, was unable to say when the agreement would be signed.

Emerging from the meeting, commerce ministry Joint Secretary member Bangladesh side, said, "The negotiation was fruitful. Once signed, the agreement will create a forum for Bangladesh to discuss trade issues with the US, which we

He said, "As we're very close to an unanimous text, we don't need to sit face-to-face any more. We'll now maintain contact with the US government through email and our embassy in Washington to lead to

liminary stage for further preferential trade deals, like a free trade agreement, with Washington, he Like the US team, commerce

Signing of the Tifa will be a pre-

the agreement signing.

ministry officials and the Bangladeshi negotiators were also tight-lipped about the contents of the final draft

When asked, Ahmad also declined to say whether the final draft includes a clause relating to transparency, bribery and corruption that was in the earlier draft prepared by the Office of the US Trade Representative and opposed by the Bangladesh side.

However, sources said Dhaka later softened its stance on the issue. SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

#### UK offers to help fight terrorism

British strategist reveals UNB, Dhaka

The United Kingdom (UK) has offered Bangladesh to work out a mechanism to effectively combat terrorism, a problem being faced by the countries across the world. "We're very keen to work out with

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SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

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### Trade deficit widens on costly imports

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

As the prices of petroleum products, rice and scrap vessels shot up in the international market, Bangladesh's trade deficit has widened further, pushing the current account bal-

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Trade deficit increased by 52 percent to reach \$1.2 billion in the first five months of the current fiscal year, from \$792 million during the correspondingperiod of the previous year.

The current account balance

recorded a deficit of \$111 million during July-November 2004 against a surplus of \$169 million in the same period of the preceding year.

When the payment of outstanding letter of credit (L/C) will be made, the trade deficit will increase further as price of major import items have shot up," a Bangladesh Bank (BB) official said.

"It will also put pressure on our foreign exchange reserve," he added mentioning that the reserve declined to \$3 billion in the first

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

### Hartal ends with stray incidents

Cops beat up Hazi Selim; BNP men manhandle AL women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 36-hour hartal enforced by the Awami League-led 14-party opposition line-up ended yesterday with stray incidents of violence in Dhaka and a few other places in the country.

Pro-hartal processions were brought out in different areas of the capital while ruling coalition activists staged anti-hartal demonstra-

Police charged batons to dis-

perse a pro-hartal procession at Azimpur at about 11:30am leaving 15 people including former AL lawmaker Hazi Mohammad Selim

Ruling BNP activists swooped on Jubo Mahila League workers on Ring Road at Shyamoly during the hartal hours. Chanting anti-hartal slogans, they attacked the procession with rods and hockey sticks and manhandled the AL female activists.

SAARC SUMMIT

#### Postponement won't hurt ties with India: Morshed

UNB, Dhaka

Although there has been certain undercurrent of uneasy feelings over the postponement of the Saarc summit, Foreign Minister Morshed Khan yesterday said it would not affect the bilateral relations between Dhaka and New Delhi.

"The postponement (of the summit) will not come in the way of our bilateral relations," he told reporters, responding to a query as

### Anti-Delhi moves to make Saarc limping

Says Indian foreign secretary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran has said Saarc would continue to lack substance and energy if the thrust of initiatives of some of the member countries was seen to be patently hostile to India or motivated by a desire to contain India in

"Some members actively seek association with countries outside the region or with regional or inter-SEE PAGE 11 COL 6 : national organisations in a barely

project Saarc as some kind of a regional dispute settlement mechanism," he said.

disguised effort to counter-balance

India within the association or to

See full text on page 4

"We need to create a positive and constructive environment by avoiding hostile propaganda and intemtake whatever steps are necessary to

MAGURCHHARA BLOWOUT

## Dhaka to go to int'l court for compensation

Bangladesh will go to the international court seeking compensation for the damage caused by fire in the Magurchhara gas field.

The 1997 fire damaged gas worth Tk 3,900 crore, State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain said in parliament yesterday, replying to a question by a Jamaat lawmaker.

Unocal had given Tk 38 crore only as compensation to the government in 1997, the minister informed the House.

government in 1998, Unocal is supposed to give the government five percent additional quantum of gas the company would extract, he said, adding that the company was, however, claiming that it had already compensated the loss as per the 1998 deal with the government.

"Under this situation, the government has initiated necessary process to go to the international court for realising the compensation," the minister said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

#### Student strikes called

JCD, BCL blame each other for Valentine's Day blasts

DU CORRESPONDENT

Six opposition-backed student organisations yesterday called a student strike at Dhaka University (DU) today and all educational institutions in the country tomorrow demanding immediate investigation and punishment of the cul-prits involved in Monday's bomb blasts at a Valentine's Day crowd on DU campus.

Led by the Awami League's (AL) student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student bodies also threatened to go on an indefinite strike at all the educational institutions if the 'real culprits' are not arrested in the next two days. At least 16 people including 12

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

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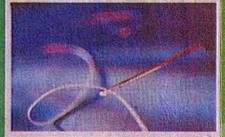
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