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REGD. NO. DA 781 VOL. XV NO. 37 DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2005 www.thedailystar.net FALGUN 11, 1411 BS MOHARRAM 13, 1426 HIJRI 20 PAGES PRICE Tk 7.00

15 'militants' held in north

They confess to training for Islamic revolution

STAR REPORT

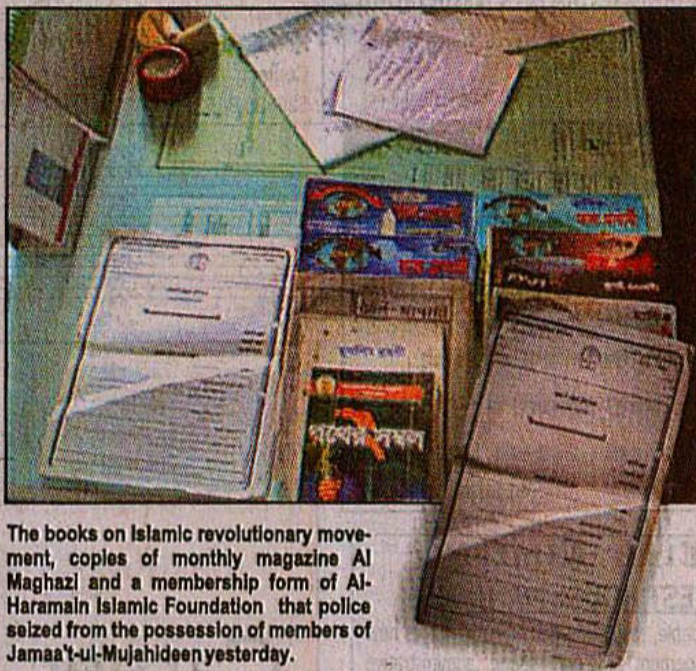
Fifteen suspected militants were arrested in three northern districts yesterday as police mounted a hunt for Islamist fundamentalists.

Twelve suspected militants of Jamaa't-ul-Mujahideen working for an Islamic revolution in Bangladesh were arrested yesterday in Galbandha with books on Islamic

movement. Police held two more militants at Panchbibbi upazila in Joypurhat and another militant of Jamaa't-ul-Mujahideen in Thakurgaon.

The arrests came a day after 12 extremists at Dhamrai, Jahangirnagar University (JU) and Joypurhat were held with important documents including bomb-

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The books on Islamic revolutionary movement, copies of monthly magazine Al-Maghazi and a membership form of Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation that police seized from the possession of members of Jamaa't-ul-Mujahideen yesterday.

Crucial Washington meeting on governance today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-hyped 2-day donors' meeting on Bangladesh begins in Washington today at the behest of Europeans concerned over deteriorating governance, rising lawlessness and a fear of Islamist militants' uprising.

The meeting, first of its kind being held away from Bangladesh and also without any official representation of the country to be discussed, is being held amid grave dismay repeatedly expressed by Bangladesh Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman.

A day after expressing his grievances to the European Union (EU) for organising the meeting in

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A visibly overloaded passenger launch approaches Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday undaunted by the MV Moharaj disaster that left at least 149 people drowned in Buriganga river Saturday night in the latest of a series of unchecked river accidents.

Still looking for the missing

Death toll rises to 149

AFP, Dhaka

The death toll from a launch capsized in the river Buriganga rose to 149 yesterday as hundreds of distraught relatives thronged a riverbank desperate for news of missing family members.

The relatives, many of whom had been camping on the bank for two nights running, looked on anxiously yesterday as rescue workers laid out corpses for identification.

"My 16-year-old son is dead; he was a fruit seller on his way back from buying fruit in Dhaka," said his

mother Rahima Khatun.

Her elder son and her husband had also died recently, she added in tears.

The search was being carried out by police with one rescue boat. "We've finally found our uncle," said Faruq Ahmed. "He was a crew member. We knew it was him because he was wearing his favourite shirt."

Police said the search would continue for as long as it was necessary.

"We've found 30 bodies today

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WASHINGTON MEET Donors excluded Dhaka for govt failure: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the failure of the BNP-led coalition in governing the country prompted the development partners to organise the Washington meeting without any representation from Bangladesh.

"The donor countries have realised that the BNP-led coalition government is engaged in plundering the money provided by them," Hasina told an AL meeting organised in observance of the International Mother Language Day at the Engineers' Institution auditorium.

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Shipping ministry under fire for unsafe waterways

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday observed that the shipping ministry's failure to effectively monitor the vessels plying the inland waterways is one of the reasons for frequent launch disasters.

The parliamentary standing committee on the shipping ministry also expressed dissatisfaction with various irregularities in the ministry and said those account for its poor performance in containing launch disasters.

The committee at an emergency meeting yesterday reached the conclusion that MV Maharaj sank because of its flawed design. The vessel capsized in Buriganga on Saturday night, and the death toll stood at 149 till yesterday. The committee came to know that the ship was built in a month, but its owners still managed to have the route permit and registration quickly thanks to alleged irregularities, said a source.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain admitted that organisational

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Over 500 killed as quake rocks Iran

REUTERS, BBC ONLINE, Tehran

A strong earthquake hit southeast Iran yesterday, killing more than 500 people, injuring hundreds and destroying villages, a local official said.

The 6.4-magnitude quake struck just before 0600 (0230 GMT) and was centred near Zarand in Kerman province, 740km from the capital,

Tehran. Some 30,000 people in about 40 villages spread over a wide, mountainous area have been affected.

Casualties are expected to rise as rescue workers reach the province. Heavy rain is hampering rescue work.

State-run television in Iran and the local governor's office in

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Asma Kibria asks why delay in FBI probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Kibria, wife of slain SAMS Kibria, yesterday demanded the government explain the delay in having an FBI investigation into the Habiganj carnage.

Speaking at a press conference at Kibria's Dhanmondi residence, she expressed scepticism about the government's intention of allowing the US Federal Bureau of

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