15 'militants' held

FROM PAGE 1 making formula.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Police arrested two Jamaa't-ul-Mujahideen men --Habibur Rahman and Raju Sarder -in Gaibandha town in the early hours vesterday

During instant interrogation, the two confessed to holding training and motivational sessions at mosques and madrasas to gear up Islamic movement

Acting on their confession, police raided different places in Shaghata upazila and arrested eight persons. They are Enayet Hossain, Sadakat Mondol, Ashraful Islam, Obaidur Rahman, Bablu Akand, Ahmedullah, Aminul Huq and Shahidul Hug

The police also arrested two more militants -- Shahinur Rahman and Mazharul Islam -- at Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha.

During the raids, police recovered membership forms of Al-Haramain Islam Found (sic), Bangladesh office, in Arabic, seven books on Islamic movement and a few copies of a monthly magazine, Al Maghazi. The militants were kept in

Gaibandha and will be produced before the court today. A six-member police interrogation cell led by Monsur Alam, ASP-

Circle B, was scheduled to quiz them last night. Sources in the police said they were gathering information about

activities of the militant organisation in the district The arrestees might have been involved in the recent series of

bomb blasts in Gaibandha, said a source. Three bombs exploded on a drama stage in front of Mohimaganj Sugar Mills rest house, injuring 13

persons on December 18. Only a week later, 21 persons were injured when four bombs were blasted at a folk drama at Takier

Bazar in Palashbari upazila. A grenade was hurled at a dance drama at Ramnather Vita in Gobindaganj upazila the same day.

Earlier on November 12, a taskforce recovered 24 highly explosive gelatine sticks and 124 detonators from a Santahar-bound train at Bonarpara Railway Station. Two persons arrested in connection with the incident confessed that the Jamaa't-ul-Mujaheedin was involved in the train explosive.

JOYPURHAT ARREST Police arrested Enamul and Sirajul in Panchbibi suspecting their links

JP skips JS session over dev fund allocation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmakers yesterday boycotted the parliament session protesting the government reluctance to allocate development funds to their constituen-

with extremists vesterday early morning from their houses in Roygram and Tantpur villages.

FOLLOW UP Six militants arrested on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Dhamrai with nine auidebooks on bomb making and

Pallabi

Pallabi area.

Saber Sharif.

Sultan Alam

FROM PAGE 12

campsl

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)

house 4/B, Lane 4, Section 11,

Pallabi at around noon and seized

the heroin worth around Tk 75 lakh.

"Posing as buyers our intelli-

gence members have been follow-

ing the drug peddlers for the last one

month to track down the gang," said

Rab-4 Commanding Officer Lt Col

The arrestees are Mohammad

Rabbani, his wife Jarina Begum and

process of revolution that involves

violence. Such activities are com-

during a visit to Rajshahi University

at his request recently and there the

JMJB leader asked for his faction's

co-operation [in attacking the police

bombs at Mohimaganj in

Gaibandha district a few months

ago, members of the JMJB bomb

squad have been keeping a close

eye on Karim. Those arrested in

connection with the bombs con-

fessed to police that he is also a

arrested Jamatul Mujahidin mem-

bers also confessed to a magistrate

in Natore that Rajshahi University

a leader of the party

FROM PAGE 12

Myanmar.

Khan tomorrow.

also affiliated with the JMJB.

Myanmar FM

invitation of Foreign Minister M

Morshed Khan. This will be his first

visit after assuming office as

Myanmar foreign minister, said a

oreign ministry handout yesterday.

A few days ago, a number of the

member of Jamaatul Mujahidin.

Since the detection of gelatine

He said he met the JMJB chief

JMJB plans

pletely against Islam."

STAFF CORRESPONDENT other important materials were remanded for two days yesterday. Two madrasa students and a vesterday arrested three alleged college student arrested at Jahangirnagar University Sunday night on suspicion of extremist link

were sent to the court yesterday with a three-day remand petition. The court decision was not

available till 8:00pm last night. Three followers of Bandla Bhai who were arrested from Kalai and Sadar upazila of Joypurhat Sunday

night were also sent to the court yesterday. Local police confirmed that these three -- Golam Mostafa, Delwar Hossain and Sobhan alias Salauddin -- had links with extremists

BANGLADESHI GOODS Bill to allow free access to US market placed STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill seeking duty-free access of all

Bangladeshi products to the US market was placed at the lower chamber of Congress on February 17.

Congressman Jim Kolbe, a Republican, and Congressman Joseph Crowly, a Democrat and chairman of the Bangladesh Caucus in the US Congress, placed the bill titled Tariff Relief Assistance for Developing Economies Act of 2005 (TradeAct of 2005).

Andrew Samet, trade counsel for Sandler, Travis and Rosenburg, a USbased international trade and customs law firm, will fly in on February 26 to discuss the 'Trade Act of 2005' with the Bandladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said a statement issued by the **BGMEAvesterday**

The bill was introduced in the upper house on January 26 seeking dutyfree access to US markets for all products from Bangladesh as well as for 13 other least developed countries (LDCs). Four senators, both Democrats and Republicans, supported moving the bill.

If the bill is passed, the countries in question might enjoy an average 16 percent duty reduction, while tariffs on the garment product range may be reduced between seven and 40

Outlaw die in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Bangladesh and Myanmar and A regional leader of outlawed Purbo discuss ways for cooperation in Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) coastal shipping apart from direct was killed in a 'shootout' between road-link between the two countries police and members of the outfit at and repatriation of Myanmar refuvillage Dakhalpur in Kaliganj upazila gees from Banglades of Jhenidah district early yesterday Three policemen were also

Foreign ministry fails Rab holds 3 with 750g FROM PAGE 12 heroin from

ministry has been suffering from, the JS body observed that, in 1972, the ministry was allocated \$23 million, while after 33 years it received a \$32 million allocation in

the current budget. "The allocation has not been increased proportionately," the committee chair noted. "If the govdrug peddlers including a couple ernment increases budget for with 750g heroin from the city's improving law and order, it should A team of Rab-4 raided the also increase budget for the foreign ministry to uphold the country's image abroad," he said.

A ruling BNP lawmaker and member of the committee told the meeting that the external publicity wing of the ministry has failed to control the anti-Bangladesh propaganda abroad. A number of foreign missions also have failed to play any effective role to counter such propaganda against Bangladesh, said

committee members. In response, the foreign ministry officials present said the information ministry controls officials served in the external wing as they come from the ministry. The foreign ministry has nothing to do in this regard, they added.

Meeting sources said ruling BNP lawmaker Manjur Quader said they couldn't avoid the issue when for-

Washington meeting

FROM PAGE 1

Washington on governance on February 23 and 24 without any representative from Bangladesh Saifur could not hide his sentiment once again vesterday as he met a visiting IMF mission. He asked the International Monetary Fund mission why had they come to meet him in Dhaka rather than going to

teacher Dr Asadullah Al Galib is also Washington. On the other side, opposition Asadullah also leads a faction of leader Sheikh Hasina said yesterday he Ahle Hadith. Karim. who leads the failure of the BNP-Jamaat-led his rival faction, said there are coalition in governing the country has allegations of money laundering prompted the Bangladesh's developagainst Asadullah, whose party is ment partners to organise the Washington meeting excluding any representation from Bangladesh.

The donor countries have realised that the BNP-led coalition government has engaged in plundering the money provided by them," Hasina said yesterday while speak ing at a meeting organised by the Awami league marking International Mother Language Day at the Institution of Engineers auditorium.

He will be accompanied, among others, by the director general of the The meeting in Washington on February 23-24 is being jointly organ-Political Department and assistant director of Southwest Asia Division ised by the World Bank, the EU and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the US State Department, with US Assistant Secretary of State for During his visit, the Myanmar South Asia Christina Rocca attendforeign minister will hold official talks

According to highly placed diplowith his counterpart M Morshed matic sources, a large group of European donors, an influential Both the ministers will review the European country having substantia status of bilateral relations between aid involvement in Bangladesh and some Scandinavian countries want to persuade the multilateral donors and the US to take a tough line on aid and link it with greater response to good governance, human rights and

eigners alleged two Taliban-linked ministers are in the cabinet. "Where is Bangladesh heading

for? Why cannot the foreign ministry control the situation?" a meeting source quoted the lawmaker as asking. Talking to journalists, Quader

NEWS

said he wanted to know from the ministry officials whether the government would be able to redress the damage wrought by such anti-Bangladesh propaganda Another BNP lawmaker, Naser

Rahman, put the blame on main opposition Awami League for launching the anti-Bangladesh propaganda abroad. He also termed the donor agencies' Washington meeting beyond the

diplomatic norms. On reforms in the ministry, the parliamentary body discussed salaries, allowances and promotions of staff. The meeting observed that the officials in the Foreign Service are not getting promotions as frequently as other civil officials.

deep into the problems," the chairman said.

"We should at least strengthen the missions at UK. USA and EU imme-

turmoil

It has been learnt that the donors are frustrated with the inaction of the government on the human rights and terrorism fronts. They feel their repeated requests to improve governance have not been working and there has been a disconnection between them and the government. The government has created an

anti-corruption commission, a longstanding demand of the donors, but in a stillborn form, because of selection of wrong people and contradictions of laws. The separation of the judiciary and an independent human right commission are still not in sight.

The EU also has gone public on the extra-judicial killings by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). Although the Rab have been able to catch some criminals, the use of this force and the way of operation of the so-called elite force have been critically taken by the western countries and put

Bangladesh in a bad light But rounding off his 11-day trip to Jeddah, London, Brussels and Rome, what the Bangladesh's finance minister said first at Zia International Airport on Monday morning was, "If there is a meeting or Bangladesh's development process, this should take place in Bangladesh." "We are a sovereign and a large country," he added.

Saifur met 13 European Commission (EC) commissioners and conveyed his concerns about the upcoming Washington meeting to the EU external affairs commissioner.

SHRINE BLAST **Two arrestees**

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

with the grenade explosion at a shrine in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar were put on a seven-day remand vesterdav

student of Jamea Islamia Karmadha Madrasa and also an Imam of Kanikiari Mosque of the area and Hafez Md Qumrul Islam, 40, a teacher of Dar-us-Salam Madrasa in Sylhet were produced before a first class magistrate court with a 10-day remand

their involvement with the grenade explosion at Shaidingi shrine at Prithimpasa Nawab Bari in Kulaura on February 20 where a day-long Ashura programme was held. Police said.

Additional Superintendent of Police of Moulvibazar Harun-Ur-Rashid said police are testing the important clues they found from the arrested persons.

Nawab Ali Abbas Khan, a former Jatiya Party lawmaker and a member of the Prithimpasa Nawab family said it may be an act of an extremist Islamist fundamentalist group.

Tajia procession, the main part of the Ashura programme was declared 'Bedat' through fatwa several times in the past, he added.

Unocal president, director exempted from personal court appearance

BDNEWS, Dhaka The High Court (HC) yesterday exempted Unocal Bangladesh Chapter's President Andrew L Sawthorp and Legal Director Chye Koh from personal appearance before

the court in a contempt of court case filed by Maxwell Engineering Ltd. A division bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice AFM Abdur Rahman also fixed February 28 for hearing on the rule earlier issued by the High Court.

After hearing the petition filed by Maxwell Engineering Works Ltd, the HC on February 5 had issued a rule on Andrew L Sawthorp and Chve Koh to show cause why proceeding for contempt of court against them should not be drawn. The court had also directed them to appear in person before it on February 22.

On Tuesday, they appeared before the court and sought exemption from personal appearance before the court.

Fair postponed after bomb threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura District women affairs department postponed a fair scheduled to be held on the Jhenidah Public Library pre-

mises yesterday after criminals threatened to launch a bomb attack there. In a letter sent to Jhenidah district women affairs officer. unknown crimi-

Donors excluded

DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2005

zealots

FROM PAGE 1

said

she asked.

alleged.

said

of Islam.

country

The AL chief said the image of Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed Bangladesh across the world is said the government is instigating being tainted due to the governthe criminals instead of bringing ment's failure to run the country. them to book

"Why should the people of

"The rampant corruption by the

ministers and prime minister's

family has compelled the donor

countries to hold meeting in

Washington without any represen-

tative from Bangladesh," she

"Denmark stopped providing

She also accused the govern-

ment of harbouring Islamist extrem-

sts, blasting its for the failure in

bringing the perpetrators of bomb

Hasina said some people are

trying to establish Islamist extrem-

ism in the country by using the name

Sen Gupta said the country is now

on the verge of destruction due the

government's inability to run the

security to the countrymen, its

legitimacy comes under guestion."

he said, adding that the government

has surrendered to the activities of

Biman worried

delayed flights

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is anx-

ious over a European Union (EU)

decision that provides compensation

Passengers to be

compensated with

over EU

BDNEWS, Dhaka

decision on

"If a government fails to give

AL Presidium Member Suranjit

and grenade attacks to justice.

Bangladesh take responsibility of

the BNP-led coalition government?"

"I urge you (donor countries) to The coalition government is ounish the BNP-led coalition for its trying to uproot the people believing failure to govern the country prop-Bengali nationalism from the erly. But don't punish the people of country, said Presidium Member Bangladesh for the failure of the Abdur Razzak. government," the opposition leader

The meeting was also addressed by AL presidium members Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amu, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Acting Secretary Obaidul Quader, President of Dhaka University Teachers' Association Dr AAMS Arefin Sddique and language movement veteran Mahbubul Alam Chowdhury.

Premier Bank FROM PAGE 12

financial aid to Bangladesh due to Mazid gave extra benefits to the directors by flouting rules, which harm the corruption by shipping minister, yet the prime minister did not take the interests of the shareholders. any action against him," Hasina Despite having all these track records, Mazid was included in the

> Bank Reforms Commission. Mazid was appointed as the chief executive officer of Agrani Bank when Price Waterhouse Coopers, a Hong-Kong based organisation was taking over the nationalsied commercial bank

But after cancellation of his appointment following criticism in he media, he was given NOC for

joining the Premier Bank. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on February 12 suspended a Tk 55 crore public floating of Premier Bank after an investigation found around 25,000 beneficiary owners' (BO) accounts of the bank suspected to be fake.

The SEC probe found that 15,000 BO accounts were opened by the depository participant of the Premier Bank using a single address. About 5,500 BO accounts did not have any address while 3,000 accounts were opened using only one address.

The BB also detected a number of irregularities in the opening of a large number of bank accounts with the Premier Bank. The anti moneylaundering department of the central bank is now investigating possible link of four other banks with the 25,000 false BO accounts.

Besides, there are allegations that the chairman of the board of directors put pressure on many branch managers to open a number of accounts and Mazid was involved in it. Meanwhile, Mazid could not be

he said he informed the BB evalua-

tion to the directors of Prime Bank

though the central bank told him that

the evaluation was secret, not for

publication.

to passengers for delayed flights. Sources concerned said the EU contacted though this corresponhas taken a decision on Thursday dent made several calls at his cell requiring an airline to compensate phone and residence yesterday and passengers if a flight is delayed in any Monday. of the EU countries.

However. Mazid told Bangla According to the EU decision, if a daily Prothom Alo on Monday that flight is cancelled or delayed for a as managing director he made the long time, the airlines must offer Pubali Bank profitable which was stranded passengers a ticket refund ncurring loss or a free flight and, in some cases, it Mazid claimed he made the will have to provide meals and Prime Bank one of the best perform ing banks in five years. refreshments as well as hotel accom-About publishing CAMEL rating modation.

Biman, the national flag-carrier, has been operating on seven domestic routes and on 24 international and regional routes in three continents, ncluding in five countries of the EU.

After he started working as the The EU destinations are London. anaging director of the ris, Rome, Frankfurt and Bruss Bank, its profit jumped to Tk 90 crore The aircrafts of the Biman fleet-from Tk12 crore in two and a half six DC-10s, four Airbus-300s and vears. he claimed. four F-28s -- are 15 to 25 years old. There may be some lapses and "As a result, the flights of Biman mistakes in carrying out works, but I often delay due to simple mechanical did not do any harm to any bank faults, apart from inclement weather knowingly," he said. and other major reasons," said an There is no allegation of fund official concerned. embezzlement against him, he said, According to Biman officials, the adding that the central bank would new EU decision will make Biman not approve his appointments if his "All preparations for the fair were flight operations more costly in the mistakes were serious. EU countries About false BO accounts with the A top Biman official informed that depository participant of Premier they received the directive from the Bank, he said, "I am not involved in EU. "We will decide about our next it. I am ready to accept any punishcourse of action within a couple of She got the letter on Saturday and ment if it is proved that I am days," he told BDNEWS. involved," he told the Bangla daily.

"We will work seriously and go On the foreign missions, he said. diately.

remanded

Two people arrested in connection

Maruf Mohammed Ishaque, 22, a prayer. The two detainees had confessed

cies.

The second largest opposition party in parliament is likely to join the session today and walk out of the House, giving an ultimatum to the government to meet their demand, sources said

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had assured the JP lawmakers of meeting their demand. But the promise is yet to be fulfilled, said a JP lawmaker

Last year, the JP went for such protest twice but returned to the House on government assurances.

With the JP lawmakers staying away, the House yesterday witnessed a day nearly without the participation of opposition parties.

The main opposition Awami League has been boycotting the session, which started on January

Shipping ministry

said

FROM PAGE 1

shortcomings and shortage of manpower in the ministry lay in the way of making launch journeys safe, said a meeting source.

"The ministry does not even know how many vessels ply the inland water routes," the minister told reporters after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. He said all the vessels should be brought under the shipping traffic management.

Ministry officials apprised the meeting that as many as 3,000 vessels ply the waterways while the shipping directorate, which is commissioned to investigate vessels' fitness, has only four inspectors to discharge the duties.

The shipping minister told journalists that the government would detect malpractice in approving designs and issuing fitness certificates after passing the Inland Shipping Ordinance (amendment) Bill 2005 in parliament. "Hopefully, everything will be alright once the bill is passed.'

Members of the parliamentary body also blasted the shipping ministry officials for not implementing the recommendations made by different inquiry committees on ferry disasters.

It asked the ministry to submit

iniured. The dead, Moazzem Ali alias 'Koshai' Moazzem, 40, was the regional leader of the PBCP.

Kaliganj police said they cordoned off a field at the village at about 3:30am where some PBCP cadres were holding a secret meet-

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the PBCP men opened fire. Police returned fire, resulting in a gunfight between the two sides Police said Moazzem was

caught in the 'crossfire' and died on the spot. His accomplices however managed to flee.

Sirai, the committee chairman.

inquiry reports to the committee

so that it can review the status of

the reports," the shipping minister

were formed in the last decade,

but not a single report of those

was made public while as many as

480 launches capsized during

that time claiming at least 10,000

Criticising the ministry's claim,

BNP lawmaker and member of the

committee M Nurul Islam said

"You should rather have initiated

steps to save people's lives," a

Members of the committee

meeting source said.

ers after the meeting

About 100 inquiry committees

They said Moazzem was an accused in 20 cases, including ten for murder.

Rupali operations

FROM PAGE 12

it has to act by the IMF instruction. But, after the meeting, Saifur told newsmen the government couldn't nject such a huge amount into Rupali. Instead, the government would try to reach a consensus on the capital adequacy requirement through further talks with the IMF, he

added. He also said the government would try to find a strategic investor to buy the bank.

Kapasia land

FROM PAGE 12 Highway stopped since the subsi-

dence in the morning. Traffic remained suspended till filing of this report in the evening yesterday. Meanwhile, no tremor was recorded yesterday, and the reason for such subsidence could not be known immediatelv.

Geologist Dr Aftab Alam Khan all inquiry reports to the committold The Daily Star that some kind of tee. "We will examine why the underground cave-in due to infiltraministry did not carry out the tion of water from the nearby river is recommendations," said GM likely to have caused the subsidence. "I myself proposed to submit all

"When a cave was created in the underground, the surface ground could not take the pressure and it subsided," said Dr Khan. He however said the incident is not that vorrying

Mir Fazlul Karim, director of Geological Survey Institute, told The Daily Star that some minor fractures in the Dhaka-Modhupur terrace might have resulted in the subsidence.

The ministry officials at the He said that this sort of subsidence usually occurs after an earthmeeting claimed that they had guake. started the recovery operation quickly, meeting sources said.

A team of the Geological Survey Institute will visit the area today.

Gazipur police quoting the locals said that earlier a crack was spotted in the same place after the tsunami of January 26. Locals said that a similar crack was created at that very place some 40 years ago following an earthquake.

were surprised to know that the Hundreds of curious people Maharaj was built in a month. "If gathered at the spot to see the such a ship can be built in a unusual incident. A police team has month, then shutting down all been deployed to handle the crowd. other industries, we'd better start Sub Inspector Abu Obaed Khan building ships like garments," the told The Daily Star that the trees on committee chairman told report-

the subsided area still stood normal until yesterday afternoon.

restraining militants -- all issues of serious international concerns.

According to the available information, these countries and blocs, which gave Bangladesh \$60 million in FY03, want the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the US to rethink their financia assistance to Bangladesh. They feel the two multilateral donors having the biggest stakes in Bangladesh have not been sufficiently vocal about these threats that are undermining the country's stability and are rather focussed only on the positive macroeconomic indicators.

Both the WB and the ADB think the position of these particular countries is not helpful to mitigate the situation that Bangladesh is facing today. Rather, they feel any such steps would be counterproductive and throw the country into a deeper

Still looking

FROM PAGE 1

(Tuesday) and we will continue them," said a man named Kabir the search Wednesday and whose brother and nephew were Thursday if we have to," said on the ferry. Dhaka district police superintendent Mohammed Bakhtiar Alam.

Around 400 to 500 people were still at the scene yesterday looking for the bodies of relatives.

The MV Maharaj capsized late Saturday when it was struck by a pre-monsoon cyclone. Many passengers were heading home for a two-day public holiday.

The official number of passen gers was 167 but survivors said there could have been as many as 500 people aboard the ferry which was sailing from the capital to the central town of Chandpur.

A distraught man named Mahfuz, surrounded by weeping relatives, said his cousin Sabuj was among the 30 bodies. "We just thank God that his body has been found and we can bury him, he said.

Authorities salvaged the ferry Monday and said there were no more bodies trapped in the vessel, although many relatives said they had still not found family members.

Thousands of people had watched the salvage operation as divers brought out bodies from the sunken vessel one by one.

"It's like torture standing here watching each body being

"I told the external affairs commisnals warned not to hold the fair, saying sioner that the FU initiative to hold they would blast bombs at the fair. this Washington meeting is concep-

The fair was organised to exhibit the tually wrong," Saifur said. "It could handicrafts and other products of have been held in Bangladesh, or at different voluntary women's organisaleast, we could have been invited." Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nurul

The finance minister alleged that Karim Mazumder was scheduled to a group 'patronised by the opposition' inaugurate the fair at 10.00am yesterfeeds the EC with wrong information day as chiefguest.

"This has created an unhealthy attitude among some European countries about Bangladesh," he said. "As a result, they do not look at told The Daily Star. Bangladesh from an appropriate immediately informed the DC and superintendent of police (SP), she said.

"But the EC is an institution. It should not accept any information without verification," he maintained.

about Bangladesh. complete and some 70 voluntary organisations took stalls, but it could not be held due to security reasons," District Women Affairs Officer Masuda Islam

perspective. In most cases, they draw conclusions without going into the depth."

organisers of security, but they dared

loudly and clutching two baby

Asma Kibria

not hold the fair

FROM PAGE 1 Investigation to probe the Januarv 27 grenade blasts that killed former finance minister SAMS Kibria and four others.

Admitting the threat, Jhenidah SP

Akram Hossain said he assured the

brought out wondering if it's She reiterated that her family does not have confidence in any investigation dictated by the government

"We want to know what condi-"I just want his body," said tions the FBI has put forward that another woman, Halima, wailing the government is unable to comply with," she said.

> Asma said that her family has been kept in the dark about the status of the ongoing investigation by the local team.

Accusing the government of using delaying tactics to consign the incident to oblivion, she said, "They (the government) in fact do not want to bring the FBI.

She alleged that the intelligence personnel are intimidating the people who have expressed solidarity with her movement for justice.

Asma at yesterday's press confer ence announced fresh programmes to demand trial of the persons responsible for the grenade and bomb blasts including the Habigan carnage. The new programme styled 'blue for peace' calls for the participants to pin a piece of blue cloth onto their clothes as a symbol of peace on every Thursday from March 3. Asma called on all to take part in the peaceful demonstration until the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Referring to a recent commen by the Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, the slain lawmaker's son Dr Reza Kibria said that instead of admitting, the government is trying to rationalise its failure to avert the blast incidents in light of violence in other parts of the globe.

Over 500 killed

FROM PAGE 1

Kerman said more than 500 people died as a result of the earthquake, which lasted 11 seconds

The authorities say they have now recovered 231 bodies

Reports say 200 people were killed in one village.

The head of Zarand hospital earlier said 5.000 people were injured, but Iran's interior ministry savs that number includes people who received first aid for very minor injuries.

While villages were razed, major settlements in the area appeared to have escaped heavy damage so the toll would not be as high as the many thousands killed in some past quakes in Iran of a similar strength, officials said.

"We are expecting the death toll to rise," Ali Sharifi, head of Kerman's medical university, told radio.

The head of Kerman Natural Disaster Headquarters, Mohsen Salehi, was quoted by the official IRNA news agency as saying destruction in five villages was between 20 and 70 percent.

The tremor, which struck at 5:55 a.m. (9:25 p.m. EST Monday), evoked memories of the devastating earthquake which hit the desert citadel city of Bam, about 260km southeast of Zarand in December 2003

The pre-dawn Bam guake, which had a magnitude of 6.7, flattened the city, killing some 31,000 people.

Criss-crossed by several major fault lines, Iran is one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the

world, natural disaster experts say. But damage in major urban centers on Tuesday was light.

"In Zarand and Kerman only some walls have collapsed and there were no casualties." Interior Ministry spokesman Jahanbakhsh Khanjani said.

Kerman Governor Mohammad Ali Karimi told television that aid groups had been sent to the villages but he had not yet asked for any help from other provinces.

No major oil or gas production facilities are located in the affected area in Opec's second largest oil producer

Tremor jolts Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mild tremor shook Chittagong and its adjoining areas yesterday afternoon.

The tremor measuring 4.8 on the Richter scale occurred at 1:47pm and lasted for 28 seconds. Its epicentre was 265km off the country's lone seismic observatory centre at Ambagan in the city,

sources said. No casualties or injuries were reported.

On February 15, two light tremors jolted the port city. The tremors were measured at 4.2 and 4.3 on the Richter scale and lasted for 17 and 22 seconds, while their epicentres were 152-km and 203-km off the seismic observatory centre, sources said.

a network of 230 rivers. Some 3,000 launches provide daily transport for over 100,000 people. At least 3,000 people have died in over 260 launch accidents in Bangladesh since 1977. A combination of rough weather and overcrowding has often been

blamed The government has pledged that measures, including new weather monitoring stations, to reduce ferry accidents will be implemented immediately, instead of coming into force in

Bomb hoax FROM PAGE 12

floor for one hour, but didn't find any bomb.

The bomb hoax scare was so intense since two offices of the NGO in two northern districtsNaogaon and Rangpur--had recently come under bomb attack.

sons. "Oh Allah, help us find my husband. Ferry accidents are common in this delta nation criss-crossed by

April.