

## 15 'militants' held

FROM PAGE 1

making formula. Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Police arrested two Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen men -- Habibur Rahman and Raju Sarder -- in Gaibandha town in the early hours yesterday.

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 Huq.

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 Takiar 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 Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen 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 constituencies.

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 31.

## Shipping ministry

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 appraised 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

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

### FOLLOW UP

Six militants arrested on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Dharmrai with nine guidebooks on bomb making and other important materials were remanded for two days yesterday.

Two madrasa students and a 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 Bangla 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 Moshab alias Salauddin -- had links with extremists.

### BANGLADESHI GODS

## 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 Crowley, 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 Rosenberg, a US-based international trade and customs law firm, will fly in on February 26 to discuss the TradeAct of 2005 with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said a statement issued by the BGMEA yesterday.

The bill was introduced in the upper house on January 26 seeking duty-free 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 percent.

## Outlaw die in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushia*

A regional leader of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) was killed in a 'shootout' between police and members of the outfit at village Dakhalpur in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah district early yesterday.

Three policemen were also injured.

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 meeting.

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.

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

## Rab holds 3 with 750g heroin from Pallabi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested three alleged drug peddlers including a couple with 750g heroin from the city's Pallabaria.

A team of Rab-4 raided the house 4/B, Lane 4, Section 11, Pallabi at around noon and seized the heroin worth around Tk 75 lakh.

"Posing as buyers our intelligence members have been following the drug peddlers for the last one month to track down the gang," said Rab-4 Commanding Officer Lt Col Saber Sharif.

The arrestees are Mohammad Rabbani, his wife Jarina Begum and Sultan Alam.

## JMJB plans

FROM PAGE 12

process of revolution that involves violence. Such activities are completely against Islam."

He said he met the JMJB chief 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 camps].

Since the detection of gelatine 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 confessed to police that he is also a member of Jamaatul Mujahidin.

A few days ago, a number of the arrested Jamaatul Mujahidin members also confessed to a magistrate in Natore that Rajshahi University teacher Dr Asadullah Al Galib is also a leader of the party.

Asadullah also leads a faction of the Ahle Hadith. Karim, who leads his rival faction, said there are allegations of money laundering against Asadullah, whose party is also affiliated with the JMJB.

## Myanmar FM

FROM PAGE 12

invitation of Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan. This will be his first visit after assuming office as Myanmar foreign minister, said a foreign ministry handout yesterday.

He will be accompanied, among others, by the director general of the Political Department and assistant director of Southwest Asia Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

During his visit, the Myanmar foreign minister will hold official talks with his counterpart M Morshed Khan tomorrow.

Both the ministers will review the status of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar and discuss ways for cooperation in coastal shipping apart from direct road-link between the two countries and repatriation of Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh.

## Rupali operations

FROM PAGE 12

it has to act by the IMF instruction.

But, after the meeting, Saifur told newsmen the government couldn't inject 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.

## Kapasias land

FROM PAGE 12

Highway stopped since the subsidence 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 immediately.

Geologist Dr Aftab Alam Khan told The Daily Star that some kind of underground cave-in due to infiltration of water from the nearby river is likely to have caused the subsidence.

"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 worrying.

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.

He said that this sort of subsidence usually occurs after an earthquake.

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.

Hundreds of curious people gathered at the spot to see the unusual incident. A police team has been deployed to handle the crowd.

Sub Inspector Abu Obaed Khan told The Daily Star that the trees on the subsided area still stood normal until yesterday afternoon.

## Foreign ministry fails

FROM PAGE 12

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 government increases budget for improving law and order, it should 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-

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 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.

"We will work seriously and go deep into the problems," the chairman said.

On the foreign missions, he said, "We should at least strengthen the missions at UK, USA and EU immediately."

## 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 yesterday 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 Washington.

On the other side, opposition leader Sheikh Hasina said yesterday the failure of the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition in governing the country has prompted the Bangladesh's development 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 speaking at a meeting organised by the Awami league marking International Mother Language Day at the Institution of Engineers auditorium.

The meeting in Washington on February 23-24 is being jointly organised by the World Bank, the EU and the US State Department, with US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca attending.

According to highly placed diplomatic sources, a large group of European donors, an influential European country having substantial 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 restraining militants -- all issues of serious international concerns.

According to the available information, these countries and blocs, which gave Bangladesh \$60 billion in FY03, want the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the US to rethink their financial 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 macro-economic 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

turnout.

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 long-standing 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 on 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.

"I told the external affairs commissioner that the EU initiative to hold this Washington meeting is conceptually wrong," Saifur said. "It could have been held in Bangladesh, or at least, we could have been invited."

The finance minister alleged that a group 'patronised by the opposition' feeds the EC with wrong information about Bangladesh.

"This has created an unhealthy attitude among some European countries about Bangladesh," he said. "As a result, they do not look at Bangladesh from an appropriate perspective. In most cases, they draw conclusions without going into the depth."

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

## Still looking

FROM PAGE 1

(Tuesday) and we will continue the search Wednesday and Thursday if we have to," said 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 passengers 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

## SHRINE BLAST Two arrestees remanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

*Moulvibazar*

Two people arrested in connection with the grenade explosion at a shrine in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar were put on a seven-day remand yesterday.

Manuf Mohammed Ishaque, 22, a student of Jema Islamia Karmadha Madrasa and also an Imam of Kanikari 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 prayer.

The two detainees had confessed their involvement with the grenade explosion at Shaiding 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 'Beda' 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 Chye 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 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 premises yesterday after criminals threatened to launch a bomb attack there.

In a letter sent to Jhenidah district women affairs officer, unknown criminals warned not to hold the fair, saying they would blast bombs at the fair.

The fair was organised to exhibit the handicrafts and other products of different voluntary women's organisations.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nurul Karim Mazumder was scheduled to inaugurate the fair at 10.00am yesterday as chief guest.

"All preparations for the fair were complete and some 70 voluntary organisations took stalls, but it could not be held due to security reasons," District Women Affairs Officer Masuda Islam told The Daily Star.

She got the letter on Saturday and immediately informed the DC and superintendent of police (SP), she said.

Admitting the threat, Jhenidah SP Akram Hossain said he assured the organisers of security, but they dared not hold the fair.

## Asma Kibria

FROM PAGE 1

Investigation to probe the January 27 grenade blasts that killed former finance minister SAMS Kibria and four others.

She reiterated that her family does not have confidence in any investigation dictated by the government.

"We want to know what conditions the FBI has put forward that 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 conference announced fresh programmes to demand trial of the persons responsible for the grenade and bomb blasts including the Habiganj 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 comment 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.

## Donors excluded

FROM PAGE 1

The AL chief said the image of Bangladesh across the world is being tainted due to the government's failure to run the country.

"I urge you (donor countries) to punish the BNP-led coalition for its failure to govern the country properly. But don't punish the people of Bangladesh for the failure of the government," the opposition leader said.

"Why should the people of Bangladesh take responsibility of the BNP-led coalition government?" she asked.

"The rampant corruption by the ministers and prime minister's family has compelled the donor countries to hold meeting in Washington without any representative from Bangladesh," she alleged.

"Denmark stopped providing financial aid to Bangladesh due to the corruption by shipping minister, yet the prime minister did not take any action against him," Hasina said.

She also accused the government of harbouring Islamist extremists, blasting its for the failure in bringing the perpetrators of bomb and grenade attacks to justice.

Hasina said some people are trying to establish Islamist extremism in the country by using the name of Islam.

AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sen Gupta said the country is now on the verge of destruction due to the government's inability to run the country.

"If a government fails to give security to the countrymen, its legitimacy comes under question," he said, adding that the government has surrendered to the activities of

## Biman worried over EU decision on delayed flights

BDNEWS, *Dhaka*

Biman Bangladesh Airlines is anxious over a European Union (EU) decision that provides compensation to passengers for delayed flights.

Sources concerned said the EU has taken a decision on Thursday requiring an airline to compensate passengers if a flight is delayed in any of the EU countries.

According to the EU decision, if a flight is cancelled or delayed for a long time, the airlines must offer stranded passengers a ticket refund or a free flight and, in some cases, it will have to provide meals and refreshments as well as hotel accommodation.

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

The EU destinations are London, Paris, Rome, Frankfurt and Brussels. The aircrafts of the Biman fleet--six DC-10s, four Airbus-300s and four F-28s--are 15 to 25 years old.

"As a result, the flights of Biman often delay due to simple mechanical faults, apart from inclement weather and other major reasons," said an official concerned.

According to Biman officials, the new EU decision will make Biman flight operations more costly in the EU countries.

A top Biman official informed that they received the directive from the EU. "We will decide about our next course of action within a couple of days," he told BDNEWS.