

## Cops gun down 6 'robbers' in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday gunned down six alleged robbers at Kazipara and Lalmatia in the capital.

Three of the robbers were killed when police opened fire on them at Kazipara while three others died what police claimed in a shootout with them at Lalmatia.

Six people including two policemen were injured in the incidents. **LALMATIA INCIDENT**

The Lalmatia incident appears shrouded in mystery as the police claimed that the slain youths were robbers and were killed during a 'shootout'.

Witnesses said they found the three in handcuffs, and one of them was begging the plain-clothes law enforcers for life.

"At around 8:30pm, someone

knocked at our house and asked whether the house owner is Hashem. Minutes after, on hearing sounds of some people talking, I opened a window and saw three youths in handcuffs," said Rina Begum, one of the tenants.

She said she heard around 15 to 20 gunshots after she had closed the window.

At that time, the police in loud-speakers were asking the locals not to come out of their houses, saying there were robbers in the locality.

After a number of gunshots, the locals found the youths bullet-hit and lying on the ground.

Owner of the house Abdul Jalil said he did not see any robber. "I saw only armed police and Rab members," he said.

Police said a joint team of police

and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday took position in Lalmatia after robbery attempt failed in the area Monday night.

Three youths knocked at the door of a house block-E in a bid to commit robbery. When the youths were talking to the guard of the house, policemen appeared at the scene and nabbed them.

Mohammadpur police said they exchanged bullets for 10-15 minutes with the robbers and two of them died on the spot. Another critically injured robber later died.

Police recovered one pistol, one revolver, three bullets and two knives from the spot.

**KAZIPARA INCIDENT**

A police team, led by Mashiur Rahman, sub-inspector of Mirpur

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## Niko gets \$4m illegal payment for Feni gas

Bapex remains high and dry from joint venture deal

SHARIEF KHAN and JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

A \$4 million illegal payment of Petrobangla for purchase of gas from Feni gas field in April entirely went to the account of Canadian company Niko in violation of the weakly framed Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) between Niko and Bapex.

In addition, Bapex has not so far got any benefit from the JVA that was imposed on it in October 2003.

Because of the JVA, Sylhet Gas Field Limited (SGFL) had to give away for free its unexplored Chhatak east gas field and marginal Chhatak west gas field to Bapex so that Niko can have access to them for free. This also violates the country's

policy that unexplored fields should be awarded through bidding.

Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFCL) also had to give away its two marginal gas fields of Feni and Kamta to Bapex without paying asset value. Niko will only have to pay the SGFL and BGFL for the infrastructure they built in the past in these fields.

This made Bapex 40 percent 'stake holder' of the Bapex-Niko JVA 'without any investment', while there is no justification for the BGFL or SGFL to give their valuable and proven gas fields to a foreign company.

But in reality, the JVA gave Niko access to confirmed and prospective gas resources worth over \$1

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday unveils the plaque of a Shaheed Minar at Ikeburoko Park in Tokyo, in memory of the language martyrs of Bangladesh.



SHARIEF

## Grabbers attack Ctg port eviction team

20 hurt, 15 vehicles damaged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Illegal occupants of public land at Laldiar in the port city made a violent attack on an eviction squad of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) yesterday, leaving at least 20 people injured and some 15 vehicles damaged.

The attackers also set a CPA bulldozer ablaze. The damaged vehicles include that of a CPA magistrate who led the eviction team, and

of women police.

Police Inspector Ilias, two Ansar personnel, an employee of the magistrate's office and a PDB worker were among the injured.

The law enforcers resorted to baton charge and blank fire to bring the situation under control.

The eviction drive however went on and recovered some 22.75 acres of CPA land worth over Tk 1 crore at Laldiar adjoining Chittagong airport.

The CPA drive aimed at recovering

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## PM lays foundation of Shaheed Minar in Tokyo

Says Dhaka-Tokyo ties to deepen

BSS, Tokyo

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the existing friendship between Japan and Bangladesh will be closer and more dynamic in future for the welfare of the two peoples.

She was addressing a function marking the construction of a

Shaheed Minar, a typical memorial for Bangladesh Language Movement martyrs, at Ikeburoko Park in Toshima-ku area in Tokyo.

"The Shaheed Minar will further cement Japan-Bangladesh relations," Khaleda Zia told the function before laying its foundation.

The Bangladesh prime minister

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## LAUNCH TRAGEDIES

### Shipping authorities, owners find them 'normal' affairs

RAFIQ HASAN

Although over 500 people have died in three major launch disasters this year, launch owners and the shipping authority, in expressions of apathy, term such disasters as 'normal,' saying the toll is not so significant.

Even the minister in charge terms the rising death toll as 'his' bad luck.

Water transport experts, however, say these deaths are tantamount to a preplanned killing, since

the launch designs are severely flawed and since the authorities lack the willingness or power to stop the faulty launches plying in the rivers.

Yet, these disasters could easily be averted if the launch owners spent money for professional designs, instead of bribing the water transport authority for transportation clearance certificates, they say.

Unstirred by the deaths of so many people, a launch-owner quips to The Daily Star, "It is normal that some

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## EU offers help for fair polls

Urges govt, opposition to talk, reach consensus on caretaker govt reform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ambassadors of the EU countries in Bangladesh yesterday said the next parliamentary election is crucial for the country's democracy and offered to help make it free, fair and acceptable.

At a news conference in the city, they also urged the ruling and the opposition parties to sit together to discuss and forge a consensus on the

caretaker government reforms.

The conference was organised at the residence of the British envoy on the occasion of the United Kingdoms taking over the presidency of European Union from this month for the second half of 2005.

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas, French Ambassador Jacques Andre

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## UK cops raid 6 houses in northern England

More attacks likely, London cops about to identify a bomber

REUTERS, AFP, Leeds/London

Police searched six homes in northern England yesterday as a 'significant' part of the investigation into last week's London bombings, blamed on al-Qaeda, which killed at least 52 people.

Detectives from London, together with local officers from West Yorkshire, searched the properties around the city of Leeds as part of a pre-planned intelligence-led operation, a police spokeswoman said.

No arrests have been made so far. Inspector Miles Himsforth of West Yorkshire Police said some material had been seized from the houses but could not elaborate.

West Yorkshire police inspector Miles Himsforth said homes along Hyde Park Road in Leeds were evacuated at around 11:30 am (1030 GMT), and that army officers used a

controlled explosion to gain access to a property.

West Yorkshire includes former industrial hubs such as Leeds and Bradford with large Muslim populations of south Asian origin. Britain's domestic Press Association said at least one of the raids was in Leeds.

Some 500 to 600 people were evacuated from their homes in Leeds on Tuesday where a controlled explosion was carried out following anti-terrorist raids in the northern English city, police said.

Firearms officers were brought in as a precaution but the house was unoccupied, he said.

Leeds has one of the biggest South Asian Muslim populations in Britain. In May 2001, it was one of a series of northern English towns, which saw rioting between Asian and white youths blamed on ethnic, religious and racial divisions.

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## 15 to walk gallows for slaying four

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday sentenced 15 people including a union parishad (UP) chairman to death, 13 to life in jail and 12 others to two-year rigorous imprisonment for killing a former UP chairman, his brother and two locals in Munshiganj in July 2001.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of Speedy Trial Tribunal 1 acquitted 68 others and blamed the administration and police for negligence, noting if they had taken the necessary steps in time, the heinous incident would not take place.

A group of local miscreants led by UP Chairman Ayub Ali brutally slew former chairman of Bagra UP and BNP leader Monowar Ali, 63, his brother Badsha, 40, and two others named Hashem and Ismail Gazi on July 7, 2001. Anwar Ali, another brother of Monowar, and his nephew Salauddin were also seriously injured in the incident.

A murder case was filed with Shrinagar Police Station against

Ayub and 61 others five days after the murders and the investigation officer pressed charges against Ayub and 107 others on November 30, 2003.

The proceedings of the case were stayed seven times since it had been shifted to the tribunal for quick disposal.

The convicts who received death penalty are Ayub Ali, Salam alias Ketu Salam, Mannan Shah, Faruq Gazi, Kuti Chand, Sabuj Ali, Nazir, Nizam, Mahfuz, Ripon, Shafiu Azam, Hashem, Abdul Mannan alias Mobile Mannan, Javed Ali and Mizan.

Of them, Ayub, Salam, Mannan, Shafiu, Hashem and Mahfuz are in jail custody and the rest were tried in absentia. Of them, Ayub, Mannan and Faruq were given double death penalties for killing Monowar and Badsha, but one of the sentences will be executed after confirmation by the High Court.

Those who received life terms are Salam Sikder, Mithu, Minto, Badsha,

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