

Chemist denies any role in London blasts

AP, London

An Egyptian biochemist arrested in Cairo in connection with the London subway and bus bombings taught at a British university after taking graduate courses in North Carolina. Magdy el-Nashar, 33, has denied any role in the attacks during questioning by Egyptian authorities, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. A government official said el-Nashar was detained in Cairo between July 7, when the bombings occurred, and Wednesday. US, British and Egyptian officials had been in contact concerning el-Nashar following the attacks, the official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was giving information not in the official ministry announcement. The ministry said el-Nashar came to Egypt from London on vacation and intended to return to Britain to continue his studies. "El-Nashar denied having any relation with the latest events in London. He pointed out (to questioners) that all his belongings remained in his apartment in Britain," the ministry statement said.

The head of the Cairo research center that sponsored el-Nashar's studies said he arrived in the Egyptian capital two weeks ago. British and FBI officials were looking for el-Nashar, who recently had been teaching chemistry at Leeds University, north of London. The Times of London said el-Nashar was believed to have rented one of the homes police searched in Leeds in a series of raids Tuesday. The four other men also believed to have been involved in the bombings all had connections to the Leeds

area. Neighbors reported el-Nashar recently left Britain, saying he had a visa problem, the newspaper said. Leeds University said el-Nashar arrived in October 2000 to do biochemical research, sponsored by the National Research Center in Cairo, Egypt. It said he earned a doctorate on May 6. The head of the research center said el-Nashar returned to Egypt two weeks ago, turned in his Ph.D. thesis to the center's Chemistry Department and spent a week there with colleagues. A week ago, el-Nashar told colleagues at the center he was going on vacation for 45 days, the center's president, Dr. Hany el-Nazer, told The Associated Press. FBI agents in Raleigh, N.C., had joined the search for el-Nashar, a former graduate student at North Carolina State University. University spokesman Keith Nichols said a person named el-Nashar studied at North Carolina State as a graduate student in chemical engineering for a semester beginning in January 2000. Nichols said the school has gathered records in anticipation of being contacted by the FBI.

4 killed

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unconscious state. The railway sources said there was no pointsman at the Mondolertah level crossing at the time of the accident. High officials of the railway, police and district administration visited the spot.

FALSE CASE

Boy languishing in Khulna jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An innocent teenager is languishing in prison for one year for being falsely implicated in a case and poor police investigation.

Police on July 20 last year arrested Obaidul, 18, and Asma Akhter, 11, on charge of abducting Beethi Rani Biswas, 18.

However, Beethi, daughter of Pulin Biswas and Usha Rani Biswas, left home for Dhaka after an argument with her mother on March 18. She had also taken up a job of domestic help in the capital.

Usha filed a case with Swarnokhola Police Station accusing Obaidul and Asma of abducting his daughter on March 20.

Sub-inspector Abul Kalam, investigation officer of the case, pressed charges against the accused on June 24.

After the arrest, police sent the two to Bagerhat District Jail on July 21. A court had bailed Asma but rejected Obaidul's bail petition.

Beethi returned to her parents two weeks ago with the help of the Dhaka office of Aparajay Bangladesh, a non-government organisation (NGO).



Most of the Netrokona-Durgapur road is now under water. The photo was taken near Jhanjail Bazar in Durgapur upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

College student

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Meherpur College, at gunpoint. Later, they demanded a ransom of Tk 1 lakh for his release. When contacted, Meherpur police said they were trying to trace the victim. As many as 27 people, including school and college students, have been abducted in the district since January this year. Of them, four were killed, two remained untraced and the remaining 21 bought their freedom with hefty ransoms.

CPB fears

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Commission (EC) and caretaker government, including a number of suggestions given by CPB and 11-party, is a positive initiative, the statement added. Meanwhile, Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman Anwar Hossain Monju MP yesterday said all including those in power and in opposition now realise that the laws of EC need to be reformed. If the democratic system is disrupted due to lack of foresightedness of any of us, the countrymen and the democratic world will get upset, the JP leader said.

Caretaker issue

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High Commissioner David Sproule said in an interview with UNB at his High Commission on Wednesday. Without commenting on the merit of the opposition plea for reform of the caretaker government system, he said if it is agreed that reforms are necessary, the government and the opposition should discuss it together and find a solution. "I see the prime minister has suggested to the opposition that it discuss the issue in parliament... parliament is a good forum to discuss issues of governance, the constitution and the budget. It is appropriate that elected representatives discuss such issues in that forum," he said. Sproule said Canada is prepared to help with election monitoring and provide technical support to the Election Commission in the conduct of an election to ensure that it is recognised by Bangladeshis and international community as free and fair. He said CIDA, in collaboration with Asia Foundation, is contributing \$ 4.5 million for a project "Fair Elections and Institutional Reforms in Bangladesh" that is focused primarily on a network of civil-society bodies working on election-related matters. It is also aimed at building capacity of the Election Commission. Rejecting the idea of Canadian mediation between major political parties, the envoy said it is not the role of the Canadian High Commission to mediate the political issues in this country. The Tuesday Group will organise a 2-day "election conference" in coming January here to help ensure that Bangladesh's next elections meet international election standards, he said, adding that over 400 representatives of parliaments, governments, political parties, civil society, NGOs, business community and media will be invited there. Technical experts from home and abroad will participate in the panel discussions at the conference that will come up with recommendations to help the Election Commission hold free and fair elections. Besides, the Canadian justice department is working with the Bangladesh law ministry to develop an independent prosecutor service, help improve legislation-drafting capacity and share experiences on alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms to resolve small local disputes legally without further pressure on the court system. On the much-debated issue of extra-judicial killings by Rab, he said all governments should respect international conventions that stipulate that everyone has a right to fair trial. The Canadian government wants the Bangladesh government to guarantee full protection of all minorities, including the Ahmadiyyas, so that no group can take away their rights to practise their religion freely, he said. About recent grenade attacks and killing of opposition politicians, Shah AMS Kibria, he said like other diplomatic missions here, Canada has urged the government to bring the perpetrators to justice as soon as possible.

AL, allies announce agenda

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were also there. But no leader of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), a member of 11-party left alliance, was present, as the party kept out of this agenda-setting process. After the reading of the proposals, Dr Kamal said, "We have tabled these reform proposals unitedly before the nation. Their implementation will bring genuine people's representatives in parliament and help it get rid of the clutches of black money and muscle power." He said the opposition parties will move together and realise the demands through movement. In an instant reaction, LGRD and Co-operatives Minister and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday termed the opposition-set reform agenda an AL-led move to hinder the "smooth electoral process".

"But, there is scope for discussion to find ways to make the elections free of violence and black money," Bhuiyan said, adding, "For discussion, they [opposition parties] will have to return to parliament." The 4-point set of proposals of the opposition camp to reform the formation and jurisdiction of the caretaker government comprises the following. The president will appoint an acceptable person as chief adviser and advisers of the caretaker government by consensus of and in consultation with all political parties. During the tenure of the caretaker government, the president will act in all matters of state on advice of the chief adviser, keeping parliamentary democracy in consideration. During its term, the caretaker government will run the defence ministry. And, jurisdiction of the caretaker government will be confined to conducting the day-to-day work and assisting the EC in holding the general elections. **REFORMS OF EC** The reform proposals regarding the EC include the appointment of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and other election commissioners in consultation with political parties. The number of election commissioners will also be determined by consultation. In case of any difference of opinion, the decision on the EC will follow majority's views. Being a permanent constitutional body, the EC has to have the ability and status to conduct elections neutrally in an atmosphere of independence. It will have an independent secretariat free of control of the executive. The EC also will expand its organisational framework down to upazila level and appoint and control its entire staff. During the election period, the government will arrange for adequate manpower as required by the EC. The EC will enjoy full financial independence and the finance ministry will have no control over the release of its funds. It will have full authority of appointing the returning officers, presiding officers and law-enforcing agencies to ensure security during the elections, and the government will be bound to take necessary actions as per the EC's demand. The persons involved in conducting elections will be under the EC for a certain period before and after the polls. During this period, the EC will have the authority to take immediate disciplinary actions against them for any offence and negligence of duty, and the government will have to act out the EC decisions. The EC will be fully independent in announcing election schedule and preparing election rules. The EC will be able to postpone or cancel elections for violation of election laws and rules and to issue orders of arrest and to punish the violators. During the election period, it will have judicial power. The voter list will be prepared maintaining complete transparency. The voter list preparation and issuance of voter identity (ID) cards will have to be computerised and electronic voting introduced. As per the CHT peace accord, a new voter list of the permanent residents of the hill tracts will have to be prepared and their voting right ensured. Expatriates will have to be included in the voter list and arrangement

made for their vote casting. The EC will constitute an all-party observer team at local level during elections. At national level, the members of the election observation team will have to be enlisted six months ahead of the election and the list of observers will have to be supplied to the contesting political parties and candidates with the announcement of the election schedule. The observers will never enter the polling booths. The matters relating to international election observers will have to be published one month before the election and their activities will be specified. Transparent ballot boxes will have to be arranged with serial numbers. Vote counting will be made in presence of all and the signed copy of the results will have to be given to every candidate or his nominee and designated observer. The returning officer will send the consolidated statement of the election results to the EC secretariat and only the EC will announce the result. The election tribunals will dispose of any case of election result within two months and any appeal will have to be disposed of by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court within three months. **REFORMS OF ELECTORAL LAWS** In its proposals for reforms of electoral rules and regulations, the opposition line-up says, in order to protect the election process from the destructive impact of black money, the candidates must make public declaration of their assets and dependants. The proposals say an election officer will monitor electoral expenses of the candidates in every constituency and send reports to the EC secretariat. All candidates must submit statements of their election expenses within one month of the polls. All candidates have to provide the EC with personal information including their academic qualifications, source of income, and description of assets and liabilities. Black-money-holders, loan defaulters and relatives of loan defaulters, and persons who opposed the Liberation War and were war criminals will be ineligible to contest the elections. The proposals include imposing ban on 'religion-based politics' and using religion in vote seeking. The opposition camp also wants a ban on electioneering at religious places including mosques, temples and churches. No political party will nominate any criminal and black-money-holder to contest the elections. The political parties have to strictly control their expenses for rallies and processions, after declaration of the election schedule. The lists of presiding officers, assistant presiding officers and polling officers will have to be delivered to the candidates and that of polling centres made public at least 15 days ahead of the polls. The law enforcement agencies will be under the EC during the election period. It will be compulsory for all political parties to submit their financial reports to the EC. Apart from the above, the reform agenda also proposed to increase the number of women's reserved seats in parliament and direct election to them. **BRIEFING BY HASINA** Before reading out the proposals, Hasina narrated the background of the concept of the caretaker government system. She said, "We had struggled to introduce the system to ensure people's right to vote. But unfortunately reforms are now needed due to politicisation of the caretaker government."

"Moreover, the dilly-dally in separating the judiciary from the executive and ensuring its independence as well as appointment of judges on party consideration have given rise to a range of questions," Hasina went on, adding, "It may not be logical to appoint someone only because of his post." She said the chief adviser or any adviser must not be a member of any political party or its affiliated organisations.

3 robbers

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in the last five months in the city and district. One alleged robber, identified as Sher Ali alias 'Khora' Jamir, 40, was beaten to death by a mob at Bathua under Ashia Union of Patiya upazila on July 11. On June 23, two unidentified muggers were killed by a mob in front of Oli Khan Mosque in the city's Chawk Bazar. Locals lynched three alleged muggers—Rajib Kumar, 25, Meherab Mohammad Arif, 24, and Rinku Kumar Acharya, 26—while they were trying to flee after mugging at Fazilhat Sarak (road) near Barouthan under Patiya upazila on May 25. On May 23, two unidentified muggers were beaten to death while hijacking an auto-rickshaw at Shikarpur under Hathazari upazila of the district. One notorious robber, identified as Humayun Kabir, 35, was lynched by a mob at Juidandi under Anowara upazila on February 22, while an unidentified robber aged about 40 was beaten to death at Samadiarpur of Sadaha Union under Satkania on February 10.

Mannan Bhuiyan

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adviser by reaching a consensus," he quipped. On the proposal to shift the defence portfolio from the president to the caretaker government, he said, "During the tenure of the caretaker government, president is the only elected person. If any emergency situation like a war arises then who will give the decision?" He labelled this suggestion as "illogical" too. "It seems to me those who have drafted the proposals do not have any experience of election," he said, censuring the opposition agenda. "Had the Awami League leaders been involved with the agenda setting process, it would be better," the minister remarked, adding there are many demands in the opposition's proposals that are already in effect. Bhuiyan also claimed that the Election Commission already enjoys complete freedom in conducting elections. The lists of presiding officers, assistant presiding officers and polling officers will have to be delivered to the candidates and that of polling centres made public at least 15 days ahead of the polls. The law enforcement agencies will be under the EC during the election period. It will be compulsory for all political parties to submit their financial reports to the EC. Apart from the above, the reform agenda also proposed to increase the number of women's reserved seats in parliament and direct election to them. **BRIEFING BY HASINA** Before reading out the proposals, Hasina narrated the background of the concept of the caretaker government system. She said, "We had struggled to introduce the system to ensure people's right to vote. But unfortunately reforms are now needed due to politicisation of the caretaker government."

Jute and textile workers

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Chowdhury, joint convener of Jute, Cotton and Textile Mill Workers Sangram Parishad, said. He was addressing the rally organised by Shilpa Sramik Karmachari Rakha Samannay Parishad in support of today's hartal at Muktagach in the city. People should come forward to make today's hartal successful for the sake of saving the jute industry as well as lives of about two crore people directly and indirectly involved with it, Shahidullah viewed. "Severe crisis in the country's jute sector can easily be realised when the jute minister himself acknowledged the problem and sought the prime minister's intervention," he said. In the context of huge demand of jute in the international market, India is greatly patronising its jute industry, he said, adding, "But the Bangladesh government is still indifferent to revivifying the jute sector, leaving scope for India to occupy the international market." "Jute mills are being closed down one after another in our country," Shahidullah said referring to the "international conspiracy" against the country's jute sector. Lutfur Rahman, another leader of Jute, Cotton and Textile Mill Workers Sangram Parishad, alleged that the government has so far not taken any initiative to purchase jute though the jute season

has already started. Shilpa Sramik Karmachari Rakha Samannay Parishad leaders Shafi Uddin, Ashraf Ali Khan, Nurul Islam and Abdul Kader also spoke at the rally. Later they brought out a procession in support of today's hartal that paraded different city roads. In a statement yesterday, AL General Secretary Abdul Jaill said the BNP-Jamaat government has plundered millions of taka since it assumed office and it is unwilling to meet the logical demands of the jute, cotton and textile mill workers. He urged the political parties and professional bodies to make the hartal a success. Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Manzurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim in a joint statement yesterday called upon the countrymen to make today's hartal a success. Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haq Inu and General Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad in a joint statement also extended their support to the hartal. Meanwhile, Shilpa Sramik Karmachari Rakha Samannay Parishad yesterday brought out a truck procession in Khulna city in support of today's countrywide hartal.

Suicide bomb spree

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down of how many were killed in which incident. Davis said he had records of seven blasts in all, of which three were noted down as suicide car bombs. Firefighters tried to douse the flames near one blast site which targeted Iraqi troops in the north of the city, where several cars were destroyed and bloodsoaked survivors argued with police. "The (Iraqi) army vehicles were parking right here when a speeding Daewoo car approached and exploded. It split in two parts," eyewitness Raed Salman said. A police source said six people were killed and 16 hurt in that blast. The bodies were too charred to immediately identify how many were Iraqi soldiers and how many civilians. In the New Baghdad district in the southeast of the city, eyewitness Basim Mohammed said he saw a car bomber ram an armoured US convoy at high speed, but saw no casualties. Davis confirmed that was one of the car bombs recorded by US forces. He said two US soldiers were hurt. Another bomb struck near Andalus square in the town centre. Reuters correspondents in central Baghdad heard that blast, followed by gunfire. An Interior Ministry source said the blast was caused by a suicide car bomb that wounded five Iraqi soldiers and three civilians. Smoking wreckage of cars was also visible at a blast site near the old Iraqi Defence Ministry headquarters. Iraqi troops ran around and gunshots could be heard after the blast. Police sources said 19 Iraqi soldiers were wounded there. And another apparent suicide car bomb exploded outside a garage, witnesses and Iraqi police sources said. "We were stopping right here with our bicycles when a car drove

near the garage. It tried to enter but exploded outside. The broken glass rained down on our heads," said Hassan Talib, a witness. al-Qaeda's Iraq wing said in statements on the Internet it had carried out five suicide car bomb attacks. "A lion from our brigade... staged a heroic attack on a unit of the apostate (Iraqi) guard," one statement said. In a separate incident in the remote western desert, US Marines said two of their troops had died in a roadside bomb strike on Wednesday.

Rain in Dhaka

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places, it added. Meanwhile, yesterday's downpour led to temporary inundation of many major roads at the commercial hubs of the city, including Motilheer, Arambagh, Gullistan near Bangabhaban, Bijoynagar, Kakrai and Topkhana Road. Other areas of the city such as Mirpur sections-1 and 10, Kazipara, Paikpara, Jatrabari, Sayedabad, Tikatuli, Hatkhola, also went under water for a few hours. Our Chittagong correspondent adds: Heavy downpour measuring up to 250mm on the second consecutive day since Wednesday night forced many areas in and around the city to go under knee-deep water. Bakolia, Miankhan Nagar, Chawk Bazar, Shulak Bahar, Katalganj, Kapashgola, Badurtola, Agrabad CDA Colony and Halishahar were the most affected areas where many places went under waist-deep water. However, the situation started improving after the rain ceased at around noon. The local Met Office recorded 110mm rainfall in the last 24 hours ending at 3:00pm while it had recorded 140mm rainfall in the previous 24 hours, sources said.

London 'bomb-maker'

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"What we expect to find at some stage is that there is a clear al-Qaeda link, a clear al-Qaeda approach," he said. Warning that another attack is "a strong possibility," Blair said the hunt is now on for the financiers and bomb makers who supplied the young killers in London's deadliest peacetime bomb attack. Four British-born Muslims, the youngest only 18, blew themselves up in separate attacks last Thursday on three underground trains and a bus during the morning rush hour. Three came from the northern city of Leeds, where police have since discovered large quantities of explosives in properties connected with the bombers. Media reports that the explosives were similar to those used in other al-Qaeda-linked attacks were described by Blair as "a reasonably fair picture." Blair also said it was time for Muslim leaders in Britain to stop being in denial about "lunatic fringe" extremists who convert impressionable youngsters. Describing the four bombers who died in the blast as "fool soldiers," Blair said "What we have got to find is who encouraged them, who trained them, who is the chemist." "al-Qaeda does not act like some classic Graham Greene cell. It has very loose affiliations and we have got to find the bankers, the chemists and the trainers, all the people who are assisting in this."

He confirmed the investigation had spread around the world, saying "There is a Pakistan connection and there are also connections in other countries." He would not be more specific. Blair called the bombings the greatest single act of mass murder in modern English history. The BBC, citing sources close to the investigation, said the explosive used was the highly unstable TATP (triacetone triperoxide), made from freely available ingredients. He said the explosives, found in raids in the city of Leeds, are thought to be similar to materials used by British "shoe bomber" Richard Reid who tried to blow up a transatlantic flight in 2001 with explosives concealed in his shoes. It said police are hunting the mastermind behind the London bombing and an Egyptian chemistry student who has fled his Leeds home. The BBC said a man with al-Qaeda links on a watch list had entered Britain two weeks ago and left a day before the bombings. He was not put under surveillance because he was not considered a high risk. "With this particular man there is nothing at the moment that links him directly," Blair said. When asked about the overall accuracy of the BBC report, Blair said "It is a reasonably fair picture." Blair felt it was vital that leaders of the 1.6 million Muslims in Britain helped to root out extremism. "The crucial issue now is can we engage with the community in Britain so that they move from being fairly close to denial about this into a situation in which they really engage with us?" "We need them to tell us who the preachers of hate really are, who are the recruiters of the vulnerable, what changes of pattern occurred in people's behaviour. Police admit they are puzzled about the last 81 minutes in the life of Hasib Hussain, captured on grainy CCTV images on the day of the bombings. At 7:20 a.m. he was caught on film at Luton station, north of London, wearing a casual jacket and jeans with a bomb in the rucksack on his back. He was seen joking with the three other bombers who then went on to target underground trains. Police are still baffled about why he may have changed his original target and instead blew up a bus.

Food, water crisis

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The Bailey bridge over a channel of the Teesta damaged on Tuesday is still underwater, snapping the district's road communications with Lalmonirhat. Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: With further rise in water level in the Ghagot, Brahmaputra and Teesta rivers, more areas have been submerged following incessant deluges and onrush of water from upstream rivers. Over 75,000 people in the char areas of Fulchari, Shaghata and Gaibandha sadar upazilas have been marooned. Waist-deep floodwater has inundated Fulchari Bazar, forcing shop owners to shift goods and valuables elsewhere. Railway ferry services between Balashi and Bahadurabad Ghat remained suspended following the collapse of a bridge and portion of rails in Malenda. The Teesta Inter City Express, however, runs temporarily from Dinajpur to Balashi Ghat. Our Mymensingh correspondent reports: Goshgaon, Gamaritala, Dakshin Majibari, Dhubaura and Purakandulia unions and standing crop and seed beds on about 50 acres of land in Dhubaura upazila have gone under water. Over 50 ponds have been inundated, causing a huge loss to fish farmers. Our Netrokona correspondent adds: The situation further deteriorated yesterday with more areas being submerged. About 4 lakh people in Durgapur, Kalmakanda, Atpara, Madan, Mohonganj, Barhatha, Netrokona sadar and Khalajuri upazilas have been marooned, Netrokona Water Development Board (WDB) sources said. Water level in the Sumeshwary, Mogra, Kongsha and Dhanu rivers has registered a sharp rise, while the Dhanu overflowed its banks at Khalajuri point. Road links between the district

headquarters and Durgapur and Kalmakanda upazilas have been snapped. Flood-hit people are facing acute crisis of drinking water, fodder and others essentials. In Sherpur, about 2 lakh people have been marooned as more areas have been submerged in bordering Nalitabari, Jinaigati and Shreebardi upazilas. Floodwater has washed away about 1,000 thatched houses and damaged more. Newly planted Amon crop on thousands of hectares of land and thousands of vegetables fields have been damaged. About 1,000 ponds have been inundated and fish worth about Tk 10 crore has been washed away. Sherpur district fishery office sources said. Road communications between Sherpur and Nalitabari, Jhinaigati, Sheerbardi upazilas remained snapped with the upazila headquarters remaining under water. The BDNEWS reports: The flash flood has washed away a one-kilometre-long part of the Kolaro embankment in Zianagar upazila in Pirojpur, inundating four villages.

4 Indians

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Indian insurgents were killed in an encounter with the joint forces of BDR and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Kamalajanj in Moulvibazar. The joint forces recovered six grenades, one submachine gun, two magazines, 105 rounds of bullet, three cell phone sets, one wireless set, two radio antennae from the insurgent hideout on a hilltop surrounded by forests. A joint team of army and police in a predawn raid on June 17 at Kalagahata under Bandarban pourasabha arrested nine Manipuri people whom they linked to an insurgent group of Indian state Manipur.

Ayodhya attackers

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said Yashpal Singh, chief of the police force of Uttar Pradesh state where Ayodhya is located. "They were all foreign nationals," Singh told reporters in state capital Lucknow, without elaborating. Meanwhile, Indian troops yesterday recovered the bodies of two more Islamic militants in the Kashmiri Himalayas, taking to nine the number of rebels killed in clashes there, the army said. Separately, the region's police chief Gopal Sharma said 11 militants from the dominant rebel group in southern Indian Kashmir, the Hizbul Mujahedin, had been arrested over a series of high-profile killings and grenade attacks. Rebels and troops first clashed with each other in the snowbound Gurez area of Indian-administered Kashmir on Tuesday evening after rebels were sighted inside the Indian zone of the divided region. Sporadic firefights occurred throughout Wednesday but ended during the night, allowing soldiers Thursday to close in on the positions from where the rebels had been firing, the army said. "We recovered seven bodies of militants on Thursday and two more on Friday," Indian army spokesman Vijay Batra told AFP. He said "extensive searches" in the area were continuing Friday to flush out any militants still hiding. Batra declined to give numbers, but the military said the rebels constituted the largest infiltration into Indian Kashmir since India and Pakistan began a slow-moving peace process to solve the Kashmir dispute 19 months ago. Indian media reports, quoting

army sources, have said about 35 militants had crossed the Line of Control (LoC) — the ceasefire line dividing Kashmir between India and Pakistan — in groups from Monday. The army has killed 52 militants during 14 infiltration attempts since April in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley alone, Indian officials have said. India accuses Pakistan of funding and arming Muslim rebels who have been fighting Indian troops in Kashmir since 1989. Islamabad denies the charge and says it is doing its best to prevent militants from crossing into Indian Kashmir. Insurgency against Indian rule in Kashmir has left more than 44,000 people dead by official count. Police chief Sharma meanwhile said the 11 Hizbul militants had been arrested in southern Anantnag district in coordinated raids over the past few days. He claimed the 11 formed an important Hizbul unit and were involved in the murders of the brother of Kashmir home minister A.R. Veeri and the nephew of the region's Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. "They were also involved in grenade attacks in busy market areas and a failed attack on the home minister," he said. In other violence in Indian Kashmir, police said seven people were injured in a grenade attack on a retired police officer in northern Magam town Friday. The officer and his two police guards were among the wounded.