

Left parties ask govt

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implemented through the House.

He said similar issues in the past were settled through discussion outside parliament.

Convener of the 11-Party and Workers Party General Secretary Bimal Bishwas said the opposition combine's demand for reforms in electoral and caretaker government systems has already become a popular demand. He said the opposition will go for a united movement if the government does not take initiative to resolve the issue through discussion.

"The 11-Party will continue working towards cementing the current unity among the opposition parties that are now in a simultaneous movement," he said, calling for the other parties, who are out of the unity, to join hands with the opposition combine.

Leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), a key component of the 11-Party alliance, were not present at the press conference.

"Communist Party is not with us for the time being but we hope they will join us soon," Bimal Biswas said.

Replying to a query, Dr Kamal criticised the government for describing the opposition demands as 'unrealistic and unconstitutional'.

He recalled discussion of three alliances, after the fall of military ruler HM Ershad, for reaching a consensus on interim government.

"The same person, who now holds the portfolio of law ministry, was the vice president during the despotic rule of general Ershad. At that time too, he with the same tone termed the three alliances' move for interim government unconstitutional," he said in an oblique refer-

Half-day strike

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and Pallabi areas and it has now gone beyond tolerance," said an aggrieved salesman. "After the arrest, the police negotiate with the drug store owners for bribes to settle the release of the salesmen."

The leaders of the drug stores assembling at the Mirpur section-10 roundabout on Monday and yesterday demanded immediate removal of Ziaul Huq Zia.

Rahman said, "If there is no progress on Wednesday too, we may go for tougher action like indefinite country-wide strike."

Meanwhile, the BCDA in greater Mirpur areas with solidarity from the central committee leaders in Mitford Hospital area continued their strike for the third day yesterday protesting frequent police atrocities, arrest of salesmen from certain drug stores in recent times and periodic unauthorised toll collection from drug shop owners.

Sadequr Rahman said the BCDA leaders have documents to prove that Zia realised bribe worth over Tk 5 lakh.

"He realised the money at various times from different drug stores and threatened them not to disclose it. Those who raised voices against him fell victim to Zia's vicious practice of detaining salesmen," Rahman explained.

When contacted over telephone, Ziaul Huq Zia claimed he is innocent and said the BCDA leaders are giving lame excuses to cover selling of illegal drugs.

"Last week I arrested six people from three different drug stores in the greater Mirpur area with evidence of banned drugs like Viagra, cough syrup Tixi and alcohol. They get united and protest every time police seize unregistered drugs from the drug stores. In fact, they also tried to offer me money in a bid to write off their crime," Zia told this correspondent.

"I have full support from my senior officers and I will continue to carry out my duties as per the laws," said Zia.

The BCDA leaders will meet today at three places--Mitford Hospital area, near Banghabandhu Shiekh Mujib Medical University and Mirpur section-10 roundabout--and announce further action.

Communications

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incurred loss of Tk 47.80 crore due to irregularities and mismanagement in collection of toll and fare from 13 bridges and 10 ferries from 1999 to 2003.

Admitting some earlier irregularities in the system of toll collection, senior officials of the ministry informed the committee that measures have been taken to remove all irregularities, meeting sources said.

The committee asked the ministry officials to submit a report at the next meeting about the measures taken.

On information that the ministry could not realise Tk 11 crore outstanding tolls from Meghna-Gumti bridge due to legal complexities, the PAC formed a sub-committee to look into the matter and submit report in a month.

The parliamentary body also blasted the communications ministry officials for their failure to complete a tender process regarding collection of toll from Buriganga-2 bridge in a year.

The committee disposed of 87 objections raised against Railway division from 1979 to 1985.

ence to Moudud Ahmed.

"It's quite possible to find an acceptable person as the caretaker government chief as well as meet the other proposals if we could sit down with open minds," he said.

"I wonder why should the government be reluctant to hold discussion outside the parliament," he said.

Dr Kamal said, "Government could at least give any of the senior opposition leaders a call before appointing the chief election commissioner and it's a democratic norm."

"We are ready to accept any democratic and secular party in the opposition alliance," he added.

Those who want to use black money and criminals in elections, want to use religion as a tool for seeking votes, and who have made a quick buck through corruption are against the reforms, he said.

Asked about almost identical reactions of CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim and ruling BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan to the proposal for consensus appointment of the caretaker government chief, Rashed Khan Menon said, "It's unfortunate for us."

CPB general secretary and BNP secretary general in their reactions had described the proposal as unrealistic.

The left alliance yesterday announced its own programme to mobilise public support in favour of the 31-point reform proposals.

The left leaders will hold rallies at city's Mirpur area on July 23, Demra on July 24, and Hazariabagh on July 25. Besides, they will hold a rally at the Muktangan on July 26 to protest the price hike of essentials. They will hold rallies at district levels, starting from August 8 to continue till August 31.

Fuel prices

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thousands of crores of taka in oil purchase due to high import costs and low sales prices. The BPC is in a pretty bad shape. We cannot remain indifferent to this situation for long," he added.

Mahmudur Rahman, who was present at the meeting, said, "We have not decided about petroleum prices yet, but the way the prices are increasing [in the international market] we may be compelled to think about raising them in the domestic market."

After yesterday's sudden increase in fuel prices, the still unaware consumers locked in altercations with fuel pump staffs at various points in the city.

Myanmar

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Bandarban Cantonment about the safety and security of the bordering areas.

In 2003, the Bandarban district administration had sent a proposal of increasing the number of BDR observatory posts between Naikkhonchhari and Thanchi to protect the border from illegal intrusion of foreign criminals.

According to a statistics, the security forces have seized more than 200 sophisticated firearms, huge quantity of explosives, military blankets and combat uniforms, and communication instruments, and destroyed several dens of foreign intruders in continued operations since September last year.

Kakrail-Satrasta

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Satrasta crossing in the capital.

An estimated Tk 450 crore will be required for construction of the flyover and the government will soon officially seek loan from Kuwait Fund to implement the project, ministry sources said.

The approval was given at the presentation ceremony of feasibility study, detailed engineering design and preparation of tender documents for the construction of the flyover that will cover Moghbazar and Mouchak intersections, two of the city's worst traffic congested areas.

An American engineering firm conducted the feasibility study with Tk three crore financial support from Kuwait Fund and prepared the design of the flyover.

Team leader of the feasibility study Roberts E Rickman presented the design.

Presided over by LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the presentation ceremony was attended by Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, and State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar and other high officials.

Local Government Engineering Department will construct the flyover that will have four-lane deck and box girders with pedestrian bridge.

The flyover will have several links with the adjoining roads.

At Mouchak intersection, the flyover will have a three-storied structure.

There will be stopovers at different points and staircases for pedestrians.

The LGRD minister asked the authorities concerned to take immediate step to expedite the project, sources said.

3 robberies

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up, the robbers later confined them in a room.

The gang then took away Tk 30,000 in cash, gold ornaments weighing 15 tola and other valuables--worth about Tk 2.54 lakh in total.

In Motijheel, another gang of robbers cut through the window grills of one Jahangir Alam's house at 23 Khilgaon Bagicha and entered the house at 11:00pm.

Holding Jahangir's family at gunpoint, the robbers looted Tk 1.5 lakh in cash, gold ornaments weighing 20 tola and other valuables, worth around Tk 3.6 lakh.

In another incident at Tantibazar under the Kotwali Police Station, a gang of robbers stormed into a goldsmith's house at 24 Sutanagar at 10:00pm.

Looting valuables worth around Tk 4 lakh, the gang blasted several cocktails to frighten the locals and fled the scene.

The police failed to recover the looted goods or arrest any of the robbers involved in any of the incidents till yesterday.

Court warns

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Rahman and his wife Dr Begum Ferdousi of the charge and warning the complainant, Anwara Rahman, wife of DIG Anisur Rahman.

The court's warning came after the charge against the couple was found false.

Anwara Rahman filed the case against Dr Rahman and his wife Ferdousi on April 18 for torturing 11-year-old Nasrin Akhter. Uttara police arrested the two the same day immediately after Anwara, landlord of the couple, filed the case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

After an investigation, the investigation officer (IO) found the charge to be grounded in falsehood and submitted final report to the court, praying for acquittal of the doctors.

The couple at a press conference in the Court Reporters' Association, Dhaka yesterday said that the complainant had filed another false case against them after the submission of final report by the IO. The complainant and his husband had also threatened to file a dozen such cases against them, they added.

IMF eyes

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develop the operation of the exchange market.

The IMF also noted that taka depreciated by 9 percent and 5 percent in nominal and real effective terms since the exchange rate was floated in May 2003.

It also pointed out that a tight monetary stance is important to contain inflationary pressures.

It also observed that a further increase in fuel price is needed in view of the rising global prices.

"The authorities (government) need to keep the domestic fuel prices under close review and make further adjustments as needed," the IMF said, adding that fuel price hike in the first half of 2005 was appropriate.

"The impact of higher domestic fuel prices on the poor can be reduced by well-targeted and transparent transfers to them," it added.

SC clears way

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Court headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain rejected the leave to appeal petition after hearing both sides, clearing the way for holding the election to the women reserved seats in due time.

The law ministry will send a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner today for initiating the process of the election, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told reporters after the SC verdict.

"Now there is no obstacle to holding the election," said the minister.

Counsels of the petitioners, meanwhile, said they would file a petition with the SC to review the rejection order.

Parliament passed the 14th amendment in May last year and enacted the law on November 29 which was gazetted on December 8.

But the election could not be held within the stipulated period (90 days from enactment of the law) because of a High Court stay order following three public interest litigation writ petitions filed by 13 women rights groups and individuals.

The High Court, on May 30, termed the amendment 'not unconstitutional' and said the period of time lost due to the stay would not be counted and the election would be held by the stipulated time. Then the petitioners moved to the Appellate Division.

Opposing the leave-to-appeal petition yesterday, Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali in his submission said if the court now grants the petition, it will have to review the SC's previous judgement in the Ahmed Hossain versus State case.

In the Ahmed Hossain case (challenging the 10th amendment provisions for women's reserved seats), the Appellate Division had said that indirect election cannot be called undemocratic and it has sanctions of the constitution itself.

The Attorney General said 14th amendment to the constitution is proper and there is no flaw in the law of election process.

Dr M Zahir, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam and Barrister Sigma Huda moved for the petitioners.

Honesty, morals

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on the basis of two term examinations.

Meanwhile, it is alleged that some major yardsticks of assessment under the SBA programme have not been set whereas there is question about the teachers' ability to judge students' morality, honesty, values and behaviour.

The ministry did not set any criteria to judge the matters.

The government has also ignored serious objections about administrative procedures in the secondary schools.

The plans were sent to the prime minister for approval in June even though there was a recommendation within the ministry to continue the SBA programme on an experimental basis until the end of the year and take the final decision on the basis of the feedback.

Prof Maniruzzaman Miah, who headed the National Education Commission Report 2003 in which school-based assessment was first proposed, said the government decision to implement the SBA is too premature.

Teachers should be trained according to the requirement of the programme which is very vital before introducing the school-based assessment, he added.

ZIA becomes risky

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air traffic every day. Over the last four to five years, air traffic has increased two folds but there had been no improvement of navigational system or the basic infrastructure.

The CAAB sources said it handles 250-300 flight navigational clearances every day fetching around Tk 50 lakh daily (annual \$30 million).

In addition, the airports in Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Jessore, Rajshahi, Syedpur and Barisal bring in another Tk 35-40 crore annually for providing non-aeronautical facilities, the bulk of which is earned by the ZIA alone.

"Flights to and from Europe, the Middle East, India and the eastern part of Asia fly through Bangladesh airspace. Even Indian local flights from east to west use our airspace. They pay for it. This is our advantage, but it never gets the attention it deserves," said a CAAB source.

The condition of the four-kilometre taxiway at ZIA is worse than that of any road in Dhaka city. Every 10 yards you can spot potholes that have been recently repaired on makeshift basis. It needs a complete reconstruction. But as this is expensive, the government does not allocate enough funds for a complete task. The makeshift repairs do not last long," he added.

"A similar condition prevails on the 11,000-foot runway at the ZIA. It has many cracks. In addition, its landing light system has gone down. The runway is supposed to be equipped with landing lights at a distance of every 500 feet. But often we don't see lights between 1000 feet," he pointed out.

To ensure navigation safety, the airport is equipped with a Navigation Aid that relays different signals to incoming and outgoing flights. One of its components--Very High Frequency Omni Range Finder (VOR)--helps navigate an aircraft from one airport to another. Its second component is the Instrument Landing System (ILS) that helps pilots to land in a non-visual condition using instruments. The third component is the Distance Measuring Equipment (DME) which shows the distance between the aircraft and the airfield.

"This equipment is 15-20 years old and goes out of order frequently, posing a major safety hazard. We have tabled a Tk 40 crore project for modernising the Navigation Aid. But it has remained on the shelf for the last three years. We are now operating by frequently repairing the equipment," the CAAB source added.

If the ILS is out of order, no pilot will land at ZIA during bad weather and will divert the plane towards the Chittagong airport, if needed.

Out of the seven airports, only the ZIA has two radar systems--a primary and a surveillance radar system. Both the radar systems, which were purchased second-hand 15-20 years back, are out of order most of the times.

"None of the three radarscope [a vital component] of these radar systems are functioning properly. Years ago, it did not matter much. But now as Bangladesh's airspace has become congested, it has become very difficult for the air

Quit Iraq

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group, the Brigades Abu Hafs al-Masri, and dated July 16.

After August 15, "there will be no more messages, just actions that will be engraved on the heart of Europe."

"It will be a bloody war in the service of God," said the statement, the authenticity of which could not be verified.

"It's a message we are addressing to the crusaders who are still present in Iraq -- Denmark, the Netherlands, Britain, Italy and those other countries whose troops continue to criss-cross Iraqi territory."

"These are our last words. The Mujahedeen, who are on the look-out, will have other words to say in your capitals."

A statement issued in the name of the "Europe Division" of the same al-Qaeda group claimed responsibility for the July 7 bombings on London's public transport system, which killed at least 56 people and wounded some 700.

The same group also claimed the 2004 train bombings in Madrid and the 2003 attacks in Istanbul.

Miah said he has not been consulted or invited to attend meetings on the SBA system since he submitted his report in 2004.

Only 17.4 per cent of the teachers of 20 secondary schools and 20 madrasas where the SBA pilot project was undertaken, received training on how to work with the new system, a ministry report said.

Widespread limitations in the evaluation process and maintenance of academic records on extra-curricular activities have been observed during the pilot project, the report pointed out.

It is impossible for the education ministry to train 4.5 lakh teachers for the SBA programme by the year-end.

The government has decided to implement the project without even collecting most of the feedback inputs from the schools under the pilot project.

Meanwhile, a senior official of the education ministry said the ministry has not yet finalised the project.

"It will be launched once everything is incorporated in the project," said the official requesting anonymity.

The SBA is part of a Tk 490-crore Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project funded by a loan from the Asian Development Bank.

traffic control room to maintain separation between airplanes," said the CAAB source.

Flight separation is a system to ensure that the airplanes do not fly in a collision course.

"Now it entirely depends on the pilots. Almost no other country in the world lacks such radar," he added.

Faced with tremendous workload, the CAAB has recently recruited 10 staff for the air traffic control department. However, there is still a shortfall of 10 more staff in the 40-staff department. The new recruits are being trained locally, whereas they must be trained in modern environment in Singapore and Thailand, aviation experts said.

"Given the hostile and most stressful nature of air control, this department should have a different pay structure. Usually, we don't get people who want to work here," quipped a source.

"Consider the stress on the person handling 20 airplanes at one point of time--one plane is coming from Kolkata, another from Nepal, and so on. This person is getting calls every other seconds and he has to respond to them all and ensure their safety route. And this goes on round the clock without any respite," he added.

"But these people get the same salary as in any other government jobs. There is no scope for making extra bucks or taking bribe. No wonder why people should not want to work here. In India, this department has an entirely different pay structure, considering its stress level," he pointed out.

CAAB Chairman Air Commodore AKM Harun Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the Danish funded Tk 300 crore project to install a new radar system, improve landing light system and runway and upgrade the control tower is now awaiting approval of the civil aviation ministry. "We expect to see it go very soon," he said.

"Improvement of equipment or trained manpower is not possible overnight. It will take some time--two to three years--to finish this project," he pointed out.

The chairman added that given the present condition, the CAAB is operating satisfactorily. "Improvement is a continuous process. Equipment will become old at one point and new manpower will require training--these are natural," Chowdhury pointed out.

Dollar price

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(BB) Deputy Governor Allah Malik Kazemi sat in a meeting with the managing directors of nine first generation private banks yesterday. He had another round of meeting with 22 other banks on the dollar crisis some days ago.

The BB side in yesterday's meeting hinted that at present the value of taka is a little too high and after a further depreciation by about Tk .5 the market will settle down, a meeting source said. The BB also said the growth of remittance and export is good at the moment, so there will be no trouble in meeting the import demand.

The BB called the private bank executives to discuss the foreign exchange situation and said there is no dollar crisis in the market, Pubali Bank Managing Director Khondkar Ibrahim Khalel told The Daily Star yesterday. However, the central bank requested them to manage foreign trade prudently, he added.

Haji pilgrims

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An official of the Religious Affairs Ministry told the news agency that some 8,000 ballottee and 52,000 non-ballottee devotees are expected to perform Hajj this year. It was 5,000 and 40,000 last year.

A sales officer of Saudi Arabian airlines, Saudia, said if Biman increases the ticket fare, they will also increase the same. They have already decided to increase ticket fare for the pilgrims of countries like Indonesia.

Airlines like Biman, Saudia, Emirates and Kuwait Airways will start their Hajj flights from December 2005, as Hajj rituals will begin in the first week of January 2006.

Garuda Air of Indonesia and Malaysian Airlines have also decided to increase the fares for Hajj flight due to the price hike of jet fuel in the international market.

Airlines that also carry Hajj pilgrims from Dhaka to Jeddah are Saudia, Emirates, Gulf Air, Kuwait Airways, Singapore Airlines and Malaysian Airlines.

BSF kills 1

UNB, Thakurgaon

Indian border security force (BSF) gunned down a Bangladeshi youth on Harinmari border in Baliadang upazila of the district early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Shahidul Haque, 20, son of Abdul Latif of Ratnai-Kashibari village in the upazila.

According to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources, the Indian border guards of Sonamoti camp opened fire on Shahidul when he reached near border pillar no 382. Shahidul died instantly. The BSF men later took away the body.

However, the victim's family could not say why he went there.

Commander of 20 Rifles Battalion Lt. Col. Mostafizur Rahman confirmed the incident. He sent a letter, asking the BSF to return the body.

With Shahidul, three people were killed by the Indian BSF on the Thakurgaon border in the last two months.

Fight against

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together to counter all forms of the scourge "wherever it exists" and assured the international community that New Delhi will never be a source of proliferation of sensitive technologies.

"India and the US have both suffered grievously from terrorism and we must make common cause against it," he said addressing the joint session of the US Congress.

"We cannot be selective in this area," he said, pointing out that terrorism anywhere threatens democracies everywhere.

Democracies, he emphasized, cannot be soft on terrorism, for it exploits "the freedom our open societies provide to destroy our freedom".

"We know that those who resort to terror often clothe it in the garb of real or imaginary grievances. We must categorically affirm that no grievance can justify resort to terror." During the 40-minute address, Singh touched on a wide- range of issues and spoke about India's commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation, economic reforms and commitment to strengthening multi-lateral trading systems and work with US and other partners for a successful outcome of Doha Round.

Talking about India's impeccable track record in nuclear non-proliferation, he said "we have adhered scrupulously to every rule and cannon in this area."

Sunamganj-3

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Sayedur Rahman Chowdhury (Bikalpadhara), Iftekhar Ahmed Limon (Jatiya Party-Manju), Ataur Rahman (Jatiya Janata Party), Krishak Mohammad Sadeque (Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolan) and Dewan Ferdousur Rahman (independent).

As many as 102 polling centres out of the total 127, including 46 in Sunamganj sadar and 81 in Jagannathpur upazila, have been identified as vulnerable.

The total number of voters is 2,18,450.

Jafar Siddique, deputy commissioner of Sunamganj who is also the returning officer for the by-polls, told The Daily Star that all preparations were complete to hold the polls.

A huge contingent of police, army, BDR and Ansar members will be deployed at the polling centres to avert any untoward incident. Besides, magistrates will lead 30 striking teams and four speedy trial courts for instant trial of the offenders.

Camelia's body

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husband Monir Hossain and nine others including her in-laws, doctor and policemen. In separate petitions, she also accused them of destroying evidence of the murder.

The reason behind Camelia's death could not be learnt immediately after the exhumation, as the body was swollen and partly rotten, said the police inquest report, adding it bore a long reddish mark in the back.

The DMCH forensic department will form a board to perform the autopsy today.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday sent Monir and his brother Akhtar Hossain to jail, when the two appeared before the court in a case filed by Halima for torturing Camelia for dowry.

Upon hearing of the dowry case, Judge Shamsul Arefin of the Fifth Special Tribunal for Prevention of Repression on Women and Children also directed their lawyers to produce two other accused, Monir's brother Shahrier Ahmed and his wife Shamima Parvin, within 15 days, as they were absent.

Halima earlier told The Daily Star Camelia's in-laws killed her and hanged her body from the ceiling to make it look like a suicide. She said, "They tortured my girl for dowry, killed the baby she was carrying and threatened to kill her after she had filed a case against Monir's family."

11 militants nabbed

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the "right Islamic way of life in light of the holy Quran and Hadith."

The police said house owner Mozam was a participant in the three-day training. Local people assisted the police in the midnight operation and caught RU student Golam Mustafa when he tried to escape arrest.

JIC TO QUIZ THE MILITANTS
A magistrate court in Rajshahi yesterday granted a seven-day remand for the arrestees after the police produced them in court and sought 10 days' remand.

Sources said the arrestees will be sent to Dhaka today following a home ministry directive. They will be quizzed in the joint interrogation cell (JIC).

Superintendent of Police (SP) at Rajshahi, Abdullah Al Mahmood, told reporters that the arrestees were shown arrested under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. They carried diaries containing "dangerous teachings," he added.

"Such gathering of men from different areas at a remote house at dead of night created doubts. We will file a case with specific charges soon after investigation," the SP said.

DANGEROUS DIARY
After the pre-dawn operation, the police started a desperate hunt for one Aslam of Chapainawabganj as they seized his diary from the militants.

The diary contains a number of lessons on physical exercises and arms training what the police described a "scary matter for the investigators."

Aslam was scheduled to deliver the first lecture on the use of arms during the three-day