

24 Indian soldiers killed in Maoist mine blast

AFP, New Delhi

At least 24 paramilitary soldiers were killed yesterday in a powerful landmine blast triggered by suspected Maoist rebels in eastern India, a federal minister said.

The vehicle carrying the soldiers passed over the mine in Bijapur district in the state of Chhattisgarh, some 1,100 kilometres (700 miles) southeast of New Delhi.

Three of the soldiers who survived the blast were battling for their lives in hospital, officials said. The blast shattered the vehicle.

"We suspect that the Maoists are behind the incident. It is a blow to the state because the Maoist situation was improving in Chhattisgarh

when the incident happened," said federal junior home minister Shriprakash Jaiswal.

He said the attack was aimed at derailing peace efforts.

Maoists have strongholds in at least five of India's 29 states including the eastern states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. They say they are battling for greater social and economic rights for indigenous tribes and landless farmers.

The three-decade-old conflict has claimed thousands of lives.

"They used a powerful explosive and that is why the toll is so high," said Arvind Vichar Netam, Chhattisgarh's home minister.

New Delhi says left-wing rebels operating in India have ties with Maoist guerrillas in neighbouring Nepal who are fighting to overthrow the monarchy and install a communist republic.

"Our government has been trying to resolve the Maoist problem and we are confident you will see a solution emerging over the long-term," Jaiswal said.

He said the federal government had advised state governments to boost economic and social development in insurgency-hit areas to resolve the problem.

"We have told the state governments that unless you try to address the problem of development in these areas, you will not be able to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Shab-e-Barat on Sept 19

BSS, Dhaka

Shab-e-Barat will be observed on the night of September 19, a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee announced yesterday.

The meeting was held at the conference room of Islamic Foundation with its Chairman, State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan, in the chair.

Religious Affairs Secretary Rafiqul Islam, Director of Meteorological Department MAkram Hossan, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Moulana Obaidul Haque were, among others, present at the meeting.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushlia

Outlaw leader killed in 'crossfire'

A regional leader of Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML) was killed in 'crossfire' during a shootout between his accomplices and the police in Chuadanga on Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Amirul Islam alias Sutki Amir, 40, second-in-command of the outlawed party in the southwestern region.

A team of the Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Amir at Bardi in Sonargaon upazila of Narayanganj on Friday. During interrogation in Narayanganj he confessed to his involvement in underground politics and having firearms hidden in different areas of Chuadanga.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Govt to open three more consulates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to open three consulate offices in Miami, Milan and Sydney to facilitate services to the expatriate Bangladeshis and expansion of trade and commerce.

An agreement to this effect was reached at an inter-ministerial meeting held yesterday at the foreign ministry with Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin in the chair.

Representatives from the ministries of foreign affairs, home, expatriates' welfare and overseas employment and establishment, finance and commerce attended the meeting.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Bangladesh save worst for last

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

A relatively weak Sri Lanka white-washed Bangladesh 3-0 in the one-day series with a comfortable six-wicket win at the Premadasa Stadium here on Sunday.

Skipper Marvan Atapattu was

SEE PAGEW 15 COL 6

Prayer Timing		
September 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

New Orleans left to the dead and dying

AP, New Orleans

As the last weary refugees evacuated from New Orleans, the shattered city drew closer to dealing with its dead, confronting a gruesome landscape of scattered corpses that were expected to number in the thousands.

No one knows how many people were killed by Hurricane Katrina and how many more succumbed waiting to be rescued. But the bodies are everywhere: hidden in attics, floating in the ruined city, crumpled in wheelchairs, abandoned on highways.

Echoing the mayor's prediction, Gov. Kathleen Blanco said Saturday she expected the death toll to reach

the thousands. And Craig Vanderwagen, rear admiral of the US Public Health Service, said one morgue alone, at a St. Gabriel prison, expected 1,000 to 2,000 bodies.

The last refugees at the Superdome and the convention centre climbed aboard buses Saturday bound for shelters, but the dying continued.

Touring an airport triage centre, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., a physician, said "a lot more than eight to 10 people are dying a day."

Most were those too sick or weak to survive. But not all.

Charles Womack, a 30-year-old roofer, said he saw one man beaten

to death and another commit suicide at the Superdome. Womack was beaten with a pipe and treated at the airport centre, where bodies were kept in a refrigerated truck.

"One guy jumped off a balcony. I saw him do it. He was talking to a lady about it. He said it reminded him of the war and he couldn't leave," he said.

Three babies died at the convention centre from heat exhaustion, said Mark Kyle, a medical relief provider.

But some progress was evident. The last 300 refugees at the Superdome were evacuated Saturday evening, eliciting cheers from members of the Texas National

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Aiyar arrives in Dhaka today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Panchayati Raj, Mani Shankar Aiyar MP arrives in Dhaka this morning on a two-day official visit to hold bilateral talks

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

14-party vows to oust govt, establish secular rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Awami League-led 14-party opposition yesterday pledged to reinstate four main principles of the 1972 constitution and establish a secular democratic government through ousting the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition.

Observations of the recent High Court (HC) judgement that declared the fifth amendment of the constitution illegal, will be implemented if they take office, they said while addressing a joint rally at Muktangan in the city.

The "historic judgment" will strengthen the foundation of democracy and uphold the supremacy of the constitution, they said at the rally formed as part of the opposition's countrywide joint demonstration to protest against the BNP-Jamaat government's naked interference into the judiciary after the recent HC verdict.

"The verdict also cut the root of the BNP and its self-made distorted history," AL General Secretary A b d u l

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

PVT MEMBERS' BILL COMMITTEE Lawmakers fail to end dispute with speaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Irked by the speaker's indifference to the need for allowing private members' bills to be placed in parliament, the parliamentary standing committee on private members' bills and resolutions yesterday met the speaker, but failed to resolve the crisis.

The crisis in the committee is rather likely to deepen as its representative from the main opposition Awami League (AL) boycotted the meeting in protest against the speaker's refusal to meet the committee's demand to allow some private members' bills in the upcoming parliament session.

The lawmakers, who have been vocal for long about expressing their thoughts in formulation of laws through placing their bills in parliament, met Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar as the last effort to resolve the crisis.

But the speaker refused to meet the demand, prompting a debate on the issue between him and the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Members of a mobile court destroy packets of date expired milk powder seized from a wholesale store on Shaheed Fauque Road at South Jatrabari in the capital yesterday.