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14-party to ask BNP to expel militant-linked alliance partners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mainstream opposition parties are going to issue an ultimatum to the ruling BNP to expel its partners from the four-party coalition for their link to militancy.

The 14-party opposition will announce the ultimatum tomorrow from a joint press conference, asking BNP to axe Jamaat-e-Islami and other militant elements, sources said.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting of the 14-party alliance, comprising main opposition Awami

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## Gunmen for judges, security in courts

Frightened judges meet Babar for safety

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of bomb attacks on courts and death threats on judges and lawyers, the government yesterday decided to provide gunmen to district judges and step up security at courthouses across the country.

The judges, many of whom received death threats over telephone in the last couple of days, will also receive security

arrangements at their courts as well as residences.

The assurance came when a delegation of district judges met State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar at his office yesterday to seek security, following panic after recent telephone threats and Monday's bomb attacks on Chittagong, Chandpur and Laxmipur courts, which came 47 days

after countrywide bombings at different points, including courthouses.

"The state minister has assured us of providing gunmen to all district-level judges and security at their courts and residences," Rezaul Karim Chunnu, secretary general of the Judicial Service Association, told The Daily Star last night.

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JMB issues death threat to 6 journos in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) threatened six journalists of Rajshahi on Wednesday saying they are creating obstacles to establishing Islam.

Local newspaper Sonali Sangbad received a letter, claiming to be from JMB, on Wednesday that gave death threats to the journalists.

The letter threatened local correspondent Jahangir Alam Akash of the Sangbad, Anisuzzaman of Janakantha, Bulbul and Tanjibul of

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Three kilometres of Gobindaganj-Dinajpur Highway go under water as incessant rain and breaching of the flood control embankment along river Karotoa at three points cause flash flood in Palashbari and Gobindaganj upazilas yesterday.

Jamaat rejoinder, our reply

Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh in a rejoinder on Wednesday protested a report headlined "August 17 bombers did it again: Laxmipur bomber has Jamaat link; DCs asked to up watch on courts" published in The Daily Star.

The report said, "The family of JMB [Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh] cadre Masum, 22, who was caught while hurling bombs at Laxmipur court on Monday, is involved with Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, a key component of the ruling four-party alliance. Acknowledging the family's involvement with Jamaat politics, Masum's mother told police that her husband is a rokon (full member) of Jamaat

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## Floods in a fury

More areas in 3 northern dists inundated, 3 die of diarrhoea

STAR REPORT

The flash flood situation in the northern region further deteriorated yesterday with the inundation of more areas in Gaibandha, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon districts.

Three people died of diarrhoea that broke out in the flood-hit areas of Panchagarh.

More than one lakh people still remained marooned in the flood affected districts. Several thousand homeless people are living an inhuman life due to lack of relief materials.

In Panchagarh, Abdul Hakim 65,

Khadiza Begum 35, and Rahim, 7, of Ruhia upazila died of diarrhoea on Wednesday, reports our correspondent from Dinajpur.

The incessant rain and swelling rivers left at least 50,000 people marooned and 1,700 families homeless in five upazilas of Thakurgaon district, officials said.

About 2,000 thatched houses collapsed during the torrential rain in the district.

The flood inundated around 20,000 hectares of cropland in four

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## Durga Puja from Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The five-day Durga Puja, the greatest festival of the Hindus, will begin on Sunday and the preparations of the Puja Mandaps have been completed to let hundreds and thousands of devotees across the country start their celebrations.

The Hindus believe Durga, worshipped as the goddess of supreme power, will come to earth on Sunday this year and stay for four days.

Official sources said as many as 22,000 Puja Mandaps have been put up across the country including 145 in the capital. However, Bangladesh Puja Uddyan Parishad said around 18,000 Puja Mandaps have been put up in the country including 142 in

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## PREMIER BANK SCAM Criminal case filed against Dr Iqbal

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) yesterday filed a criminal case against Premier Bank Chairman Dr HBM Iqbal and eight others for opening fake accounts in a bid to grab shares worth about Tk 56 crore.

SEC Director (Law) Mohammad Mizanur Rahman filed the case with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mizanur Rahman

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## Perpetrators of blasts will not be spared

PM tells Islamic scholars

UNB, Dhaka

Sending out a strong message to the terrorists, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the perpetrators of the recent bomb blasts will not be spared.

The prime minister renewed her government's tough stance when some noted alem (Islamic scholars) of the country met her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on the occa-

sion of the holy Ramadan.

She assured the religious leaders that the innocent people would not be harassed in any way.

Khaleda said adequate security

measures have been taken so that both Ramadan and Durga Puja can be

celebrated with due religious fervour.

She urged people to remain alert against terrorist acts and maintain sanctity of the Ramadan.

The prime minister told the Islamic scholars that the government measures taken on the occasion of Ramadan to arrest the price hike of essentials would continue.

Rice, pulses, onion and edible oil are now being sold at fair prices by the government through OMS to check the price hike of the essential com-

modities.

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Confusion over 5 Bangladeshis held in India

BDNEWS, Kolkata

Five Bangladeshis were arrested in Kolkata a day after the August 17 serial blasts in Bangladesh, but authorities here neither informed the matter to the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi nor to the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata.

Immigration authorities in Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Airport arrested the five—Delwar Hossain, Sirajul Islam, Sohel Mia, Md Shamim and MM Jalal Ahmed Selim—on August 18. Police here said they were involved in the August 17 serial blasts in Bangladesh.

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## HANNAN'S CASE WITHDRAWAL State minister Goutam recommended petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A state minister and two leaders of Gopalganj BNP had recommended in Mufti Hannan's application for withdrawal of case submitted to the then home minister and described the four cases filed against the militant kingpin as politically motivated.

State Minister for Water Resources Ministry Goutam Chakraborty, the then president of Gopalganj district BNP Sheikh Saifur Rahman Nantu, and senior vice-president Moniruzzaman

Pinu in the application had advised for Hannan's exemption from the charges brought in those cases.

When contacted last night, Goutam Chakraborty did not deny making recommendation in favour of Hannan.

Operations commander of Harkatul Jihad (Huji), Hannan on November 17, 2002, submitted the application to the home minister and pleaded for the cases against him to be withdrawn in line with the

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ESSENTIALS

## Prices spiral out of control

SURAJIT DEBNATH

Government efforts to sell some essentials in the capital and three other cities through the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) and Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice at the district headquarters have virtually failed to control the persisting price spiral of goods in the country.

The middle and lower middle classes and poor people are already experiencing a crippling effect on their

day-to-day life due to the enduring price spiral of essentials and iftar-related items, as the government is yet to take stern action against unscrupulous businessmen who have stockpiled various goods to raise their prices further.

The price level may continue to go up during Ramadan as government initiatives to reverse the trend are not being implemented

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