

## Lawyers boycott court

FROM PAGE 1

Razzak Khan and advocate Zainul Abedin, yesterday morning met the chief justice at his office and requested him to continue the court activities.

The SCBA, on the other hand, took out processions on the Supreme Court premises, urging the judges and lawyers to abstain from their judicial work. The SCBA also held a protest meeting at the south hall of the bar.

Presided over by SCBA President advocate Mahbubey Alam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by former SCBA president advocate Ozair Farooq, advocate Rahmat Ali MP, Dr M Zahir, barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, advocates Subrata Chowdhury, Khondker Mahbub Hossain, Nurul Islam Sujan, BA Rashid, Fazle Rabbi, Mahbub Ali, Abu Bakar Siddique, Bashir Ahmed, Mamtajuiddin Mehedi, Awasafur Rahman and Rabiul Alam Budu.

The SCBA will form a human chain at the main gate of the Supreme Court from 4:00pm to 5:00pm Saturday and hold a lawyers-people solidarity meeting at the Central Shaheed Minar at 4:00pm on Sunday in protest against the killing of judges.

The two groups of BNP-backed lawyers association, Jatiyataabadi Aijnjibi Forum, yesterday held separate press conferences at the SCBA building protesting the court boycott.

The faction led by BNP's Law Secretary advocate Zainul Abedin held its press conference at the north hall of the SCBA building. Advocate Abdul Wahab, deputy attorneys general Golam Kibria, Golam Mohammad Chowdhury Alal, Helaluddin Mollah and Badruddoza Badal, assistant attorney general Giasuddin Mithu, advocates Mokslesur Rahman Zahid and Manir Hossain, among others, were present there.

Another faction led by advocate TH Khan held the press conference at the hall room of the SCBA annex building. Barrister Ziaur Rahman

Khan MP, advocates Shah Khasruzzaman, Saidur Rahman, Sanaulah Miah and Golam Arshed, among others, were present.

The two pro-government lawyers' groups expressed shock at the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi but blamed the SCBA leaders for serving political interests using the killing.

Reacting to the press conferences of the government-backed lawyers, SCBA Secretary advocate Enayetur Rahim said those who have held press conferences against the decision of the SCBA are the patrons of the extremists and bombers.

The lower courts in the capital -- Dhaka Judge Court, Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court, District Magistrate Court and Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court remained almost inactive as the lawyers joined the boycott programme.

Sammilita Aijnjibi Samannay Parishad, the forum of pro-opposition lawyers, also staged demonstration and held meetings on the court premises to protest the killing. It asked the lawyers to join the human chain and gathering on Saturday and Sunday.

The judges, meanwhile, gave a seven-day ultimatum to the government to ensure their security, otherwise they would go for a tough movement from November 21.

Senior assistant judges Sohel Ahmed and Jagannath Pandey were killed on November 14, a day after the Saarc Summit, in the bomb attack by a member of JMB suicide squad.

SC Registrar Mohammad Fazlul Karim and Deputy Registrar Mohammad Dalil Uddin yesterday met the families of the slain judges and consoled them. They also visited Mokslesur Rahman Zahid and Manir Hossain, among others, were present there.

The two also visited injured Abdul Mannan, an employee of Jhalakathi District Judge Court, who has been receiving treatment at the Sadar Hospital.

## Donors want

FROM PAGE 1

fund flow to the beneficiaries, besides increasing the cost of business and inefficiencies," Patel explained.

He said the three-day discussion between the development partners and the government was all about how to move forward with the PRSP implementation.

"We had a very open and frank discussion. We spent a lot of time talking about the Anti-Corruption Commission this morning," Praful said, adding the day's two sessions were really focused on finding constructive ways to institute good governance.

### ONATTACK ON JUDICIARY

Referring to the recent spate of attacks and killings of judges, the donors maintained that an environment where such things happen and no prompt action follows may damage Bangladesh's interests abroad. They said the government should find out quickly who did the crimes and act on it.

Patel said, "We are concerned because such incidents happen only in a very unstable environment. And if you don't do something about it very quickly, Bangladesh will become known more and more as a place of terrorism and violence."

"The bottom line of what we have told the government is that we want to see Bangladeshi citizens can come home in the evening, feeling safe. If they are always worried that their children may not safely come back home, I think foreign investors and development partners will also have similar anxieties," he told the press.

However, he mentioned, the donors did get an assurance from the government, particularly from the prime minister, of acting seriously on these issues.

The donors at the meet agreed on a number of concrete steps for moving forward with the development process and also reached accord with the government to work together in monitoring its progress, the WB VP said. "The government promised to sit with us, if we like to discuss any issue or concern over things not moving in the right direction," he added.

For example, Patel said, six months from now the donors would meet again here to take stock of the progress made and how things are moving. "I think joint monitoring is the only way to ensure gradual progress... this is the only way to move forward. So, they have agreed and we are optimistic about it," he remarked. Patel said the donors feel the government is serious about its commitments and that is why they are supporting it. On the donors' concerns over corruption and the ineffective Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told the press that the absolute power the ACC has been vested with has made things complicated. He said it is not enough to make a law or form a commission, rather the people who enforce the law or run the commission are the ones who make the difference.

Saifur said for about three hours yesterday they discussed the gamut of governance issues including corruption,

law and order, prosecution, separation of judiciary and strengthening of local government bodies.

On the issue of Islamist militancy and terrorism, the finance minister said, "We have told them it is more of an international phenomenon than a national one. It is difficult to contain such type of terrorism with the normal law enforcement tools."

Bush and Tony Blair are also struggling to combat such terrorism, Saifur noted, and are now framing laws to contain it. "We will also have to face it collectively. The government cannot do it alone. The entire nation needs to take part in the process," he maintained.

Talking to the press, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the government is committed to separate the judiciary. "We have informed the donors about the progress made in this regard and they have appreciated it. They understood that it is not an easy task."

Moudud said the main issue as far as separation is concerned is basically of putting around 600 administration cadres now working as magistrates under the Supreme Court. "We have told them about the steps we have taken to bring them under the Supreme Court," he added.

Elaborating on the topic, the law minister said the government is considering an interim measure. "One option is to give the 600 magistrates two options to choose from -- to join the judicial service or to continue in the administration cadre but work in the judiciary on deputation," he explained.

At a session yesterday a Norwegian delegate asked the government to set a deadline for making the ACC functional.

Meeting sources said Moudud echoed Saifur in telling the donors that the government made the ACC independent and gave it absolute power, and so now cannot dictate it what to do or to catch any particular people.

A delegate of a European Union country also raised the issue of deaths in 'crossfire' and said such extra-judicial killing is not proper. Australia also raised the issue of human rights violation in this way.

### PM calls

FROM PAGE 1

She said necessary financial support will be given to the families of the two slain judges. She also assured that employment would be given on priority basis to the family members of the two judges on the basis of qualifications.

Association President Rafiqul Islam and General Secretary Rezaul Karim led the delegation. They expressed satisfaction over the government's steps already taken to ensure security of judges and bring the criminals to justice.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed informed the delegation members that the government has already taken adequate security measures at the judges' residences and offices.

The association leaders invited the prime minister to inaugurate the annual conference of the Judicial Service Association next month.

### Free trade area

FROM PAGE 20

trade area and in turn raising living standards in South Asia.

However, differences persisted among members at their last meeting in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka this month, with negotiations stumbling over a sensitive list of products, rules of origin and a compensation mechanism.

At the end of their two day meeting on Sunday, the leaders of South Asian states however directed officials to iron out all differences during talks in Kathmandu on November 30 and December 1.

On Thursday, Singh pointed out that a free trade agreement concluded with Sri Lanka in 1998 had resulted in a "win-win" situation for both and "could be a model for similar agreements in the region."

He said that even two decades after its formation, saarc had "not succeeded in exploiting the immense economic potential of our region."

Intra-regional exports stood at a five percent of Saarc's combined total, compared with 55.2 percent for the European Union, he noted.

"Hence, the need for implementing Safta cannot be overemphasized. We hope the free trade area would help us to move forward towards the eventual goal of South Asian Economic Union."

The summit over the weekend saw Saarc countries promising to fight the grinding poverty that afflicts millions across the region with renewed urgency and signing accords to ease restrictions on trade.

Set up to alleviate poverty and promote economic cooperation, Saarc has been dismissed by critics as a talking shop that has achieved little since it was formed in 1985 due to mistrust and squabbling between member nations.

### Minister sees

FROM PAGE 20

situation) in the country's northern region and termed media reports on it false and the opposition campaign politically motivated.

"There is no Monga in the northern districts of the country and...no one died from starvation," he said at a press conference in PID conference room at the secretariat.

The minister also saw political reasons when his attention was drawn to the reports on Monga in the newspapers and electronic media.

"These were absolutely biased and propaganda. We probed many media reports about Monga but did not find any authenticity of those," he said.

The minister, however, admitted absence of employment opportunity in the region in this season, but outright rejected existence of Monga.

Mentioning the poverty as an annual phenomenon in the northern region of the country, he also said the government has taken enough steps to tackle the situation.

"We have already provided about 15.80 lakh VGF and VGD cards through which 38 thousand metric tons of foodgrains was distributed in the five districts where the number of total families is 19.05 lakh," he added.

Besides, the government has allocated Tk 15.50 crore for various projects under the social safety net programme.

He also stressed the need for land reform and establishing industries in the poverty-stricken northern region.

Deputy minister for food and disaster management Asadul Habib Dulu, who also faced volley of questions from the journalists, denied any irregularities and corruption in distribution of the VGF and VGD cards among the poor.

Termining the allegations politically motivated, he also pinned the blame on a vested quarter for trash-his image.

He, however, said that there were some faults in making the list and army personnel revised the list after scrutiny.

### Lankans vote

FROM PAGE 20

midnight (1800 GMT). A total of 13.3 million people were eligible to vote to elect a president for a six-year term from among 13 candidates. However, the election was seen as a face off between the present and former premiers.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, who wants to review the peace process with the rebels, expressed confidence that he could celebrate his 60th birthday Friday as the country's fifth executive head of state.

His main rival, 56-year-old opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe who supports the peace process, was also upsets.

The island's Tamil minority, around 13 percent of the 19.5 million population, shunned the election which was seen as a setback to Wickremesinghe.

Reports from Tamil-dominated areas in the northeast said tyres were burnt on the road by the guerrillas to discourage voting.

## Opposition plans

FROM PAGE 1

has already declared to counter the opposition parties programmes in the streets.

"If the opposition can organise 10 lakh people in their rally, we will hold a grand rally with 25 lakh people," Bhuiyan, also the secretary general of the ruling BNP, said at a discussion meeting in the capital on November 7. The leaders of the ruling alliance are pondering over holding the grand rally in the capital early in the next month, sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, General Secretary of Dhaka city unit of BNP Abduus Salam said, "We will sit soon to fix the date of holding a grand rally."

At present, the AL and its allies and their front organisations, are working to ensure participation of over 25 lakh people at the gathering with a plan to organise people from ten districts adjacent to Dhaka.

The senior opposition leaders yesterday held a rally at Narsingdi and Manikganj to motivate the people to join the grand rally in Dhaka. Similar rallies are planned to organise in Savar and in Keraniganj tomorrow and in Brahmanbaria on Saturday. Besides they will start a two-day publicity campaign using loudspeakers in the city on Saturday.

AL, that has been boycotting the parliament since last year, is likely to continue its boycott as the party policymakers are not thinking about joining the upcoming session slated for

November 20. They are occupied with the November 22 grand rally.

"We will discuss the issue of joining the upcoming parliament session after holding the grand rally," Opposition Deputy Leader Abdul Hamid yesterday told The Daily Star.

Referring to the speaker's phone call to him on Wednesday, the deputy leader said the speaker does not have anything to do unless the ruling party high command directs him. "I am in doubt whether the speaker has initiated the move to bring the main opposition in parliament on his own or advised by the ruling party high command," he added.

### Charges pressed

FROM PAGE 1

sheet to a first class magistrate court of Tangail.

The accused are -- JMB Chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman, JMB Chief Siddiquil Islam alias Bangla Bhai and Mokhesur Rahman Sumon of Mizapur Purba Para village under Jamalpur Sadar upazila. At present, all of them are evading arrest.

Rahman and Bangla Bhai were the masterminds behind the August 17 countrywide serial bomb blasts, the report mentioned. The blast at the Madhupur Bus Stand was part of the serial attacks, carried out by Sumon.

Earlier, SI Shajahan filed a case under Explosive Substances Act and Special Power Act with Madhupur police station the same day after the blast.

## AL rally attack

FROM PAGE 1

the professional statement, saying most wanted criminals Subrata Bain, Molla Masud and Mukul ran the attack that killed 22 people and injured over 200.

Earlier on June 26, Joj Mia, arrested at Senbag in Noakhali, also gave confessional statement, naming 12 persons, including Rana and his brother-in-law Shafiq.

Shafiq, son of a peon of the Chest Diseases Hospital, is wanted for killing two members of rival Kala Jahangir group near TB Gate at Mohakhali in 2001.

However, none of the three confessors could say who masterminded the attack.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar recorded the criminal's statement, identical to the one made by Rana.

Shafiq said one Robin asked him and Rana to meet at one "jiboner mess" in Moghbazar, where he disclosed the plan of attack 10-12 days before August 21.

According to Shafiq's statement, Robin told them that the attack was planned by Subrata, Masud and Mukul.

"A day before the Awami League meeting, at a place near the Baitul Mukarram Mosque Robin showed us the detailed plan of the attack and the points where we will have to take position," Shafiq said.

Robin handed Shafiq, Rana and Joj Mia a grenade each and kept one for himself and asked Shafiq and Rana to wait on the east side of the Bangabandhu Avenue before the AL meeting, said the statement.

"On August 21, Robin called us at around 4:30pm and told us to mingle with the people attending the meeting," Shafiq said, adding, "We were instructed to throw the grenade after one of our leaders throws one first."

Both Shafiq and Rana said in their statements they were strictly instructed not to throw grenades on the dais,

### PM may visit

FROM PAGE 1

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told reporters that the peace process in the Middle East would figure prominently at the summit meet of the heads of state and government of the OIC member states.

He told the reporters that the prime minister is likely to travel to South Asian capitals, including New Delhi and Islamabad, next year as Saarc chairperson.

The exact dates of the prime minister's visit are yet to be confirmed, he said.

### Reporter strangled

FROM PAGE 1

Physical evidence made the police believe that Gautam was strangled by using the rope. Before leaving, the assailants left the door closed from inside.

Friends said Gautam was living in a house at Jhiltai. But he often used to stay in the office. For the last four or five days he slept in a cot in his office.

Gautam came from a Zamindar family of Bhanga. He began his career with Protham Alo since its inception and joined the Samakal about six months ago.

The autopsy report said it was a case of homicide.

Journalists strongly protested the murder of Gautam. A rally chaired by President of Faridpur Journalists Association Munshi Harunur Rashid demanded arrest of the killers within four days.

The rally announced a four-day mourning when local newspaper offices will hoist black flag and journalists will wear black badge.

### Suicide squad

FROM PAGE 1

collective efforts to eliminate.

He stressed the need for creating mass awareness by social leaders, professionals and civil society members against terrorism being carried out in the name of Islam.

During the meeting, the association leaders, led by its president Md Helaluddin, informed the state minister of various problems facing the shop and market owners in the metropolises.

They alleged that some influential political leaders, top criminals and policemen get money of the smuggled drugs, a prime cause of spreading terrorism.

"If drug peddling can be destroyed, terrorist incidents will come down," the members of the delegation told the minister.

They demanded rehabilitation of hawkers at eight designated places of Dhaka City within the next 15 days in consultation with Dhaka City Corporation.

The association that represents about 250 markets and shopping malls in the capital demanded import of tax-free metal detectors and CCTVs for installation at their markets.

The shop owners also urged the state minister to evict Balurmath slum at Mirpur Mazar Road allegedly used for drugs trading and training of criminals. They also informed that some 568 groups are operating in the city who are deceiving people through various vile tactics.

Barar asked police, DB and Rab to take necessary actions against the drug traders and criminals.

### Militant

FROM PAGE 1

The Detective Branch (DB) of police produced Hannan before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 2:00pm on completion of a seven-day remand in the August 17 Rajuk blast case and Investigation Officer Zahidur Rahman Chowdhury sought 10-day's remand for further interrogation.

The information obtained from Hannan is being verified and the militant linchpin needs to be confined in the custody until the investigation is over, said the forwarding report placed before the court in connection with the Rajuk blast case.

Also the forwarding report on the Jatrabari blast case stated Hannan along with his accomplices exploded bombs across the country including Jatrabari area to create panic across the country.

After hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate MA Salam granted the remand prayer.

"I could not stand and my left hand is numb. Sometimes, I vomit with blood due to severe headache. Moreover, I am in the police custody for over 44 days," Hannan told the court when he was asked about his rights of private defence without any lawyers.

Rab members took Hannan to the court, wearing him helmet and a bullet proof vest.

Mufti Hannan, who escaped arrest for several years, was already shown arrested in four other blast cases filed with the Tejgaon, Ramna and Motijheel, Demra police stations.

### Foreign airlines

FROM PAGE 20

The representatives of the foreign airlines agreed to reduce airfare at a meeting with the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin at his secretariat office yesterday.

Representatives of the Saudi Arabian Airlines, Qatar Airlines, Kuwait Airlines, Emirates, Gulf Air and Pakistan International Airlines were present at the meeting.

The six airlines agreed to ferry non-ballottee hajj pilgrims at the fare fixed by the government following request by the state minister.

Sources at the religious affairs ministry said about 50,000 non-ballottee pilgrims are expected to perform Hajj this year. The number of ballottee pilgrims is 2,600. Biman Bangladesh Airlines will carry a total of 18,000 Hajj pilgrims -- both ballottee and non-ballottee.

Five foreign airlines will ferry 8,000 Hajj pilgrims while Saudi Arabian Airlines will carry the rest of the pilgrims, according to meetings sources.

### Horror spectre

FROM PAGE 20

When asked about the latest developments in the probe, Investigation Officer Clarence Gomez, also an ASP of Satakia circle, yesterday said the case is now at the home ministry's monitoring cell and he would submit the charge sheet only when the ministry asks him to do so.

When asked why UP Chairman Aminur Rahman Chowdhury, the prime suspect, has not yet been held, Gomez said the matter lies with the higher authorities, not him.

On the night of November 18, 2003, Tejendra Shil and 10 others including a newborn baby were incinerated. The others killed on that night include Tejendra's wife Bakul Bala Shil, 60, his son Anil Shil, 42, daughter-in-law Smriti Rani Shil, 30, two grand children Rumi Shil, 12, Sonia Shil, 7, three nieces Babuty Shil, 25, Prasadil Shil, 17, Annie Shil, 07, a four-year-old baby and another close relation Debendra Shil, 72.

Immediately after the barbaric attack, Tejendra's son Dr Bimal Bil and his [Tejendra] brother Shachindra Lal Shil, who lost her three daughters (Babuty, Prasadil and Annie) in the arson, left their village house, and since then have been staying in the city.

The day after the carnage, a 10-member police camp led by a havildar was set up on the yard of the house. The camp is still there to guard the gutted house.

## JMB now threatens

FROM PAGE 1

fuses from bordering Ratanpur Baganbari in Chhatkai upazila of Sunamganj early yesterday.

BDR officials said a man ran into the Indian territory, leaving behind a bag with explosives and detonators when BDR troops on patrol chased him after he had entered Bangladesh at about 4:00am yesterday.

**CONFESSION BY JMB MEMBER**  
An operative of JMB arrested in city's Uttara on Wednesday confessed to a magistrate yesterday that he blasted a bomb near Zia International Airport on August 17.

Twenty-five-year-old Rezaul Karim Raju, who hails from Jamalpur, also admitted that he and seven others took training on how to operate a bomb at a mosque in Moynertek of Uttara a day before the countrywide blasts.

A teacher of Taragachhi Kindergarten in Gazipur, Rezaul said JMB leader Habib had been the trainer while another leader Jahid got him involved in "jihad", by promising him heaven after death.

Rezaul also told the magistrate that Habib had supplied him with a time bomb in a gift box early in the morning of August 17 at a house in Abdullahpur. Later the same day he blasted the bomb in the airport area while Jahid exploded his bomb at Gulshan-I intersection.

Metropolitan Magistrate Nani Gopal Biswas recorded the statement under 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Sources in Detective Branch of police said they arrested Rezaul, following up the provided by Masud, who was arrested on August 22 during a raid to arrest Habib, the man alleged to have been in charge of staging the blasts in Gulshan area.

Meanwhile in Kurigram, police yesterday arrested JMB member Saidur in Kodakati Bazar of Rajibpur upazila, reports BDNEWS.

Son of Sadu Molla, Saidur hails from remote Char Kharubhaz in the district. **THAKURGAON**  
The BDR has beefed up security along the Indian border in Thakurgaon,

following rumours that seven members of the JMB suicide squad were holed up in the district town with a plan to strike again, reports UNB.

A senior official of BDR's Battalion 20 said the measures have been taken in response to the overall security situation of the district.

The police and other security forces have also stepped up efforts to ensure security in the district reportedly following an intelligence report from the capita, said sources. According to the unconfirmed report, a 10-member suicide squad of JMB had recently been dispatched to Dinajpur.

Seven members of the squad had already entered Thakurgaon, a district police official said, requesting anonymity.

Sources also claimed the JMB squad is likely to strike within a week, but they did not specify the targets.

Acting on the intelligence, police teams have carried out raids on several possible hideouts of JMB men across the districts but to no effect.

Acting OC of Thakurgaon Police Station Mazhar Hossain said police on Tuesday night raided in vain Lakshampur-Debadangi village under Sadar upazila for three people suspected to have a direct role in the August 17 blasts. Imam Abdul Gafur of Thakurgaon Able Hadith Mosque and Rezwan alias Razzak, a student of Ranisangkoil Kuwaity Madrasa, were among the suspects.

Earlier, a bomb-like device was recovered on Tuesday from a paddy field in Singia village under Sadar upazila. The recovery caused panic among the locals. The device, wrapped in red tape and electric wire, has been taken for examination by the army's explosives experts.