

COURT ATTACKS  
SC hears govt's  
petition for stay  
on HC order  
Sunday

UNB, Dhaka

The government sharply moved to secure stay on High Court order directing the police to submit progress report on investigation of the recurrent bomb attacks every fortnight, but Supreme Court order in this regard was held back till Sunday.

Court sources said the government asked the attorney general to seek a Supreme Court (SC) stay on the interim HC orders given Wednesday upon a public interest litigation.

Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali along with his deputies drove to the residence of the chamber judge of the SC in the afternoon.

Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury heard the government petition seeking stay on operation of the HC orders, which also contained another rule asking the government to explain causes of its alleged "inaction" in tackling bombings by militants.

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PM cancels  
UAE trip

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has postponed her scheduled visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) beginning on Saturday in the wake of repeated militant bomb attacks, but keeps her Saudi Arabia visit on.

She was due to pay a visit to the UAE at the invitation of UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan on her way to attending the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) summit in Makkah on December 7-8.

Officials, however, said the prime minister has postponed the UAE visit due to her preoccupation at home. "It's in no way linked with the incidents of bomb blasts," said a high official of the foreign ministry.

They said a new tour schedule is being worked out through diplomatic channels so that the prime minister could visit the UAE and several other Gulf countries in near future.

However, a reliable source at the prime minister's office (PMO) said, though the PM's visit to Makkah remains unchanged, it still depends on the situation of the country.

Businessmen urge  
parties to end blame  
game, sit for talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Concerned over the recent incidents of bomb attacks, the country's business leaders yesterday urged all political parties and the civil society to stop their blame-game and sit together to find out solutions to the situation.

At a meeting organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), the leaders of different chambers, associations and trade bodies decided to meet with the prime minister and opposition leader very soon to persuade them to sit in dialogues to find ways to end bomb terrorism.

"For the sake of national existence and the country's economic development, we strongly urge all political parties to sit in dialogues

unconditionally and find out ways to stop the bomb attacks," said Mir Nasir Hossain, president of the apex trade body.

Terming the bomb terrorism a national problem, he said the very dimension of the situation has now changed and the sign is very ominous.

President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sayeeful Islam said those who are conducting the attacks in the name of Islam cannot be true Muslims, for Islam does not approve of any criminal activities.

"The political parties should bring out a joint statement that they are against this type of religious militancy," he said.

Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury, vice-president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and

Exporters Association, expressed anxiety over the authorities' failure to identify those who are conducting such attacks.

"If the situation continues, our export will fall drastically," he said, suggesting the government to craft an anti-terrorist law to prevent all types of terrorism.

Kamran Tanvir Rahman, president of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association, also blamed the intelligence agencies for failing to net the culprits engaged in religious militancy.

MA Awal, chairman of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, said the country is now facing a big challenge of whether or not it can stop the bomb attacks and "without a nationwide unity it is not possible".

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CHT peace deal  
means little for  
hills people

STAR REPORT

The signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace accord did not change the fate of the mass hill people though eight years have passed since the agreement.

The peace accord, which ended a two decade long bush war between the indigenous guerillas and members of army, was signed on December 2, 1997. The accord brought a new sense of hope to the hill people for the first time in years. But in reality they received neither peace nor developments after signing the peace accord.

Now the government and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samity (PCJSS), which signed the peace accord, have taken a face-to-face position over its implementation.

"The Awami League government did sign the accord but could not implement it. But now the coalition

government has been violating the accord, even somewhat working against the accord," said Jotirindriya Bodhiprio Larma alias Santu Larma, the president of the PCJSS.

Santu Larma became the chairman of the CHT regional council by the clause of the accord. The government also formed three hill district councils but the regional council is remaining almost inactive, as they do not have power to work because of government's policy.

"Without a secular and democratic government, the CHT accord would not be implemented. The coalition government does not want to implement the treaty for sure," said Santu Larma.

The accord was a major achievement that recognises indigenous people's rights, and had draws acclamation from leaders of

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PM's talks offer  
nothing but  
farce: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina spurned Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's proposal for discussion with political parties aiming to stop bombings and terrorism, saying that it's nothing but a farce.

She also rejected Jamaat-Ameer Matur Rahman Nizami's claim that his party has no link with the militants.

In a post-hartal press statement yesterday, Hasina questioned the prime minister's sincerity about combating terrorists.

She deplored that the prime minister refrained from taking any action even after the ruling-party MPs claimed that a section of the alliance government is involved in Islamist militancy.

"After this, the prime minister must drive out terrorists from her own party first," said Hasina, also the chief of the Awami League (AL).

She said instead of taking action against those within her party, "the prime minister is taking action against those who are speaking

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Nightmare revisits

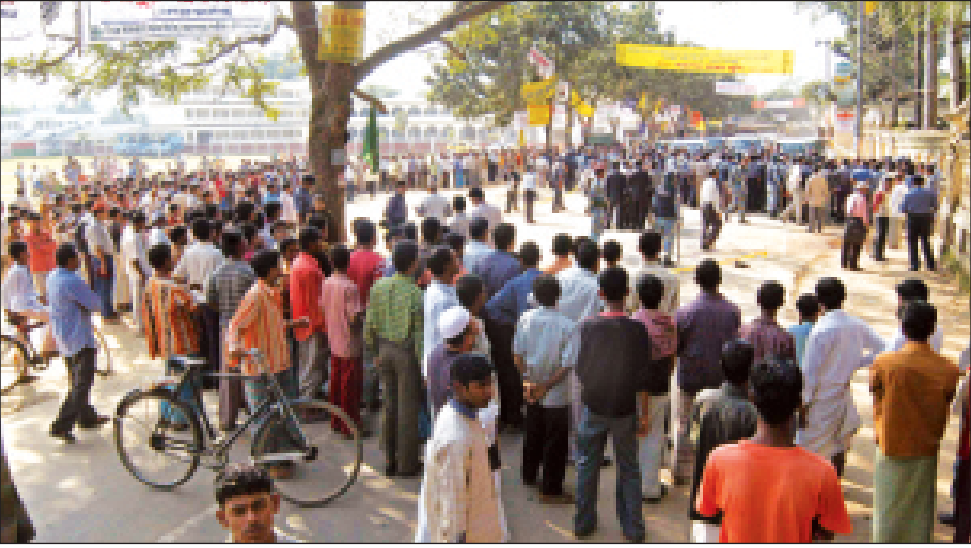


PHOTO: STAR

From top: Wounded victims of yesterday's bomb blast in Gazipur are given medication at DMCH; relatives of an injured policeman break down; and people crowd in front of Gazipur DC office after the blast.

Outlaw killed  
in "crossfire"  
in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kustlia

A top cadre of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML) was killed in 'crossfire' during a shootout between his accomplices and the police in Chuadanga early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Shamsheer Ali alias Sama, 35, of Iswarchandrapur village under Darshana upazila of the district.

According to police, a team of Detective Branch (DB) police arrested Shamsheer at Nimtala of Darshana upazila on Tuesday night.

During interrogation at the DB office, Shamsheer gave information about his accomplices and hidden firearms. Following his statement, DB police took him to Iswarchandrapur village at about 3:30am to recover the firearms hidden there.

Police said as they reached the spot, Shamsheer's cohorts opened fire on them. Police fired in return resulting in a gunfight.

Shamsheer died on the spot during the shootout when he attempted to escape while his

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COURT BLASTS  
Worried UK  
offers help

UNB, Dhaka

British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office Dr Kim Howells has condemned the appalling attacks on innocent people in Gazipur and Chittagong and wanted to work with the Bangladesh government to tackle terrorism.

Howells in a statement from Pakistan on Wednesday offered his deepest sympathy and condolences for the families of the victims and the people of Bangladesh.

"We cannot allow the terrorists to succeed. We must work together to defend democracy and the rule of law in Bangladesh," he said.

Shahadat Chy's  
Qulkhwani  
today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Shahadat Chowdhury will be held after Asr prayer at his residence at house no. 223, lane-15, Lake Road, New DOHS today, says a press release.

Shahadat Chowdhury, freedom fighter and editor of the Shaptahik2000, died on Tuesday. He was buried at Shaheed Buddhijibi graveyard Mirpur on Wednesday.

Relatives, friends and well wishers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani.

Prayer Timing			
December 2			
	Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	5-15	5-50	
Juma	12-30	1-15	
Asr	3-45	4-00	
Maghrib	5-19	5-22	
Esha	7-00	7-30	
Source: Islamic Foundation			



Left: A lawyer holds a high official of police by the collar at Paltan during hartal yesterday; right: police drag Jubo Mohila League activists at city's Russell Square during hartal.



PHOTO: STAR

200 JMB men  
trained in  
Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Over 200 members of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) had been trained as seasoned cadres for carrying out destructive activities in at least 10 secret training centres in Bagerhat.

Sources said the JMB militants trained at these centres can operate any kind of guns and set off grenades and bombs.

Divided in 16 groups each with 12 to 24 members, these JMB operatives spread out to cover the districts in Khulna Division in the first week of August.

They have achieved their preliminary target by carrying out the

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Top man of JMB suicide  
squad held in Rajshahi

28 other operatives netted with leaflets, books on jihad

STAR REPORT

Law enforcement agencies yesterday arrested 29 suspected members of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in different districts of the country.

They also recovered a huge amount of foreign currencies, leaflets, books on jihad and materials bearing links to militancy from the arrestees, said police sources.

Our staff correspondent from Rajshahi reports: Police yesterday arrested a top member of JMB

suicide squad in the city's Upashahar area.

The arrestee, Obayedur Rahman of Shibganj in Chapainawabganj, was taken on a five-day remand the same day in an August 17 blast case filed with Rajpara Police Station.

Police recovered notebooks and diaries containing names of leaders of Pakistan-based militant outfits including Laskar-e Taiyeba, Jois-e Muhammad, Al Tawheed. Two of those diaries include directions and plans of militant kingpins Abdur

Rahman and Bangla Bhai.

A student of Arabic at Rajshahi Government College, Obayedur was an activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami.

The journals also include the locations of a number of militants' lairs and teachings and strategies of JMB chief Abdur Rahman. Besides, police found in his possession a monthly magazine of JMB.

Our Rangpur correspondent reports: An army intelligence

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AL meets today  
to review  
situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meets today to review the prevailing political situation and to discuss opposition's movement to end the BNP-Jamaat rule.

The meeting, scheduled to be held at the party's Dhanmondi office with Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair, is likely to fix the day for the party's national council as the existing committee expires on December 25.

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Bomb materials  
similar but  
less powerful

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost similar kind of materials was used in the bombs blasted in the two suicide attacks in Gazipur on Tuesday and yesterday, but yesterday's one was less powerful, experts said.

Both the bombs contained home-made explosives, but yesterday's one contained less amount of explosive while it also had aluminium powder in it, said an expert yesterday after primary examination of the evidences of explosion.

The circuit used in yesterday's bomb was simple, but it was a completely different one in Tuesday's bomb, which was not found in any of those used in the recent blasts, the expert said requesting anonymity.

The bomb that went off yesterday weighed around one kilogram and contained pieces of iron used in fishing nets as splinters while the

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Safta finalised in  
Kathmandu

PTI, New Delhi

In a major effort to promote regional trade, the seven South Asian countries have finalised the agreement on Free Trade Area, which is to come into effect from January 1.

Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath, who is in Brussels to attend the G-90 Summit of African-Caribbean-ACP (ACP) countries, made this announcement after receiving a message from Kathmandu where the Committee of

Experts on Safta (South Asian Free Trade Area) deliberated on the modalities of the agreement.

They met to resolve the outstanding issues including compensation of revenue loss to least developed countries, on Safta to complete the negotiations as agreed upon in the Saarc Summit in Dhaka last month.

Safta signed at the Islamabad

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PHOTO: STAR

Pickets block a passenger train at Gazipur during hartal yesterday.