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Babar sees end to militancy within couple of months

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday expressed his hope of a satisfactory end to the militancy issue within a couple of months.

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BTV to cover SAFF final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Television (BTV) will telecast the final of the Fourth SAFF Championship between Bangladesh and India live from Karachi on Saturday.

The final will kick off at 7:00 pm

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Dollar turns scarce as import booms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A decelerating export growth, payment of deferred import bills as well as for fuel and fertiliser imports, and additional expenses for hajj pilgrims have resulted in a fierce dollar crisis.

Consequently, taka is losing value against the US dollar every day. The crisis has to do more with the scarcity than the high price of dollar. The daily cross-currency transaction volume in the inter-bank foreign exchange market has nose-dived from around \$2 crore in early November to the range of \$14 to \$15 lakh now.

The situation has worsened to such an extent that no dollar seller was found in the forex market last

Tuesday.

That day, in a bid to keep dollar price at the import level in check, Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (BFEDA) in a meeting fixed it at Tk 67. But the step proved ineffective, as, according to banking sources, the price of dollar in the last two days hovered over Tk 68.

The price level of dollar for import has climbed steadily from below Tk 66 in October to Tk 67 in last week to hit Tk 68.15 yesterday.

In the inter-bank forex market, the dollar price soared from Tk 65.80 in early November to Tk 66.10 last week and then rose by Tk 0.10 yesterday to Tk 66.20, banking sources said.

The state-owned Sonali Bank

and Agrani Bank have been the key players in the inter-bank forex market. But the dollar scarcity has become so acute that Agrani Bank is now the only one selling dollar and that too in a limited amount. It sold only \$2 lakh yesterday.

For the last few weeks, Sonali Bank has not supplied any dollar to the market. It rather had to buy dollar in large volumes. Even yesterday it purchased \$1 lakh from Agrani Bank.

A number of factors are behind the Sonali Bank's forex debacle. This month it had to pay \$4.5 crore for the fuel imported by the state petroleum agency, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), alone. The bank is also due to pay

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

JMB trainer in Barisal released as IOJ leader pulls strings

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A ruling alliance leader allegedly forced the Barisal district police and administration to release Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) military trainer Mohiuddin Faruki yesterday.

Sources said Maulana Shakhawat Hossain, organising secretary of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), had been staying in Barisal for about a week for making arrangements to release Mohiuddin, arrested in connection with the August 17 countrywide serial bomb blasts.

However, Barisal district Convener of IOJ Abul Kashem Mohammad Shahjahan said Shakhawat visited Barisal for organisational activities.

During his stay in Barisal, the IOJ leader met several magistrates and leaders of the ruling BNP for the release of Mohiuddin, the sources said.

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Prayer Timing

December 16

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-22	5-25
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

TERROR TALKS

War heroes not sure if Jamaat taboo issue

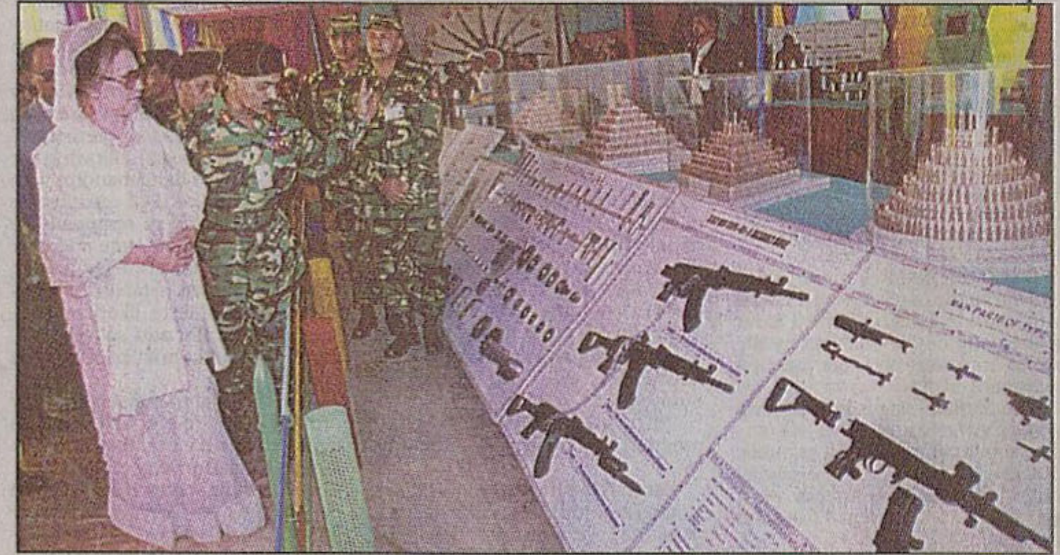
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The freedom fighters awaiting the talks on militancy with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Sunday appear to be confused whether they would be allowed to talk about ruling

coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami's alleged links to the militants.

The apprehension began to grow after Jatiya Party (Birshad) was reportedly forced to hold back from talking about Jamaat's militancy

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia looks at arms and ammunition after inaugurating an eight-day Victory Day exhibition of war weapons at National Parade Square in the city yesterday.

Cattle market bid turns into farce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) bidding process for its 15 makeshift cattle markets for the Eid-ul-Azha next month allegedly turned into a farce as some influential ward commissioners and ruling BNP leaders along with their musclemen prevented the intending bidders from participating in the bid.

The ward commissioners, BNP leaders and their men yesterday

and also on Wednesday stomped the Nagar Bhaban premises to scare away the prospective bidders. Some people from the mayor's office also joined the troublemakers.

Police deployed at the Nagar Bhaban remained silent spectators to this show strength.

The last date for buying tender schedules was Wednesday and that for submitting tender was yesterday.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

Arrest Nizami, Mujahid: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded the government arrest Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and cabinet members Motiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid for patronising the militants.

"Nizami and Mujahid and their party Jamaat are the driving force behind the growing militancy in the country," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told reporters after a meeting of the AL presidium.

He demanded arrest and legal

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

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