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US has no info
on Qaeda
network in
Bangladesh
UNB, Dhaka

The United States has said it does not have any specific information about the presence of al-Qaeda network in Bangladesh.

Responding to a Washington Post report that al-Qaeda may have found its way into Bangladesh, US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack on Thursday said: "I don't have any particular information about the presence of al-Qaeda individuals in Bangladesh. We do know that they have -- that they have had in the past a worldwide network."

He, however, said Washington was as concerned as Dhaka about the issue of terrorism in the South Asian nation.

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5 cops hurt in
shootout with
gunrunners

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Five policemen and a suspected gunrunner were wounded in a shootout when police interdicted an arms-smuggling bid at Sadar upazila yesterday.

Masud Rahman, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) in Cox's Bazar, said the gunfight began at about 4:00am when a team of Cox's Bazar police challenged 'five gunrunners' in the hilly area of Gomatali.

Sources said the gang was about to set off for Chittagong with a large consignment of firearms.

But intercepted, they opened fire on the police team. Police returned fire, leading to a gunfight.

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Agitating govt
college teachers
go on 6-day strike
from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of government colleges under the banner of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) General Education Association will refrain from work for six days starting from today.

They join the non-government primary school, high school, college and madrasa teachers who are on indefinite strike.

The government college teachers will refrain from work until

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Israeli warplanes yesterday pound Uzai district of southern Beirut near the airport for the first time while carrying out a series of raids in eastern Lebanon.

Tk 90 lakh Bogra forest trees sold at Tk 9.8 lakh

BNP men cut over 20,000 costly trees in 3 years through secret tenders, local MP denies link

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Back
From Dharaborosa Char, Bogra

In the last three years, the same BNP lawmaker - Kazi Rafique - also reportedly influenced the forest department to let BNP leaders and activists plunder 14,000-15,000 more trees on a Bogra sandbank - Dharaborosa Char in Shariakandi, according to sources at the district administration.

The latest controversial tender was put to the fridg after a probe

committee of the district administration detected three months back instances of staggering corruption.

The inquiry committee, headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Sayed Mizanur Rahman following a complaint by Sharikandi Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Firdous Alam, found over 7,000 shishu,

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PHOTO: STAR

Stumps of trees are all that is left at Dharaborosa Char in Bogra. Selling each tree for as low as Tk 135, the authorities razed the entire forest.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

40 buried under rubble as Israeli jets pound Lebanon

UN struggles to set truce terms, road links with Syria snapped after 4 key bridges bombed

REUTERS, Beirut

Israeli air strikes killed at least 40 civilians in Lebanon and a Hezbollah rocket barrage into Israel killed three people yesterday as world powers tried to agree on a resolution to halt the fighting.

One air strike hit a farm near

Qaa, close to the Syrian border in the Bekaa Valley where workers, mostly Syrian Kurds, were loading plums and peaches on to trucks, local officials said. They said 33 people were killed and 20 wounded.

An Israeli army spokesman said air strikes in the area had targeted

two buildings that military intelligence had showed were used by Hezbollah to store weapons.

But television footage showed bodies of what appeared to be farm workers lined up near the ruins of a small structure in fruit groves. Strewn nearby were fruit baskets.

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Country dates with acute power crisis

Technical glitch halts Ashuganj plant

STAR REPORT

Technical faults are increasingly plaguing different power plants and regional grids, adding to the already acute power crisis across the country.

Ashuganj power plant, the second biggest of the country, yesterday morning suffered the latest in a series of breakdowns in power generation. The plant has tripped thrice in two and a half months.

Besides, different regional grids have experienced major technical

Baby dies of 'wrong' treatment
Relatives fail to get prescription, ransack hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following a three-year old child's death due to alleged wrong treatment at a private hospital at Dhammandi in the capital, the girl's relatives manhandled the hospital staff yesterday.

Former-affected Farzana Faiza Chowdhury alias Rowshi, daughter of Shaiful Alam Chowdhury in Tajmohol Road in Mohammadpur, was admitted to the Pancare Hospital and Diagnostics at 10:30am on Thursday with fever.

After Rowshi died at the hospital at 10:00am yesterday, relatives wanted to see treatment papers and prescription. As the doctors failed to provide those, the aggrieved relatives vandalised furniture and flower tubs and got locked into a scuffle with the hospital staff.

Police rushed to the hospital, brought the situation under control and sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Rowshi died due to wrong treatment by the doctor. Prof

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Manmohan says sorry to Asma over hotel room search

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh apologised yesterday to leading Pakistani human rights activist Asma Jahangir after police searched her room at a hotel in South Delhi.

Singh, who knows Asma Jahangir personally, spoke to her and apologised for any inconvenience caused to her by the search.

Asma Jahangir had gone to Delhi to attend a meeting of South Asian Human Rights group which was attended by representatives from countries of the region including former Bangladesh foreign minister Kamal Hossain, his wife Hamida Hossain, eminent human rights activist Sigma Huda and editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam.

It was explained to Asma Jahangir that there was enhanced security enforced in Delhi as the Indian Independence Day neared.

Police had 'barged' into the hotel rooms of the Pakistani rights activist and her delegation and started rummaging their luggage

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RU moves to recruit 546 staff again thru' fresh test

Ignores over 50,000 applications, lawsuit pending with SC

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Rajshahi University (RU) authorities have started issuing letters to the 546 employees for attending written tests and interviews scheduled to begin from August 11 while a legal suit against the controversial recruitment is still pending with the Supreme Court.

The class III and IV employees, who were 'illegally' recruited in April 2004, have been allowed to apply against 350 newly-advertised posts.

There are recommendations from officials for the 546 employees whereas none of over 50,000 general applicants for the posts has

been called for written test or interview, informed sources said.

Rajshahi University, already facing a huge deficit budget, will have to spend over Tk 3 crore annually due to the fresh recruitment while the total allocation for 'education purposes' of the university in this fiscal year is Tk 5.80 crore, sources said.

The RU authorities have already spent Tk 2.5 crore from development and stipend funds for daily basis salaries of the 546 employees and Tk 15 lakh on cases filed over their 'illegal' recruitment in April 2004.

"Rajshahi University is heading

towards a serious crisis simply due to political reasons," Workers Party politbureau member Fazle Hossain Badsha said pointing to incidents of violence and chaos on the campus following the recruitment.

Badsha, also a former vice president of RU Central Students Union, hinted that the RU move would be legally challenged soon.

TEACHERS, OFFICIALS CONCERNED
Expressing concern over the recruitment move, several senior teachers and officials said the disputed employees don't have the qualification and experience while

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DHAKA JAIL

Inmates not served with fish, meat for 2 months

Contractors hike rates as prices of the items soar in market, authorities yet to budge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an unprecedented instance, the Dhaka Central Jail (DCJ) authorities failed to provide fish or meat to inmates almost throughout the entire months of June and July even though it is obligated to provide the items every other day.

It has been learnt that the contractors had stopped supplying fish

and meat to the DCJ as the authorities did not approve the contractors' bid, which quoted higher rates for the items, on time. The DCJ is now accommodating around 9,000 prisoners and detainees.

According to sources concerned, the bidders' rates for different items were quite in line with existing market prices and the tender evaluation committee also recom-

mended to accept the proposal.

In the wake of growing resentment among the prisoners and detainees, the authorities resumed providing fish and meat from the last week of July. Suppliers to a number of other jails have also expressed their inability to supply some items anymore due to the rise in prices.

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5 Bhaluka militants sent to JIC

No 'important information' gleaned yet

STAR REPORT

Five out of seven remanded militants, who had been arrested from Bhaluka madrasa on August 2, were sent to Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka for questioning yesterday.

They are Moulana Mufti Abdur Rouf, suicide squad members Saiful Islam and Kamruzzaman Kamal, and two Ehsar (full-time) members of banned Jamaatul

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Rouf was also active in Rajshahi

5 killed in Comilla road crash

UNB, Comilla

Five people died and 20 others were injured when a bus rammed an auto-rickshaw on the Comilla-Chandpur highway at Keshanpur in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said the accident took place at about 5:30pm when a Chandpur-bound bus from Dhaka hit the three-wheeler, killing three of its five passengers on the spot and injuring 22, including bus passengers.

The remaining two auto-

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Country dates with acute power crisis

Technical glitch halts Ashuganj plant

STAR REPORT

Technical faults are increasingly plaguing different power plants and regional grids, adding to the already acute power crisis across the country.

Ashuganj power plant, the second biggest of the country, yesterday morning suffered the latest in a series of breakdowns in power generation. The plant has tripped thrice in two and a half months.

Besides, different regional grids have experienced major technical

setbacks four times in last five months.

Two current transformers (CTs) of the Ashuganj plant yesterday stopped functioning after flashing an overload signal on the monitor at 8:05am.

Power generation at two 300-megawatt units - number 3 and 4 - came to a halt immediately after the shutdown of the CTs, which are used to carry power to the distribution lines.

As a result, all the circuits of 230-kV Ashuganj-Ghorashal and

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Tigers outclassed Zimbabwe clinch series

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh went down without fighting in the fourth one-day international as hosts Zimbabwe took an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series with a seven-wicket win at the Harare Sports Club ground yesterday.

Having headed into the series as favourites and relishing on a prospect to win their first-ever away series, the Tigers completely failed to come into grips with their own errors as the Zimbabweans took sweet revenge after being defeated in both the Test and the one-day series back in January 2005.

Middle-order batsman Brendan Taylor again ended the match with a massive six, this time off leg-spinner Alok Kapali, to end the match with 8.2 overs still in the bag.

Bangladesh succumbed once again to some poor shot selections and a couple of unnecessary run-outs to score 206 for nine in 50 overs.

Opener Shahriar Nafees struck 45 off 93 balls before throwing away his wicket to part-time bowler Hamilton Masakadza. He shared a 52-run stand with in-form Aftab Ahmed, who scored 27.

All-rounder Forhad Reza struck a four and a six to score 30 runs. His