

## More fertiliser

**FROM PAGE 1**  
feed, reports our staff correspondent in Khulna.

Ghose & Brothers, a fertiliser dealer, hoarded the fertilisers on the ground floor of a three-storied building on 7 PC Roy Road. The owner of the dealership, Uma Prashad Ghose, could not be arrested.

Police took the owner of the building Deb Prashad Sheth in custody for his suspected involvement in the hoarding.

According to police, Uma Prashad Ghose is a listed smuggler and black marketer.

The joint forces led by metropolitan Magistrate Atiul Haque also seized huge quantities of spoilt basic commodities from a warehouse on Station Road.

The recovered spoilt food items are 150 sacks of rice, 136 sacks of sugar, 26 sacks of lentil and 233 sacks of fish feed.

The warehouse belonged to rice trader Elias Hossain -- proprietor of Medina Traders.

In Chittagong, members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) sealed off 16 large warehouses at Majhirhat under the Doublemooring thana, our staff correspondent reports.

However, Rab did not enter the warehouses as no magistrate was available yesterday. They would raid the warehouses in the morning today.

It is believed that many top food importers of the country stockpiled huge quantities of basic commodities such as lentil, sugar, pulses, edible oil or other items in these warehouses.

Sources said three commissioned agents -- Kabir Majhi, Ahmed Trading and Ali Enterprise -- rented the warehouses a few years back to store various commodities imported by leading importers including PHP and Abul Khair groups.

UNB reports, police sealed off an unregistered food-processing factory in Natore after they found huge quantities of adulterated food items from the establishment.

Detective branch of police raided the factory named Uttara Foods and seized adulterated 'tasty saline', fruit juice, 'ready tea', sugar, and raw materials used in making the items.

In Sirajganj, residents of a village

## Ekushey Book Fair

**FROM PAGE 16**  
contained essays.

Visitors expressed satisfaction over the environment of the fair with less dust and no long queues.

The gathering of book-enthusiasts was particularly noticeable at the stalls of Anya Prakash, Ananya, Moula Brothers and Seba Prakashani.

Several publishers expressed their satisfaction over the sales of books, while many others were not happy over the issue. The readers complained against the high price of books this year.

A number of prominent writers were also present at the fair yesterday.

Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal visited the fair in the afternoon and spent time at Samoy Prakashani giving autographs to fans. He also unveiled the cover of a book, 'Computer-E Bangla Operating System' by the publishing house.

Eminent writer Selina Hossain also unveiled covers of two books, 'Nari Jiboner Golpo', a collection of 84 women writers, and 'Se Ak Banishikha' by Rowshan Ara Akhter.

In the morning, Reza Kibria came to the fair on the occasion of publication of an essay collection 'Prabondho Sangraho', by his slain father Shah AMG Kibria. The book was brought out by AGamee Prakashani.

Writer Imdadul Haq Milon spent time at Ananya Prakashani. Writer Pranab Bhatya also came to fair yesterday.

A seminar and a cultural programme were held at the Bangla Academy in the evening.

## Thick fog

**FROM PAGE 1**  
passengers on board more than 800 vehicles immensely suffered on both sides of the Padma and the Jamuna at Daulatdia, Paturia and Nagarbar points.

Around 350 vehicles from Dhaka lined up at Paturia in Manikganj whereas 430 vehicles that included Biswa Itjema-bound buses lined up at Daulatdia in Rajbari. About 20 vehicles queued up at Nagarbar terminal in Pabna.

Army men were seen controlling the traffic at the terminals to ease sufferings of the stranded passengers.

In Munshiganj, ferry movement on Maowa-Keorakandi route was severely disrupted for about 11 hours until 10:00am yesterday morning due to dense fog, causing immense sufferings to the passengers, reports UNB.

BIWTC sources said ferry service on the route remained halted for over 11 hours leaving several hundred vehicles stranded on both sides of the river Padma.

Passengers of the stranded vehicles said they had to suffer a lot due to acute scarcity of food and drinking water.

Meanwhile, ferry movement through Mukhtarpur ferry ghat remained suspended for hours due to the same reason.

BIWTC sources said thick fog forced 19 large launches and a number of boats to anchor in mid Padma, Meghna, Shitalakhya and Buriganga rivers.

Meteorologists, however, forecast that the foggy weather will start normalising by tomorrow. Temperature might fall by a couple of degrees but there is no possibility of any cold wave, they said.

## Power ministry

**FROM PAGE 1**  
touches to their respective agenda.

A top BPDB official told the news agency that they have already completed the drafting of the work plan in line with the guidelines given by the chief adviser's office.

"We'll focus on the problems the power sector has been facing and also place some concrete proposals for resolving the nagging crisis," he said. Sources said two types of strategies--short-term and long-term--will be accommodated in the plan of action.

Mainly there will be a list of generation projects, their funding and the present state of implementation in detail in the plan. The present state of the existing plants will also be included in the plan, according to the sources.

In this regard, they said, the short-term plan will be presented with an implementation target by 2009.

A number of priority projects might be laid out on list, such as 450MW Meghnaghat phase-II and phase-III, another 450MW plant at Bheramara, 300MW Shiddhirganj peaking plant, 360MW Shiddhirganj combined-cycle plant, 150MW Chandpur plant, 90MW Fenchuganj plant, 210MW Shiddhirganj plant and another 450MW Dhaka North Power plant project.

Among the projects, the World Bank has proposed to provide funds for the 450MW Bheramara and 300MW Shiddhirganj plants while Japan is interested in the 360MW Shiddhirganj plant.

The BPDB will mention in the plan how much gas and coal will be required for fuelling the power-enhancement plan.

On the other hand, sources said, Petrobangla will focus on gas and coal exploration and proper usage of the newfound national wealth under the ground.

Particularly, it will present in detail the present and future states of country's gas and coal production and the funding it needs to implement the projects.

The sources said the work-plan will emphasize diversified uses of the energy resources for power generation and other purposes including downstream business emerging from mining industry.

Energy Secretary AMM Nasir Uddin said the work-plan on gas and coal utilisation is being prepared on the basis of the Energy Master Plan up to 2025.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Fahim Munaim told the UNB that as per instruction, the Power and Energy Divisions are getting ready to make the presentation tomorrow.

## Laws approved

**FROM PAGE 1**  
deputy managing directors.

A maximum of 13 members to be appointed by the government would comprise the board of directors. They would be accountable to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) the way private commercial banks (PCBs) are.

The central bank will monitor the NCBs to create a level playing field for all banks in the country, sources add.

In the early nineties, the Rupali Bank was changed into a public limited company but it continued to operate like all other nationalised banks due to restrictions set out in the memorandum and articles of association. But this time, the rules have been altered so that the government involvement is confined only to appointment of the board directors.

ABB source said when the central bank's reform programmes have improved the performance of the private banks, the NCBs lag far behind thanks to government control and political interference in loan disbursement.

Low-yield investments in the sectors prioritised by governments often result in defaulting on loans. Political leaders pressure banks to disburse loans against projects that are mostly evaluated to be unfeasible.

In order to do away with the problems, both the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) proposed wide-ranging reforms in the banking sector, the first being the corporatisation of the NCBs with plans for full privatisation.

The decision to corporatise the NCBs is considered a major step towards the reforms prescribed by the Bretton Woods institutions with plans to eventually remove all government controls from the banks.

The WB and IMF have long been pushing for privatisation of the NCBs. They have made it one of the major prerequisites for Bangladesh to receive Poverty Reduction Growth Facility loans.

The last BNP-led coalition government had agreed in principle to gradually privatise the state-owned banks.

## Star editor

**FROM PAGE 1**  
ago. He does not appear to know

even his name properly, nor its spelling. Abul Mansur Ahmad is a political and literary figure of undivided Bengal and subsequently of Pakistan and Bangladesh whose place in history cannot be dirtied by the likes of Mr Huda.

Mr Huda's statement reveals, more than anything else, his nature, level of sophistication and sense of decency. It is full of innuendoes and malice and contains not a single fact.

Since Mr Huda seems to know a lot about my personal wealth, I invite him to publish everything he knows about me, my "mischievous" ventures and my moveable and immovable properties so that the whole world can know what Mr Huda is talking about.

Mr Huda has chosen a wrong person to silence with his threats. We will continue to perform our journalistic task "without fear or favour".

## Meghnaghat-2 Power Project

**FROM PAGE 1**  
bagged the power deal as a political favour by the previous alliance government, on January 21 gave PDB a Tk 6.22 crore cheque as land rent and initial development payment. But the cheque bounced.

As per the Land Lease Agreement (LLA) of Meghnaghat-2, the PDB can cancel the contract for such a fault. But the PDB gave BON Consortium three weeks' time that expires on February 22 and served it with a notice of "Project Company Event of Default" as per the LLA. The BON Consortium must "cure" its action, or the contract will be cancelled.

"With great concern it is informed that the power company has failed to make payment of rent and Initial Development Payment within due date and constitutes a 'Project Company Event of Default' under Land Lease Agreement, which if not cured within 22nd February, 2007 shall give rise to the right on the part of Bangladesh PDB to initiate action pursuant to Land Lease Agreement," said the PDB letter.

The PDB gave BON Consortium 20 acres of land. Meanwhile Karim has gone into hiding. Various sources claim that Karim has fled to Malaysia with his family using fake names and addresses. The Daily Star tried to contact him over telephone several times yesterday but failed to reach him.

In addition to failing to pay PDB the initial development payment, Karim is unlikely to be able to arrange finances for Meghnaghat-2 within April, and meet the contractual deadline.

The power project needs at least US \$250 million for engineering and procurement of the plant and its installation.

"Because of the cases and corruption charges against him, no bank is going to put their neck in this project," quipped an official.

"This project is dead. The country has paid the price of unfair tendering process for this project," he added.

The BON Consortium is supposed to be led with German power

company Steag with only 20 percent stake (officially unannounced). Obaidul Karim claimed to The Daily Star early January. Orion has only 16 percent share and Belhassa holds the remaining shares.

However, though holding a small share, the BON Consortium is headed by Karim himself and he has been tapping various banks to arrange the project finance. Karim had also held an international tender to procure power plant equipment last year and received three bids from NSRD, a Chinese company, Korean Hyundai and another unqualified Chinese company. Karim told The Daily Star that he might opt for Hyundai plant and finalise the tender in February.

But the cases against him have thrown him off the driving seat of this project as well as other projects.

While these cases were being set to be filed against Karim, the BON Consortium gave the PDB a cheque of Tk 6.22 crore. But the bank returned the cheque to the PDB along with a note saying, "May be presented again, 7 days required."

The PDB reviewed the situation in the light of the LLA and deducted the event of default. The PDB can cancel the contract if the contractor fails to take a remedial action. The LLA did not spell out any cure period for this kind of fault. So, the PDB resorted to another part of the contract dealing with material breach, which gives a 30-day period.

Early January, Obaidul Karim met The Daily Star correspondent to brief on the progresses on this project. The Daily Star ran a number of stories on this project, highlighting how Karim has been unduly favoured at the bid selection process and later during the contract formulation process.

Karim claimed that he had finalised 80 to 85 percent of the project finance. Upon awarding the engineering and procurement contract in February, he would be able to close the finances in March. He also claimed that world leading financiers were ready to fund the project.

Industry insiders said that Karim was earlier turned down by several

top financiers like Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank--who's small involvement gives other financiers confidence to pump in major parts of required fund.

Orion never actually gave the bid that was selected for this power project and it actually submitted its name as one of the two partners of a Japanese bidder Nisso Eiwi, which has the experience to qualify for building such a power plant. However, Nisso disappeared from the scene in 2004 and Orion brought in another German company Steag showing it as the lead bidder. The government initially rejected such a gross anomaly, but then with pressure from the Hawa Bhaban the government accepted and approved the bid by August 2005. Orion signed a series of contracts with the PDB and other authorities for the power project and signed the LLA, the final deal, on October 11 last year.

## Kuakata murder

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Dhaka at around 7:00pm on January 27 by their private car after a two-day stay there.

When they reached Rajopara on Kuakata-Dhaka road under Kalapara upazila, Abul attacked Tania with sharp knives and the other two killers helped him to murder her, Zahid told the magistrate.

According to the plan, the killers then dumped the body into a roadside ditch and set out for Dhaka with the car, while Zahid went to a nearby house and called locals saying that some smugglers had attacked them and killed his wife.

Later on, Kalapara police arrested him from the spot suspecting his involvement with the incident. Patuakhali Sadar police seized the car abandoned at Kaliakapur on Patuakhali-Dhaka road the next day and recovered two bloodstained knives from the car.

Tania of Talalta in Dhaka was an assistant teacher of Shaheed Babul Academy of the capital.

## Big guns stay out of dragnet

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The only 'big fish' arrested is

Giasuddin Ali Mamun, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique

Rahman's business partner and a close friend, whose name had kept coming up in connection with illegally monopolising a number of businesses and large scale corruption which allegedly made crores of taka for him.

He had been first detained on the night of January 11 by the joint forces from DOHS area in the capital and released later to be finally arrested again from Nayapaltan last Wednesday.

Dissatisfied with the drive's outcome, the advisory council on law and order, on January 28, instructed the security forces to focus on 'real criminals' and their patrons, asking them to avoid wholesale arrest. It asked the forces to prepare a fresh and accurate list of criminals and arrest accordingly.

The immediate past four-party alliance government successfully politicised the administration, police, and constitutional institutions making way for several of its ministers, members of parliament (MP), local leaders, their relatives and musclemen to earn large sums of money by grabbing public property, and manipulating major business tenders.

They also influenced appointments and transfers in most of the state-owned commercial banks and corporations through their loyal CBA (collective bargaining agent) leaders.

Since the handover of power by BNP-led alliance government, different newspapers ran series of reports exposing alleged corruptions, irregularities and other crimes of former ministers and lawmakers including Mirza Abbas, Nazmul Huda, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, SA Khaleq, Salauddin Qader Chowdhury, Altaf Hossain Choudhury, Giasuddin of Narayanganj, Sarwar Jamal Nizam and Shajahan Chowdhury of Chittagong, Helaluzzaman Talukder Lala of Bogra, Hafiz Ibrahim of Bhola, Dildar Hossain Selim of Sylhet, Abdul Wadood Bhuiyan of Khagrachhari, Mojibor Rahman Monju of Khishoreganj, Monjurul Ahsan Munshi of Comilla, and Prof Shahidul Islam of Kushtia.

This correspondent compiled the names from investigative reports published in different newspapers including The Daily Star.

Top leaders of banned militant Islamist organisation Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh, Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, admitted before investigators of having links with four-party leaders Barrister Aminul Haque, Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu of Natore, Alamgir Kabir, Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, Nadim Mostafa and Abu Hena, said sources. None of them has even been interrogated yet.

Hours into the declaration of emergency, security men arrested former AL lawmaker Kamal Majumder in Dhaka. Among other significant arrests were those of Chittagong BNP leader Dastagir Chowdhury, Tangail transport leader Murad Siddiqui, Mirsarai Upazila BNP President Delwar Hossain alias Dlu Member, and Habiganj Municipality Chairman and district BNP General Secretary GK Gaus.

As the drive was strengthened, several former lawmakers and leaders of both BNP and AL including Ali Asgar Lobi, Gias Qader Chowdhury, Salman F Rahman, and Tanjim Ahmed Soheli were barred from going abroad.

Although the forces raided several places, they did not find many godfathers and criminals at their houses and offices as they had gone into hiding.

The forces rounded up some relatives and close aides of some former ministers including Ruhul Quddus Talukder and Altaf Hossain Choudhury to extract information about their corruption and links with criminals including militants.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward commissioners Mirza Khokon, Chowdhury Alam, Monwar Hossain Dipjol and Kazi Abul Bashir, who had allegedly been involved in extortion, land-grabbing and tender scams, could not be arrested despite several attempts.

The security men could so far arrest ward commissioners Sayeed Bepari, M Quaiyum and ABM Enamul Haq in Dhaka. Enamul was freed later.

DCC ward commissioners who are not staying home at night to avert arrest include Chowdhury Alam, Dipjol, Mirza Khokon, Ismail Hossain Benu, Kazi Bashir, M Shaheed, MA Quaiyum, Shamsul Haq, Mozammel Haq Mukta, Mir Ashraf Ali, Badal Sarkar, Motahar Hossain, Khaza Habib Ullah, Abul Khayer Bablu, M Mohon, and Abdur Rouf Nannu, according to sources.

Alleged smuggling syndicate leader of Chittagong, Maruf Nizam, Bogra's Sonatolo, Upazila BNP President Syed AKM Ahsanul Tayeb Zakir, leader of extortionists in Narayanganj transport sector Mahbud Ullah Tapan, former finance minister Saifur Rahman's son Naser Rahman, Jasas leader Mosharrar Hossain Thakur of Habiganj, former BNP whip Shahidul Haq Jamal's nephew Rezaul Haq Reaz, Jhalakathi BNP leader Ziauddin Mizan, Tanore BNP President Sheesh Mohammad, and Sylhet BNP leader and ward commissioner Ariful Haq Chowdhury are yet to be arrested although there are severe allegations of criminal activities against them.

Most of the CBA leaders of state-owned commercial banks, Desa, Wasa, Titas Gas and T&T in Dhaka and elsewhere, who used to manipulate appointments, transfers, promotions, loans, and interest waivers, and who used to supply manpower for political programmes, went into hiding following the declaration of emergency.

After the joint drive had begun, most of the CBA officers were found locked as the leaders were not going to the offices.

Although the forces arrested Rajuk CBA leaders Kazi Amir Khasru, Abdul Malek and Auranageb Nannu, and Nurullah Bahar of Chittagong, most of the corrupt CBA leaders escaped the dragnet.

Besides, AL leaders who are accused of patronising criminals including Shamim Osman, Haji Selim, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Sheikh Helal and Abu Taher, and expelled Joyanal Hazari are also yet to be interrogated.

Talking on the criminals and godfathers roaming free, ASM Shahjahan, former inspector general of police (IGP) and an adviser to the 2001 caretaker government, said caretaker gov-

## Baghdad blast

**FROM PAGE 16**  
the latest crash occurred about 7:30 am as two Apaches were flying along a well-established air route near Taji, a major US base about 18km north of Baghdad.

One helicopter was struck by heavy machine gunfire but continued flying, the witnesses said. The other helicopter banked sharply and flew back toward the source of fire, apparently to attack the target.

But that helicopter was also struck by ground fire, exploded in a ball of fire and crashed, the witnesses said. The other helicopter flew away, they said. The witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing for their own safety.

The United States has lost more than 50 helicopters in Iraq since May 2003, about half of them to hostile fire.

In fresh violence in at least nine people were killed on Saturday in a series of attacks across Iraq, including six police commanders shot dead near the northern town of Samarra, security officials said.

A group of gunmen attacked a police checkpoint early in the day, killing six commanders and wounding another six, an official at a local police coordination centre told AFP.

The attack took place north of Samarra, which is 125km north of Baghdad, he said.

However, the loss of four helicopters since Jan. 20 has raised new questions about whether Iraqi insurgents are using more sophisticated weapons or whether US tactics need changing.

Three of the latest crashes involved Army helicopters two Apaches and one Black Hawk. The fourth was an OH-6A observation helicopter operated by the Blackwater USA security firm. All were believed shot down, and 20 Americans, including four civilians, died in the crashes.

In Washington, Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, acknowledged that insurgent ground fire in Iraq "has been more effective against our helicopters in the last couple of weeks."

But Pace said it was unclear whether "this is some kind of new tactics or techniques that we need to adjust to."

The Islamic State of Iraq, an al-Qaeda-linked group, claimed on Friday that it shot down the Apache near Taji in a statement posted on an extremist Web site.

"We tell the enemies of God that the airspace of the Islamic State in Iraq is prohibited to your aircraft just like its lands are," the statement said. "God has granted new ways for the soldiers of the State of Iraq to confront your aircraft."

Iraqi insurgents have used heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and shouldered-fired SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles throughout the Iraq conflict. US officials believe Iran is supplying Shia militias with new weapons including more powerful roadside bombs, Katyusha rockets and a newer class of rocket-propelled grenades.

Some of those weapons could have found their way into the hands of Sunni insurgents, who operate around Taji.

The US military relies heavily on helicopters to avoid roadside bombs and insurgent ambushes. Any new threat to helicopters would be a serious challenge to the military as it gears up for a major crackdown against Sunni insurgents and Shia militias in Baghdad.

Helicopters are always vulnerable to ground fire, said Stephen Trimble, Americas bureau chief for Jane's Defence Weekly. "A well-placed bullet can pretty much take down any helicopter," he said.

Protecting helicopters from attack is significantly more complicated than defending against roadside bombs, Trimble said.

"What you would do with a Humvee is up armour it," he said. But helicopters can't support a significant increase in weight. The US military is looking into technology that tracks and fires at rocket-propelled grenades, he said, but its use on helicopters is a long way off.

Apaches carry multiple high-tech defences, including long-range sensors, radar jammers and an infrared jammer for countering incoming missiles.

## Hamas, Fatah

**FROM PAGE 16**  
campus in the town of Rafah, torching the student council building, university officials said.

More than 100 Palestinians have been killed in internal violence since Hamas, which rejects Israel's right to exist, won parliamentary elections a year ago and wrested power from Fatah, which advocates peacemaking with the Jewish state.

On Friday alone, the day's death toll reached 17, including four children, and more than 200 people were wounded. Casualties were so high that hospitals ran out of ambulances to transport the dead and wounded, and blood supplies were running low.

The day's violence came after an earlier truce collapsed Thursday afternoon, setting off fire fights that killed seven by the end of the day.

In Washington, the so-called Quartet of Mideast negotiators met on Friday to explore ways to jump-start peacemaking between Israel and Abbas despite the latest round of violence between Hamas and Fatah.

There's simply no reason to avoid the subject of how we get to a Palestinian state," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said after meeting with foreign ministers from the European Union, United Nations and Russia.

Abbas and the Syria-based Mashaal are to meet on Tuesday in Saudi Arabia for a new round of talks on forming a coalition government, Nabil Abu Rdenah, an Abbas spokesman, said Friday.

Abbas hopes that replacing the current Hamas-led Cabinet with a more moderate Hamas-Fatah coalition would be enough to induce the West and Israel to lift crippling sanctions imposed on the Palestinian government to pressure it to abandon its militantly anti-Israeli stand.

But previous rounds of coalition talks have ended in failure and often led to new bloodletting.

However, the Apaches, which were designed to fight the Soviet Union on the plains of central Europe, have proven vulnerable to intense ground fire.

During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, more than 30 Apaches had to break off an attack after suffering heavy damage in fighting with the Iraqi Republican Guard. One helicopter crashed but the two crew members survived.

Elsewhere, the US command said 18 insurgents were killed in fighting Thursday night and Friday after insurgents opened fire on the Americans from several positions in Ramadi, 115km west of Baghdad. No civilian or US casualties were reported, the military said.

Ramadi, the capital of the western province of Anbar where Sunni insurgents remain well-entrenched, has seen some of the bloodiest street battles of the war.

The US forces returned fire with machine guns, tanks and finally a missile, which struck the intended target, killing at least 15 insurgents.

On Saturday, a parked car bomb struck a commercial area south of Baghdad, killing one civilian and wounding eight, police said.

The explosion occurred just before 8 a.m. in Mahmudiya, a predominantly Sunni city some 20 miles south of the capital, police said, giving the casualty toll. Some storefronts were damaged and four vehicles were set on fire.

Mahmoudiya is in an extremely violent region in Iraq in an area known as the "triangle of death" for the numerous attacks by insurgents.

Insurgents also renewed their attacks on Friday, prompting US forces to fire another missile that killed at least three attackers.

Also in Anbar, gunmen assassinated the Sunni chairman of the Fallujah City Council, Abbas Ali Hussein, an outspoken critic of al-Qaeda. He was the third council chairman assassinated in Fallujah this year as insurgents target Sunnis willing to cooperate with the US and its Iraqi partners.

The US military said six more troops died Thursday, two in fighting in Anbar province, one of an apparent heart attack and three in vehicle accidents.

The deaths raise to at least 3,092 the number of members of the US military who have died since the Iraq war started in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 2,480 died as a result of hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

In Baghdad, police said they found the bullet-riddled bodies of 23 people throughout the capital apparent victims of Shia or Sunni death squads. Three more bodies were found in Kut, southeast of Baghdad, and two in Mosul.

## Tigers open

**FROM PAGE 16**  
However, the bad news for millions of cricket fans at home is that they might miss the action due to non-availability of live coverage by any satellite channel available in the country.

The series is Bangladesh's final preparation for next month's World Cup in the West Indies. But after a 5-0 whitewash at home in November last year, the Tigers are upbeat to settle an old score against their battered southern African rivals.

Bangladesh suffered a 3-2 defeat when they last toured Zimbabwe in July-August last year.

## Ijtima ends

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Road to facilitate devotees to take part in the prayer.

A dais has been erected in the northern part of the Ijtima field to arrange the concluding prayer.

Around four thousand foreign devotees from 65 countries around the world are also attending the three-day congregation on the bank of the river Turag in the suburban town of Tongi.

The Ijtima is being held under tight security by several thousand security personnel including Rapid Action Battalion members. Twenty-five magistrates are also performing Ijtima duties by rotation.

Meanwhile five people including a Malaysian national died yesterday, the second day of the event.

Malaysian citizen Jahi Mohammad Jane Abdur Rahman, 67, died at Asian Cardiology Hospital at Mohammadpur yesterday morning due to cardiac failure.

Abdul Jalil, 84, of Jhenidha, Abdur Razzak, 32, of Noakhali, Rafiqul Islam, 44, of Rajshahi and Faruq Ahmed, 42, of Manikganj also died on Friday