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Militant patrons also to face same fate

Probe begins to identify militants' political godfathers; patrons' list drawn up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hours after the execution of the six linchpins of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), the government high-ups yesterday gave hints that it is now the turn of the patrons and masterminds of the militants to face trial.

"We have already tentatively identified the patrons of the organisation (JMB)," Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad told a private television channel.

"There were patrons behind the militants and by this time we have almost identified them. We have got names of persons involved with the organisation from the militants arrested so far. We have area-wise lists and we are proceeding based on this," he said.

Law Adviser Mainul Hossain said the patrons will face the same punishment if they are found

guilty.

"The law enforcers are looking for the godfathers. If they are netted and we come to know about their role, they will face the same punishment," he told private TV channels yesterday.

The law adviser said a lot of information has been gathered from the statements given by the militants to police.

Mainul said they need to investigate who worked as the godfathers behind the militancy. "I think those who gave political backing to the militants are in the country," he said.

The IGP said a process of filing cases against the patrons and collecting evidence and witnesses is going on. "Soon we will be able to bring them to book," he said.

Six top militants including JMB chief Abdul Rahman and his second-in-command Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai were executed two days ago, but the patrons and

masterminds of their militant activities have remained untouched.

Meanwhile, a case was filed with Bagmara Police Station in Rajshahi against BNP leader and

former minister barrister Aminul Haque for his alleged patronisation of militancy. Fazlur Rahman, a victim of torture inflicted by Bangla Bhai, filed the case on Friday night.

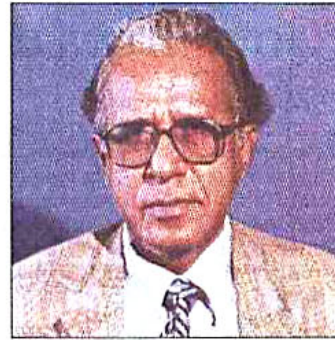
Torture victim sues ex-BNP minister Aminul Haque

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Former post and telecommunications minister barrister Aminul Haque was sued on Friday night for aiding and abetting the militants of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

This is the first case against any of those ex-BNP ministers and lawmakers widely alleged to have backed the rise of Islamic militancy in the northern districts.

Fazlur Rahman, who was



Aminul Haque

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Miladunnabi today

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, marking the birth and death anniversary of Prophet Hazrat Mohammed (PBUH), will be observed across the country as elsewhere around the Muslim world today.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, immediate past prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

The day is a public holiday. The government has chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day. The programmes

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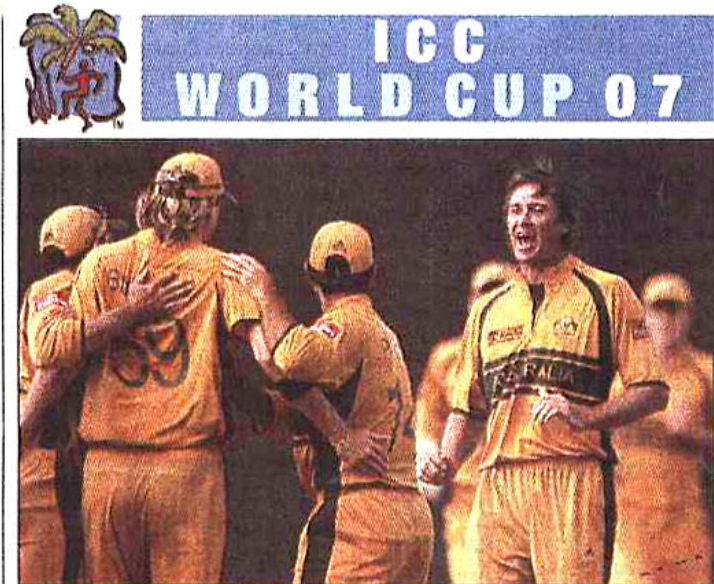
Rejoinder

Sundarban East Forest Division sent a rejoinder disagreeing with some parts of the news item that The Daily Star published on March 21 under the title "Forest Fire: Trees on 250 acres burnt in Sundarbans".

The news mentioned that 250 acres of forest area was burnt while the rejoinder signed by divisional forest officer claimed that the actual burnt area was only two acres.

According to the news, bawalis

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Australia's Glenn McGrath (2nd-R) is jubilant after dismissing Bangladesh's Afab Ahmed (unseen) during their World Cup Super Eight match at the Sir Vivian Richards stadium yesterday.

McGrath mauls Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

The record breaking exploits of Glenn McGrath left Bangladesh tottering at 65/5 at the end of 16 overs in their 22-over rain-reduced debut Super Eight match against favourites Australia at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua today. Captain Habibul Bashar was

batting on 14 while Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had just come to the wicket after the fall of Sakib Al Hasan (25).

McGrath became the highest wicket-taker in World Cup history when he had Afab Ahmed nearly caught at mid-off by Nathan Bracken in his third over. Besides

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Saarc FMs agree on university, food bank

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, New Delhi

Saarc foreign secretaries yesterday discussed taking Safta to the next level by including a free trade in services and unanimously deciding to recommend the setting up of South Asian University, creation of Saarc Food Bank and granting Iran observer status.

The first day of the two-day Saarc Standing Committee Meeting in New Delhi, comprising foreign secretaries, included discussions to operationalise the Saarc Development Fund (SDF) and a regional transport network ahead of the Saarc leaders' summit to be held in the Indian capital on April 3 and 4.

"We discussed taking Safta to

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Holiday Notice

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on account of Eid-e-Miladunnabi. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.

SAARC SUMMIT

Trade, connectivity, terrorism main focus

REZAUL KARIM

The forthcoming 14th Saarc Summit in New Delhi is expected to focus particularly on trade, terrorism and connectivity amongst the member countries.

The two-day summit that begins on Tuesday at the Vigyan Bhawan Convention Centre will underscore an increased global interest in the region with the US, European Union (EU), China, Japan and South Korea participating as observers for the first time since the launching of the regional grouping 22 years ago in Dhaka.

Bangladesh Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Sri Lanka President Mahinda

Rajapakse, Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Bhutan Prime Minister Khandu Wangchuk and Nepal Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala will attend the summit.

Observer countries' foreign ministers -- Li Zhaoxing of China, Taro Aso of Japan and Song Minsoon of South Korea -- will make brief presentations at the opening session of the summit. The US will be represented by Richard Boucher, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia.

Officials said close interaction with three important observer countries from Asia would further boost the region's economy.

Besides, the EU and US already

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IFTEKHAR-PRANAB MEETING

Dhaka asks Delhi for duty free access, removal of non-tariff barriers

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, New Delhi

Bangladesh yesterday asked for duty-free access for its goods to the Indian market and the removal of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers to reduce nearly \$8 billion cumulative trade deficit between Bangladesh and India, when Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury met Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee.

Terming the meeting an attempt to revive the dormant bilateral negotiation structures between the two neighbours, Iftekhar said India reassured Bangladesh that no water would be diverted from the Tipaimukh river

and Mukherjee has given positive signs for ratifying the 1974 Indira-Mujib Land Boundary Agreement.

"We asked the Indian government to provide duty-free access for Bangladeshi goods to the Indian market," Iftekhar told reporters at a briefing at Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, ahead of the 14th Saarc Summit to be held in the Indian capital.

"We discussed Bangladesh's cumulative \$7 to 8 billion trade deficit with India which should be brought down and I requested my counterpart to dismantle non-tariff and para-tariff barriers for Bangladeshi goods in order to reduce the gap," Iftekhar added.

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Shipbuilding firms get foreign orders

RAFIQ HASAN, back from Chittagong

Some local ship building companies are receiving orders worth millions of dollars from foreign buyers for large ocean-going ships as they are diverting orders from developed East Asian countries to labour intensive developing countries like Bangladesh.

Ship building industry sources said since countries like South Korea and Singapore are becoming less interested in building such ships, European buyers are now coming to Bangladesh, China and India.

Bangladesh can be a major builder of large ocean-going ships if the government allows duty free import of steel, the basic raw material for ship building industry, they say.

Duty free import of steel can be

allowed against a bond system that the material would be used only for export purposes, and it would create scope for huge export orders facilitating use of the country's cheap labour force, experts noted.

"We have world class expertise and skilled labour force for ship building. The only requirement now is government's policy support. If given, this sector can earn billions of dollars of foreign currency every year," said one expert.

These days European buyers are frequently coming to visit ship building plants in Chittagong and place orders for ocean-going ships," said Sakawat Hossain, managing director of Western Marine Shipyard Ltd.

"European buyers are showing keen interest in the development of

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BDR intervention brings down essentials prices

RASHIDUL HASAN

Prices of produce in different kitchen markets in the capital are in a downward trend since Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) started setting up open markets where retailers may sell their produce for lower prices than other kitchen markets.

The price of a kilogram of onion was Tk 16 to Tk 18 in TT Para open market in Kamalapur while the price was Tk 22 to Tk 24 in other kitchen markets on Friday. The price of a kilogram of rice in BDR operated markets was Tk 15.25 while the minimum price of a kilogram of rice was Tk 21 in

Hatirpul kitchen market. Price differences are noticeable not only for rice and onions but for other produce also.

Prices are lower in the BDR markets because the border security force buys produce directly from growers, eliminating all the cost in between.

"The produce we sell in our markets are bought directly from the growers, eliminating all the cost of the middle agents, and that enables us to keep the prices down. Moreover, we don't have to bribe anybody in the process," said Lt Col Fazle Akbar, chief coordinator of 'Operation Daal Bhaat - 2007'.

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You is the most important word in our dictionary
You are the one who makes us smile
Your interests are what we stand guard
Your voice on the phone makes us happy
Your faith is what we treasure most
Your ambition fuels our resolve to modernise constantly
You inspired us to open 50 branches nationwide and aspire for more
Your journey through life bestows on us, our reason to exist

On the 12th anniversary of our relationship, we just wanted to say **thank you.**

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