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# Benazir, Sharrif fail to agree on polls tactics

**AFP, Islamabad**

Pakistan's two main opposition leaders have failed to overcome key differences preventing them from forming a united front ahead of general elections in January, party officials said yesterday.

Former premiers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif will now have to meet again next week to try to hammer out an agreement, their parties said.

Benazir and Sharif are trying to draw up a joint list of demands they want President Pervez Musharraf to meet to ensure the January 8 vote is not rigged, failing which they are threatening to boycott the election.

Any agreement is crucial because if they pull out of the election it would rob the vote of any credibility, undermining Musharraf's claims to be leading the emergency-ruled country back toward democracy.

On Monday, Benazir and Sharif set up an eight-member committee to draw up a list. It finalised a 15-point charter Thursday, but has had to refer the two outstanding issues to the party leaders, committee member Raza Rabbani said.

"We have arrived at a consensus on 13 out of 15 points. There is a slight difference on the formulation of two points," Rabbani -- a member of Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party -- told AFP without giving details.

A senior leader with Sharif's party, Raja Zafar-ul-Haq, said the committee could not agree on the reinstatement of judges ousted by Musharraf under emergency rule, or a timeframe for the government to meet the demands.

"The differences were on the issue of judges and a cut-off date to the government for acceptance of the terms for free and fair elections," Haq told AFP.

Benazir and Sharif will meet early next week to approve the demands and try to agree on a deadline, he said.

"We are hopeful about a consensus on all issues," Haq said.

Rabbani also stressed: "It is incorrect to say that the talks are deadlocked over the two points."

Sharif in particular has been calling for the reinstatement of ousted chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and 37 other judges forced into retirement by the government after refusing to swear an oath of allegiance to Musharraf under emergency legislation.

He told a private television that Benazir Bhutto's party wanted the judges issue be taken up after elections while "we want their

## WTO should focus on fair trade, not just free trade: CJ

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Chief Justice Md Ruhul Amin yesterday called upon the international community to restructure the management of international institutions in order to ensure equality, fairness, and democratic practices.

"Further negotiation under the WTO should focus on expansion of fair trade and not just free trade," the chief justice said as the chief guest at a book publication ceremony in Brac Centre Inn of the capital.

He hoped for global justice in an inclusive and fair global economic order that might put an end to poverty.

He underscored the needs for more access to the markets of developed countries for exports from the developing countries, and for extending the principle of free movement of workers as well.

The book titled 'National Law in



Children light candles at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday evening in commemoration of the loved ones lost in the Liberation War. Naripakkha, a women's rights organisation, arranged the event.



Dignitaries of South Asian nations pose for a group photo before the meeting of Saarc Council of Ministers in New Delhi yesterday.

## 'Allow cartoonists' freedom for exposing corruption'

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Speakers at a meeting yesterday said instead of limiting the freedom of speech the authorities concerned should rather ensure an atmosphere conducive to cartoonists uncovering diverse aspects of corruption.

"At present, the cartoonists do not seem to have the opportunity to work freely, whereas they can make a huge difference in exposing corruption and corruption suspects," said Rafiqunnabi, a noted artist and cartoonist who is popularly known as Ranabi.

"The authorities concerned should take necessary measures for a cartoonist to be given a free rein," he said adding that a cartoon can portray a situation from a refreshingly different point of view.

"Besides, we cannot deny the

## All 10 extremists accused of Khulna cop murder acquitted

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Khulna, on Thursday acquitted all the ten chargesheeted accused in the case of killing two police constables.

The acquitted extremists are founder of Outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) faction Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan, PBCP activists Shahadat Hossain, Asaduzzaman Tipu, Kamal Hossain, Rafiqul Islam Milton, Ekram Hossain, Mashikul Islam Mofiz, Sharifuzzaman Shumon, Milton and Biplob.

Judge Abdul Salam Shikder passed the order, acquitting the ten, as charges brought against them were not proved.

The police constables -- Ramesh Chandra and Shariful Islam -- were

## Greek cops rescue Bangladeshi held hostage by compatriots

**STAR REPORT**

Greek police have rescued a Bangladeshi national held hostage by seven fellow countrymen for ransom for over a month.

The 51-year-old unidentified man, who owned a small shipping company and used ships to transport Bangladeshi immigrants into Greece illegally, was rescued in the port of Piraeus on Tuesday, reported Qatar's Doha-based daily Gulf Times quoting AFP on Thursday.

Two of the ships were seized in Italy, which issued an arrest warrant against the businessman.

But he was kidnapped by seven fellow Bangladeshis over a month ago in the western Greek port of Patras, a major gathering point for migrants seeking access to Italy.

## Two more bodies of Sidr victims recovered

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Two more decomposed bodies were recovered from a paddy field at Tafaibari under Sharonkhola upazila of Bagerhat district yesterday, raising the death toll from cyclone Sidr in the upazila to 660.

The identity of the victims could not be known. Locals buried the bodies at noon.

Meanwhile, Hafez Khalilur Rahman has so far conducted namaz-e-Janaja of over 300 people killed in hurricane Sidr that lashed Sharonkhola upazila on the night of November 15. All the dead hailed from South Khali Union.

A teacher of Sonatala Hafeza Madrasa under Sharonkhola upazila, Khalilur Rahman also conducted namaz-e-Janaja of his elder brother Saeed Ahmed, his father-in-law, mother-in-law and sister-in-law and two other close relatives killed in the cyclone on the night.

## Twin bombings kill 26 in Iraq

**AFP, AP, Baquba, Baghdad**

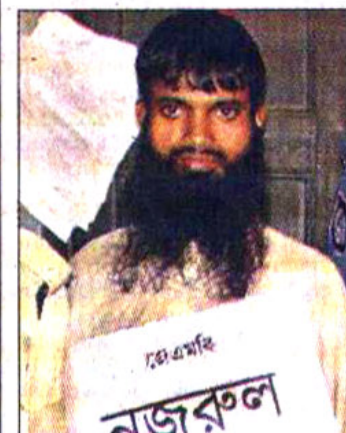
A female suicide bomber attacked the offices of an anti-al-Qaeda group that has joined forces with the US, killing 16 people while another car bomb blast killed 10 others yesterday in one of Iraq's most violent provinces, police and the US military said.

A woman suicide bomber killed at least 16 people in the first attack on Friday when she blew herself up in the office of an anti-Qaeda front in Iraq's Diyala province, police and medical sources said.

The blast, just days after the jihadi group warned of a new bombing campaign in Iraq, shook the town of Muqadadiyah, 100km north of Baghdad, near the provincial capital Baquba, security officials said.

At least 27 people were wounded in the attack, which took place at around 10 am (0700 GMT), they said.

"The explosion was caused when a female suicide bomber detonated her vest in the office of the local Awakening group," said Baquba police official Lieutenant Colonel Najim al-Soumaidaie, referring to a group of local Sunni Arabs who have taken up arms



## 2005 SERIAL BLASTS Absconding JMB accused held in Dinajpur

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur**

Police arrested an alleged member of the banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Khanpur in Dinajpur yesterday afternoon.

The arrestee Nazrul Islam, 26, is a charge-sheeted accused in a case filed in connection with the August 17, 2005 countrywide serial blasts, according to police sources.

After a tip off, a police team led by Officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Police Station Motier Rahman and Sub-inspector Nasir raided

## JMB bomber killed 8 in Netrakona on this day

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona**

Today is the second anniversary of the gruesome Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) suicide-bomb attack on a crowd in front of Udichi office on Ajahar Road in Netrakona.

A JMB bicycle bomber on December 8, 2005 blew himself up killing eight people including two leading Udichi activists Khwaja Haider and Sudipta Pal Shelley and wounded 50 others.

To observe the day, different social and cultural organisations including Udichi have taken various daylong programmes.

Even though two years have passed, families of the victims received no compensation, the victims' families alleged.

During The Daily Star correspondent's visit to the house of Khwaja Haider, his widow Shahana Begum, 28, said her family did not get any monetary assistance from the government.

"No minister, nor even the Netrakona deputy commissioner (DC) visited my home," she said.

She said she has two children, Siplu, 11, and Sawon, 3, and her



Family members of Mamun, inset, mourn the loss after gunmen shot him dead at Keraniganj in Dhaka yesterday.

## \$17.6m ADB loan for Bangladesh

**AFP, Manila**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide Cambodia and Bangladesh with 49 million dollars in loans and grants to help in development aid, the Manila based multilateral bank said Friday.

In a statement the bank said it would give 31.7 million dollars in aid to Cambodia and 17.6 million dollars to Bangladesh.

A loan of 10.1 million dollars and a grant of 9.9 million dollars would go to a rural development project covering three provinces around the Tonle Sap lake in Cambodia, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia.

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## Library for cyclone-hit students

**UNB, Bagerhat**

In a bid to facilitate the study of the students of cyclone-battered Sharonkhola upazila ahead of the SSC examination, the army has set up an evening library at Tafaibari village.

The library was opened on Thursday in two rooms of Rayenda Pilot High School, adjacent to the temporary army camp.

Teachers from nearby schools are giving lessons to some 300 students who lost their books and other study materials during the

## A YEAR INTO INTRODUCING SMP No move yet to set up 4 police stations

**IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet**

The task of setting up four more police stations in Sylhet city is yet to start even after a year of the introduction of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP).

Instead of six police stations, only Sylhet Kotwali and Dakshin Surma Police Stations are currently functioning under the metropolitan police.

A senior SMP official has admitted that the inhabitants of Sylhet

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