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Woman JMB member held in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) during a drive arrested an alleged woman "ehsa" member (full-time activist) of the banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Janagaliya Shaghata upazila in Gaibandha early yesterday.

Police said after a tip-off a contingent of Rab-5 personnel led by Capt Zakir raided the house of Amjad Hossain and arrested his wife Ambia Begum, 50, in connection with being involved with the outfit.

Rab also recovered books and leaflets on Islamic revolution at her home. Her three sons Anas, 26, Mukul, 23 and Bulbul, 20, alleged active members of JMB, fled the scene sensing the raid beforehand.

Rab handed Ambia over to Shaghata Police Station around noon.

Pro-Thaksin party claims victory in Thai polls

AFF, Bangkok

Allies of deposed Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra claimed victory in Sunday's elections, setting the stage for the billionaire's political comeback more than a year after his ouster in a coup.

Samak Sundaravej said his People Power Party (PPP), which regroups Thaksin's political allies, would form the next government although he predicted they would fall short of an absolute majority in parliament.

"I will be the next prime minister for sure," Samak told reporters, adding that he had invited other parties to join PPP in a coalition.

With 95 percent of ballots counted, state television said PPP was expected to win 222 of the 480 seats in parliament, short of the majority needed to rule alone.

Election authorities planned to release unofficial results by midnight.

The results were a repudiation of the military's relentless efforts to wipe out Thaksin's political influence, 15 months after the generals seized power in a bloodless coup, an analyst said.

"The results underlined that people still support Thaksin and want him to come back," said Ukrit Pathmanand, a professor of political science at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. "It also showed that Thaksin was still popular, especially among people living in northeastern provinces."

If PPP fails to win a majority, the Democrats could still try to win the premiership by cobbling together a coalition with a group of smaller parties.

PPP appeared to come out ahead in the polls even though one third of the country, including Thaksin's rural strongholds, is still under martial law.

A group of Asian election

observers said that it had concerns over the secrecy of the ballot and reports of vote buying, but that generally the polls had gone well.

"Overall the administration of the elections seems to have gone pretty smoothly. The Election Commission seems to have handled things pretty well," said Adam Cooper, spokesman for the Asian Network for Free Elections, which deployed 42 observers around the country.

Thaksin has not returned to Thailand since the coup, living instead in self-imposed exile in Britain, where he bought the Manchester City Football Club.

The junta dissolved Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais) party and banned him from political office, but the man who made a fortune in telecoms has remained a dominant and divisive figure in Thai politics.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

CA calls on Saudi king

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Pakhruddin Ahmed along with heads of states of different countries made a courtesy call on Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz on Friday.

Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed, Bangladesh ambassador to Saudi Arabia and secretary to the chief adviser Kazi Aminul Islam were present. They exchanged greetings with the Saudi king, according to a message received from Jeddah.

The chief adviser is scheduled to return home today morning after performing the hajj.

He left Dhaka for Jeddah en route Makkah on December 16.

Pakhruddin was accompanied by his wife Neena Ahmed, Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed and his wife Naznin Moeen. They performed hajj together.

After performing hajj, Pakhruddin and his entourage went to Madinah to make ziarah at the holy Rawja Mubarak of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) and offered prayers at the Masjid-e-Nabbi.

The chief adviser met and exchanged greetings with the Saudi king at a reception for heads of state, ministers and noted personalities on December 20.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Antique idols seized in India

Concealed in car from Bangladesh

ANI, BAGHDODRA, West Bengal

Customs officials have seized four antique idols worth 10 million rupees in the international market from Siliguri in West Bengal. The four idols carved out of black basalt date back to 12th century AD.

Officials said that they intercepted a car from Bangladesh and found the idols concealed in the vehicle.

Unauthorised dealing in antiques is banned under the Antiquity and Art Treasure Act (AAATA) of India. Under the Act, no object more than 100 years old can be taken out of the country without permission.

But even then, India has become a hub of clandestine dealings in object of art, with most of the smuggled goods finding their way to rich drawing rooms of the West.

BSF kills 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader on Khalisha border near Kushkhali in Satkhira.

The identity of the deceased remained unknown.

BSF sources said BSF members fired shots at a group of cattle traders on Khalisha border while they were returning to Bangladesh at about 4:30am. One of the cattle traders died on the spot.

BSF members took away the body.

BSF protested the killing and asked BSF to return the body.



PHOTO: STAR
Social organisation Dhakabashi brings out a colourful procession from Shishu Academy in the capital, a day after Eid-ul-Azha.

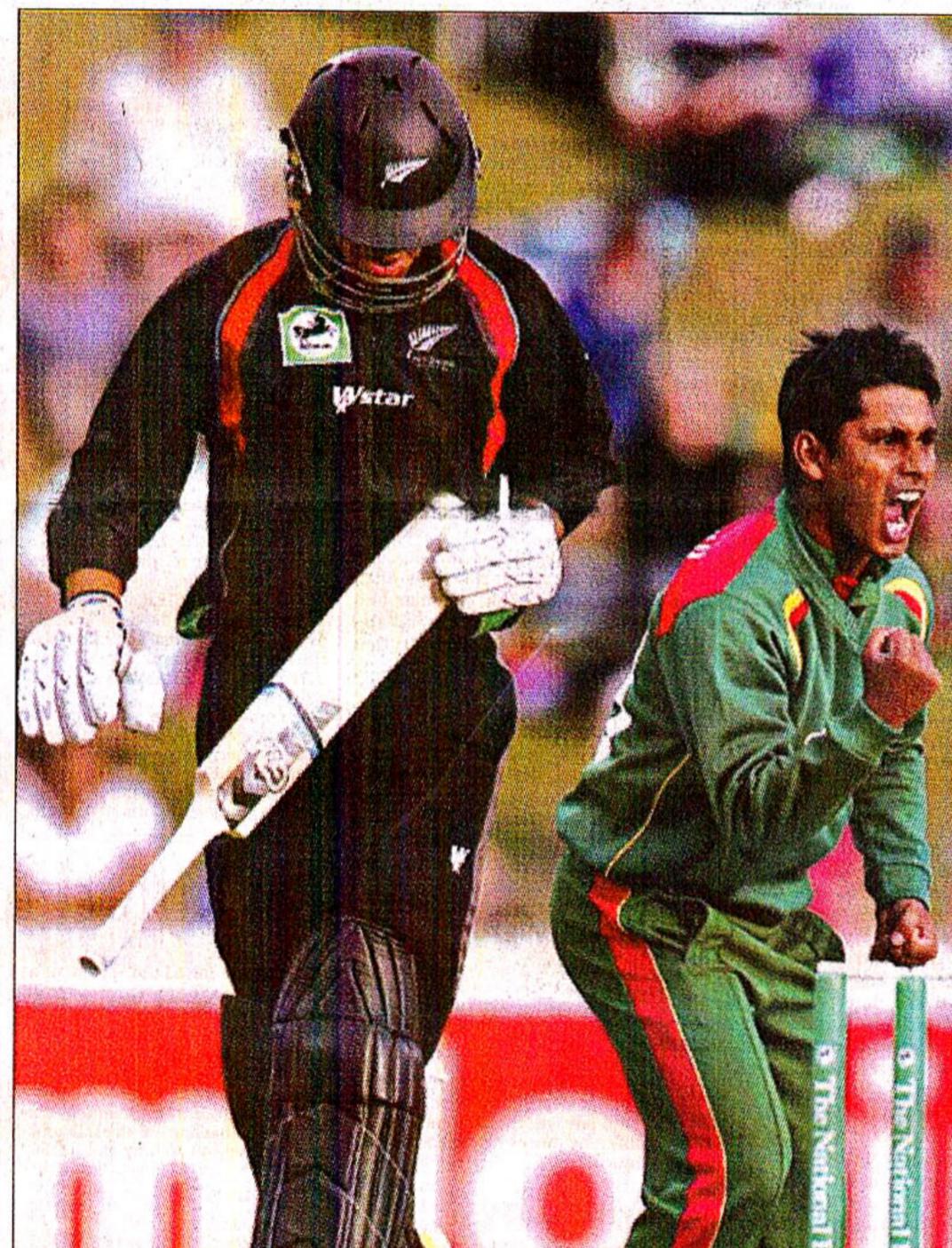


PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh Captain Ashraful, right, celebrates after getting the wicket of Ross Taylor in the Twenty20 international cricket match yesterday against New Zealand XI at Sneddon Park in Hamilton, New Zealand.

ICC donates \$250,000 to Sidr fund

AFP, Hamilton

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Sunday donated 250,000 dollars to the Bangladesh cyclone relief fund.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed presented a cheque to Bangladesh cricket team manager Ahmed Sajidul Alam and captain Mohammad Ashraful before the start of a Twenty20 charity match against a New Zealand XI here.

All proceeds from the match were also going to help the victims of the cyclone.

Cyclone Sidr slammed into Bangladesh on November 15, killing at least 3,200 people and destroying more than a million homes.

Prayer Timing

December 24

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:25	6:00
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	3:45	4:00
Maghrib	5:24	5:27
Esha	7:00	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Musharraf will rig vote

Charge both Benazir, Sharif

AFP, Larkana

this year.

"In our north, the flag of Pakistan is being lowered and the flag of extremism is being raised," she told around 25,000 thousand supporters in the southern town of Larkana.

Referring to the recent survey, Benazir called for mass protests if pro-Musharraf parties win the election.

"The government has created a rogue force. They have hired goons who will be deployed at polling stations in police uniform, which will be a source of vote-rigging," the former premier said.

Musharraf, a pivotal US ally in the "war on terror", has been struggling to keep a lid on the insurgency, especially in the country's rugged tribal northwest along the border with Afghanistan.

But he has also been faced with months of political turmoil that began when he suspended the chief justice of the Supreme Court in March and led to imposition of a six-week state of emergency which has killed at least 750 people

গুরু শপিং ভেল্টির (নিউ মার্কেট সংলগ্ন)

চাকার প্রাণকেন্দ্র নিউ মার্কেটের নিকটবর্তী ঢাকা কলেজের বিপরীতে ২৪নং মিরপুর রোড ধানমন্ডি অবস্থিত গুরু শপিং সেন্টারের

৭ম, ৮ম, ৯ম এবং ১০ম লেনার ফ্রোর ভাড়া অথবা বিক্রয় হবে।

ফ্রোর এরিয়া: ৯,৪৩৬ বর্ষফুট (প্রতি ফ্রোর) মেট = ৩৭,৭৪৪ বর্ষফুট

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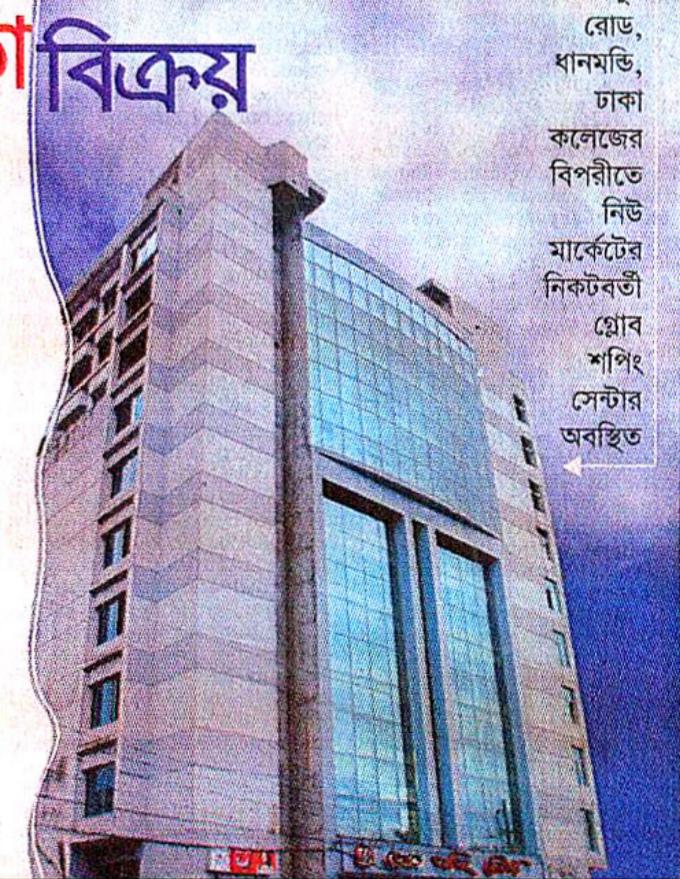
অভারেগিউল লেভেল থেকে হেল্প তলা পর্যন্ত অত্যাধুনিক এসি মার্কেট।

অর্থাধিকার: বাংক, বীমা, হস্তাগাল, ইউনিভার্সিটি, আইটি পার্ক, টেলিকমিউনিকেশন প্রতিষ্ঠান।

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২৪

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ঢাকা

কলেজের
বিপরীতে

নিউ
মার্কেটের
নিকটবর্তী

গুরু
শপিং
সেন্টার
অবস্থিত

মার্কেটের
নিকটবর্তী
গুরু
শপিং
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অবস্থিত