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## Woman JMB member held in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) during a drive arrested an alleged woman "ehsar" member (full-time activist) of the banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Janagalia of 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

AFP, 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 per cent 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 Ukrist 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.

## CA calls on Saudi king

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin 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 holy hajj.

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

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

After performing hajj, Fakhruddin 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.



Social organisation Dhakabashi brings out a colourful procession from Shishu Academy in the capital, a day after Eid-ul-Azha, to celebrate the religious festival.

## Tigers roar to win

REUTERS, Wellington

Bangladesh completed preparations for their international series against New Zealand with a four-wicket victory over a New Zealand XI in a Twenty20 match in Hamilton on Sunday.

Bangladesh, who have lost both their one-day games against first-class sides in New Zealand, will take confidence from the result against a team that included several members of the full New Zealand side.

Former New Zealand batsman James Marshall top-scored for the New Zealand XI with 33 off 26 balls, while Scott Styris scored 29 as the hosts made 133 for seven off their 20 overs.

Bangladesh began their chase for the modest total poorly, losing Tamim Iqbal in the first over for a duck and Zunaed Siddiqui shortly after for four to leave them struggling at 19 for two in the fourth over.

However, useful contributions from Aftab Ahmed (20), captain Mohammad Ashraful (20) and Shakib Al Hasan (22), all of whom were run out, moved the visitors to 86 for five in the 12th over.

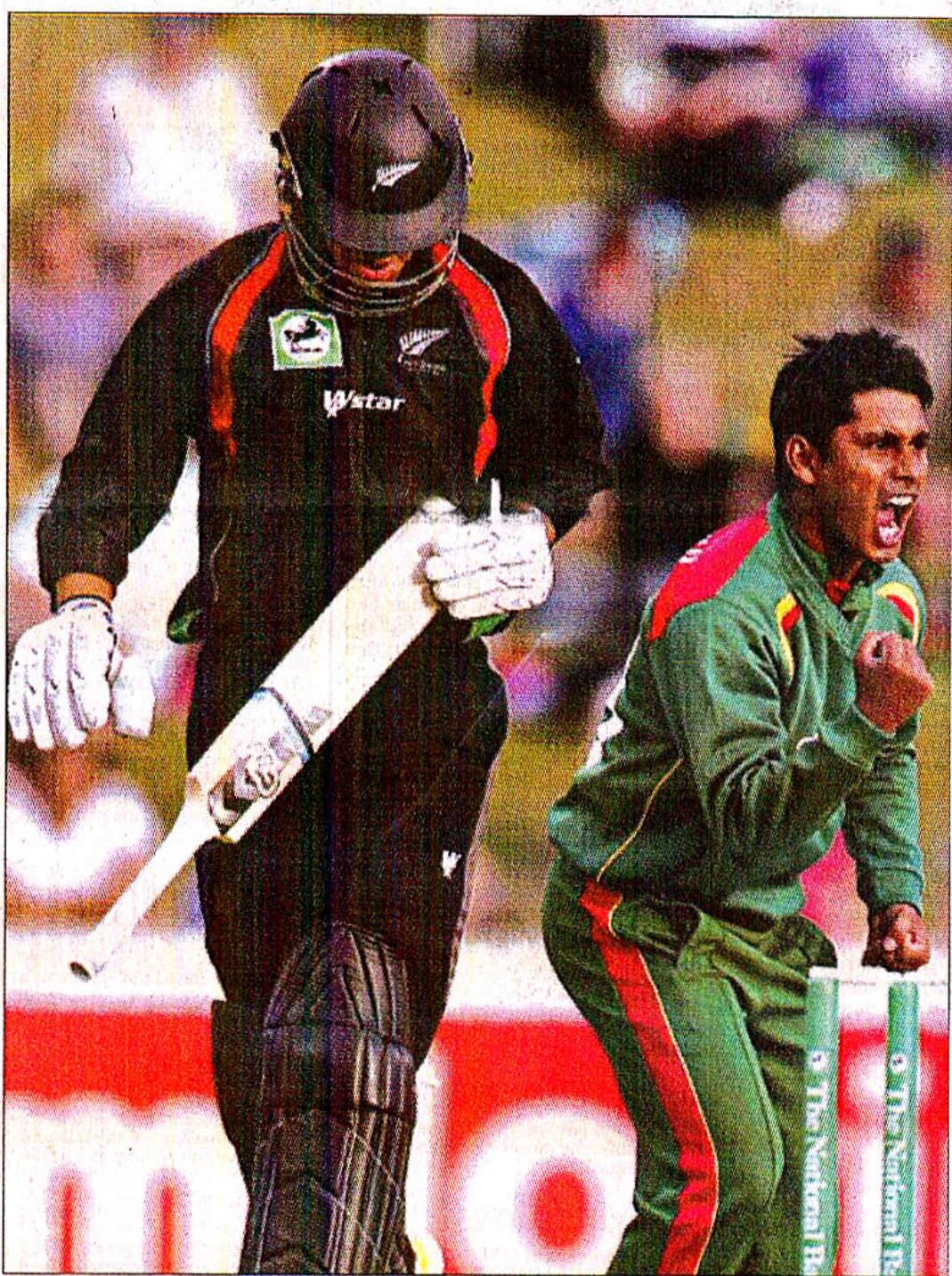
All-rounder Farhad Reza then smashed 31 off 17 balls in a 50-run partnership with Mehrab Hossain (22 not out) to take Bangladesh to 133 for five before Gareth Hopkins off Scott Styris caught him.

Mushfiquur Rahim then scored the winning run off the last ball of the 17th over.

The match was played to help raise money for World Vision's relief fund to alleviate the damage suffered in Bangladesh from Cyclone Sidr in November.

The first game of the three-match one-day series is on Wednesday at Eden Park in Auckland before the series moves to Napier on December 28 and Queenstown on December 31.

The two sides will then play a two-match Test series.



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.

## Antique idols seized in India

Concealed in car from Bangladesh

ANI, BAGHDUGRA, 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 A.D.

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 (AATA) 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, Sathkhira

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

The identity of the deceased remained unknown.

BDR 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.

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

## OPTICAL FIBRE LINE HC order allows BTTB to sign deal for backup

SHARIER KHAN

The High Court in a rule recently stayed an order of the Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and allowed a private company sign a deal with Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) for swapping an optical fibre network.

This gives BTTB the chance to have this vital backup line free of

cost. The backup line is required to stay connected to the submarine cable when the main line is disrupted; and thus ensure uninterrupted telecom and Internet communications.

The High Court rule was issued following a writ petition filed by private phone company Bangla Phone, which has been receiving various kinds of warning from the

## Mainul admits flaws in 6th Wage Board award

UNB, Dhaka

Law and Information Adviser Barrister Mainul Hossain yesterday admitted flaws in the recently declared 6th Wage Board award for journalists, employees and workers of newspapers and news agencies.

There might be some flaws in the gazette notification on the

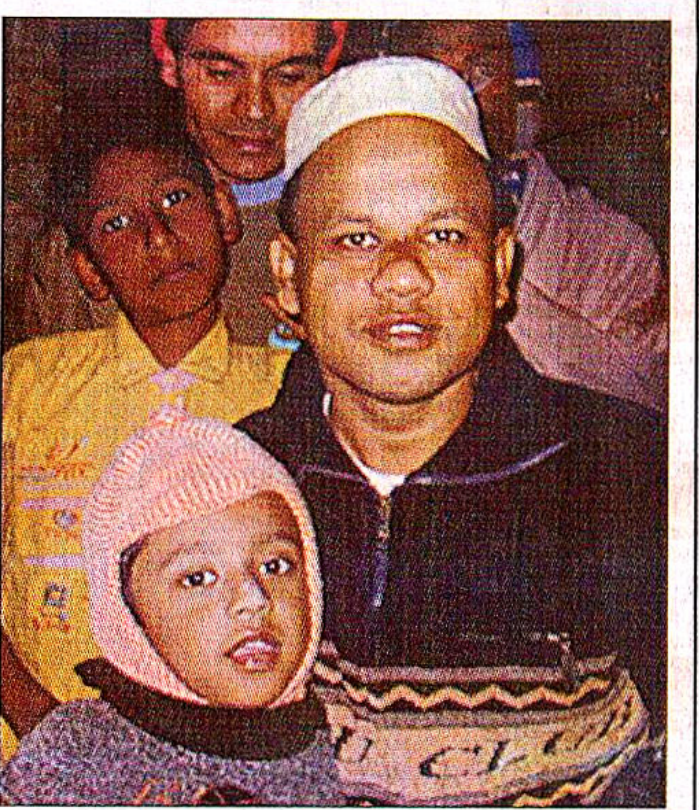
## DATeline AFGHANISTAN Harrowing tale of Noor Islam's captivity

PORIMOL PALMA, back from Bagharpara, Jessore

Freedom was almost a resurrection for him, daylight had only been a dream punctuated with thoughts of being shot dead every other moment in the dark caves of Afghanistan, where he had spent 82 sleepless days in captivity.

"This is my second life. I've started my life anew, because I could never imagine that I would return home," said Noor Islam, who had been abducted by unidentified Afghan militants on September 15 this year from Brac office in Logar Province of Afghanistan. He returned home on December 13 following his release on the 7th.

He said he could hardly sleep in the caves during his captivity as he had been left blindfolded with his legs tied. "In around three months, I slept no more than 10 to 12 hours. I tried to sleep fearing I would get sick



Noor Islam poses with son at their village home in Jamdi in Bagharpara, Jessore after his return from Afghanistan. He was abducted by unidentified Afghan militants.

## 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 Sajjadul 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.

## Musharraf will rig vote

Charge both Benazir, Sharif

AFP, Larkana

Pakistan's bitter election campaign heated up again yesterday as the country's main opposition leaders accused President Pervez Musharraf of trying to rig the vote two weeks from now.

Musharraf, battling a wave of militant violence that saw 56 people killed in another suicide attack Friday, is under intense international pressure to ensure the January 8 parliamentary election is free and fair.

But Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, boosted by a recent poll, which found Pakistanis overwhelmingly oppose the president, hit the campaign trail with allegations that he will engineer a parliament that favours him.

Holding the first rallies since an Islamic holiday marred by the attack, Benazir suggested Musharraf was a "dictator" who had mishandled the mounting insurgency, mainly in the north, that has killed at least 750 people

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 that has killed at least 750 people

**গ্লোব শপিং সেন্টার** (নিউ মার্কেট সংলগ্ন) **ভাড়া বিক্রয়**

ঢাকার প্রাণকেন্দ্রে নিউ মার্কেটের নিকটবর্তী ঢাকা কলেজের বিপরীতে ২৪নং, মিরপুর রোড ধানমন্ডিতে অবস্থিত **গ্লোব শপিং সেন্টারের** ৭ম, ৮ম, ৯ম এবং ১০ম তলার ফ্লোর ভাড়া অথবা বিক্রয় হবে।

ফ্লোর এরিয়া: ৯,৪৩৬ বর্গফুট (প্রতি ফ্লোর) মোট = ৩৭,৭৪৪ বর্গফুট

**বিশেষ সুবিধা ও বৈশিষ্ট্য সমূহ:**

- অত্যন্ত আকর্ষণীয় লোকেশন।
- কার পার্কিং ব্যবস্থা।
- অত্যাধুনিক লিফট, এসকেলেটর ও স্ট্যান্ডবাই জেনারেটর।
- আভারগ্রাউন্ড লেভেল থেকে ৬ষ্ঠ তলা পর্যন্ত অত্যাধুনিক এসি মার্কেট।

**অগ্রাধিকার:** ব্যাংক, বীমা, হাসপাতাল, ইউনিভার্সিটি, আইটি পার্ক, টেলিকমিউনিকেশন প্রতিষ্ঠান।

**ফ্রিফ্রি ফ্রাটেনার্স এন্ড ইনভেস্টমেন্টস লিমিটেড**

প্রধান কার্যালয়: ৪ ইউনিস সেন্টার (১১তম ডাল), ৫২-৫৩, দিলকুশা বা/এ, মতিঝিল ঢাকা-১০০০  
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