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PM's public programmes curtailed on security alert

Two ministers, intelligence sources say

HASAN JAHIID TUSHER and M ABUL KALAM AZAD

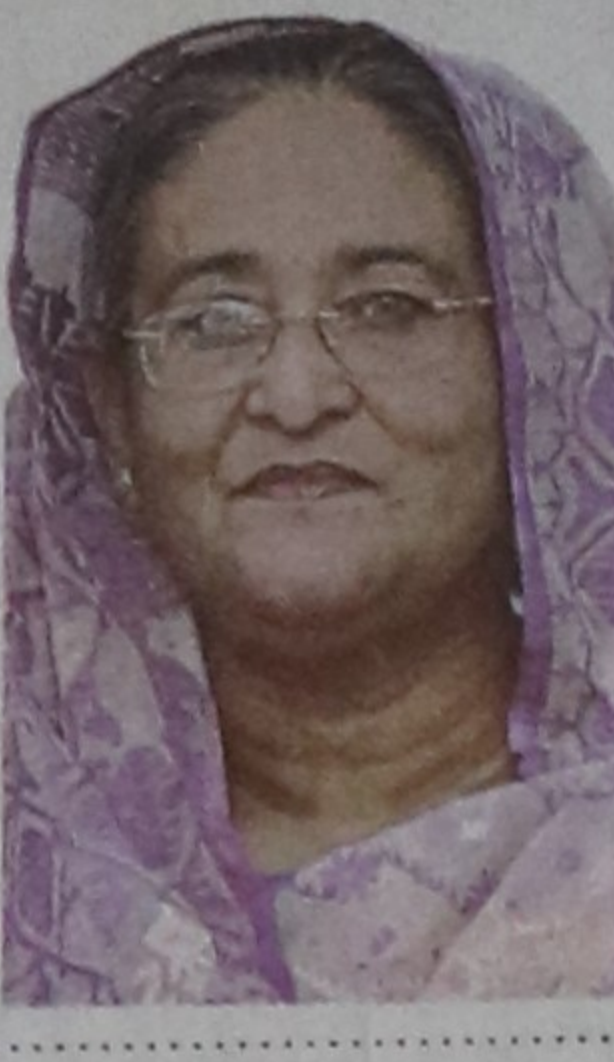
The government a couple of days ago received information from different international intelligence agencies that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's life is under threat from international terrorist organisations who are in league with local extremist groups.

Two ministers and intelligence sources told The Daily Star yesterday that they received information that the month of February is espe-

cially crucial. Following the threat alert, all scheduled outdoor programmes of the prime minister were immediately curtailed.

The international intelligence sources informed Commerce Minister Faruk Khan and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni about the threat. Upon receiving the information from the US, United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan, security of the prime minister were immediately strengthened, sources close to Hasina said.

"She is a target, and there is



no doubt about it," a senior official of a domestic intelligence agency said.

The official, who is involved in anti-terrorism work, said security of the prime minister will be rearranged soon, and some sophisticated security apparatus will be incorporated, especially for occasions when she will be attending outdoor events.

State Minister for Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj said they are assessing the intelligence about the threat,

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina enters state guesthouse Jamuna on Hare Road yesterday where she moved from Sudha Sadan for better protection. Inset, security personnel guard the new prime minister's residence.

PHOTO: STAR/COURTESY

S Arabia to recruit more doctors from Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saudi Arabia is soon going to recruit 5,000 doctors from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India for dozens of newly constructed and renovated public hospitals in the Kingdom.

Arab News, an influential Saudi newspaper, quoting Saudi health ministry

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Mashrafe now a \$6 lakh cricketer

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza hit an amazing figure when the Kolkata Knight Riders purchased the Bangladesh fast bowler for six-lakh dollars (US) after a sensational bidding in the Indian Premier League (IPL) auction in Goa yesterday.

There was more good news for the Tigers as Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful was sold to Mumbai Indians, who roped in the batsman at his base price of US\$ 75,000.

After a dramatic bidding, Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan's Knight Riders got pace spearhead Mashrafe, dubbed "Narail Express", for a price that is the biggest ever deal for any Bangladeshi sportsman in history.

Mashrafe's bidding started with a base price of US\$ 50,000

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Trans-Asian Railway project finally set to take off

PINAKI ROY

The government is going to start work on Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) that would connect the country's railway system to a 81,000-km network stretching from Europe to East and South-East Asia.

"The prime minister has already directed me to take initiative in this regard," Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told The Daily Star.

The minister along with high officials of Bangladesh Railway (BR) is now visiting

Chittagong and Cox's Bazar to see the possible route of the TAR to connect Chittagong and Cox's Bazar with Myanmar.

Starting from Turkey, the TAR would link Bangladesh with six countries of East Asia including Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore, and also with Europe through Turkey.

Bangladesh signed the Inter-governmental Agreement on the TAR Network on November 9, 2007.

But Dhaka still needs to sign bilateral

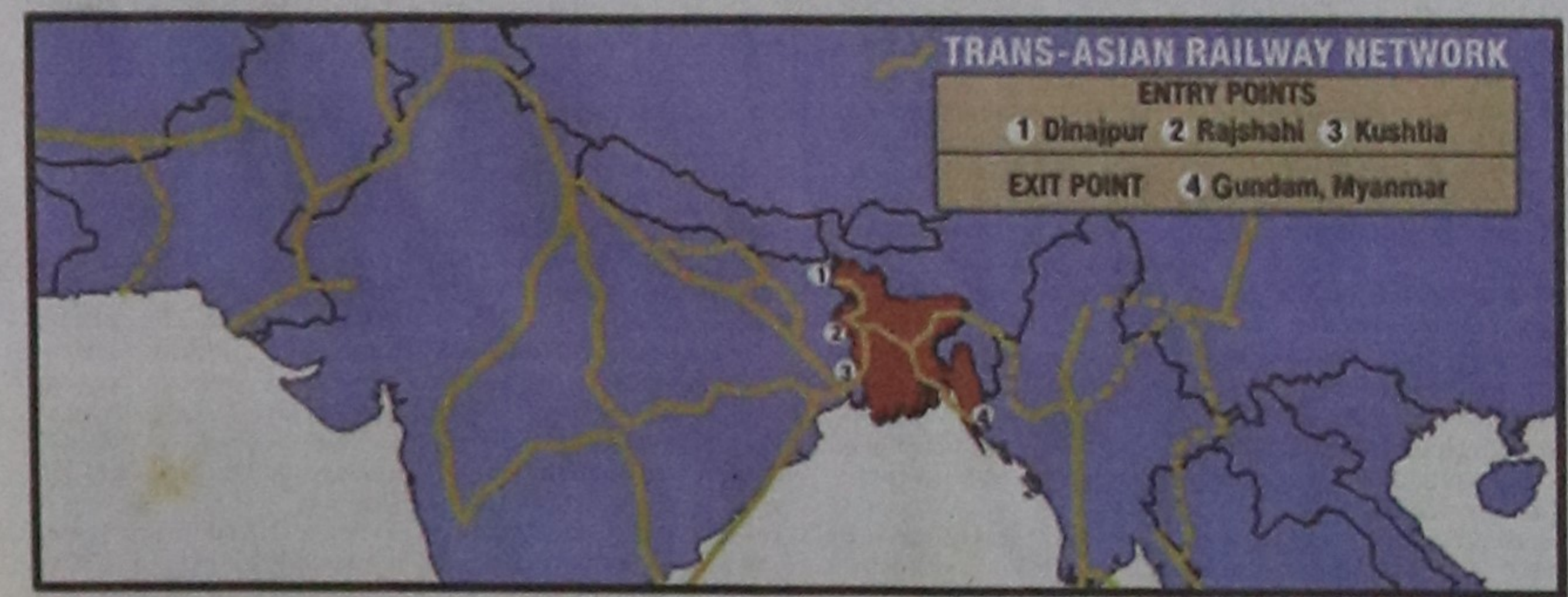
agreements to make the network operable, officials said.

BR sources said the country now needs to build 128 km rail track from Dohazari in Chittagong to Teknaf in Cox's Bazar. The railway has to acquire 1,200 acres of land to build the track.

At present, there is railway link up to Dohazari.

"We have to build a metre gauge railway network from Dohazari up to Gundam (Myanmar) through Teknaf,"

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Hasina likely to visit KSA this month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to visit Saudi Arabia in the third week of this month to perform Umrah.

During her visit, she will discuss with the Saudi government on different bilateral issues and may sign an agreement aiming to enhance trade and investment between the two countries.

The prime minister may mention Awami League's main electoral pledges during her meetings with Saudi leaders and seek their support to implement those pledges, including recruitment of more manpower from Bangladesh and other economic assistance for

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PROBE REPORT ON DIPJOL ISSUE REVEALS DIG-Prisons violated code, abused power

KAILASH SARKAR

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG-Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique violated at least 15 clauses of the jail code and abused his power in various ways to allow special privileges for a dreaded convict, Monowar Hossain Dipjol, according to an investigation by the jail authorities.

A two-member investigating committee of the Jail Directorate submitted a 72-page report on Thursday to the acting inspector general of



Shamsul Haider Siddique

prisons (IG-Prisons), finding Haider guilty on the charges, and also mentioning that the present jail superintendent of Dhaka Central Jail had no control over the prison under

Haider's supervision.

The probe committee is comprised of DIG-Headquarters Commander M Zakaria Khan, and Deputy Jailer of Dhaka Central Jail AG Mahmud.

They prepared the report by talking to 32 persons, who are DIG-Prisons Maj Haider, Dhaka Central Jail Superintendent Towhidul Islam, Jailer Mohammad Faruq, some deputy jailers, and some jail guards.

The investigation was launched after a vernacular

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AL to offer chairmanship of four JS bodies to BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League (AL) has decided to offer the main opposition BNP chairmanship of four parliamentary standing committees.

Chief Whip of Parliament Abdus Shahid yesterday said they would soon send a formal proposal to BNP.

The decision comes in line with AL's electoral pledge that if voted to power it will share the standing committee chairs with the other parties on the basis of proportional representation in parliament.

He told reporters that the prime minister wants the committees to be formed in the current session. And a decision has been taken to have the opposition members at the helm of some committees.

"According to the number of seats, BNP lawmakers

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'72 trade accord was only renewed during Zia's rule

Says BNP refuting minister's claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has said the bilateral trade deal with India during the rule of late president Ziaur Rahman was not a new treaty but renewal of the 1972 agreement.

The main opposition in parliament has also expressed its support for multilateral regional transit facilities under the Saarc rather than a bilateral transit treaty with India.

Dismissing the commerce minister's claim that the bilateral trade agreement was executed during Zia's rule, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said, "No new trade deal was executed during Zia's rule. It was only renewal of the 1972 agreement, article 5 of which was never implemented as it concerned the much-debated transit issue."

The trade agreement was first signed during the post-independence government of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 28, 1972, he said.

Addressing a press conference at the party's Gulshan office, he said, "All countries of South and Central Asia, China, Myanmar and Iran will be benefited economically if multilateral regional transit facilities are expanded under the Saarc instead of a bilateral transit treaty with India."

Delwar said the BNP is in favour of extending all kinds of multilateral agreements to increase trade and investment facilities and

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Boucher due today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A Boucher arrives today on a two-day visit to Bangladesh to hold talks with both the government and opposition leaders on trade and terrorism issues.

He is expected to arrive at the Zia International Airport in the early hours today and likely to meet opposition leader Khaleda Zia and Home Minister Sahara Khatun in the afternoon. He may hold meetings with the members of civil society on the night.

Boucher will have a hectic day tomorrow as he is scheduled to hold important talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and some other influential ministers, including Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni.

This will be the first high-level visit by an American dignitary since the installation

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MUMBAI ATTACK Sahara slates Pak claim of Bangladesh's involvement

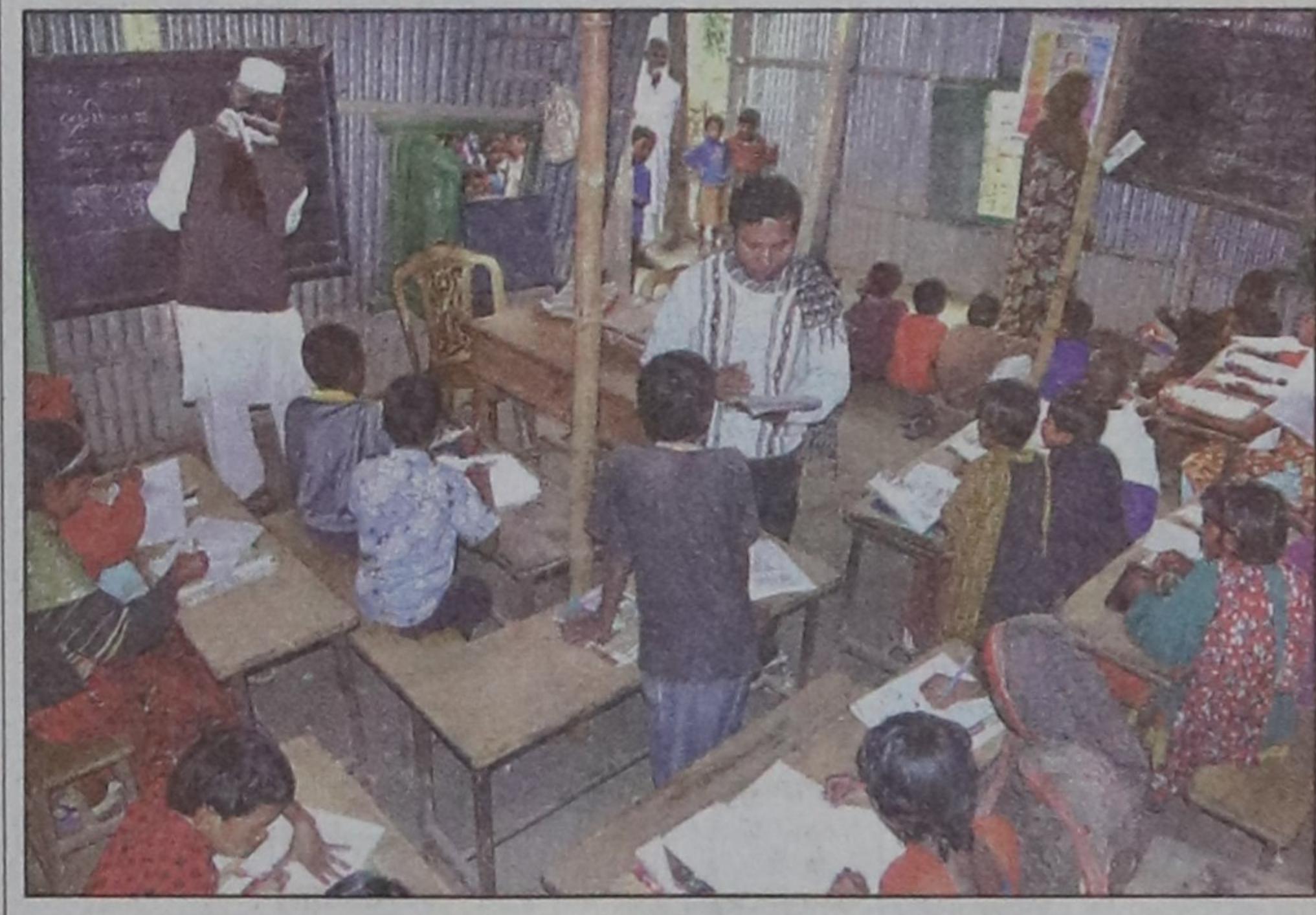
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday strongly condemned the Pakistan investigation agency's claim of Bangladesh's involvement in the Mumbai terror attacks last year.

"Militants and terrorists do not belong to any territory, country and nation. I am shocked at such claim," she told reporters after attending the concluding ceremony of annual sports competition of Rajuk Uttara Model College.

The three-day long competition of the college ended yesterday amid various colourful programmes and prize distribution among contestants on the college premises.

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The chair and the desk in front is the headmaster's office. The headmaster is teaching a class on the left while two other teachers are giving lessons in two other parts of the room. This single room is the Narapara Govt Primary School in Sariakandi upazila of Bogra.

PHOTO: STAR

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN A SHAMBLES-1 70pc can't read, write even after 5-yr study

SURANJITH DEABNATH and RAIHAN SABUKTANIN

The quality of the country's primary education is so substandard that around 70 per cent of students who complete the five-year primary level education are unable to read, write or calculate properly.

According to a new government study, 69 per cent of students who have completed primary school are not able to read news headlines in Bengali newspapers properly.

Also, 87 per cent of these pupils failed to do simple mathematical calculations like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

The survey has also found students tremendously weak in English language.

The recently published study on 'National Assessment of Pupils of Grades three and five - 2006' under the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) has also revealed that 72 per cent of them are not able to write a short composition.

Badrul Alam Tarafdar, secretary in charge of Primary and Mass Education, admits that there

is an issue of low quality of education at primary level. He said that in order to encourage parents to send their children to schools, expanding primary education used to be the main target of the education ministry, not quality education.

"But, the time has come to focus on quality education now. At present, ensuring quality education is the main goal of the ministry because most parents are now willing, even eager, to send their children to schools," Tarafdar told The Daily Star.

Researchers and academicians have identified several causes behind the students' poor performance. The main reason they point out, is that most of the primary students -- both in urban and rural areas -- pass their exams without learning 50 per cent of the curriculum.

Renowned academician Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury said the scenario of low quality education in primary schools is mainly due to lack of attention by teachers, students and also parents.

"Primary education should be extended up to

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