

# Bomb kills govt official, family in Pakistan

US drone strikes kill 13

AP, AFP, Parachinar

A bomb ripped through a government official's house in northwestern Pakistan yesterday, killing him and his five family members in an attack that police said was in retaliation for military operations targeting Taliban in the area.

The military has stepped up airstrikes in Kurram since many militants fled there following a major ground offensive launched in nearby South Waziristan in mid-October. Both areas are in Pakistan's lawless tribal region near the Afghan border.

Sunday's attack targeted the house of Sarbraz Saddiqi, a government official in Kurram, said police officer Naemullah Khan. The dead included Saddiqi, his wife and four children, he said.

Police are investigating how the bomb was planted in Saddiqi's house and whether it was detonated by timer or remote control, said Khan.

The attack appeared to be in retaliation for the military's stepped-up effort to target Taliban militants in the area who

have fled from South Waziristan, said Khan. Government officials have also been kidnapped in Kurram, he said.

Many Taliban militants are also believed to have fled to North Waziristan, an area in Pakistan's tribal region dominated by Jihadi groups launching cross-border attacks against coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Washington has pressed Pakistan to target such groups but has received a reluctant response, as Islamabad has continued to concentrate on militants that pose a domestic threat.

The US has responded by relying more heavily on drone missile strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas, including one Saturday in the Babar Raghza area of North Waziristan.

Pakistani intelligence officials on Sunday raised the death toll from the strike to 13 after eight more bodies were pulled from the rubble and two wounded died in the hospital.

Earlier the US missile attack and demolished a compound in Pakistan's tribal belt used by militants crossing into

Afghanistan killed 13 fighters, Pakistani security officials said yesterday.

The US drone slammed two missiles into the building on Saturday in Saidgi village, seven km north of Miranshah, the main town of North Waziristan tribal district bordering Afghanistan, officials said.

"Taliban have recovered more dead bodies from the debris. We have reports that a total of 13 militants were killed and three injured," an intelligence official in Miranshah told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"One of the local commanders, Abdur Rehman, was also killed," he added.

The US rarely discusses the covert programme but has in the past said it has taken out several top al-Qaeda operatives.

At least one local militant commander was killed in Saturday's strike. But authorities were still trying to determine how many of the others were militants or civilians, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to the media.

Pakistan publicly opposes the strikes but is believed to secretly aid them.



PHOTO: AFP

Cpl. Frederick of the Wayne County Airport Police and his bomb-sniffing dog Spencer patrol at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport on Saturday in Romulus, Michigan. Airports and airlines across the US moved rapidly to tighten security after a man tried to set off explosives on a plane flying from Amsterdam to Detroit.

## Father alerted US about Nigerian bomb suspect

Airports worldwide have increased security as bomber charged

BBC ONLINE, AFP, Detroit

The father of a Nigerian man charged with trying to blow up a transatlantic jet on Christmas Day had voiced concerns to US officials about his son.

US investigators on Sunday tried to piece together terrorism connections of a Nigerian man who has been charged with attempting to blow up a US jetliner after reportedly confessing that he had been trained by al-Qaeda in Yemen.

Airport security was stepped up worldwide after the botched terror attack as

British police raided premises where the suspect, the son of a wealthy Nigerian businessman, was thought to have lived while studying at a London university.

The father, a top Nigerian banker, warned US authorities last month about 23-year-old Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's extreme views, say officials.

US sources confirm a file was opened, but say the information did not warrant placing the accused on a "no-fly" list.

Abdulmutallab was formally charged by a US federal judge at a Michigan hospital where he is being treated for

burns after allegedly trying to detonate a device.

'Sewn in underpants'

The detainee reportedly smiled as agents brought him in to the room in a wheelchair, dressed in a green hospital robe and with a blanket over his lap.

High explosives are believed to have been moulded to his body and sewn in to his underpants.

He was immediately overpowered by passengers and crew aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253, minutes before it was due to land in Detroit from the Dutch capital Amsterdam.

PLANE BOMBING BID  
US lawmakers question intelligence breakdown

ANI, Washington

In the wake of a failed flight bombing bid by a London-based Nigerian student, US lawmakers have raised questions over the intelligence breakdown, which facilitated the suspect to smuggle an explosive mixture onto the Detroit-bound airplane despite the fact that his name was on a federal terrorism watch list.

Congressional lawmakers pledged to hold hearings next month to find out whether intelligence agencies were properly sharing information about the suspect.

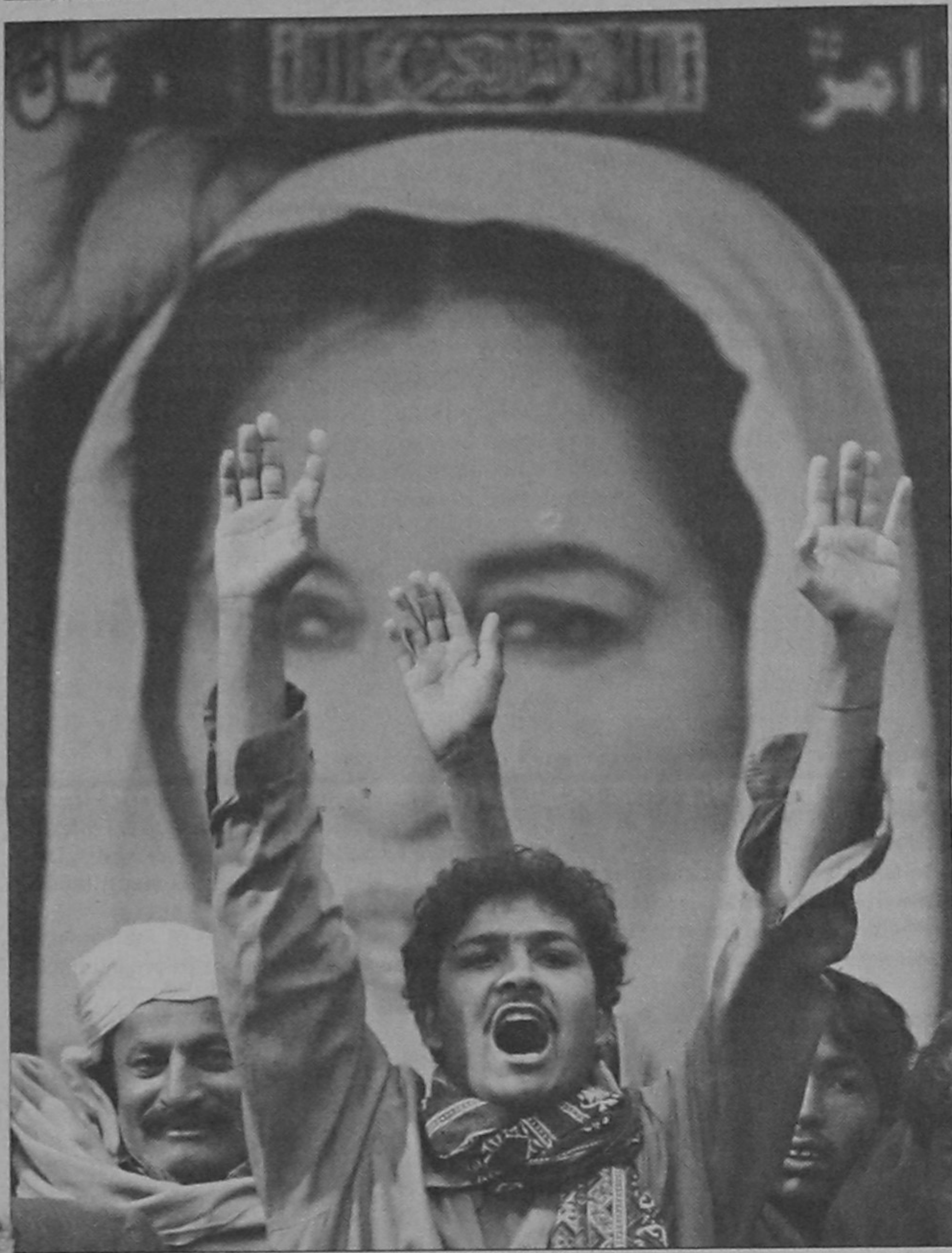


PHOTO: AFP

Supporters chant slogans in front of the grave of slain former Pakistani premier Benazir Bhutto on her second death anniversary in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh late Saturday. Benazir, the first woman to become prime minister of a Muslim country, was killed on December 27, 2007 in a suicide attack after addressing an election rally in Rawalpindi, a garrison city near the capital Islamabad.

## Tributes flow for Benazir on death anniversary

ANI, Islamabad

Paying homage to the former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on her second death anniversary, Pakistani political leaders remembered her as a leader who gave voice to the downtrodden and worked for the national unity.

In his message, former Prime Minister and Pakistan Muslim League-N chief Nawaz Sharif described Bhutto's assassination as a 'sad chapter in the political history of the country'.

"Benazir had achieved a unique status in Pakistani politics due to her extraordinary intelligence, tireless efforts and bold style of politics. That is why the tragic death of Benazir shocked her party members and millions of Pakistanis equally," Sharif said.

Calling Benazir 'a national hero', Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira said Benazir was a great motivator who always encouraged people to 'strive for larger goals in life'.

"It is a measure of her greatness that ordinary people who came in contact with her became extraordinary," Kaira said in his message.

National Assembly Speaker Dr Fehmida Mirza said Benazir always worked for society free from exploitation and discrimination and fought for the rights of downtrodden and oppressed people.

## Sharif ready for talks with Zardari

Sees no threat to country's democratic set-up

ANI, Islamabad

Ruling out any threat to the present democratic set-up in the country, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif has said that he is ready to hold talks with President Asif Ali Zardari, but only if clear agendas are fixed prior to the meeting.

Interacting with media persons after a meeting of party leaders here, Sharif said the talks should be result-oriented.

"There is no threat to the

system. If there is any threat, it will be from undemocratic moves. We will support the democratic process and the constitution," The Daily Times quoted Sharif, as saying.

While reassuring the PML-N's support to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Government, Sharif criticised the government for not implementing the Charter of Democracy (CoD) and abolishing the 17th Amendment.

Commenting on the issue of resignation of NRO beneficiaries ministers and other top

officials, the former prime minister said: "The government itself should have secluded the beneficiary ministers until they cleared themselves of all charges. We want to support the democratic system but that does not mean we exonerate those who committed corruption."

Later, in his message on the second death anniversary of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, Sharif described Bhutto's assassination as a "sad chapter in the political history of the country."

Malik, 9 other names removed from travel ban list

ANI, Lahore

Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik has asked the authorities remove the name of 10 politicians, including him, from the Exit Control List (ECL).

According to a private television channel, the Interior Ministry had issued a letter on December 21 asking all airport officials not to stop the 10 politicians from going abroad.

The letter was issued without informing the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), The Daily Times reports.

## PM outlines green plan

FROM PAGE 16

Bilateral talks with India are going to start at various levels soon over the two countries' share in the common rivers, she said.

"I hope Bangladesh's bilateral talks with India will be successful. The rivers are just like arteries of human body. When the arteries are blocked, the way people struck by heart attack, we as a nation may suffer heart attack if we fail to save our rivers," she said.

She made the remarks while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 18th National Council-2009 and the 34th Council Meet of the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh (IDEB) at its auditorium in the morning.

The PM revealed a special plan for building a modern Dhaka by expanding its peripheries and developing four suburbs surrounding the capital.

Besides, she said, the government is going to take initiatives soon to clean up the riverbeds of the Shitalakhya, Buriganga, Balu and Turag to save the rivers from deadly pollution.

She said the government will clean up polythene and coconut groves from the Buriganga River, and raise and construct its banks, including constructing walkways for people.

Hasina again warned of stern actions against those who will fell trees damaging the country's environment and bio-diversity.

"We want to see a green and blue Bangladesh. We'll restore navigability of rivers apart from ensuring that there will be green trees everywhere in Bangladesh--both in cities and villages."

"Rivers with their blue waters and trees with their greenery will make the Green and Blue Bangladesh," the PM said.

Hasina said there are over 700 rivers in Bangladesh and they are the lifelines of the country.

About the repeated incidents of tree felling in the country's coastal areas, the PM said the miscreants will have to be given such punishment so that they never dare to damage the country's environment.

Hasina also directed the authorities concerned not to give permission to any housing project if the developers do not include measures to protect water bodies and plants saplings in their housing projects.

The government through its National Dredging Committee has planned for massive dredging of the country's major rivers and maintaining those, Hasina told her audience.

About construction of embankments, the PM said from now on agricultural lands will be used for building embankments. "Instead, the embankments will be constructed with the mud that will come from river dredging."

After dredging the rivers, the reclaimed lands will be

used for industrialisation and house construction, she said.

For example, she said, if the Jamuna River is dredged, then its 11 kilometre-long width can be reduced to 4 kilometres through deepening its riverbed and thus it will be able to contain huge water. Besides, huge lands will be reclaimed.

"A deeper Jamuna will contain huge water and if we can construct the riverbanks, then people will be safe from recurring floods and water surge," she said.

Hasina also stressed the need for gradually reducing the use of groundwater and increasing the use of solar energy for a safe and healthy future.

The PM emphasised dredging the Garai River for protecting the Sundarbans and its wildlife, including the breeding point of Royal Bengal Tiger, as well as the agricultural lands from high salinity.

She regretted that the last Awami League government was about to complete the dredging of the Garai, but the BNP-Jamaat government stopped the dredging works.

Addressing the function, the premier asked the audience to implement the government's development programmes with utmost sincerity and greater pace.

Presided over by IDEB executive committee president M R Khairul Umam, the function was also addressed by its general secretary Engineer Kazi Nazrul Islam.

## 'Britain's worst shoplifter' jailed for 321st crime

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

A man who has been described as Britain's most prolific shoplifter was jailed for one day yesterday after committing his 321st offence.

David Archer, 54, from Rhyl, north Wales, has served the equivalent of two life sentences as a result of his addiction to petty crime. He has been unable to spend 14 out of the past 15 Christmases with his daughter because he has been behind bars.

Yesterday, Archer admitted in court to stealing two bottles of whisky from a store at Abergele. David Mainstone, prosecuting, said Archer had a "quite horrendous" list of previous offences and 155 court appearances.

Archer even went through a spell of stealing charity boxes, for which he was given an Asbo. In October, he had been jailed for 12 weeks for trying to steal a collection box, his 317th offence. Two years earlier he had been jailed only days after being released from prison after taking a Cancer Research Fund charity box from a Woolworths store in Rhyl.

In January, when Archer was jailed for 28 days for his 299th offence, David Davies, the court chairman, said: "Because of your appalling previous record, we are imposing a custodial sentence. It is a shame you are abusing the care that the agencies are trying to give you. Probation and other services are trying to do their best for you."

## Constructively criticise

FROM PAGE 16

strongest tools in attaining such peace," she said.

She made the call when a delegation of Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (Noab) led by its President and Daily Independent Editor Mahbubul Alam met her at her official residence Jamuna.

The PM told the media owners and editors that without democracy it is not possible to protect people's interests and the media can play a strong role in further strengthening the foundations of democracy in the country.

Press Secretary to the PM Abul Kalam Azad briefed newsmen. Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad was present in the meeting.

The premier also requested the media owners to present various successes and achievements of the government before the people and not to publish "untrue" news.

"Praise our good deeds, constructively criticise our mistakes, but please do not make untrue news. We want to give our patriotic hardworking countrymen a developed and prosperous Bangladesh. Help us in achieving the development goals," she

said.

Hasina noted all know amid what situation the people had to elect their own democratic government at the last December 29 polls.

"Now it is our moral and sacred duty to change the fate of the mass people. We are working round the clock to do that. I want help from all in the society to overcome all problems and crises," she said.

The Noab members welcomed the verdict of the Bangabandhu murder case, saying that with this historic verdict the rule of law has been upheld in the country.

They gave special thanks to the PM for her cabinet's decision for rescinding the provision for issuing arrest warrant against journalists from the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

"Through such decisions, the government's commitment towards press freedom is reflected," the delegation members were quoted as saying.

Constitution of the Information Commission by the government was also highly praised by the Noab members.

About the recently concluded Copenhagen

climate summit, they said Hasina with her able leadership was successful in establishing the rights of not only Bangladesh but also of all countries victim to the climate calamities.

They assured the PM of standing by the government to realise the country's demands regarding climate-adaptation funds and cuts in the carbon emissions.

The Noab delegation apprised the premier of various problems facing the newspaper industry.

She gave them a patient hearing and assured them of all necessary cooperation from government side for further development of the industry.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, Daily Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman, Noab members from Ittefaq Anwar Hossain Manju, Sangbad Editor Altamas Kabir, Financial Express Editor Moazzem Hossain, Samokal Publisher AK Azad and New Age Managing Director ASM Shahidullah Khan, among others, were on the delegation.

PM's Principal Secretary MA Karim and Deputy Press Secretary Mahbubul Hoque Shakil were also present.

## 6 sued

FROM PAGE 16

casualties at the yard.

However, confusion arose over the name of the owner in the case as police wrote the name as Mohammad Israfil while the employees at the Rahim Steel Mills Company (Pvt) Limited head office in Dhaka and those at the ship-breaking yard in Chittagong identified the owner as Abdur Rahim.

They said Mohammad Israfil is the yard's project director. Asked, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Monirul Islam of Sitakunda Police Station said that they would verify the name and, if found wrong, correct it accordingly.

Meanwhile, Department of Environment (DoE) Chittagong Director Abdus Sobhan said they would carry out a departmental investigation into the blast.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Md Zakir Hossain said, "Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Sitakunda has already submitted a report on the blast."

Chittagong district administration yesterday formed a two-member committee headed by Chittagong Additional District Magistrate ABM Azad to investigate the Saturday's blast.

The committee was asked to submit the probe report by December 31, said Zakir Hossain.

Four workers were killed and 13 others injured in an explosion while cutting oil tank of a ship at the yard on Saturday morning.

Six of the injured were undergoing treatment at Medical Centre (pvt) Hospital in the city while severely injured one was sent to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated, hospital sources said.