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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE



## MFS ACCOUNTS RISE

Number of mobile money accounts soars as BB lowered transaction ceilings

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## DRIVE FOR 'UNITED UK'

May courts Scotland to stop its independence bid ahead of Brexit

# ARMY-LED OPERATION IN SYLHET: DAY 4 2 more militants dead in hideout

### Atia Mahal now free of militants; bodies of 2 with suicide vests, explosives still inside

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH from Sylhet

Two more militants were killed in the army-led operation at Atia Mahal in Sylhet city with the four-day siege to the terrorist hideout drawing to an end yesterday.

However, it could take more time to wrap up the raid, launched on Saturday morning, for defusing bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and collecting evidence, say army and police officials.

Earlier on Sunday, two militants were killed during the commando operation.

Briefing reporters in Sylhet around 7:45pm yesterday, Military Intelligence Director Brig Gen Fakhru Ahsan said, "Today, we found four bodies on Atia Mahal's ground floor. Of the four bodies, we recovered two and handed over those to police."

It wasn't yet possible to recover the other two bodies as suicide vests were wrapped

around those. "We are now making a plan on how to recover the bodies," he said.

The identity of the four militants was yet to be known.

With a cache of explosives, terrorists had been holing up at a flat on the ground floor of the five-storey building since early Friday.

Army commandos launched the operation codenamed "Operation Twilight" on Saturday morning and confirmed the death of two male militants at the den on Sunday.

Fakhru said that of the two bodies recovered yesterday, one is of a man and the other of a woman. In reply to a query, he said it was tough to say precisely when they were

killed.

Police sources said they had information that top "Neo JMB" leader Mainul Islam Musa and a woman named Marzina from Bandarban had holed up there with two others.

### OPERATION TWILIGHT

Raid started: Friday

People rescued from Atia Mahal: **78**

Death in Saturday's blast: **6** people, including **2** cops

Militants killed: **3** male, **1** female

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Army and Rab personnel near Atia Mahal in Shibbari of Sylhet city yesterday. During a commando operation, army men found bodies of four militants, including a woman, on the ground floor of the building. Two of the bodies were handed over to police.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Questions raised about defence deal with India

### It may increase mistrust, observe foreign affairs, defence experts, academics at discussion

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign affairs and defence experts and academics at a discussion yesterday raised questions about defence collaboration with India and said a defence pact with the neighbouring country was not necessary as Bangladesh would not be benefited.

Any defence pact with India would encourage trust deficit and might also indirectly help spread of radicalisation, they told a roundtable on "New Dimension of Bangladesh-India relations: Problems and Prospects."

Leading Bangla daily Prothom Alo organised the roundtable ahead of the much talked about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in early April, when the two countries are expected to strike dozens of deals, most importantly a defence pact for collaboration between the armed forces of the two countries.

Speaking at the discussion, they said the defence deal with India came up all on a sudden and none of the two countries disclosed anything about it. They said India was clearly imposing the pact on Bangladesh and urged the government not to sign the deal.

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## DEATH PENALTY Mufti Hannan, aide seek clemency

STAR REPORT

Death row convicts Harkatul-Jihad al-Islam Bangladesh (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and his associate Delwar Hossain Ripon yesterday sought presidential clemency.

Three members of Huji were sentenced to death for carrying out a grenade attack on the then UK envoy in Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury in 2004.

Another death row convict Sharif Shahedul Alam Bipul is yet to appeal for clemency although five days have passed since he was read out the death warrant on March 22.

According to the jail code, a death row convict gets seven days to apply for mercy after they are read out the warrant.

The Supreme Court released the full text of its

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## Dhaka hosts IPU meet on Apr 1-5

### It brings big scope to showcase Bangladesh as a country of possibility, says IPU president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Saber H Chowdhury

The upcoming Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference in Dhaka offers Bangladesh immense scope for tapping the benefits of parliamentary diplomacy to boost international trade and attract more foreign investment, said IPU President Saber Hossain Chowdhury yesterday.

"We will have delegates of 140 countries getting together, it is a unique opportunity to showcase that Bangladesh is a country of possibilities and vibrant economy," he said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star four days ahead of the conference.

About parliamentary diplomacy, the IPU president said it has a lot of advantage. Many people call it soft diplomacy. It strengthens people-to-people contact among countries and supplement conventional diplomacy.

"In Bangladesh, the parliamentary diplomacy remains completely untapped. Our MPs can use the conference to maintain networking with their counterparts of other countries to begin parliamentary diplomacy," said Saber, also a lawmaker, who was elected president of IPU in 2014.

Bangladesh parliament is hosting the 136th assembly of IPU, a global organisation of parliaments, from April 1 to April 5. This will be the largest ever conference held in Bangladesh since its independence.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the conference on April 1 at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Founded in 1889, the IPU is known as the focal point for worldwide

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## Tigers' chance to establish dominance

### Second ODI against Sri Lanka today

SAKEB SUBHAN from Dambulla

In terms of games to be played, Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka is exactly halfway through before today's second ODI at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium gets underway at 3:00pm (Bangladesh time). At this stage, Bangladesh could hardly have asked to be in a more advantageous position, having won their first Test against the hosts a little over a week ago, before taking the lead in a bilateral series against their opponents for the first time with a clinical 90-run win in the first ODI on Thursday.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, are a team struggling to rectify their growing list of flaws and at the same time arrest the momentum of a team they have beaten 33 out of the 39 times they have played. The intensity of their headache increased yesterday when it was revealed that wicketkeeper and opening batsman Niroshan Dickwella, who missed the first game because he was serving out a suspension for dissent incurred in Australia,

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**TOP!**  
QUOTE

"I'll request everyone to keep watch on their own children, students and even those in workplaces and try to find out whether anyone has involvement in militancy."

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA AT A DISCUSSION ORGANISED BY AWAMI LEAGUE IN DHAKA YESTERDAY

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