Human disaster hangs over

going off the front of the USS Abraham Lincoln," Vice Admiral Timothy Keating, commander of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, told his

"If we go, the plans that we have are unlike anything anyone has ever seen before," Keating told

"We can achieve surprise by going about this particular conflict, if we do it, in a way that is very unpredictable and unprecedented in history -- remarkable speed, breathtaking speed, agility, precision and persistence," he said.

Also with speed are the panicky Iraqis and Kurds in northern Iraq trying to get out before the war machines shower bombs, numbers which could squall in hundreds of thousands over the next few days.

Hunger is now a huge concern as most Iraqis are living off government food ration. One in four Iraqi children is already chronically malnourished and if the supply chain breaks down, it could be

The United Nations High Commission for Refugee's (UNHCR) quickness to cope with the crisis along the border seems too inadequate if waves of refugees

In the short term, food would be urgently needed to feed some 10 million people. In the worst case, Iraq could face widespread starva tion and epidemics, a UN aid official in charge of Iraq said.

Away in Baghdad, sandbags sprouted on football fields and roundabouts overnight as the war suddenly became a reality.

After months of wait and worry, the prospect of imminent attack was here, all too suddenly, and

Demand for fuel, food and medicines is huge with car queues in front of stores and filling stations stretching longer in probably the last full day of peace.

US Army Vice Chief of Staff General John Keane has indicated that an opening air attack could be

Euros seized FROM PAGE 12

possession and deposited it with

the customs warehouse. A departmental case was filed in

A team from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) nabbed two currency smugglers --Mohammad Rafiq and Rehan alias Salman --from a hotel at Tejturibazar. They recovered 600 fake Indian notes of 500 rupee denomination and 2,000 fake 100rupee notes from their hotel room.

Later, the CID men raided Rehan's residence at Nazirabazar and seized 84 fake 500-rupee notes.

A case was filed with the Tejgaon Police Station in this regard.

followed very quickly by troops on the ground

biggest party revolt in living mem-

countries -- privately or publicly -- supported its intention to oust

Saddam by force. The United States, Britain and Australia alone

South Korea, locked in a stand-off with North Korea over the

communist state's nuclear ambi-

tions, said on Wednesday it backed

the US on Iraq and said it might

threw its weight behind the idea of

exile for the Iraqi leader and his

family for the first time to avert a

war. It did not offer to take him

accused Iraq of putting a volatile

tional circumstances which put on

our shoulders major responsibili-

ties to save the security and stabil-

ity of the Arab region," President Hosni Mubarak told Egyptians in a

'Criminal's wife

polls unopposed

Sabina Zaman Swanna, wife of listed

uesday, the returning officer declared

Swapna was the only commis-

sioner candidate to file nomination

paper for the bye-election after the seat fell vacant as her husband failed to take

oath for the second time following his

take oath after he won the April 25 elections of the KCC in 2002 and the

improvement of the status of the

UNFPA Imelda J. M Henkin said, 'In

deaths are associated with injury and

Parliament Secretary Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed, Secretary

General of AFPPD Dr. Malinee

Sukavejworakit and UNFPA

Representative Suneeta Mukharjee also spoke on the occassion.

Deputy Executive Director of

ingladesh 14 per cent of maternal

Earlier, Litu had once more failed to

Swapna elected uncontested commis

sioner of KCC ward 24.

Moudud

FROM PAGE 12

elected in KCC

region in danger.

televised address.

Egypt, an opponent of a war,

'We are facing today excep-

As the clock ticked, Saudi Arabia

contribute non-combat troops.

are providing combat troops.

Washington said about 45

Convoys of US troops in tanks,

As fierce sandstorms blow, US commanders have said the weather could play a role in the timing of any attack. Desert storms can affect delicate equipment.

cal and biological weapons, has given him until 4:15 am Iraqi time with his sons

Prime Minister Tony Blair, have amassed 280,000 troops in the

In the financial markets, most stocks fell as investors fretting about the length and aftermath of a

Gold, a safe haven in times of trouble, and bonds rose. After falling on hope of a quick war, oil prices rose slightly. The US dollar eld steady.

US officials promise an aerial bombardment of such precision and intensity that it would isolate Saddam and his leadership and stun the Iraqi army into submis-

They say upward of 3,000 satellite-guided bombs and cruise missiles will be unleashed from sea and air on targets vital to Saddam's government in a "shock and awe'

open a northern front.

France and Germany have led opposition to war and question US assertions about Iraq's weapons arsenal. China and Russia made last minute appeals for peace on Tuesday.

France, Russia and Germany are pulled out of Iraq.

Bush and Blair face opposition to war at home. The British leader

Women Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque chaired the meeting.

The meeting will continue today where parliamentarians and experts from other South Asian countries will participate. NGO and media representatives from various countries are also expected to take part.

Iraq war fallout

FROM PAGE 1

increase patrol in cities. Besides, troops in different cantonments have been put on alert and may be called out if necessary.

Paramilitary BDR, police and ansar would maintain law and order so that no-one is able to disrupt law and order by taking advantage of a possible war.

About a dozen of relevant ministers and state ministers, top secretaries, chiefs of Army, Navy, Air Force, BDR and Police attended the meeting that lasted for about one and a hour hours.

Held at the cabinet room of Bangladesh Secretariat with Bhuiyan in the chair, the meeting discussed in detail the security and food situation, increase in vigilance of defence forces and intelligence agencies, arrangements for accommodation for expatriate Bangladeshis and peacekeepers, among other issues.

Besides, special security measures have been taken for the diplomatic zone and offices of international organisations.

The diplomatic zone is fully secure and maximum security has been given for the diplomats, the minister added. He said the meeting has also

residence and discussed the Iraq decided to provide adequate accommodation and transportaissue and the preparedness back home, sources said. tion for peacekeepers, expatriates and foreign nationals who will come to Bangladesh. Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote have been asked to see to it

It has been decided to bring the Bangladeshi peacekeepers now in Kuwait to the Savar Cantonment first if they fly back home due to war. Accommodation will be provided to nationals of Asian countries if they come to Bangladesh from the Middle East.

Special arrangements have been made for accommodation and transportation of expatriate Bangladeshis so that they reach home safely.

Meeting sources said temporary offices of the foreign, home, communication, health, shipping and expatriate welfare ministries would be set up at Zia International

People arriving from the Middle East would complete registration at the airport before they are to be taken to their destinations. Bangladeshi expatriates would be first taken to the Hajj camp and provided with transport.

Talking to reporters, State Minister for Expatriate Welfare Ouamrul Islam said preparations are complete to provide accommo-

armoured vehicles and trucks have been moving across the Kuwaiti desert towards the Iraqi border.

President George W Bush, accusing Saddam of hiding chemi-

(0115 GMT) today to go into exile Bush and his main ally, British

region to kill or capture Saddam and overthrow his government in an enterprise that has created deep diplomatic schisms across the

war sought safety.

start to the war.

Ground forces are expected to move in during or after a short, intense aerial bombardment to secure Iraq's oil fields and prevent Saddam loyalists torching wells as they did in Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf

Vowing regime change, Bush says Iraq could provide groups like al Qaeda with weapons that would exceed the bloodshed caused by the September 11, 2001 attacks on

Turkey will put a motion to parliament today allowing for the overflight of US aircraft to Iraq. If approved, this could help US forces

expected to use a Wednesday UN meeting with chief arms inspector Hans Blix as a forum to denounce the war. Blix's inspectors have

won parliamentary backing on Tuesday for war, but suffered the

dation for the expatriate

Bangladeshis both at home and

He said houses have been hired

preparation for accommodation

and transportation to the expatri-

ates. He said steps have been taken

so that expatriates get one-stop

Health Minister Dr Khandaker

Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister

Moudud Ahmed, Information

Minister Tariqul Islam, Shipping

Minister Akbar Hossain, Home

Minister Altaf Hossain

Chowdhury, Agriculture Minister

Matiur Rahman Nizami, Political

Secretary to the Prime Minister

Harris Chowdhury, State Minister

for Home Lutfozzaman Babar,

State Minister for Civil Aviation Mir

Mohammad Nasiruddin also

Meanwhile, secretaries-general

of the four parties in the ruling

coalition met the BNP Secretary

General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's

The secretaries-general of the

that no untoward incident takes

place if and when anti-war rallies

are brought out, the sources added.

of Canada, Australia, and the UK.

and a UN representative were

"The foreign diplomats are satisfied with the security mea-

sures we have taken. But they told

me that we cannot take any

chance," he told newsmen after the

"Some of them expressed cer-

tain concerns and asked whether

additional security measures can

Security in the diplomatic

Earlier this month, number

lates of vehicles belonging to

reign missions have been

changed. This was done so that criminals cannot easily identify

vehicles of any particular mission.

enclave has already been strength-

ened with increased police patrol and checking of vehicles at differ-

Diplomats

present during the briefing.

be taken," Shamser said.

ent points.

FROM PAGE 1

attended the meeting.

service at ZIA.

Press conformance

in Saudi Arabia for their temporary Earlier on Monday, French and accommodation. In case the war is German envoys attended a similar programme held at the same venue prolonged, the expatriates would be brought to Bangladesh. They at the invitation of DCAB. US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters also would be kept in the Hajj camp addressed a press conference at the American Centre on Sunday, before being sent to their homes. Ouamrul said all line and releorganised by the embassy. vant ministries have also taken

But, the foreign ministry on Tuesday evening issued a notice to all diplomatic missions in Dhaka informing them that 'they have to take prior approval of the foreign ministry for holding any press conference'.

"This is a normal practice all over the world to have prior approval from the host foreign office before any press conference by foreign missions. We notified the missions here," Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury told newsmen.

However, he said the notice does not obstruct foreign diplomats from attending any programme they are invited to, and they do not have to take prior approval for that.

Earlier on Tuesday night, the Iraqi embassy cancelled a hurriedly called press briefing arranged by it due to what it called

Gunfight

FROM PAGE 12

mentary affairs adviser Salahuddin Quader Chowhury. One of the injured, Bacha Meah, whose hands and legs were severed by elements of Ismail-led group, was

admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) in a critical condition. Police sources said the two rival groups traded more than 300 rounds of fire for nearly two hours in the

morning. The incident might have been a sequel to an attack on Ismail-led group by Babul-led group four days ago. They also set fire to at least 16

ago. They also set me to at least 10 houses including that of Ismail. Witnesses said Ismail group was seen equipped with firearms like M-16 and AK-47 rifle. Additional SP (north) of district police Hasib Aziz said both Ismail and Babul are 'infamous cadres' and

they don't have any political identity. One of dead, Jahangir, and critically injured Bacha Meah, known as notorious terrorists of Raozan upazila, took part in yesterday's gunfight as hired elements, sources

Security in the area has been stepped up with deployment of adequate police force. None could be arrested in this connection till the filing of this report yesterday eve-



PHOTO: STAR

Myanmar Prime Minister and Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Than Shwe receives his Bangladesh counterpart Khaleda Zia at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Barisal, Sylhet polls today

FROM PAGE 1

and order if necessary.

Being informed, all but the criminal Asaduzzaman Litu, has been ruling party candidate took posielected commissioner of ward 24 of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) unoption in front of the DC's office and their supporters were assembling around the place when this report was filed at 10.00pm last night. On expiry of the last date of withdrawal of nomination papers on

Awami League leaders demanded troops deployment during the voting, otherwise they would go for indefinite strike in Barisal from the following day.

Both the ruling coalition and the opposition are taking the city polls very seriously, as they believe that the results of the polls will have a direct bearing on the country's politics. The two cities witnessed hectic

electioneering over the past weeks. Senior leaders from the ruling BNP and the main opposition Awami League took part in the election campaign in favour of The Election Commission has taken all out preparations to make the polls free and fair. The voting

would take place from 8.00am to 4.00pm.The authorities have announced a public holiday to help 3,49,853 voters in Barisal and Sylhet exercise their voting right. Members of police, BDR and ansar would guard the 169 polling centres. Side by side, magistrates would be on duty in the centres

and they would try the unruly elements on the spot. Various groups have sent election observers to Barisal and

Twenty-three candidates (9 in Barisal and 14 in Sylhet) are seeking election as mayor. For 76 posts of ward commissioner, including 19 reserved posts for women, the total number of contestants is 579. Of them, 210 are running for the general seats and 50 for the reserved seats in Barisal, while the numbers in Sylhet are 250 and 69

Our correspondent from Barisal reports: The Election Commission has appointed SK Abul Kalam, DC of Barisal, as the returning officer. It also appointed 90 presiding officers, 572 assistant presiding officers and 1,144 polling officers for 90 centres and 572 election booths.

In Barisal, a total of 1,63,933 voters, including 78,541women, would elect one mayor from the nine candidates. The main candidates are Whip Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, backed by the four-party alliance, Enayet Pir Khan, the Nagorik Parisahd candidate, and two rebel BNP candidates --Ebaidul Huq Chan and Ahsan Habib Kamal

Sarwar is a ruling party MP and also the president of district

Our Sylhet correspondent reports that all the candidates --14 for mayor, 241 for the general ward commissioners and 69 for women (reserved) seats-- finished their election campaigning yester-

A total of 1, 85000 voters will elect their representatives for the new city. Local people believe that it

would be a contest restricted to the AL backed candidate Badar Uddin Kamran, the incumbent mayor, four-party alliance nominee MA Haque, and the BNP rebel candidate AFM Kamal. According to police, all the 79

polling centres in Sylhet are vulnerable. However, they said adequate security measures have been taken to counter violence. The law enforcers have divided

the city into 4 sectors for maintaining a peaceful atmosphere during voting. During the electioneering in Sylhet, senior AL leaders Advocate Abdul Hamid, Abdus Shahid, AL

General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP, Asaduzzaman Noor MP, Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta MP, AMA Muhit, Obaidul Qader, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Dr. Amanullah, Sultan Mohammad Mansur and Nurul Islam Nahid campaigned in favour of Kamran.

On the other hand, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury MP, Nazir Hossain MP, Ilyas Ali MP, Dilder Hossain MP, Moulana Farid Chowdhury MP and Mokbul Hossain MP attended various projection meetings of MA Haq.

Dhaka, Yangon

utes discussed "entire gamut" of bilateral relations, with economic cooperation figuring high.

The Myanmar prime minister billed the Bangladesh leader's visit as a "milestone" and said it would open a "new chapter" in bilateral

"The existing friendly relations between the two countries will now turn into a brotherly relation with your visit," he was quoted as saying by Bangladesh's Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan.

Khan said construction of the proposed Bangladesh-Myanmar Road and bridge over river Naaf would commence within months and is expected to finish within this He said communications minis-

ters of the two countries would meet today to work out a "detailed timebound action programme" for construction of the Dhaka-Yangon Road for cross-border transporta-

Describing the talks as "fruitful" the foreign minister said the summit-level meeting also decided to have military cooperation for capacity-building of the armed forces through training and sharing experiences.

The issue of avoidance of double taxation also came up in the meeting that decided to sign a MOU on this matter in the near future.

On the proposed Coastal

Shipping arrangement, the Myanmar side suggested tripartite agreement involving Thailand. But Bangladesh requested for a bipartite agreement for quick fostering of

economic relations, with the option for including Thailand in future. About Bangladesh's proposal for easing visa regime allowing a Bangladeshi citizen to stay in Myanmar for more than 90 days, the Myanmar side assured of taking

immediate measures in this respect About the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from camps in Bangladesh, the Myanmar premier said necessary instructions would be given to the authorities and hoped that the problem would be solved bilaterally

Bangladesh made a strong plea for quick repatriation of the remain-ing 22,000 Rohingya refugees as UNHCR plans to wrap up its programme in the next few months. The Bangladesh side thanked the Myanmar government for already taking back about 2 lakh refugees.

The two sides also decided to hold single-country trade fairs to boost bilateral economic relations. A Bangladeshi Trade Fair begins in Yangon today.

As the Myanmar side suggested upgrading the MOU on present annual consultation between the two foreign ministers to an accord on Joint Commission on Bilateral minister accepted the proposition.

sion on his wife's character and

against Nazrul Islam. Nazrul's par-

ents, brothers and sisters were gave

Assistant PP Zebunnahar Akhter

case two brothers were sentenced to

District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka Mohammad Mahbub-ul-

Islam found Abul Azim alias Sebu

and Anwar Hossain alias Munna

guilty of killing Joynal Abedin on February 20, 1995.

In the case filed with the Keraniganj Police Station, it was

alleged that the accused went to the

house of Joynal Abedin, a grocer, at

East Brahminkita under Keraniganj

thana on February 20, 1995 and

knifed him to death as a sequel to

life-term imprisonment vesterday.

Later, a murder case was filed

Special PP Nurul Iman Babul and

Meanwhile in another murder

Judge of the Sixth Additional

hacking her to death.

evidence against him.

appeared for the state.

Five to be hanged

area on November 3 asking her to write a letter for him. But Nannu along with the other accused raped and murdered her.

Later, they dumped her body into nearby wetland to destroy evidences. After three days of the incident, Demra police recovered her decomposed body from the wetland. The investigation officer (IO) of

the case arrested Nannu and three

others for raping and murdering the

victim and pressed charges against them on November 19 last year under section 9(3) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act. The court framed charges against

the accused on January 26. All 14 prosecution witnesses were crossexamined. Special Public prosecutor (PP) Abdul Latif Talukder said he was

satisfied with the judgement.

In the Milan Akhter murder case, the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4, Dhaka Division sentenced Nazrul Islam to Judge Mohammad Jahangir Alam

his wife Milan Akhter on April 12 last A case was filed with the Uttara Police Station on April 12 last year

accusing Nazrul Islam of cast asper-

Later victim's younger brother Jane Alam filed a murder case against Mollah found Nazrul guilty of killing The convicts broke down in tears

on hearing the Judgement.

previous enmity.

Eleven out of 25 prosecution witnesses were cross-examined during the trial.

Kenya plot fresh coup

happen.' Kenya's initial injury crisis has

cleared in time for the match. All-rounders Maurice Odumbe (hamstring), Thomas Odoyo (groin) and batsman/wicketkeeper Kennedy Otieno Obuva (bruised arm) had all been major doubts for the semifinal

But all three as well as captain Steve Tikolo, who has been struggling with tonsillitis, passed fitness tests on Monday.

India, who have fielded just 12 different players this tournament, look set to stick with the side that defeated New Zealand by seven wickets last week. The Indians have been one of the

form teams in South Africa but captain Saurav Ganguly is well aware of Kenya's shock factor. He said: "Kenya have surprised

quite a few teams. They've played well to reach the semifinals and, in a World Cup semifinal, no team can be The toss could yet prove the

decisive factor in what is the final day-night game of the tournament. Almost all the matches in South Africa have been won convincingly by the side batting first, except for India's previous tie with Kenya on March 7 when Ganguly steered his side to victory.

John Wright is hopeful that two ears of hard work as coach of India will bear fruition with the continued progress of his side all the way to the

final against Australia on Sunday.

"It's been a good couple of years and I love my job," stressed the former New Zealand opener. "Things haven't been easy by any means, but they've been enjoyable

"I have always had faith in my team and we have done reasonably well. We have progressed and we continue to improve and, for me, that's the most important thing."

But Wright believes the biggest

test is still ahead of them when they

and it's been a challenging two years,

never short on excitement.

face outsiders Kenya, stressing: "We still have a long way to go in this tournament. "We shouldn't be thinking about who we will play in the finals if we

reach there, there is an important semifinal to play first. "We have a lot of respect for Kenya and what they have achieved in the World Cup and we have to play very, very good cricket to beat them

we still have a long way to go.' He added: "The people of India desire, and deserve, a good team, they deserve a team that doesn't give up, that keeps on fighting. For me, that's the most important aspect and Inevertakeitforgranted."

ernments had to pay 600 dollars Tuesday morning for taxis to Amman or Damascus, but the price went up to 1,200 dollars in the afternoon. It

Water tanks that usually cost 35 dollars were sold at 75 dollars.

"Most people are even buying small plastic bags, which are sold for 15 dollars the pack of 3,000, to fill them up with water. It looks really odd to have small water bags everywhere in thehouse," said Ahmad Abdel Aziz.

Aziz was sitting at his shop where workers were racing to build water tanks, some even on the sidewalk.

From afar, King Ghazi street looks very threatening, with crowds of men cramming one side of the road. But as one gets closer, the scene gets clearer. It is the "street bourse", or men

grouping around rusty metallic safes on small tables behind which dealers

enough dinars to buy necessities in the event of war.

Abu Mustapha, a taxi driver, could

hardly see in front of him as he walked away with 500 dollars worth of Iraqi dinars -- a massive wad given the largest Iraqi banknote is just 250 dinars (0.08 cents). The dinar traded at 3,050 against the dollar, from 2,800 a day before, at

exchange bureaus across the capital on Tuesday, dealers said. It was the first time the dinar had traded above the 3,000-mark in

several years, they said. Tuesday evening, the night life was dead at the usually busy Arasat street, which was completely deserted and dark, with rows of tightly sealed iron

shutters and closed restaurants. The clientele of the last few days had dwindled since the rushed evacuation on Tuesday of UN staff, foreign diplomats and many journalists.

There was just one lone taxi driver, sittingquietly in the dark in his car. "We are not wondering whether

there will be war anymore," he said with a deeply melancholic look. "We are just anxious about the exact time the bombs will start raining

on our ancient Arab city before the eyes of a heedless world.



Bangladeshi peacekeepers of the United Nations arrive at Zia International Airport yesterday from Kuwait ahead of

Fatal flu alert

be immediately reported to the medical officer at Zia International Airport (ZIA) and the person concerned be shifted to hospital.'

The Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) in the city has been alerted and it is ready to receive any suspected patient, he said.

The staff at ZIA have been put on high alert and any arriving passenger showing signs of sickness should go through medical quarantine, a high official there said. He however said the ZIA authorities did not get any official instruction from the health directorate in this regard till yesterday.

Meanwhile an Internet message said doctors in Hong Kong have made a major breakthrough in identifying the deadly pneumonia virus, which will make its treatment easier, The Standard newspaper of Hong Kong reported The newspaper quoted scien-

tists as saying that the virus belongs to the paramyxoviridae

Prof John Tam at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Hong Kong said investigations affirmed that the current treatment given to patients is the right choice. But more tests are needed. Doctors are using a combina-

tion of anti-viral drugs and ste-

roids to treat patients in Hong

Kong, but not all have responded positively, the Internet message Scientists around the world are working to trace the deadly disease to dozens of different bacteria and viruses, but had found no strong clues on what it was. Many

have not seen before. The WHO says the disease spreads through close contact, not through casual contact. In almost all the cases, health workers or family members taking care of the patients contacted the virus. There is no evidence that the disease spread through casual contact.

suspect that it is something they

Dr Suniti Achariya, WHO Representative in Bangladesh, also sent a letter to Health Secretary M Fazlur Rahman yes-

The WHO so far received reports of more than 150 suspected cases of SARS from Canada, China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet The disease first broke out in

Guangdong province in China in November. The WHO is coordinating an international effort to identify the origin of the disease.

According to WHO, main symptoms of SARS include: high fever (>38 degree Celsius) one or more respiratory symp-

toms including cough, shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing and one or more of the following: close contact with a person vho has been diagnosed with

reporting cases of SARS

recent history of travel to areas

In any suspected case, the person concerned should be kept quarantined for a specific period and the aircraft may be disinfected as prescribed in the WHO Guide for aviation, WHO says.

City of peace

usually costs 200 dollars.

stand to exchange dinars and dollars. But the rush was obviously exceptional, with some eager to secure hard currencies and others seeking to get