Press freedom

ing of 31 for the United States itself. In similar vein, the RSF report put Israel at number 146 for its actions in the occupied Palestinian territories against a ranking of 44 for Israel

"The Israeli army's repeated abuses against journalists in the occupied territories and the US army's responsibility in the death of several reporters during the war in Iraq constitute unacceptable behaviour by two nations that never stop stressing their commitment to freedom of expression," RSF said.

The report also noted that the world's richest countries were not necessarily those with the freest media, stating that Singapore and Bahrain featured among the 50 countries that respect press freedom least.

Benin, East Timor and

Stern action

Telephone Board (BTTB) told the meeting that its bills amounting to Tk 81 were due with the government Tk 64 crore with private organisations, Tk 46 crore with cellphone companies, Tk 125 crore with aban doned lines and the rest with individ-

Officials of the BTTB said their unrealised bills with Grameen Phone stood at Tk 16.42 crore, with the Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited at Tk 18.34 crore, with Seba at Tk 3.29 crore, with Bangladesh Rural Telecom Authority at Tk 4.73 crore and with the TM International Bangladesh Limited at Tk 2.77

The meeting was told that punitive actions were taken against four officials of Nilkhet exchange for corruption.

Chaired by committee chairman Haque, it was also attended by members of the body and officials

Tech-park FROM PAGE 12

The parliamentary body on the ministry will visit Malaysia to see hitech parks in the Southeast Asian "The committee wants to assist

the ministry to implement the project properly. We will visit Malaysia to gather experience about how the IT sector flourished there." said Nurul Islam Moni, chairman of the standing committee.

The park has been divided into five blocks, of which blocks 1 and 5 will be implemented in the first According to the plan, ready-to-

occupy plots will be built in block 1 where different companies will set up their factories. Hi-tech education and training

institutions will be set up in block 5.

oorest nations, are listed in the ranking's top 50.

"As in 2002, the ranking shows that a country's respect for press freedom is not solely linked to its economic development," RSF said.

It is the second such survey published by the rights' group, which based its report on a poll of journal ists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists for events between September 2002 and September

Asia fared badly, with eight Asian countries languishing in the bottom 10 places because of what RSF said was the lack of an independent media and the dangers faced by iournalists. 'Like last year, the most cata-

strophic situation is to be found in Asia, with eight countries in the bottom 10: North Korea, Burma, Laos, China, Iran, Vietnam, Turkmenistan and Bhutan," the group said.

"Independent news media are either non-existent in these countries, or are constantly repressed by the authorities." it said. "Journalists there work in extremely difficult conditions, with no freedom and no

"A number of them are imprisoned in Burma, China and Iran." North Korea was listed at the bottom of the 166 countries, while China was at 161.

Cuba, described as "the world's ggest prison for journalists", and itrea were also in the bottom 10.

The report put four northern European countries -- Finland Iceland, the Netherlands and Norway -- at the top of its list, running neck and neck as the countries judged to have the freest press.

Sierra Leone

International and regional issues of common concern will also come up in the discussion. It will be the first ever highest-level

visit from Sierra Leone. The major contact between the two countries was established with the deployment of Bangladesh army contingent in Sierra Leone under the UN peacekeeping mission.

This mission contributed to bringing peace and stability in the civil wartorn West African country. At present. some 1.496 Bangladeshi troops are engaged in policing peace there.

Manpower export FROM PAGE 12

signing of the MoU, the Malaysian government would withdraw the ban on hiring people from Bangladesh The ban was imposed in 1997 following a huge inflow of undocu-

Currently, around 1.30 lakh Bangladeshis work in Malaysia.

Prices of essentials

said Monwar Hossain, secretary of Karwan Bazar Traders' Association. As to the rise in prices of edible oil and other grocery items, he said,

"This is an annual phenomenon

ahead of Eid." A source at Bangladesh Edible Oil Limited, a refinery and bottling company, said, "We raised oil prices from Tk 234 per unit (5-litre bottle) to Tk 239 due to a rise in international market prices. But retailers are selling oil at Tk 252 per unit. We cannot determine the retail price of oil because it is a commodity prod-

is responsible for controlling retail SM Jahangir Hossain, joint secretary of Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables, and Allied Products Exporters' Association, said, "The prices have gone far beyond the purchasing power of the middle

uct. It is the commerce ministry that

class, let alone the poor." He said there is no coordination between the production and export of vegetables to meet the season's demand as during Ramadan, which

results in short supply, and consequently price hikes.

"The hike in vegetable prices is the reason behind such a sharp rise." said Khaledur Rahman, a member of the Association.

"But then again it is a usual pre-Ramadan phenomenon.'

Some traders also pointed out the fact that we are in the middle of a dull season for vegetable production, which is one of the reasons for short supply and the consequent upward trend in prices

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud recently said the stock of daily commodities is adequate and his ministry would discuss the price situation with traders in an effort to bring prices within the reach of commoners.

However, the National Board of Revenue Sunday waived import duty on onion and the Bangladesh Bank lifted the LC margin on all food items to reduce the gap between retail and wholesale prices. But prices so far have shown no sign of

Hasina blames PM

Bangabandhu after taking office rather than punishing them.

"The prime minister's party godfathers are so powerful that a state minister in Dhaka filed a case against the Awami League leaders in Natore by influencing a magis-

"The godfathers of the ruling coalition made people live in panic and the nation wants freedom from the misrule. The fate of people will not change if the coalition does not step down," she said.

Hasina also criticised Khaleda for her remarks on media saying, "About 600 journalists have faced government persecution. Even foreigners could not escape.

Former Dhaka University vicechancellor Professor AK Azad Chowdhury also addressed the programme where Hasina distrib-

uted prizes among children. Staff Correspondent from Raishahi reports: AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil also took a swipe at the prime minister for her Paltan Maidan address and asked the government to stop repression

on AL leaders and activists. "Don't invite unrest by provoca tive statements. Don't threaten us," Jalil said in his address as chief guest to a council of Rajshahi Jubo League, a front organisation of the main opposition party, at the District Council Auditorium.

"How does she know results before elections?" Jalil said, referring to Khaleda's statement that the AL would not get even the 56 seats in the next polls, which it has now in parliament.

Khaleda said, "I am confident that the number of their (AL) seats will decrease in the coming elections because of their politics of anarchy and destruction.

Jalil said her statement clearly showed the next elections were going to be manipulated.

The AL leader called upon partymen to prepare for a mass movement against the law and order downslide.

"Public institutions can no longer work freely. The government is using police in repressing the oppo-

sition. Even the children are not safe." he said. About the price spiral of essentials, he said the government that clinched power promising an economic freedom increased perks for

lawmakers but left the people of the low-income bracket in the lurch. Chaired by District Jubo League resident Asaduzzaman, the council was inaugurated by central Jubo League President Jahangir Kabir

ETV yet to get back equipment

SC CORRESPONDENT

The Ekushey Television (ETV) is yet to get back its transmission equipment, as the government took no step even after the verdict of the court.

On a writ petition filed by the ETV for getting back the transmission equipment and licence, a division bench of the High Court gave judgement on August 20 directing the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to decide on the application of ETV for licence and the government to return the seized equipment by 30 days.

The Appellate Division on the leave to appeal filled by the Attorney General's office extended the time to dispose of the prayer for licence of ETV but said nothing regarding return of the equipment. The judgement was signed on

September 20 and following the signing of the judgement, the government did not take any step in this regard The division bench comprising

ustice MA Wahab Miah and justice Shamim Hasnain gave the aforesaid

Five hurt in factional fight in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Five people were injured during a fierce clash between two factions of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) on the Azam Khan Commerce College campus at 12:30pm yesterday.

Severely injured Raihan Sharif. assistant general secretary of the college, and Titas, former secretary of city unit of JCD, were admitted to the general hospital. The other injured are City JCD members Bábu, Rupak and Tarigul.

Sources said one of the factions involved in the clash is loyal to City BNP Secretary Nazrul Islam Manju and the other to the city mayor.

The clash occurred when City JCD President Masud Parvez, leader of the pro-mayor faction, prevented the rival group from entering the college auditorium where a party meeting was being

Both groups used clubs and hand bombs during chase and counter-chase, and damaged two roadside shops and six rickshaws. A tense situation prevailed on cam-Leaders of both groups blamed

Pirates torch 20 houses in Laxmipur

UNB, Laxmipur

Pirates belonging to Jahangir Bahini on Sunday attacked a village and torched about 20 houses in Boyar Char, 80km from the district head-

A number of villagers requesting anonymity told UNB by mobile phone that more than 100 pirates swoop on Molla village in the morning, beat up the poor villagers, plundered their houses and took away cattle and goats. They also torched about 20 houses.

They (villagers) alleged that police from Boyar Char camp did not come to the aid of villagers although thev were informed.

Sources said Boyar Char camp n-charge Anwar Hossain was served with showcause notice following October 15 gunfight with the pirates. Four pirates were killed in the fighting.

OIC top job

FROM PAGE 12

foreign ministers and other high officials of many countries called on Khaleda and formally extended their support to Bangladesh's candidature for the post, he claimed.

The countries whose dignitaries met Khaleda and extended their support during the visit include Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Senegal.

Khaleda also had 10 bilateral discussions with foreign dignitaries on the sidelines of the October 16-18 summit.

The foreign secretary ruled out any possibility of a change in Bangladesh's position following Malaysia's decision to throw a candidate for the top post.

"We are fully confident about our

position for the post and there is no reason to lose confidence following the declaration of candidature by another country," Chowdhury said The decision for the post of OIC secretary general will be taken at

the next foreign minister-level conference in Turkey next year on the basis of consensus, he told the ournalists The next summit level confer-

ence of the OIC is likely to be held in Kuala Lumpur in the year 2006 Bangladesh would fight for the post till the final decision is taken,

the foreign secretary said. He further said Bangladesh is fully satisfied with the outcome of the recent summit-level conference of the 56 Muslim nations. "But we feel that the organisation needs further revitalisation.

The political level decision has already been taken to revitalise the OIC and a nine-member expert group will be appointed soon to work out the formula for it, he said

Responding to another query, the foreign secretary said Bangladesh will not send troops to Iraq without UN authorisation.

Cells suggested at ZIA, home ministry to help foreign investors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A taskforce to identify impediments to investment yesterday recommended setting up of a cell at Zia International Airport and another at the home ministry to help foreign investors as soon as they enter the country.

The 17-member inter-ministerial taskforce led by Board of Investment (BoI) Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman also recommended appointment of an official at the Bol who would have the power to quickly provide the investors with telephone, electricity and gas connections.

In the areas between Dhaka and Mymensingh, and Dhaka and Aricha, the authorities should keep some telephone lines reserved for investors so that these can be provided overnight, the taskforce suggested. The recommendations were

made at a meeting of the taskforce

at the Bol where high officials of different ministries gave their views. The taskforce was formed on October 10 in the wake of allegations by Japanese investors that corruption and insecurity were

driving them away from

Bangladesh. The Japanese inves-

tors made the complaints on August

A high official of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) told yesterday's meeting that corruption was there at all public sectors. He however admitted that it was compara-

tively more rampant at the NBR. The NBR is being reformed, he said, adding all tax stations are being brought under close circuit TV monitoring. Besides, tax records will be put under an online computer network so that the NBR head office can monitor activities of all branches

The port authorities said the Chittagong Port has a capacity to handle 2.20 lakh equivalent unit containers, but it is currently dealing with five lakh. As many as 3,000 trucks enter the port every day although no standard port allows entry of a single truck for unloading. As pilferage at the ports is

another threat for investors, the coast guards should be deployed to control such crimes, the NBR official

The taskforce will now send the recommendations to the Prime Minister's Office. Follow-up actions will be conveyed to embassies and investors, specially the Japanese investors, clarifying the government position on the common allegations,

Trade talks

Indian officials said Delhi did not impose any restriction specific to Bangladesh. What setbacks Bandladeshi exporters are facing are applicable to all countries, they added.

Meeting sources guoted Indian negotiators as saying if there is any specific allegation, Delhi will look into it immediately. Elias Ahmed, Bangladesh joint

secretary of trade, and his Indian counterpart Rama Sundaram led their delegations to the first round of talks that focussed on non-tariff About battery export, Indian

have been resolved through diplomatic channel instead of taking it to court that is time-consuming. As Dhaka demands that India allows cement exports from Bangladesh to its northeastern states with no delay, the Indian officials said steps might be taken to

officials said the problem should

resolve the problem shortly. They said India may accept the Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI) standards temporarily, as maintaining the Indian standards is compulsory for all

Officials of Bureau of Indian Standard, also on the delegation, will visit the BSTI and hold a meeting take the standards issue a step forward.

"Both countries are facing problems exporting their products to other countries. The Indian side sounded positive about removing the NTBs (non-tariff barriers), including providing banking and other infrastructural facilities," Ahmed, leader of the 11-member Bangladesh side, told newspersons after the meeting.

Delhi also seemed positive about eroding the barriers to the cement export from Bangladesh but requested Dhaka to withdraw the ban on yarn import through land port, he added.

"Some problems may be staved off by taking immediate steps, but some issues may take a little more time because of their nature. We can hope for the best," Ahmed said.

Sundaram, leading the 10member Indian side, said a host of issues would be discussed in the next two days without giving details on the non-tariff barriers.

The agenda of the second round of talks at the commerce ministry today is the bilateral trade agree ment that will be expired at 2003end. Bangladesh will ask for renewing the agreement in a revised form, incorporating provision for special trade preferences. On the last day tomorrow, the discussion will focus on a free trade agreement.

India exported goods worth \$1.1 billion to Bangladesh in fiscal 2001 02, while it imported products worth only \$50 million.

Trade deficit between the two countries stood at \$590 million in the first six months of the last fiscal year

Nurses

FROM PAGE 12

quell our movement by putting

The notice posted at the DMCH vesterday evening warned of punitive action against its staff involved directly or indirectly in the ongoing movement of the nurses, who demand cancellation of the appointment of nurses passing out from

The eight-point notice also warned of punishment for giving shelter to outsiders on the nursing institute campus.

and student nurses under the banner of Bangladesh Unemployed Diploma Nurses Association (BUDNA) and Bangladesh Diploma Student Nurses Association (BSDNA) brought out a procession yesterday morning.

pressure this way," she said. Ainjibi Forum's local unit leade

non-government institutes.

ered with blood but he was alive." A Palestinian motorist also was killed in the attack. Palestinian hospital officials said 12 bystanders were wounded, four of

the Sajaiya neighborhood, close to an area where mortar shells are often fired into Israel. In the last three years of fighting, Israel has killed dozens of Palestinian militants in targeted

attacks, including helicopter missile In the first air strike, Israeli war-planes attacked a house under construction where the army said Hamas was making small rockets.

The alleged weapons workshop was just 200 yards from the home of Islamic Jihad leader Abdullah Shami, who was not hurt.

Hamas has fired dozens of Qassams, with a range of about six miles, at Israeli border towns and settlements in Gaza. On Sunday, at least eight rockets were fired into Israel, causing no injuries. Doctors at Shifa hospital in Gaza said that 11 people were wounded in

the first air strike, including four

children, one of them 2 years old. A 70-year-old woman was in critical condition, they said In the West Bank, an Israeli army foot patrol was attacked Sunday evening in the Palestinian village of Ein Yabrud, near the town of Ramallah, the military said. Three soldiers were killed, and another

was seriously wounded, according to a statement. The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, loosely linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement,

Meanwhile, agitating unemployed

Govt body questions reporter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A government-formed information clarification committee yesterday quizzed North Bengal Correspondent of the Bhorer Kagoj Parimal Majumder in connection with a July 9 report on smuggling of ammunition into India, official sources said.

to the newspaper's office in Dhaka and conducted the interview from 11:00am to 1:30pm in presence of the editor, news editor and other journalists of the Parimal filed the report following

the sensational ammo haul in Bogra. Deputy Secretary Ahmedullah is Convenor of the committee and its members are an additional inspector general of police, a deputy commander of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and an additional district magistrate of

with the High Court on August 9. The court asked the government to submit a report after a through investigation.

the corespondent but failed and sent several letters to the editor of the daily. Finally, the interview took place yesterday, ministry sources said. For the first time, a home ministry

team went to a newspaper office for such a job and it will shortly make its report public, an official said.

at Paturia ferried across Padma

at 9:30 am.

"For the first time we are going nto a home Test series with so much confidence. And with the crowd behind us, it can only inspire us to perform better than we have done in the past," said Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud during a media conference yesterday after their final training session.

the difficult task at hand.

cricket and in a conventional way. They are a very disciplined side. But after the tours to Australia and Pakistan our morale is very high and we intend to play good cricket," said

Whatmore, the Test minnows are gradually shaping into a decent Test side, but Whatmore is not getting carried away by the improved showings in recent times.

"There is no reason to deviate

Whatmore said he was not overly

"Whether we play at home or much.

The Bangladesh coach had every respect for the touring side. "They are a team that will make

First Test starts today

The first game of the two-match Standard Chartered Series begins

State-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Star Sports will provide the live coverage.

However, Mahmud was aware of

"England will be tougher than Pakistan as they always play hard the diminutive all-rounder.

Under their Australian coach Dav

from our original goal and that is to see individual improvement."

excited going into the first home series as coach

away is immaterial. For me what is important is that we continue the development of our cricket. But it is nice to play in front of the home crowd. We look forward to it very

you work very hard. They don't give t away easily and we have seen evidence of that. You might pick up three or four wickets quickly but then their numbers six, seven, eight and nine can make it very difficult and get a score in excess of three hun-

Whatmore said he was happy with the two new inclusions in the side, left-arm spinner Enamul Haq Jr., who will make his debut, and

middle-order batsman Aftab Ahmed. "They are in the squad because of their performance and I am pleased they did well in the warm-up matches. We can say that the future is in very

good hands. Aftab and paceman Tapash Baishya are the players who have been left out of the 13-man squad for

England are poised to give all-

rounder Rikki Clarke and off-spinner Gareth Batty their Test debuts. Stephen Harmison and Matthew Hoggard are expected to open the

bowling with Batty partnering Ashley Giles in the spin department. Experienced top order batsman Mark Butcher has passed a fitness test following a throat infection. Butcher missed the final warm-up

The left-hander has been the best batsman in Tests this summer for England averaging a healthy 59. TEAMS

match against Bangladesh A last

BANGLADESH (final squad): Khaled Mahmud (captain), Habibul Bashar (vice-captain), Hannan Sarker, Javed Omar, Rajin Saleh, Alok Kapali, Khaled Mashud, Mushfiqur Rahman, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafee Bin Mortuza, Enamul Haq Jr.

Vaughan (captain), Marcus Trescothick, Mark Butcher, Nasser Hussein, Graham Thorpe, Chris Read, Rikki Clarke, Ashley Giles, Gareth Batty, Mathew Hoggard, Martin Saggers, Stephen Harmison, Richard Johnson, Paul Collingwood, Geraint Jones. Umpires: Ashoka de Silva (Sri

ENGLAND (from): Michael

Lanka), Aleem Dar (Pakistan) TV Umpire: AFM Akhter Úddin (Bangladesh) Match referee: Wasim Hasan Raja

(Pakistan).

N Korea Hearing on frigate case

FROM PAGE 12 vided within the multilateral context. conditioned on North Korea's progress in nuclear dismantlement." said the joint press statement after the

demand for security guarantees, said Ra Jong-yil, Thai presidential adviser for national security. "President Bush's direct remarks on the North's security guarantees

represent the United States' official policy," said Rain a press briefing. During the summit. Bush reconfirmed his commitment to resolve the yearlong nuclear standoff between North Korea and the United States peacefully through dialogue, Seoul

officials said.

The two leaders also agreed to make extra efforts toward an early restart for the second round of sixnation talks aimed at ending the North's nuclear ambitions, they said. Regarding the US regu sending more troops to Iraq, Roh said

dispatch by taking into account public The Korean government approved the troop dispatch on Sunday, just two days after the UN Security Council unanimously

adopted a US-led resolution on Iraq.

In response, Bush said Seoul's

troop decision would strengthen the

his government "would decide on the

type, form, size and timing of the of Commerce and Industry. granted the adjournment.

South Korea-US alliance, contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq and increase South Korea's prestige in (retd) M Shahabuddin -- were present in the court.

blew out due to the careless drilling by the Unocal's predecessor Occidental in June 14, 1997.

But when everything was ready

go to the Gas Transmission

Company Ltd. (GTCL), a subsidiary

of Petrobangla Though Unocal initially agreed to this condition, it eventually disagreed, causing the delay in signing the deal. Unocal is responsible for delivering the Moulavibazar gas up to the national grid at Mochai area of Rashidpur, it argued. Once the gas enters the national grid, Unocal does not have any responsibility and therefore, it will not pay for the gas transmission, it added

Respecting the PSC, Unocal is already paying 4 percent wheeling charge to the GTCL for supply of its Jalalabad gas, Petrobangla pointed out. But Unocal counters that saying it does not accept the 4 percent charge for the Jalalabad gas, as Sources added, the conflict

arose out of audit objections to the Jalalabad gas field that completed its 'cost recovery' period a couple of months ago. It means Unocal's investment in this field has been fully refunded on a priority basis through gas sales. Petrobangla is now paying Unocal only the profit gas from the Jalalabad gas field for the last couple of months. But Unocal said Petrobangla has

till Nov 5 It is the first time that the US **COURT CORRESPONDENT** president has mentioned the North's A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned till November 5 the hearing on the framing of charge against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and

adjourned

purchase graft case. Judge Rezaul Karim Khan of the Special Court for Dhaka Division ordered the adjournment following a time petition by Hasina. In the petition, lawyers for Hasina stated a criminal revision was filed

five other accused in the frigate

with the High Court for quashment of the case and hearing on it will be held shortly. So, they prayed for adjournment of the hearing on the charge-A petition for adjournment of the hearing was also filed with the specia

court yesterday by another accused Abdul Awal Mintoo, president of the Federation of Bandladesh Chambers

The court heard both petitions and The four other accused -- former chief of staff of Bangladesh Navy Rear Admiral (retd) Nurul Islam, former assistant chief of staff (operations) of Bangladesh Navy commodore (retd) AKM Azad, former director (Naval plan) commodore (retd) Haroon-or-Rashid and commodore

the international community. Moulavibazar

for signing, Unocal raised objections to some clauses of the agreed contract. Under the production sharing contract (PSC), the GPSA suggested that Unocal will pay four percent of the gas sale as 'wheeling charge' for transmission of the Moulavibazar gas to the national grid, sources said. This payment will

tions and unless these objections are cleared the status of completion of cost recovery is arbitrary Therefore, Petrobangla cannot unilaterally start paying it only the profit gas, it added. Petrobangla, on the other hand, said it was willing to resolve the audit objections but these issues

should be handled separately.

At the start of this week, the two

parties finally agreed to resolve the

not cleared a number of audit objec-

conflicts separately through seeking legal opinions on the PSC terms and conditions, specially on the interpretation of the wheeling charges, sources said. Since striking gas in Moulavibazar, Unocal conducted all scientific studies on the field and estimated a reserve of about 350 billion cubic feet (bcf) -- a quantum that determines it as a small gas

field. Unocal however did not make

an official announcement, as that

would have contractually obligated

t to submit a development plan. As per Unocal's proposal, the development of the Moulavibazar field contains workovers in development wells 2 and 3, construction of a gas processing facility including the gathering lines from well heads and 25km pipeline between Moulavibazar and Rashidpur, and the drilling of development wells 4 and 5. Total development cost of the project has been estimated at \$42

In 1999, the Moulavibazar well 3 was directionally drilled to a total depth of 7,872 feet in a record eight days and well 2, drilled in the same year, was tested at a record rate of 72mmcfd from a single production zone, which is the highest test rate

Israeli strikes Gaza

pletely burned. I also saw a teenager on the side of the street cov-

serious condition. The third airstrike also hit near

Two masked men were later seen loading belongings into the white pickup that was then targeted by

claimed responsibility for the shoot-

It was the first serious attack in the area since February 2002, when four Palestinian gunmen fired at an Israeli military checkpoint at nearby Ein Arik, killing six soldiers before escaping. Meanwhile, the Arab Liberation Front. a small Iragi-backed faction

on Monday denied a report that it might have been behind last week's

attack on a US diplomatic convov in

the Gaza Strip that killed three American security guards and

Saifur's wife

Sylhet after Zohr prayers and third

janaza in Moulavibazar after Asr

prayers today. She will be buried at

the family graveyard in

Moulavibazar afterwards, family

sources said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia rushed to the finance minister's house after hearing the news and expressed deep shock at his wife's

She consoled family members of

Foreign Minister M Morshed

the deceased and prayed for salva-

tion of the departed soul.

Khan, Post and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Huq, State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Quamrul Islam. State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury, MPs and leaders and workers of the ruling BNP also went to the finance minister's house.

Ferries have been ordered to operate round the clock and take on maximum load to clear the jam at the terminals, according to an official

maximum load to avoid getting stuck in the shallows that have crept up in places due to a drastic fall in water level and heavy sedimentation at the ferry crossing point. "All including goods vehicles

waiting since early morning yesterday

were cleared by late evening today

Earlier, ferries avoided carrying

Stranded vehicles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All vehicles stranded at Paturia and

Daulatdia ferry terminals over the

last three days have been ferried

across the Padma after waiting in long

queues due to disruption in ferry

services, official sources said yester

(Monday)," said an official of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC). He said the situation is expected to further improve if the current pace of

Four dredgers have been working

dredging could be kept up.

round the clock since October 8, removing thousands of tons of silt at two ends of the channel. The government earlier declared an emergency at Patuaria-Daulatdia ferry terminals as falling water levels at the ferry crossing point on the route seriously endangered navigation. At

least seven ferries ran aground on shoals over the past six days. The authorities opened up a 2-km wide separate channel in the river to keep ferry services going. But falling water levels forced many ferries to turn around halfway through the trip and return to the terminal to offload some vehicles before sailing off again.

Bagerhat BNP names 24 AL godfathers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna Bagerhat district BNP has announ-

ced a list of 24 Awami League (AL)

leaders branding them as godfa-

The list was made public at a crowded press conference on Sunday at Bagerhat Press Club with Senior Vice-President of the district BNP Shamsul Huq in the chair. There are 300 to 400 AL godfathers across the country, who are conspiring to destabilise the demo-

cratic government of the four-party

alliance, Bagerhat BNP said at the

But President of the BNP unit MAH Selim was not present at the press conference although he was in Bagerhat on the day.

BARISAL MAYOR

SUESAL LEADERS

press conference.

Barisal City Corporation (BCC) Mayor Majibur Rahman Sarwar yesterday filed a Tk 5 crore defamation suit against 14 top leaders of the AL for putting him on its list of 101 godfathers. The BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi

Humayun Kabir, on behalf of the

mayor, lodged the case with the

Court of Barisal Sadar Upazila

Our Barisal Correspondent reports

Magistrate. Magistrate Abdus Sabur Chowdhury accepted the case for hearing on November 20. The accused in the case are AL General Secretary M A Jalil, its presidium members Abdus Samad Azad, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Sajeda

Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta

Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Motia

Chowdhury, advisors SAMS Kibria and ASHK Sadek and joint secretar-

ies Obaidul Kader and Abdur

Bhorer Kagoj

The four-member committee went

Awrit petition on the report was filed

The home ministry tried to contact