NEWS

Passenger Janatar Mancha case robbed of

tant secretary at the establishment ministry, and Sirajuddin Ahmed, Public Commission member and former joint secretary at the women's affairs ministry, completed their submissions on the petitions

The others accused in the case are former director of Narcotics Control Department Syed Bazlul Karim, former students relationship officer at the Ministry of Education Abu Alam Shahid Khan, former deputy inspector general of police Prokriti Ranjan Chanda (PR Chanda) and former president of the Secretariat Karmachari Sajukta Parishad Syed Mohiuddin

The investigation officer (IO) of the

WI outrun Zimbabwe

REUTERS, Bulawayo

Chris Gayle made a career-best 153 not out and took two wickets for 21 to guide the West Indies to a comfortable 51-run victory over Zimbabwe in their first one-day international on Saturday The West Indies won on the

Duckworth-Lewis method after totalling an imposing 347 for six. Zimbabwe replied with 173 for three in 34.5 overs before rain washed out the rest of the game

West Indies captain Brian Lara scored 113, his 18th one-day century, and overtook Desmond Haynes for the most one-day centuries scored for their country.

The second match in the five-game series is also in Bulawavo on Sunday.

All roads

FROM PAGE 1 drawal vesterday. Transactions were

double the normal volume, bankers said Sonali Bank local office sent nearly

Tk 40 crore to its branches in the capital and clients drew over Tk 16 crore by yesterday.

A senior official said Agrani Bank principal branch brought Tk 25 crore from the central bank to cater to the clients yesterday. back.

1 lakh troops FROM PAGE 1

by May from the current 130,000, and that while some defense officials have raised the possibility of shrinking the force even more next year, the senior officer said planners were assuming the number of US forces in Iraq would probably stay the same when the military begins its third one-year troop rotation in March 2005.

"What we're looking at doing is making some assumptions with the Marines about sustaining the type of force we're going to need," said the officer, who spoke on condition of

case pressed charges against expublic servant Dr Alamgir and sever others on December 26 last year. Mohammad Saifur Rahman, the passport,

I lakh Saturday.

something on his face.

Police Station.

Azizul

victs.

the six.

UNB. Dhaka

Mohakhali Police Gate area.

Six get life for

guns forcibly

taking licensed

cash at ZIA

Muggers forcibly picked up a home

bound passenger in their car from the

11:30am and was going to hire a cab.

He found himself in a Gulistan

bound bus and later in a yellow cab with

the muggers. They got down in

Sorwar, whose passport number is

M 0629327 with flag No. 27505000367,

filed a general diary (GD) with Airport

The convicts are Aktaruzzaman,

According to the prosecution, the

convicts called out Habibur Rahman

and his brother Hafizur Rahman of

their house at village Coyghoria under

Sadar Upazila on November 28,1995

They wanted the licensed guns of

Following the death threat, the

Habib and Hafiz. Otherwise, they

victims gave their two guns to the

stayed till Dec 8

(sacked) Akram Hossain jailed for life.

and took them to Titodah Bazaar.

threatened them to kill.

accused and arrested them.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT then officer-in-charge (OC) of Ramna Police Station, filed the sedition case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka on April 8 last year, accusing Dr Alamgir and six others of sedition.

Later, the IO included the name of PR Chanda in the charge sheet as probe found his 'involvement'.

In the case, it was alleged that the cused had set up a Janatar Mancha (people's dais) in front of the Jatiya Press Club in March, 1996 and instigated the government officials and

employees to join the agitation against the then BNP government. All the accused except for PR Chanda were on bail now and present during the hearing.

Girl's death shrouded in mystery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BSS. Chuadanga

A court here yesterday awarded life A young girl was burnt to death a imprisonment to six peole for taking two licensed guns from two brothers Kalatia of Keraniganj in Dhaka yesterforcibly and threatening to kill them.

Half an hour before her death, victim Shimul Akhter, 28, told The Daily Star that she did not commit suicide

"I went out for ablution to say fazr prayers at 5:00am and suddenly a fireball hit me." said Shimul at around 3:00pm at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). On hearing her cry for help, the

victim's aunt Jayeda rushed to the spot and found that she was engulfed by She was rushed to Salam-

Bangladesh Hospital at Kalatia and them to the DMCH. Her brother-in-law claimed that

she committed suicide as a kerosene container was found at the spot. Masudur Rahman, the victim's

brother, said they had feuds with some locals over property and the miscreants threatened her mother a few days

Keraniganj police could not give any detail at 8:45 last night.

Ahmadias FROM PAGE 1 land," he said.

The worst attack was made in Khulna on October 8, 1999 during Juma pravers when a time bomb planted in a mosque exploded killing

seven Ahmadias and injuring 27. 'Shah Alam, a follower of the Ahmadia sect, was killed at Roghunathnur in Ihikargachha. Jessore on October 31 and his wife filed a case accusing 16 the same day.

fixed December 8 for hearing of the petition by the full bench. But the killers filed a false case on However, informed sources said

student, in July 1998.

the High Court order.

Bangladesh, Ramadan Mubarak.

me and my wife.

with you all.

the country.

he government or the opposition.

health ground.

Civil society

FROM PAGE 1

politics and society," Badruddoza, the founding secretary general of the BNP, who had to resign from presidency within seven months of taking office under pressure from his former party men

Zia International Airport (ZIA) and The crowded Iftar party, mostly looted his passport, Tk 30,000 and attended by journalists and a number foreign drafts said to be worth about Tk of diplomats, became the focus of political speculations in recent times Sorwar Hossain arrived at the ZIA by a after Badruddoza floated the idea of a Biman flight No. 024 from Qatar at 'third force' because of the failure of the government in tackling crimes, He said he fell unconscious when corruption and price spiral. miscreants in guise of drivers spraved

Giving reasons for his idea of float ing a platform, he said the law and order situation has 'worsened seriously' and corruption has assumed new dimensions

"Corruption has eaten into the moral fabric of society," he said.

Clad in an off-white punjabi and kurta, and in a relaxed and jovial mood, the ex-president exchanged pleasant ries with the guests and even made punchy remarks on questions from inquiring journalists. His family members including wife Hasina Warda Chowdhury, daughter Shaila, son Mahi B Chowdhury, , brother-in-law Dr Osman Haider Chowdhury busied around the Winter Garden hall, making arrangements for guests and handing out copies of the written speech of Badruddoza.

Alam, Alimuddin, Russell, Jewel and "The administration is lacking in efficiency and shows no sign of looking Judge Giasuddin Ahmed of the up," the former president said. "People Court of Additional District and are also questioning the rise of an Sessions Judge handed down the additional power centre outside the judgement in a crowded courtroom in official administrative mechanism. the afternoon in presence of the con-"The sense of utter insecurity of life,

the loss of human lives on account of

15 more Bihari settlers killed in Assam

REUTERS, AFP, Guwahati

convicts and filed a case with In a fresh outbreak of ethnic violence, Chuadanga Police Station, accusing at least 15 settlers from Bihar were gunned down by suspected ULFA Police recovered the guns from the rebels in Tinsukua district of Assam yesterday, officials said.

Later, investigation officer pressed charges against the six. After examining "Around 8:00 am today 15 laboura number of witnesses and relevant ers working in a brick kiln were shot documents, the judge pronounced the dead by suspected ULFA militants in Bordubi area in Tinsukia district," BM Mazumdar, Assam's home secretary, AC Akram's bail told Reuters.

The attacks followed a two-day lull in the state which earlier this week saw widespread looting and killing of people from neighbouring Bihar in a conflict triggered by a row over The Supreme Court yesterday stayed Railway Recruitment Board exams. till December 8 the execution of the

Militants stormed a brick kiln and High Court order that granted bail to fired indiscriminately with autoassistant police commissioner matic weapons", police chief police chief Khagen Sharma told AFP. Chamber Judge Tafazzal Islam

He said the attack was carried out by the United Liberation Front of Asom, which is fighting for an inde-

the existing law and order situation and the critical corruption situation secretaries and a couple of representademand very urgent attention.' tives from NGOs were present at the

party, among others.

British High Commissioner David

Carter, French Ambassador Michel

Lummaux, Iranian Ambassador

Mohammad Rejail Nouri, Myanmai

Ambassador U Ohn Thwin, Charge d

affaires of Nepal Madhu Raman

Acharya Arun, acting High

Commissioner of India Dilip Sinha,

Pakistan acting High Commissioner

High Commissioner of Australia, High

Commissioner of Sri Lanka, Garman

Japan Embassy, Deputy Chief of

Mission of Russian Embassy,

Former chief election commis-

sioner Justice Abdur Rouf, Managing

Director of ASA Shafiqul Haque

Chowdhury, Chairperson of Fair

Election Monitoring Alliance and

former diplomat Abul Ahsan, former

foreign secretary CM Shafi Sami, Editor

of Jugantar Golam Sarwar, Editor of

New Age Enavetullah Khan, , Editor of

The News Today Reaz Uddin Ahmed

Editor of the Bangladesh Observer

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Editor of

The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, acting

Editor of Sangbad Bazlur Rahman

Executive Editor of Ittefaq Hasan

Shahriar, Editor of Manabjamin Matiur

Rahman Chowdhury, Editor of Bhorer

Kagoj Abed Khan, Editor of Ingilab MM

Bahauddin, Ataus Samad, Gias Kamal

Chowdhury and a number of senior

journalists attend the Iftar party.

by outlaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

slogans in the name of the PBCP.

(KMCH) in a critical condition.

The attackers have taken away his

mobile phone and purse containing

Karim Raj was severely injured in an

"I feel it is my duty to point out that our civil society should start responding to and performing the duty they are expected to do in times of need. The people have great faith in them," he

"A united platform of the civil society could start organising and functioning themselves. They could sit in roundtable conferences and discuss the ways and means to come out of this situation," he said. Asked if his former colleagues in the

Deputy of chief, Political Counselor of BNP who had done politics with him for over two decades would be in the new platform, Badruddoza said: "Not Counselor of Korean Embassy, Charge only them, all people who feel for the de affairs of European Union Hens country and aspire to dedicate to the Rein, Residential Representative of the development of the country would be UNDP Jorgen Listner were present with me. I urge them all to be under the among the foreign dignitaries. umbrella.

"I will sit with the politicians after the Eid to discuss the issues and ideas, he said.

Asked what he would do if his move to form the platform faced opposition from the government as already hinted, he said: "I don't think I will face any resistance. But if I am resisted, I will tackle it when it comes."

Badruddoza came to Sheraton in the morning where he booked a room and stayed there till 4:40 when he came down to the Iftar. "The traffic block took me long to

come," he said. Asked if he faced 'any problem' in reaching the hotel, he said: "No, it is the usual thing you face everyday. Iftar attendants

Representatives from 17 foreign mis-

Rupsha Bridge Jubo League leader FROM PAGE 1 **Project official** 'Just after Rahmat gave Robin Tk 30,000, four criminals shot him five hurt in attack times, " said Maruf, an employee of Rahmat.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and later shifted to Chest Diseases Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

A business partner of the victim Supervisor of Rupsha Bridge alleged that listed criminals of Construction Project (RBCP) Rezaul Moghbazar area belonging to Arman and Mukul group phoned Rahmat on attack allegedly by the activists of Friday at about 11:00am when he along outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist with five other business partners was at a hotel at Moghbazar.

vesterday. Arman threatened Rahmat with death within 24 hours as he refused to pay him (Arman) Tk 2 lakh, demanded a week ago.

Shahid, an employee of Rahmat said Mukul phoned him later and demanded Tk 1 lakh.

Police are yet to ascertain the motive behind the killing.

Toll-takers FROM PAGE 1

money as learnt from some locals who yesterday morning only to be witnessed the incident. declared dead on arrival. The motive behind the killing was

Former general secretary of Khulna inners' Club, Raj joined the RBCP ir

Raj, but he refused to pay.

Pneumonia

Mahismara villagers

FROM PAGE 12 sions in Dhaka, editors, two ex-foreign

will ambassador.'

Teenage girls at Mahismara danced, sang and showered petals to receive the goodwill ambassador in the morning.

Clad in red shalwar and kameez, the duchess shook hands with the girls and exchanged greetings.

her with a chorus "We shall overcome ... The Unesco envoy, on the second day we shall overcome someday of her three-day visit, formally inaugurated the Mahismara centre, built on a She visited poultry training facility piece of land donated by a local couple. there.

The centres provide basic education The duchess enjoyed a ride on a to adolescents, and disseminate inforrickshaw van at another centre in a mation on reproductive health, gender tranquil Garo village, where Garo girls issues and daily life science, briefed an received her singing tribal songs. official of the outfit. He said the centres Talking to pressmen, the duchess also impart various vocational training.

praised the pace of development she The duchess, in her speech, said, "I witnessed during her second visit to am happy to be here as an Unesco good-Bangladesh after five years. "I am happy to see that Bangladeshi

Sjef Ijzermans, ambassador of the

Netherlands, Wolfgang Vollmann,

director and Unesco representative in

opposition supporters packed the

capital's Freedom Square and other

streets, kicking an effigy of Shevardnadze

and toting placards reading, "Your

century was the 20th. Now it is the 21st.'

Sultana. "People used to treat us with

disrespect and neglect previously. But

their attitudes towards us and the educa-

tion we are getting have changed now."

The Unesco ambassador went over to

another centre, where girls welcomed

She thanked people of the community for providing scope for their girls' girls want to learn and they are very eager education. The special envoy also to find ways to get rid of poverty," she handed over books and world maps for said the centres. The duchess had a simple lunch with

She talked about her country, family cookies, butter, fruits and juice at the and the education system there. Mahismara centre before starting off for Sherin Sultana, a student of the the capital.

Mahismara Centre, said the learning centres have been helping out local adolescents, mostly the school dropouts, with knowledge to be self-reliant. Dhaka, were among others to accom-

"Now, I know how to be self-reliant and earn respect from the society," said panythe duchess.

Georgia parliament

FROM PAGE 1 speaker's podium, just after the president convened the body.

"The velvet revolution has taken place in Georgia," Saakashvili said, as the hall applauded him, "We are against violence.

The takeover of Parliament throws into doubt the rule of Shevardnadze, the ex-Soviet republic's leader since 1992. The country has slid into its biggest political crisis in years after November 2 parliamentary elections, which the opposition and many foreign observers - including the United States -- claimed were rigged.

The 75-year-old Shevardnadze was hustled out of the chamber and then the parliament building by his bodyguards.

"I will not resign. I will resign when the presidential term expires, according to the constitution," Shevardnadze said before he was driven away from the narliament, accompanied by armed guards in riot gear.

Party (PBCP) at Labonchora in Khulna But the opposition appeared in control of the legislature. One demon-According to witnesses, the understrator clutching a rose stood on the ground operatives swooped on Raj podium and pounded a gave, drinking while he was going to his office at from a bottle before smashing it on the about 8:00am. They chopped him with floor. Saakashvili ordered all pro-Chinese axe and left the spot, raising government lawmakers out of the building, prompting some scuffling. He then The RBCP supervisor was admitted handed over the podium to opposition to Khulna Medical College Hospital leader Nino Burdzhanadze, who was the speaker in the last parliament.

"We tried not to allow what has happened, but Shevardnadze has lost all the chances of peaceful negotiations," Burdzhanadze said.

up under the guidance of Prime The takeover came after at least two Minister Khaleda Zia to establish the veeks of daily street protests by opposi

They vowed not to leave the streets until Shevardnadze is ousted Before the takeover, Shevardnadze criticized the opposition on Saturday for calling for civil disobedience. Speaking to journalists in Parliament, he offered a dialogue, but "without any ultimatums Parliament was elected and ... parliament should begin work today.' As tension escalated, Shevardnadze

appeared to soften his position. He acknowledged that there had been some problems with the election, which the pro-Shevardnadze party won according to the official results. "About 8 to 10 percent of the ballots were invalid," he said, but added that this should be deal with in the courts

'Aamra Zia Hobo' denies links with Mahi Chy

BSS, Dhaka

Albert P Costa and Humatun Kabir. founding president and secretary of Aamra Zia Hobo (we want to be Zia) yesterday said Mahi B Chowdhury, MP, has no relation with the organisation and he is using its name for personal

anonymity.

"As you look at this, it wouldn't seem prudent right now to plan on using a force of less than what is there now, for March '05." That force would presumably remain in Iraq until March 2006, although its size could fluctuate, depending on conditions on the ground, the Times said.

The views of senior Army and Marine Corps officers involved in the planning in Washington are important, the report added, because they track and respond to what ground commanders in Iraq say they require.

Nuruzzaman FROM PAGE 12

reports," Nuruzzaman alleged. Earlier, a joint team of police led by the officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station and a sub-inspector of Srimangal Police Station arrested him on November 18 from his house at Mirabazar in the city.

He came in the limelight weeks ago after he alleged at a press conference in Dhaka that the finance minister's son and also a lawmaker Naser Rahman demanded him Tk 2 crore as toll.

Hills students

FROM PAGE 12

vocative statements after he took office as chairman of the Hill Tracts Unnavan Board.

The Hill Tracts accord is a convention of rights for the permanent inhabitants of the region. But both the past and present governments did not come forward to implement the treaty, they alleged.

Student leader Kakon Chakma chaired the rally, also attended by the PCJSS leaders Rupak Chakma, Broze Kishore Tripura, Chairperson of the Hill Women's Federation Chaitali Tripura, Dharmabir Chakma and Prattay Chakma

On November 19, Wadud at an Iftar party organised by the district BNP shot down the 17-point demand of the Baghaichhari Jana Sanghati Samity, accusing Santu Larma of fomenting cut-throat crimes and chaos during the last 30 years.

November 16 accusing four Ahmadias," said another top Ahmadia leader.

Some people attacked Bakshibazar Ahmadia mosque and vandalised it on October 29, 1992. Besides, extremists confined some

13 Ahmadia families of Bhabanipur in Kushtia since the beginning of Ramadan and thratened to kill them on the Eid day.

Bigots in Ambarnagar of Laxmipur tortured many Ahmadias and vowed to drive them away before the Eid. The Ahmadias of Fazilpur of Feni are also under threat and found no

help of the law-enforcers despite requests.

Moazzem Hossain said the main difference between them and the

other Muslims is that the Ahmadias believe Imam Mahdi, who according to the Muslim faith will appear to show the way to light, has already been born and died.

Guest birds

FROM PAGE 12

large bird species including great crested grebe, black headed poachard, pintail, wigeon, egret, large egret, heron, night heron and snipe were seen in Chatlar beel on Tuesday. "Every morning, wholesalers buy

birds from the poachers on haor fringe villages and send them to big towns and cities including Dhaka. The poachers set their traps in Haorkhal, Jola, Chatla, Pingla and

Katua and Kukur Dubi bogs in the haor area. Wholesalers ferry the birds to

Azimganj bazaar, Sujanagar bazaar and Bhukshimol in Kulaura upazila from where the birds travel to scores of markets in Fenchuganj, Kulaura, Borolekha, Moulvibazar, Sreemongal

and Sylhet, locals said. Dr Ali Reza Khan, who visited the area recently, said the haor has been turned into the killing field of migratory birds.

"Day by day, the number of birds is decreasing as hatcheries, duck farms and other commercial facilities are thriving in the haor land," he said.

He called for strict implementation of the law as well as rehabilitation of poor local poachers to save the birds' paradise.

pendent homeland and has warned Akram has already been released all Hindi-speaking people to leave the from Dhaka Central Jail after the High Court granted him bail on November province.

The deaths Saturday take the toll in He has been serving life imprisonethnic violence to 39 in the past week. Two of the scores of people injured in ment for murder in police custody of mob attacks succumbed to their Shamim Reza Rubel, a university injuries late Friday. The High Court granted Akram ad

The violence has targetted settlers interim bail for three months on from India's densely populated Ganges plain who Assamese militants Attorney General AF Hassan Ariff accuse of taking away jobs and altermoved the Supreme Court against ing the province's ethnic balance.

Full text of Badruddoza's speech

vet to be unearthed Police recovered a bloodstained

knife from the restaurant and picked up five staff and a relative of the victim for quizzing. No case was filed till 7:30 last night.

In another incident, four alleged muggers were injured in mob beating at Shyampur vesterday.

Locals caught the four -- laved Ridov, Kader and Babul -- as they attempted to mug a rickshaw passenger They were admitted to the DMCH.

FROM PAGE 12 smoke, breast-feeding should continue and parents should be given some health education.

Hospitals should be equipped with centrally supplied oxygen, they felt.

and the critical corruption situation

I hope the civil society rises to the

demand very urgent attention.

2001. According to his relatives and tion supporters. Before Shevardnadze some officials of the project, a Jubo Dal opened Parliament, tens of thousands of leader had demanded Tk 50,000 from

Solar eclipse FROM PAGE 12

The central eclipse will begin at 04 hrs 22 minutes 36 seconds BST and end at 05 hrs 15 minutes 30 seconds. The total eclipse will occur at 04 hrs 49 minutes 18 seconds BST.

The maximum magnitude of the eclipse will be 1.039 and duration of the total phase will be 1 minute 59.9 seconds.

The eclipse will not be visible anywhere in Bangladesh, the press release said

They asked Mahi to refrain from using its name.

Since Washington declared major

American commanders say guerril

Friday, guerrillas used donkey carts

las are becoming increasingly inventive

and attacks are showing signs of greater

parties. A fourth cart -- with the donkey

wired up with explosives -- was found

Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, a member of

Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council

and head of the Supreme Council for the

Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), a

leading Shi'ite party, was also targeted

in a rocket attack Friday, his son said

Bagerhat murder

district unit President and lawmaker

MAH Selim in the chair, a press release

Meanwhile, the Awami League and

coordination

and defused.

ROM PAGE 12

said

Twin blasts

FROM PAGE 1

police armband stuck to it. Drops of blood could be seen.

"We were in front of the police said school principal Jamal Numaan. who witnessed the blast. "Blood came out of my ears and nose.

Suicide attackers have struck several times at Iraqi police. On October 27, coordinated car bomb attacks on three Baghdad police stations and the International Committee of the Red Cross killed at least 35 people. Earlier that month, two suicide bombers killed eight Iraqis at another Baghdad police

SUSPECTED MISSILE STRIKE

At Baghdad international airport, officials said initial reports suggested the DHL plane had been hit by a missile. DHL officials said the Airbus A300

had taken off from Baghdad airport and returned to make an emergency landing after an engine fire which was being investigated. No one was hurt.

Guerrillas have attempted several down five, killing 49 soldiers.

The United States blames diehard Saddam Hussein loyalists and foreign Muslim militants for attacks on US troops, foreign organizations and Iraqis cooperating with occupying forces

ideals of late president Ziaur Rahmar and it will continue to function under her guidance.

They said the organisation was set

Referring to a news item published in a section of national dailies yesterday about a function that Mahi organised in the name of this organisation, the two former office bearers in a statement said Mahi was not even a member of the organisation, leave alone its president.

They said Mahi has exposed his dishonesty and resorted to political blackmailing by organising such function under the banner of the organisation and claiming to be its leader.

combat over on May 1, 182 US soldiers have been killed in action in Iraq.

station and we heard a huge explosion,"

to launch Katyusha rockets at Iraq's Oil Ministry building and two fortified hotels used by Western contractors and ournalists A third cart loaded with 21 rockets was stopped by US troops near the Italian and Turkish embassies and close to the offices of one of Iraq's Kurdish

station

times to hit planes near Baghdad's airport, but until Saturday no fixed-wing aircraft had been reported hit. Helicopters have been much more vulnerable targets -- over the past month, guerrilla attacks have brought

Sramik League leaders of Bagerhat termed the expulsion an evewash. branding Selim as godfather of the killers They threatened to declare Selim

persona non grata if the accused in the FIR were not handed over to police.

on television discussion eg Tritio Representatives of the Civil Society, Excellencies and Partners in the devel-Matra, and speeches made by political personalities opment of Bangladesh, representatives of the community of journalists in What is probably striking is the low-

key response from the country's civil Today in the holy month of society

The two top declared pre-elections Ramadan, we are on the threshold of the most auspicious night in our calenpolitical agenda of the present governdar -- Lailatul Qadr (the glorious night). ment were --

We are also not far from holy Eid-ul-1) Improvement of the law and Fitr. Please accept greetings of Eid from order situation, and

2) Curbing the crippling all-Friends, since I resigned from the pervading corruption

presidency of the republic on account In addition, and equally imporof disagreement on principle, and have tantly, people were made to undernot met for a long time, I decided to stand that measures would be taken to seize the opportunity to be here today bring down price of essentials and make life easy for the poor and the As you know, before I became a middle class, improve the efficiency of candidate for presidentship, I resigned the administration, and create an from all political positions and so, since atmosphere for education and help then and even at this moment I hold no ease political tension.

political position or platform. But I do Sadly, the law and order situation feel proud to be a senior citizen and a has not improved -- on the contrary it member of the civil society with a has worsened seriously. Even the last background in politics and a profestwo days' newspapers gave grim stories sion. Hence I am in a natural position to of roasting alive 11 poor people in the southeastern region and slaughtering respond to the situations prevailing in of five poor people in Pabna. Rarely a The performance of any governday passes without similar tragic news ment is open to criticism by any conin the media.

scious citizen, both in its positive and Similarly corruption has assumed negative sense; to praise its good work new dimentions. For the third succesand point out the failures. I feel very sive year the country has earned the strongly, and, as we have seen earlier infamous championship award as the that when the situation demands, world's most corrupt nation members of the civil society respond Corruption has eaten into the moral constructively -- and not leave the fabric of the society. A group of people matters to political parties alone, be it through their corrupt practices are creating a massive confidence gap for Now, what is the prevailing sociopotential investors, both foreign and economic and political situation? What national. Corruption has now created a I will be talking about and aloud is really substantial impediment to the develnot new. It is on everyday newspapers, opment process of our country.

The rise of price of essential commodities has created a Monga situation in the north. People are reported to be suffering from extensive subnutrition and hunger.

The administration is lacking in efficiency and shows no sign of looking up presently. People are also questioning the rise of an additional power centre outside the official administrative mechanism.

All these taken together naturally makes people worried: where are we heading towards?

ment the government and the opposition are trying to fight out their case That is the most tragic devaluation of people's votes.

Friends, when problems besiege a pushes the poor and the middle class to the brink, when administrative mechanisms show no element of improveon as onlookers? This country has a skilled professionals, businessmen, industrialists, retired bureaucrats, writers etc whom we are proud of.

our civil society should start respondexpected to do in times of need. The

situation.

The sense of utter insecurity of life,

Without facing each other in parlia-

nation to this extent, when price hike ment -- can the civil society afford to sit large number of highly educated and

I feel it is my duty to point out that ing to and performing the duty they are

people have great faith in them. A united platform of the civil society could start organizing and functioning themselves. They could sit in roundtable conferences and discuss the ways and means to come out of this

the loss of human lives on account of the existing law and order situation,

occasion responding to this situation, justifying the people's faith in them. On my behalf I will be happy to be with you and beside you as I have always promised.

The preparations for moving the civil society could start throughout the country after the holy Eid. We could discuss with professionals eg journalists, educationists, retired bureaucrats, businessmen, industrialists etc and make in-depth studies of the problems in their own fields and find out the solutions. It requires every segment of

Following this phase, politicians of ship in politics and society.

both inside and outside the country.

This country deserves to be treated better. We have full faith in democracy and we want to see it flourish for the benefit of the people and the country. Guests and friends, please excuse the mediocrity of the iftar items -- we curtailed the menu in view of the Monga situation.

Wishing you a happy Eid and a better Bangladesh.

the civil society to ventilate the feelings.

course should be consulted and possible political solutions discussed. We need a large number of educated, honest, sincere, broad-minded, efficient people -- of which we have no darth in our society, to take up leader-

This country is composed of people who fought for freedom and democracy, who bring forth record crops after devastating natural calamities. We have a responsive community of women and a massive youth workforce