# NEWS

lists expired vesterday

same ground.

Hundreds of residents of Jurain in

the capital, when came to know that

a local school yesterday, a day after

demonstration in Banasree on the

not specify vesterday the total number

of claims and objections received

across the country to the draft voter list.

the objections and claims by June 6

and then the EC will publish the final

list, though the EC is yet to announce

against the draft lists to the election

officials concerned to examine them,

The EC has sent allegations

the date of the publication.

The revising authorities will resolve

Officials at the FC Secretariat could

added

reputed international doctors will have

the scope for helping Bangladeshi

doctors diagnose ailments and con-

duct treatment or operations, she

Khaleda Zia also expressed hope

that this new technology would give

the nation an immense opportunity in

facing the challenges of the new

century as well as play an important

role in exchanging information across

She said the telecommunications

and information-technology-based

services are earning huge revenues

for the national exchequer and are

also playing a positive role in socio-

function that the present government

has already taken a massive initiative

to promote software industry and

make telecommunications and infor-

mation technology easily available for

pointed out, the government formed

the Telecommunications Regulatory

Post and Telecommunications

Vinister Barrister Aminul Huq, State

Minister for Communications

Salahuddin Ahmed and local MP

develop country's telecom sector.

Soon after assuming power, she

The prime minister informed the

economic development of the country.

the world in an easy and faster way.

# Bangladesh waters

FROM PAGE 16 Boundary in the Bay of Bengal.

Describing his consultation as constructive and fruitful. Hemavet said all bilateral issues, including repatriation of Rohingya refugees, border security, road connection and bilateral trade and investment, were discussed during the talks

He said the Myanmar side have agreed to repatriate the remaining 21,172 I Rohingyas sheltered in Cox's Bazar. They expressed readiness to take back 8,000 already cleared by Myanmar authorities and then the remaining ones. The two sides agreed to strengthen

border security to stop illegal movements, particularly of drug smugglers and gunrunners. They agreed on holding frequent meetings between the border guards of the two countries to maintain a secure and peaceful border.

Hemayet said the two sides have agreed to increase the trade volume through border and coastal trade by improving the banking system and shipping lines. Myanmar expressed keen interest in importing more pharmaceutical products from Bangladesh, he added.

Two-way trade favours Myanmar as Bangladesh imported \$ 32.43 million against its export of \$ 4.18 million in 2004-05 fiscal year.

The Myanmar side also agreed to ease the visa regime for businessmen

and asked the EC to explain why the

and asking legal protection and secu-

EC to show cause why its direction to

the ARO to regularise the appointment

of "fake" enumerator M Atiqul Islam

should not be declared illegal.

The court also issued a rule on the

should not be declared illegal.

rity for his life and job.

FROM PAGE 1

900 Controversial Voters

## by extending visa for at least 15 days,

the foreign secretary said. On the construction of

said the two sides would soon sign a memorandum of understanding on the construction of 25 kilometres road (2 km on the Bangladesh side and 23 km on the Myanmar side) as the two subcommittees completed study on

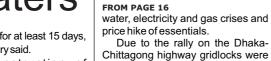
The proposed road could be linked with Kunming of China on consultation with the Chinese government to

region. The two sides also discussed cooperation in defence in the form of training of military personnel.

On the stalled project for tri-nation gas pipeline, Hemayet said the Myanmar side raised the issue when he told them that settlement of some bilateral issues with India could make the way for the trans-border pipeline.

in Myanmar prisons, Hemayet said he nationals imprisoned over there

fishermen, are now imprisoned in Myanmar while some 500 Myanmar nationals are in Bangladeshi jails.



minister.

rigging

scale corruption and misrule.

AL Presidium Member Tofail

proposals as the alliance govern-

ment politicised all the sectors to

ensure return to power through vote

the country before implementation

of the reform demands and cancel-

lation of the voter list," he said.

"No election would be allowed in

Workers' Party President

Rashed Khan Menon urged the

countrymen to resist the govern-

Demanding immediate resigna-

meeting held at party chief Sheikh

Hasina's Dhanmondi office vester-

dav demanded immediate resigna-

tion of the CEC, alleging that he is

ment's conspiracy to come back.

the reform proposals.

voter list.

seen in the Jatrabari and Bangladesh-Myanmar road, Hemayet Sayadabad areas. On the highway near Shanir Akhra many Dhaka bound buses and other vehicles were stranded for more than three hours Several thousands of opposition leaders and activists with kerosene

lanterns and water pots in hands technical and financial aspects. brought out a procession after the rally chanting slogan demanding

establish a greater connectivity in the

About the release of Bangladeshis

urged his counterpart to take humanitarian look at some Bangladeshi

Some 89 Bangladeshis, mostly

## Bus counter President asked

FROM PAGE 1

Hospital has 28, the draft roll shows. The enumerators probably used some ultra-modern remote-controlled their names are absent on the list, system, because, Delwar Hossain, who runs a shop in the clinic comdemonstrated in protest and besieged

pound, told reporters that no one had come to register them as voters. The ticket counter staffs were thunderstruck yesterday to know that

so many voters have been enlisted at that address. "Nobody came to us to put our names on the list." one of them named Dulal Hossain told reporters.

Like most areas in the country, the mmediate resignation of the prime draft lists for Savar and Dhamrai upazilas of Dhaka district are also rife with anomalies. The Daily Star The opposition leaders said a detected a few thousand erroneous mass upsurge on June 5 will virtuidentities of voters on them. For examally halt the entire country and ple, the list did not specify the relation Khaleda-Nizami government will between a female voter and the man resign then for failing to solve the named in the column for husband or ongoing crises and for their wide parent.

However, an Election Commission (EC) source claimed they are amending the mistakes. Ahmed said they placed the reform

While the number of revelations of gross irregularities in the draft voter ists was escalating, the time for parliamentary elections is declared." submitting claims and objections to the he said.

# 54kg heroin shipment

#### FROM PAGE 1

appointed a worker. They manufactured 650 tiles with heroin hidden in each of those.

"We manufactured more tiles and in each of those 100 to 150 tion of the prime minister, Jatiya grams of heroin was concealed,' Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Bashar told a magistrate. "In floor Haque Inu urged the countrymen to tiles and in cans containing molasforce the prime minister to accept ses we shipped 54kg heroin to the UK between 2004 and April 2006, Meanwhile, an AL secretarial he said.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members arrested Abul Bashar raiding a house at Shankarpur in Jessore town in the early hours on May 6.

responsible for preparing the 'fake' Bashar also said the shipment containing 54kg of heroin was supposed to be received by a No election can take place until the incumbent CEC is in the office Bangladeshi born UK citizen named and the 'fake' voter list valid, the Mintu in London. He said Zafar had provided him with Tk 1.25 lakh for the job and was supposed to provide him with Tk 7 lakh more, but they were arrested before the payment could be made.

Meanwhile, a CID-led fivemember team formed by the home ministry, to investigate smuggling of 75.5kg heroin to the UK, submitted a preliminary report to State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babai vesterday.

Babar held a meeting with the probe body members. Emerging from the meeting the state minister told journalists that the report is a preliminary one and a lot of investigation is still needs to be carried out

Babar said involvement of BD Foods in the heroin smuggling was detected in the investigation. Replying to a question he said the primary investigation did not find involvement of any political party or any government official in drug trafficking. In the confessional statement

Bashar told Metropolitan Magistrate Nani Gopal Biswas that he and Zafar also smuggled 2kg of heroin to Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wings the UK hidden in another shipment of vegetables through Zia The 88 appointments were made International Airport in 2000. A UK citizen of Bangladeshi origin named The JCD men got furious as the Lipu received the shipment of the

He met vegetable exporter Zafar Reza who exported vegetables to the UK during 1988 to 1996

in five shipments Zafar requested Bashar to join his business as a partner and subsequently financed the business Bashar said in 2000 Zafar proposed to him to smuggle heroin to the UK concealed among vegetables and

part of its project to "meet the growing public demand to create" facilipartner with the drug smuggling, State Minister for Home Affairs ties like "park, playground and graveyard etc" in "Khilgaon Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday told journalist, "Newspapers report Rehabilitation Zone" many things, but we have to cross check if those are based on fact or Hotel staff

fiction. He said so far investigators have FROM PAGE 16 not yet found any link between any Extra police force from Ramna political leader or government Police Station rushed there after official and the heroin smuggling. "If about 15 minutes of the horrific any link is found later, law enforcers vandalism and took the situation can take appropriate steps," he under control added.

He said the investigators will people away and detained four have to go to the UK for further investigation. The UK proposed to restaurant workers from the spot. the government to join the investigation and Bangladesh accepted its proposal. But the UK has yet to send about half an hour.

any investigator. "None will be spared if found involved in heroin smuggling to the UK," Babar told journalists after a meeting with top officials of different law enforcing agencies following submission of the preliminary report by the investigation team.

He said bank transactions of BD Foods and its sister concerns are being checked to find out whether there was any abnormal transaction and from where the money came and where it went.

employees on charge of contempt He said he gave instructions to of court and creating obstruction to the investigators in this regard in the the government work," officer-inmeeting.

Jubo Sangram Bangladesh logs FROM PAGE 1

Commissioners. The leaders and workers of JSP.

a platform of the young fronts of the components of 14-party opposition combine, will gather at Russell Square and Dhanmondi playground at 11:00am and then march towards the EC Secretariat in the capital.

"We will lay siege to the EC Secretariat to ensure CEC and two politically-appointed commissioners' resignation and cancellation of the controversial voter list to ensure a free, fair and neutral election," said Jahangir Kabir Nanak, chairman of Awami League's youth front Jubo League.

Nanak said the JSP will observe sit-in and hold a rally if facilitate high-speed data and voice the law enforcers put barricade to transfer and also increase the number foil the march. of international communications

Chief Election Commissioner MAAziz told a press conference yesterday. Hartal "The voter list will be corrected and FROM PAGE 1 revised until the schedule of the next

SCC ward commissioner

The speakers said the law enforcers are not sincere about arresting the killers, who had attacked Juba League leader Ayub Ali, a young trader, and his companions for protesting extortion by the ruling party backed gang.

On Wednesday night, Ayub and some other traders were injured in an attack by JCD cadres led by Abdul Mannan, General Secretary of ward no 26 JCD, who had demanded toll from the traders the day before

Ayub Ali succumbed to his injuries at a clinic on Thursday night.

The police chased the unruly

The traffic movement on the

BDNEWS adds: Earlier, the

mobile team conducted a raid on

Tourist Hotel at Gafur Tower and

detained 11 women and some men

allegedly for their anti-social activi-

Following the attack by restau-

"We are preparing to file cases

against the hotel and restaurant

rant employees, the mobile court

team abandoned the drive and left

the spot under police escort.

ties. The team also fined the hotel.

Topkhana Road was halted for

## Rejoinder

enhancement of revenue for the government. The country will also have a scope for earning huge foreign exchange

FROM PAGE 1

India. Sri

current speed.

finally land in France.

will greatly improve telecommunica-

Bangladesh earlier signed an

agreement with 12 other countries

under a consortium in 2004 for install-

ing the submarine cable underneath

West Europe-4 project connects the

country with undersea fibre-optic

cable passing from Singapore through Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh,

number of Middle-Eastern countries to

gigabyte data-transfer capacity per

second, 68 times higher than the

that this submarine cable would

circuits that will ultimately lead to an

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said

Now the country will have a 10-

Lanka, Pakistan and a

The South East Asia-Middle East-

the seabed at a cost of Tk 628 crore.

tions systems, she added.

through leasing out the unutilised capacity of the submarine cable," she told the function. The prime minister said the subma-

Commission to modernise and rine cable project would create the opportunity for introducing broadband data-transfer and call-centre services at a very cheap rate, while the cost of software production for export, egovernance, e-commerce and tele-Shahiduzzaman also spoke on the nedicine services will also decrease. Through video conferencing, occasion.

Militants attack

General of the Central Reserve Police Force who led the operation against the militants told Reuters

"We suspect some others are hiding around," he said. "Though the firing has stopped, we are searching the area.

The prime minister said that it is

only through dialogue that a lasting

solution can be found," a statement

a visit to Srinagar on Wednesday,

when he is due to take part in talks with

Pakistan aimed at ending the two

countries' bitter conflict over the

Siachen glacier in the mountains of

gathering since February, has been called by New Delhi to widen the

dialogue process in the state, where a

separatist revolt against Indian rule by

Muslim militants since 1989 has killed

querrillas and soldiers continues in the

region despite a peace process

Violence involving separatist

more than 45,000 people.

The meeting, the second such

Singh said he would go ahead with

Four workers belonging to the Congress party and two policemen also died after militants fired automatic weapons and hurled grenades. Twenty others were wounded, includ-ing two senior police officers. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

condemned the attack, saying such attempts would not prevent efforts to bring peace to the disputed Himalayan

> Kashmir's Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad was to have addressed Sunday's rally but had not yet arrived when the gunfight erupted, prompting

"A man in police uniform suddenly stood up and started firing indiscriminately at us. Thank God I have escaped but I don't know how many are lying injured there." Mohammad Ismail Bhat, a Congress worker, told

Saturday to disrupt next week's peace talks. A Pakistan-based alliance of Muslim militant groups called on Sunday for a two-day strike in Jammu and Kashmir to protest against the

## FROM PAGE 16 FROM PAGE 1 The ministry said the graveyard is a

region.

Kashmir

from his office said.

petween India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since they won freedom

from Britain in 1947. India accuses Pakistan of training, arming and sending militants into its part of Kashmir while Islamabad says it is trying to stop the incursions.

Kashmiri militant groups Al-Mansoorian and Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack in a call to a local news agency.

It was the second major incident in Kashmir in May, after suspected Islamic militants shot dead 35 Hindus

n the remote Doda region on May 1.

the huge crowd to scatter in panic.

Reuters. Militants had threatened on conference.

speakers said at the meeting. AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil chaired the meeting that also discussed the preparation of its extended meeting with grass root level leaders and the prevailing situation of the country. The AL leaders also criticised the slide in law and order situation and

asked the government to stop attacks on AL and its front organisations' leaders and activists immedi-The meeting also condemned

and protested "capturing of Sheikh Rehana's house and setting up of police station there and allocating a part of the house to former Chief Justice KM Hasan"

They demanded the house to be returned to Sheikh Rehana immediatelv

of ruling BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

#### IU closes FROM PAGE 16 chosen men of either the JCD or

ately.

#### British envoy FROM PAGE 1

formation of the inquiry committee an enumerator although he had not been appointed in accordance with the An HC division bench issued the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1981 and rule and directions following a writ the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982. petition filed by Aminul challenging the Aminul said the EC officials put validity of the EC actions during the pressure on him to issue a press preparation of the draft electoral roll

ease contradicting his earlier statements after news on the 900 "fake" ers was published. He also said he has received many

He said he was pressurised to

regularise the appointment of Atigul as

phone calls threatening him and his family with dire consequences unless he submits the forms of those voters to the EC Secretariat.

The respondents are Bangladesh The petition said, "The petitioner is represented by the home secretary, exposed to grave threats to his life and the law secretary, the EC represented liberty and to his livelihood, as his by the chief election commissioner. employment is threatened to be Election Commissioner SM Zakaria terminated, but he remains deterdeputy secretaries of the EC mined to uphold his duty under the Secretariat Mihir Sarwar Murshid and Constitution to protect the electoral Abul Kashem, District Election Officerprocess against unconstitutional, 3 and Registration Officer of Dhaka illegal and mala fide interventions by Shamsul Alam, Thana Election Officer the respondents to intimidate and of Mohammadpur Police Station coerce him to submit the 900 forms

Afroza Khanam, the IGP, the commisthat are lving in his office.' sioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Eminent jurists Dr Kamal Hossain (DMP), the deputy commissioner and Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud (west) of DMP, the officer-in-charge of moved for the petitioner while Barrister Kafrul PS, and the officer-in-charge of Sara Hossain and Tanjib ul Alam assisted them.

Mohammadpur PS. Amid huge controversy regarding its move to prepare a fresh voter list, the EC published a draft electoral roll on May 3 that gave rise to a new controversy about inclusion of a large number of fake voters.

The media carried reports on May 17 and 18 about the EC move to include 900 "fake" voters in

Mohammadpur area. Aminul, ARO for ward No. 41 (part) of Dhaka City Corporation under Mohammadour PS, has been facing the wrath of the EC for disclosing the information regarding the 900 fake voters to the media. In his petition, Aminul described how he was directed and pressurised to include the 900 controversial voters. He also mentioned how many letters and phone calls he had received from the officials concerned in favour of their inclusion.

accordingly they started with smugng 2kg of heroin to London BABAR ON INVESTIGATION Asked about reports on different newspapers about the possible link of a lawmaker of a ruling alliance

## Shanta's case

#### FROM PAGE 16

Dhanmondi, Shanta filed a case with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka against 17 cops.

Later, Shanta filed another case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

When reached, her husband Advocate Atiur Rahman told The Daily Star that they will go to higher court challenging the order.

# Saarc environment

## ministerial meet.

"The environment ministers will discuss the modalities of Regional Environment Treaty and observing 2007 as the 'Green South Asia Year'." Forest and Environment Minister Tarigul Islam said during a press briefing at his ministry yester-

Besides discussing the ways to implement the environment-related decisions taken in the 13th Saarc summit, the environment ministers would discuss the report of the Saarc senior environment officials' meeting (to be held tomorrow) and the report of expert aroup's meeting held in February to establish an extensive infrastructure for natural calamity management and prevention.

Under the 'Green South Asia 2007' programme, Bangladesh will propose adopting green-city programme, establishing networks to regulate the restricted areas arranging coordinated regional water-shade management, cleaning up the rivers and setting up an extensive infrastructure for natural disaster management and prevention, the minister told reporters.

briefing On the ministry's success in

the second anniversary of the attack on him at the shrine of Hazrat

Shahjalal (R) on May 21, 2004. The grenade attack on the Bangladesh-origin British envoy in Sylhet injured the high commissioner and killed three people, including police sub-inspector Kamal Uddin. Over 50 people were also injured in the

attack "We hope it is not too long until these cases are resolved and those killed and injured receive justice," he

said

The British envoy however expressed his gratitude for the "touching support" he received from the Bangladeshi people Investigators from Interpol and

Scotland Yard visited the shrine several times and probed the incident. Senior CID assistant superintendent of police (ASP) and investigation

officer (IO) of the case Munshi Atigur Rahman said, "We are trying to complete the job and submit the charge sheet as soon as possible."

checking use of polythene bags, he

said, "We are almost 90 per cent successful in removing polythene bags, although in some areas the success rate stands as low as 10 per cent "

Talking on failure to totally check the use of polythene, the minister admitted that the government failed to supply substitute for polythene bags at a low cost, saying that "the environment-friendly bags by the jute ministry sells at Tk 2.50 with subsidy, while the unscrupulous businessmen are selling a polythene bag at only 60-70 paisa.'

He said the ministry has formed taskforce headed by Dr Shamsher Ali to find out ways of providing polythene substitutes at a rate of Tk 1.00 to 1.25 each.

He also mentioned that the ministry has filed cases so far against 1,500 factories for releasing environment-polluting waste. State Minister for Forest and

Environment Zafrul Islam Chowdhury, secretary Zafar Ahmad Chowdhury and Director General of Environment Department Khandokar Rashedul Hasan were also present during the

failed demand of at least 200 appointments in the university.

On Friday, they vandalised 23 buses of the university, offices and residences of teachers and officers, and threatened to continue massive agitation till their demands are met. On Saturday night they torched

two private cars -- one used by the treasurer and the other by the registrar of the university.

to fu

At a rally on the campus yesterday, Islamic University unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)

demanded immediate cancellation of all 'partisan' recruitment.

#### Registration staff FROM PAGE 1

Miah Sarkar Lane, where the list was supposed to be displayed.

They kept the school under siege for about three hours since 10:00am as the school authorities, assigned by the Election Commission to prepare the voters roll and to display it, declined to show the list.

Police intervened to calm the angry crowd by assuring them of correcting the list.

ARO Mohammad Julhas Uddin also the headmaster of Muradpur Ideal High School said, "There might have been some errors and we are working to correct the list." "Hundreds of genuine voters of

the locality were not registered," local ward unit AL president Ruhul Amin, who was leading the demonstration, told The Daily Star. He said the Election Commission assigned people of the ruling BNP and Jamaat and their front organisations to prepare the voter list. "They enlisted only their people," he added.

"The authorities did not display the draft list though it was released on May 3." said Advocate Faruk Hossain adding, "that fueled anger among the public".

Shyampur police station said they deployed forces to keep the situation under control and to avert any untoward situation.

Rafigul Islam Shahin, another local leader of AL. said they have about 200 relatives who are eligible to become voters, but only 25 of them were enlisted.

'This is politically motivated as we are loyal to Awami League and everybody knows it," he said

illicit drua there.

He also said they collected the 54kg of heroin from three spots --Hotel Pritom at Paltan. Cafe Jheel at Dainik Bangla Crossing and a place in front of Shapla Chattar, all in the

capital 'He said he knows only one supplier named Habib who used to supply heroin at Shapla Chattar.

He said Zafar told him that the heroin was smuggled into Bangladesh from Pakistan.

Bashar told the magistrate that he had been working as a labourer at Zia International Airport since

# agencies. Says CEC

#### FROM PAGE 1

At the beginning of the press meet, he said he would not reply any question due to time constraints. . 'Question-answer will be in future.' he said.

During the press meet that lasted hardly 10 minutes, Aziz made his brief statement on the preparation of voter list to dispel controversies over the list.

The CEC admitted that there might be duplications in the voter list. "We don't have enough manpower to prepare the list from such a huge population. We have to recruit government officers, school and college teachers to accomplish the task.

Aziz said the EC has got 26 objections from individuals and 22 from the media about the irregularities in the draft voter list. "We forwarded all allegations to the election officials concerned for investiga tion," he told reporters

However, the CEC defended the sharp rise in the number of voters in the draft list. "The rise in the number of voter was 33.69 per cent in the voter list prepared in 2000 while this year the rise is 22.4 per cent," he explained.

About the allegation raised by the law minister of enlisting fake voters in his constituency, the CEC said they have not received such allegations. "However, we have directed the election officials concerned and revising authority to probe the allegation. The revising authority will hold hearing on the allegation on May 24.'

Referring to the laws, the CEC said punitive action could be taken against any official involved with the preparation of the voter list, if he is proved guilty. Even any person can

It is a matter of documentation. It will take time to complete the inves-

tigation," he added. Badruduzza Chowdhury Momen, Chairman of BD Foods Group, was arrested after primary investigation had revealed that he was involved in heroin smuggling to the UK. Babar said.

The meeting was also attended by Inspector General of Police MA Quavvum. Director General of RAB MA Aziz Sarkar and other top offi-

cials from different law enforcing

be punished if they submit false declaration to be a voter

But Aziz did not specify whether anyone has been punished for this. The CEC, who last time met the

press on January 31, addressed yesterday's press meet at the conference room of the FC Secretariat in presence of two election commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria.

Aziz who on April 25 launched a broadside on certain "vested quarters" and the media for "undermining democratic practices and destroying people's aspirations,' yesterday lauded the role of the media in helping the EC to prepare a fair voter list.

"Your (iournalists) investigative journalism will help prepare a fair voter list," Aziz said. "Election Commission will be able to present a fair election if your support contin-

ues About a month ago, Aziz at a luncheon meeting organised by American Chamber of Commerce said, "Some interested guarters and the media as a whole have raised a simulated storm in a tea cup as if heaven will fall if the voter list is

prepared." Aziz then accused the media of distorting facts referring to reports on various irregularities in the process and procedure of making the fresh voter list.

Since the publication of the draft voter list on May 3, the media have disclosed gross irregularities in the draft list, but the CEC and other two new election commissioners refused to make any comment.

charge of the Ramna Police Station said.

Farlier on April 16. the employees and officials of Nabisco Biscuit and Bread Factory, a concern of Bhaiya Group, attacked a mobile court team, also led by Magistrate Tapan Kumar Biswas.

PΜ

FROM PAGE 16 has taken decisions to promote people-to-people contact by facili-

tating travel between the Saarc countries.

Other relevant Saarc decisions in this regard, she told the conference, have been on youth exchanges in the fields of culture and sports, intra-Saarc tourism and linkages between concerned professional bodies.

The Saarc chairperson said South Asia is now poised to achieve significant development in social and economic areas, including the tourism sector. "We are aware of the vast economic and social potentials of our region that can be tapped through regional collaboration and cooperation."

She said, "I am confident that continued efforts would be made by the Saarc countries to promote the culture of our people through tourism. This is vital for projecting the distinct identity of South Asia."

On Bangladesh's development in the tourism sector, Khaleda said her government has recognised tourism as an industry and declared a National Tourism Policy for its development at domestic and international levels.

The policy emphasises both tourism marketing and human resource development, she said adding, the country's industrial policy has included tourism as a thrust sector.

She said steps have been taken to develop Cox's Bazar, the Sundarbans, the hilly districts and Kuakata as special tourist zones.

She said the government encourages foreign investment in this sector in the form of joint venture or 100 percent foreign ownership

Earlier. Pakistan Tourism Minister Nilufar Bakhtiar requested Khaleda to urge the Saarc countries to cut their respective defence budgets and invest the money for the development in tourism industry.

FROM PAGE 16

Baghdad," Maliki said. "We will form special new force to secure Baghdad." But the prime minister stressed that the 37-member cabinet finally approved

Bombs rock Irag

had little choice but to be hopeful. by MPs on Saturday after more than five months of coalition talks would need to do more than resort to strong-arm tactics if it were to rein in the insurgency ment and works to build institutions and raging in Sunni areas. "We have to make extraordinary

avoids party squabbles.' Much of the delay in forming the new government was due to individual parties manoeuvring to obtain more ministries for their list.

besides security, we need national "We have a new plan of reconcilia-

tion for Irag to restore trust. The government is still without ministers of defence, interior or national security because of continuing disputes over who should be appointed but Maliki said he expected the positions to be filled soon.

efforts because we suffer from terrorism

and security problems and we have

administrative and financial corruption,"

by using force, we need other measures

"We cannot confront terrorism only

Maliki said.

reconciliation.

"I don't think we need more than two or three days to nominate ministers of nterior and defence." he said

US President George W. Bush on earlier postponed their next agitation Saturday welcomed the formation of the as the government had given assurnew government as an "opportunity for ance for meeting their demands. The progress" and pledged US support for government is yet to meet their he challenges it will face.

demands. "This broadly representative unity The government is apathetic to the government offers a new opportunity for progress in Iraq," said Bush, who is Supreme Court (SC) verdict of the case regarding the separation of the under increasing pressure from the udiciary. American public to withdraw the some 130,000 US troops deployed in Iraq. A senior assistant secretary of the

The formation of the new governlaw ministry on condition of anonymity ment, after protracted wrangling between Iraq's ethnic and religious said the ministry is always busy trying to spoil the judges' opportunity. communities that saw a sharp spike in sectarian violence, was greeted with attempts to form the drafting division cautious optimism in Iraq. so that the judges may not have

"What is important for Iraqis is not to have a new government, but to judge its actions on the ground." said an editorial in the Adala newspaper of the powerful Shiite religious party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Irag (SCIRI). "The Iragi people await with impatience to reap the fruits of their

sacrifice." Ordinary Iragis had watched on with mounting exasperation as insurgents filled the power vacuum left by the bickering politicians with a daily diet of violence

vehicles and firearms for all the judges, Many accused the politicians of working for party or sectarian interests guards at judges' residences across rather than the good of the country. the country and compensation of Tk 50 lakh to each of the families of the

"We don't know about everyone in he new cabinet, but we know the prime minister has a good background and he appears strong and could well change the situation," said Qais Ahmed, a middle aged Sunni working as a housing ministry engineer.

"We hope this government will work Tribunal for Prevention of Repression on getting us services, like electricity, on Women and Children, the meeting cleaning up the city and of course sources said.

improving security." he said. Standing outside his technology company in central Baghdad, Yasse

Ghazi, a 27-year-old Shiite, said Iragis "All we have is optimism," he said. "I hope the government learns from the mistakes made by the previous govern-

Judges FROM PAGE 16 The judges also protested against the

attempts of the government to form a drafting division from the Legislative Drafting Wing of the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. The judges said the BJSA had

Moreover, the ministry had made

opportunities to become secretaries.

He requested the leaders of the BSJA

to announce a new movement to stop

BJSA President Mohammad Rafiqui

Islam, also Dhaka District and

Sessions Judge. BJSA Secretary

General Ataur Rahman, SC registra

and solicitor were also present at the

The BJSA's demands had earlier

ncluded armed bodyguards, tax-free

slain judges in Jhalakathi bomb attack

The government had earlier

appointed 162 assistant judges to

vacant posts while no vehicles were

provided to the judges of the Special

on November 14 last year.

The meeting was presided over by

the aovernment's move.

meetina