Withdraw armed forces, CEC urged

A group of prominent citizens yesterday urged the Chief Election Commissioner to withdraw the armed forces personnel from the arms recovery drive, reports UNB.

"The drive for recovery of illegal arms is being conducted under desire and power of the Chief Election Commissioner. Hence, all credit, failure and responsibilities of the drive will have to be borne by the CEC." they said in a written press state-

At a press conference at an art gallery here in the afternoon, the group identifying themselves as "citizens in protest," however, refused to make any comment on the February 15 election being boycotted by the main opposition parties.

"About the election, we have spoken individually or from our respective forums. Now we can tell you that we are concerned about appre-

Steps to ensure voters' security discussed

The Chief Election Commissioner at a meeting with officials of the Home Ministry. Armed Forces and law enforcing agencies here yesterday discussed measures to ensure security of voters during the coming election, reports UNB.

CEC Justice A K M Sadeque instructed the authorities concerned to maintain law and order during the election and take necessary measures to ensure voters' presence without any hindrance.

The meeting, held at the Election Commission Secretariat, also asked the law enforcers to ensure security to the employees and officials engaged in election duty.

Army chief Lt Gen A S M Nasim, Navy chief Rear Admiral M Nurul Islam, Election Commission Secretary Md Ershadul Haq, Home Secretary Syed Rezaul Hayat, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Mai Gen M S A Phylivan, Inspector General of Police A S M Shahjahan, Director General of BDR Maj Gen Ejaj Ahmed Chowdhury, DG of DGFI Maj Gen Imam Uz Zaman, DG of Ansar and VDP Maj Gen M A Kabir, acting chief of Air Force Air Commodore Shamsher Ali. Additional Secretary of the EC Secretariat S M Zakaria, DG of NSI Brig A K M Aminul Haq, Ad ditional IGPs M Azizul Haq and A F Kabir and DMP Commissioner A N Hussain were present.

British HC advice

The British High Commission in Dhaka has advised the applicants for settlement entry clearance, who have been invited for interview on February 14 and 15, not to visit the immigration office on either day. A press release of the High Commission yesterday requested the applicants to wait for further advice, reports UNB.

Yunus

From Page 1

talise rural life. "He saw the possibilities for empowering and enhancing the status of women - everywhere among the poorest of the poor through micro-credits for craft enterprises. Above all he believed in the genius, the resourcefulness and the integrity of the common peo-

Professor Yunus, who established the Grameen Bank in 1983, emphasised that self-employment creates jobs with little capital investment, whereas to create only one salaried job requires much capital investment. "Craft-based self-employment is tailor-made to an individual's own ability, so he or she can start working immediately, he said.

He stressed that the Grameen, Bank's results are not due to charity, but to linking Bangladesh's traditional textile industry, which is based on some one million weaving families, to the world market. "We simply showed that our weavers could make a first-rate product at a competitive price.

The roundtable was followed by the inauguration of a week-long exhibit in UNESCO's main hall of traditional Bangladeshi hand loom weaving and samples of fabrics produced through Grameen small-business loans. The evening concluded with a fashion show of handwoven cotton and silk clothing by Bangladeshi designer Bibi Russell.

Colombo blast: 19 Tamils held

COLOMBO, Feb 8: Detectives have taken into custody 19 Tamil suspects in connection with last week's attack on the Central Bank, which killed 83 people, the police chief said Thursday, reports

Some of these suspects may not be involved ... but the brains behind it is not in custody," police chief Wickremasinghe Rajaguru told reporters.

nended violence centring round the polls," said Prof Anisuzzaman responding to a query, from a reporter.

Responding to another question, he said: "We are not against recovering illegal arms. But the army should not come in civil activities."

A number of prominent citizens, including university teachers Prof Anisuzzaman and Dr Abrar Chowdhury, NGO personalities Khushi Kabir, Dr Hamida Hossain and Farida Akhtar, human rights activists Advocate Khaleda Khatun and Nurul Islam and journalist Shamim Akhtar attended the press conference.

Earlier on Wednesday, the group of citizens held a meeting in the city for exchanging views. They will also organise another meeting for exchange of views with leaders of different professional groups at 3 pm at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium on February 11.

Ban on carrying of licensed arms Feb 11-17

The government has prohibited carrying of licensed arms from February 11 to 17 in the interest of maintaining law and order during the general elections, reports

The government has imposed the prohibition on carrying of licensed arms under Article 26 of Arms Act 1878 an official handout said. Violators of the order will

be arrested. The prohibition will, however, not be applicable to the members and officials of lawenforcing agencies, and secu rity personnel engaged in different government, private and semi-government offices and establishments.

Polls: 55 foreign journalists

get visas so far By Staff Correspondent

The government has given visas to 55 foreign journalists so far to cover the parliamentary elections on February 15.

Quoting a source at the Information Ministry, the Probe News Agency said, the journalists have got 12-days visas effective from 8 to 20 of this month.

The government has directed the country's diplomatic missions abroad to take necessary actions in this re-

Meanwhile, the first team foreign journalists of Reuter TV and Reuter News Agency has arrived in Dhaka. An advance team of BBC Television is already in the

Ukhia TNO summoned by polls inquiry committee

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 8: The District Electoral Inquiry Committee has summoned the Ukhia Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) to appear before it to testify for his alleged support in favour of a BNP candidate, reports UNB.

Electoral Inquiry Committee officer and second Sub-Judge of Cox's Bazar, Dewan Ali Raza on Tuesday directed TNO Mohammad Habibur Rahman to appear before the committee at 3 pm on Satur-

Ali Ahmed and Abdul Mannan of Vailpara village under the constituency filed allegation before the committee that the TNO was sanctioning the Food For Work projects among the supporters and party activists of BNP candidate Mohammad Shahiahan.

The thana chief executive is also distributing cash money and CI sheets of abandoned Rohingya camps among the voters to influence them to vote for Shahjahan, they alleged.

The committee also summoned the complainants to appear before the Election Inquiry, Committee, constituted for looking into the violation of election code of conduct, on the day.

Mizan urges army to maintain neutrality

By Staff Correspondent

Acting chairman of the Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said in Dhaka yesterday that the parties in power had never survived with the help of the security

Addressing newsmen of an iftar party arranged by him at a local hotel, Mizan urged the army to maintain its neutrality and not to get involved in any controversy that might tarnish its image.

Mizan said, BNP was trying to cling to power by attacking the opposition ac-

The iftar party was attended by senior JP leaders Begum Raushan Ershad, Kazi Zafar Ahmed and M A Maleque and leaders of the party's front organisations.



Visitors at a stall at the Ekushey Book Fair at Bangla Academy yesterday.

By Staff Correspondent

Uncertainty looms over the fate of the Ekushev Book Fair again as the Opposition is likely to gear up its agitation from Sunday

The tempo of the monthlong fair had begun to pick up slightly as more and more people were venturing a visit after a week of its opening.

"Today has been our best day," said one stall-owner on Wednesday, adding that business had been brisk throughout the day — for the first time since the fair began February 1 in the premises of the Bangla Academy amid protests by certain student groups.

More sales were recorded during the evening than during the day, when the visitors were mostly students who only came to browse, according to one publisher. The majority of book buy-

ers come after lftar and stay till late evening. So we are obliged to stay open till 8-9 pm — well past the official closing time of 5 pm," he

South Pole

marker in

wrong place!

LONDON. Feb 8: The

South Pole is in the wrong

place, or at least it was, US

scientists sav, reports Reuter.

Antarctica admitted they had

been marking the wrong spot

for years. It took measure-

ments from the satellite-

hased Global Positioning Sys-

tem to set them right, the

New Scientist magazine re-

only about 18 inches (45 cm)

from where it had been

marked, but the change is

enough to put a kink in a line

of annual markers, the

The position of the geo-

graphic South Pole has to be

remarked every year because

the ice sheet that the marker

stakes are hammered into

moves. It moves in a straight

line, creating a neat row of

Gordon Shupe of the US

Geological Survey told the

magazine that he personally

visited the location to make

sure the pole was now accu-

rately marked. "It's not a big

magazine reported.

metal markers.

The true South Pole is

ported today.

Researchers working in

Book fair may face another setback elaborated. Meanwhile, many people

Although sales have been increasing, most publishers appeared apprehensive about reaching their sale targets and the future of the fair.

"We fared better at the National Book Fair last month, a reverse in the trend of previous years," said the stallowner of a well-known publishing house. The prevailing political

situation, rather than Ra-

madan was blamed for the

poor number of visitors. "We don't know what would happen after Feb 10 when the Opposition is likely to gear up the anti-government agitation throughout the country. Perhaps people will stop coming altogether and the fair will unofficially end before the scheduled closing date of Feb 29," said a

have been thronging to see the two photo exhibitions one on the Liberation War. organised by the Muktijoddha Smriti Trust and the other on women political activists. organised by the Sammilita Nari Samaj — currently being held at the fair. The extension of the book

fair on the road outside the Academy premises with stalls offering handicrafts. jewellery, clothes, greeting cards, leather goods, music records, food items and other consumer goods is also attracting a good number of visitors. "More people are visiting

the 'bazaar' outside than the book fair inside," complained one publisher. "People seem to be doing their Eid shopping there!" he exclaimed.

PM's Feni visit From Page 1

ter of the security person-

day's incident at her rally, Begum Zia said, "Those who have no other jobs can only do these. You saw, I was not at all puzzled nor did I move

the Opposition bench."

Asked what kind of law they would now enact to contain the alleged terrorism. she repeated that the next parliament would decide it.

In reply to a question, the PM said. "It's fact that there is no satisfaction in contesting polls without the major parties. I could be happier In her speeches, delivered

at the public rallies, the BNP

chief blasted the major opposition parties, reiterating her allegation that they were desperate to create "a constitutional crisis and an absence of government" in the country to implement their design of renewing the 25-year treaty with India. After the coming polls,

Many of them would quit politics while others would change their parties," she The PM urged the people to go to the polling centres without any fear and cast vote in the coming polls to protect what she said three

would have no politics to do

tution and sovereignty. "The three parties (AL Jatiya Party and the Jamaat) had boycotted the polls because they have understood that they would not win the elections," Begum Zia said.

The PM addressed public gatherings at Puratan Muhuriganj, Dargahat, Jamaddar Bazar, Baklarhat, Amiadhat Box Mahmud High School, Parshurambazar, Fulgazi Bazar, Puratan Munshir Hat, and Bandhura Doulatpur.

security, she said. "It's a mat-

stall-owner.

Commenting on Wednes-

an inch during the incident." When her attention was drawn to political speculations that a bill on polls under caretaker government would be passed by the next Parliament, Begum Zia said, "Time has not yet come to say anything specifically on the issue. She, however, added. The matter would be

with their participation.

things — democracy, consti-

decided in consultation with

"they (Opposition parties)

change," he said. Pre-polls violence: One killed

From Page 1 Police said they opened

fire only after the processionists allegedly opened fire and lobbed cocktails on a police van. Later a special police force

was sent as reinforcement. As a sequel to the clash, some agitators attacked BNP candidate L K Siddiqui's car at Muradpur in Sitakunda thana, police said. He was returning from ah iftar party

along with his supporters and Meanwhile, unidentified gunmen attacked the Agrabad office of BNP candidate Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury.

A procession was brought out earlier by the activists of Chhatra League from in front of Agrabad Commerce Col-

A number of vehicles were damaged in Agrabad including a jeep of the security service. Besides, sporadic bomb

blasts rocked the port city for the second consecutive Meanwhile, in the capital.

one election campaign camp was burnt by some unidentified youths yesterday evening at Mohammadpur while another, installed by supporters of BNP, in front of the Shyamoli Cinema Hall. Our staff correspondent from Sylhet reports: At least

10 persons were injured in a

clash between the activists of AL and BNP at Biswanath thana headquarters yesterday afternoon. Prior to the clashes, a group of opposition activists reportedly attacked the thana BNP office and left when police rushed to the spot. Later, some BNP ac-

tivists allegedly attacked the AL office and set it on fire. Soon, AL workers rushed there and a clash between the two rival groups continued for half an hour, witnesses said. Later, police were deployed in the area.

In Comilla town, antielection activists stripped and assaulted an independent candidate of Comilla-9 constituency in Ranirbazar area at about 11 am, reports our correspondent.

Witnesses said, election candidate Abdul Mannan Majumder was forcibly stripped and beaten up by a group of youths when he was campaigning in the area. An independent candidate

of Comilla-5, Advocate Golam Mostafa yesterday withdrew his candidature from the elections. Our Jessore correspon-

dent reports that police lathicharged and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse an antielection procession of the AL-backed Chhatra League at Daratang Square yesterday. According to police, the

processionists hurled bombs on the police on duty when the action was taken. Five Chhatra League activists were arrested. Three vehicles were also damaged in the town.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reports that two thana election offices were ransacked and a jeep was damaged yesterday in Sirajganj. Kazipur thana police said

that a group of people attacked an election office located at the Kazipur TNO office at around 2 pm, ransacked the furniture, damaged election documents and took away two cartons of voters' identity cards. In Chowhali, a group of people ransacked the elec-

tion office in the evening after an Awami League rally ended there. The attackers torched election documents partially damaging them. An official jeep of the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) was badly

damaged near Bahirgala

crossing of Muitb Sarak. Meanwhile, the AL, JP and Jamaat held separate rallies in the town urging people to resist the scheduled electioneering visit of the Prime Minister on February 11. Our Gaibandha correspon-

dent reports that loudspeak-

ers of Freedom Party candi-

date in Gaibandha-3 Harunur-Rashid and independent candidate in Gaibandha-5 Motiur Rahman Tuku were damaged during attacks. In Pabna, some 12-14 activists attacked the Shalgaria residence of Advocate Ali Ahmed of Pabna-2 con-

stituency and damaged doors and windows. Three powerful hombs were also hurled at the residence of Mirza Abdul Halim of Pabna-5 constituency by a group of people.

In Khagrachhari, the Opposition parties called a dawn-to-dusk road blockade programme today (Friday) protesting Communication Minister Oli Ahmed's scheduled electioneering campaign meeting in the district.

Our correspondent in Jhenaidah reports, some 100 rounds of cracker blasts rocked the town late Wednesday night. Meanwhile, opposition parties called a half-day har-

tal for today protesting an attack on the district AL presi dent, Ayub Hossain, allegedly by pro-election activists when he was returning home after attending an anti-election rally in the town Wednesday In Meherpur, indepen-

dent candidate Golam Mostafa and his men were beaten up by some unidentified youngmen near Prantik cinema hall in the town Wednesday. Witnesses said, the youths armed with batons and

firearms, also set the candi-

date's motorcycle ablaze.

Writ challenging polls in Ramadan rejected The High Court Division

yesterday summarily rejected writ petftion challenging the validity of the election Schedule for holding polls during Ramadan, on February 15, reports BSS.

A division bench compris-

ing Justice Bimolendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury and Justice Mohammad Abdul Mannan, in their verdict, observed that there is no constitutional bar on holding polls in the month of Ramadan.

Nazim Habibuzzaman, founder adviser of the Farakkah Resistance Movement, had filed the writ. Barrister Kazi Shahadat Hossain conducted the writ on behalf of the petitioner. He was assisted by advocate Sheikh Rezaul Karim, GM Emdadul Haque and MS Zafar Sadeque. Attorney General M Nurul lah represented the state.

Bangabazar fire Probe body asked to submit report by Feb 19

Star Report The Home Ministry has sked the Fire Brigade inquiry committee to submit its findings on the latest Bangabazar fire incident, ac

The inquiry committee that formally started its investigation from February 5 will have to submit its report by February 19. Anwar Hossain. Director

cording to sources.

for Planning and Development who heads the inquiry team, told The Daily Star that the Director General has instructed him to include a Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) official in the team. According to Anwar Hos-

sain, no evidence of electric short-circuit was found following the fire on January 29 that gutted around 120 shops of the Bangabazar hawkers market. DESA engineers in formed. Couple killed

in Kishoregani

KISHOREGANJ, Feb 8: A man and his wife were killed at a village in Karimgan thana on Wednesday night by his rivals of a neighbouring village apparently to take revenge of a killing in 1992 reports UNB. Police said Md Iraj Miah

40, the main accused of the

sensational Haji Abu Bakar

Siddiqui murder case, and

his wife Nargis Begum, 30

were attacked at their home

at Bhati Gangatia by a group of 10-12 people at about 11 Irai was shot in the leg and Nargis was stabbed to

death by the attackers. Police said Iraj Miah died on way to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. The bodies were sent to sadar hospital.

On December 12, 1992 Haji Abu Bakar Siddiqui Manager of Kishoreganj Mobarak Guest House, was killed at his residence in Shotal area of the town.

Commissioner From Page 1 He was rushed to the

DMCH where doctors declared him dead. Awami League and Chhatra League supporters brought out processions soon after the news of Alim's death spread in the area.

slogans 'Joy Bangla' also ransacked some makeshift shops and set fire to some others in that area, witnesses said. Fire was set also in front of the residence of Mir

Some people chanting

Shawkat Ali, they said. Besides, attempts were made to set fire to the residence of local BNP leader Jinnah, some local people their inconvenience. said. A number of make-shift T shops in the nearby Palashi area were damaged by the

protesters. AL chief Sheikh Hasina, in a statement, condemned the killing of Haji Alim in the holy month of Ramadan and held 'terrorists' of BNP responsible for this.

She demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the killers and recalled that no trial was held as yet for the killing of six persons at Lalbagh after the DCC election in 1994. DCC Mayor Mohammad

of the bereaved family. Talking to The Daily Star last night. Hanif demanded immediate formation of an inquiry committee to probe the killing and demanded punishment to those respon-

Hanif visited the residence of

the deceased and expressed

his sympathy to the members

Abdul Alim had, in a panchayet on Wednesday. strongly reprimanded some local musclemen involved in collecting tolls, claimed local These elements were also

involved in various other criminal activities, they alleged. Lalbagh police said none was arrested and no case was

till late last night. Fire fighters backed by heavy police contingents in riot gear were seen at various points in the area. According to Lalbagh unit

of the AL, a mourning pro-

registered in this connection

cession would be brought out from Killermor following the namaj-e-janaza of Haji Alim after Juma prayers today He will be buried at the

Azimpur graveyard

The Midnight Kile

Serbs sever all links with NATO-led force

BELGRADE. Feb 8: Bosnian Serbs today severed all military links with the NATO-led peace implementation force in Bosnia, pending the release of eight Bosnian Serb soldiers held by the Bosnian government, the Bosnian Serb news agency said, reports AFP

Russia gets EC membership

STRASBOURG. France. Feb 8: The Council of Europe's committee of minister has given final approval to Russian membership and formally invited Moscow to join as its 39th member state, the council said today. reports Reuter.

The decision follows approval of Russia's membership bid on January 25 by the parliamentary assembly of the Pan-European Organisation.

Constable succumbs to stab injuries By Staff Correspondent

Mohammad Salekuddin, a constable, succumbed to stab injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday, according to police

Salek was attacked by some muggers on the night of January 5 near the outer stadium. Later he was sent to the DMCH.

Ban on protests

From Page 1

ing to Karotova crossing at the Mirpur road, from Karotoya crossing to the western point of the Tunnel Road. from Tunnel Road point to Dhanmondi Boys High School, Indira Road adjoining the Farmgate. Khejur Bagan Manik Mian Avenue and all roads and lanes in the locality mentioned above.

Besides, carrying of firearms, swords, guns, knives. explosives, lathis, stones and similar things have also been banned during the time.

Char Syedpur From Page 1

spot far away from the main squad. Masir called out his two terrorist associates Doulat Hussain and Abul Hussain, at the top of his voice and asked them to kill the members of security forces. Responding to Masir's call, his associates, armed with rods and sticks, attacked and injured the members of the security forces seriously despite giving their identity.

and freed Masir. The miscreants fled the spot as soon as other security personnel reached there, but they did not open fire considering the security of the poor villagers present at that

place. Three injured security personnel, were taken to the Combined Military Hospital in a critical condition, the press release said.

It also said a squad of the

joint force conducted a drive at 5 am on February 4 to arrest Masir, Doulat Hossain, Abul Hossain and other accomplices. They gheraoed the area

search arrested two terror-At this stage, the male residents of the area were called in to inquire into the matter. The people of the area expressed their regret for such an unprecedented incident and disclosed the

The people also informed

It further said that the

that they were fed up with

the oppression by these ter-

rorist, the press release said.

members of the security per-

sonnel had expressed their

regret to the villagers for

names of the terrorists.

and a small squad during the

The two foreign companies are the first foreign companies in Bangladesh to strike a gas field since the mid-1970s. In May 1994, after two years of negotiations with the government, Cairn together

16 — covering a 881 square kilometres area in the Bay of Bengal The joint venture company has signed another PSC for block 15 — covering the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sitakunda and Sandwip region and is conducting a survey there for hydrocarbon re-

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3 killed, 30 hurt in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent Three persons were killed and thirty others injured in

road accidents in Sylhet and Comilla yesterday. Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet reports: Three persons died and five others were injured seriously when a Dhaka-bound coach (Dhaka-Ja-3624) and a Srimangalbound tempo (Moulvibazar Pa-05-0068) from Mirjapore collided head on at Shah-

jibazar yesterday morning. Three passengers of the tempo, a school teacher, Nibaran Dev. 35, of village Bhamsha. Dipak Paul. 30, of village Khushbir and Kalamuddin, 25, of village Suilpur, Srimangal died on the

Of the injured, 3 were admitted to Moulvibazar sadar hospital and 2 to the Srimangal thana health com-

Police seized the coach. BSS adds: Twenty-five persons were injured when wo buses one bound for Dhaka and the other bound for Chandpur collided head on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Beltoli near Comilla yesterday afternoon.

DU vacation

From Page 1 The decision was taken at

a meeting of the DU Syndicate held at the Vice Chancellor's office yesterday. The situation on the university campus became

volatile centring the Prime

Minister's visit to the Bangla

Academy to inaugurate the book fair on February 1. Just a day before the PM's visit to the campus police attacked the students of Jagannath Hall causing injuries to some 200 students. Police also arrested 95 students

from the hall. Gas reserve From Page 1

more discoveries in the same area. Following the formal announcement of the discovery. Cairn will give Petrobangla a bonus of one million US dollars as per the Production sharing agreement. In turn, Petrobangla will also award

its employees a bonus as per tradition, the sources noted. The drilling was conducted by both the foreign and local experts from the Petroleum Concession Divi-

sion of the Petrobangla. With this discovery, the country's total reserve may exceed 13 trillion cubic feet and more gas-based power plants can be set up.

with Holland Sea Search Bangladesh BV were the first

foreign companies to be

awarded a Production Shar-

ing Contract (PSC) on block