NEWS

Hasina criticises

alternative power centre of ruling BNP. But, if it was my son and family I am quite sure all the newspapers would have been replete with reports against us.

Hasina said the information minister is a charge-sheeted accused in a journalist murder case while some other ministers have also been accused of torturing journalists.

The opposition leader came down hard also on the caretaker government for its role in the last general elections and categorically accused the then president, chief adviser of the interim government and its advisors of working against her party.

"Advisors of the last caretaker Advisors of the last caretaker government including late Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, major general (retd) Moinul Hussain Chowdhury, ASK Shahajahan and Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury as well as the then president Shahabuddin Ahmed and Chief Advisor Latifur Rahman worked against the Auguri Laggue worked against the Awami League and they all had one plan [that is] to defeat the Awami League in the elections."

"Ask your conscience if you had done the right thing," Hasina said to them.

She added the situation in the

country has turned worse after the BNP-led coalition took office.

On the alleged politicisation of the judiciary and administration, Hasina referred to the proceedings against an additional judge of the

High Court by the Supreme Judicial Council for allegedly taking bribes and the gross misconduct of the inspector general of police (IGP) in a contempt case. She observed the incidents stemmed from the iticisation of the key wings of the state by the coalition.

She urged the journalists and the people as well to unite against the "misrule' of the government. "Now is the time to free the people from the repression and torture of this pressive government and a reversal of the present situation is a must to establishing people's rights."

Journalists Wahidul Haq, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Akhter Ahmed Khan and DUJ General Secretary Omar Faruk also addressed the AGM, presided over by DUJ President Abdul Jalil uiyan.

Before the start of the ogramme, a minute's silence was observed in memory of journalist Manik Chandra Saha, who was killed recently in a bomb attack in Khulna.

Reserved seats in JS Khalelda lauds Bangladeshi Women demand **Troops' role in UN missions** direct elections

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said Bangladesh has achieved a fame as one of the leading peacekeepers through its troops' com-mendable services in the United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world.

"Bangladeshi peacekeepers have brightened the country's image across the globe," she said, replying to a supplementary from Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmaker Golam Habib Dulal in the House.

The prime minister said about 5,000 Bangladeshi soldiers are currently engaged in the UN peace-keeping missions in different countries.

"Involvement of more troops in he peacekeeping missions has enhanced Bangladesh's image abroad," she said, adding that the UN prefers Bangladeshi soldiers in case of any deployment of peacekeeping forces anywhere.

Robbers loot

Tk 4 lakh in

cash, goods

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Robbers yesterday looted cash and valuables said to be worth about Tk

4 lakh from the house of a Bangladeshi-born French citizen

Police said a gang of five entered the house of Manik Mohammad Bablu, 45, a French national living in Paris for last 17 years, at around

The gang kept Manik's parents

hostage at gunpoint and took away Tk 2.50 lakh, ornaments weighing

10 tolas, Manik's French passport

return ticket of Thai Airways and

Nurul Haq, Manik's father, filed

case with Chandgaon Police

Manik came to Chittagong Monday to observe the Eid-ul-

Azha with his parents and other family members.

Motorcade attack

in Chandgaon Residential Area.

at Ctg

12:30pm.

Station.

wo credit cards.

Women's organisations yesterday reiterated their demands for direct elections to reserved seats for women in parliament and increasing their number from the proposed 50 to at least 64. If the government does not meet the demands, the women leaders will stage sit-ins after the Eid-ul-Azha, besides intensifying their movement, they said at a press conference at the National Press Club.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They will also call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina to

press the demands. The leaders said the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) had pledged in its election manifesto to increase the number of reserved seats for women in parliament and to hold direct elections to them.

But it is now going back on a significant part of its pledge only by increasing the number of reserved seats without providing for direct elections to them, the speakers said.

"Without direct elections, the increasing women's reserved seats in women selected for the reserved parliament to 50, without direct elections to them, would not empower women. "It will rather increase complications in some matters." seats won't be able to represent the country's women effectively, as they will lack direct contact with grass-roots women," a speaker told

to defile Dhaka's

image abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

roundtable yesterday.

"The coalition government intends to execute a blueprint to turn

secularimage.

nalism, in the city.

'Anti-blasphemy act'

Civil society leaders state at a roundtable

Buriganga-Turag river route now navigable

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Most of 29.5 km stretch of the rivers Most of 29.5 km stretch of the livers Buriganga and Turag between Sadarghat and Ashuliya are now navigable for any kind of vessels having a 'depth clearance of 12 feet', said the disector of Circular said the director of Circular WaterwaysProject.

Samajik Protirodh Committee, a joint platform of 21 women's organisations including Ain o Salish Kendro The rivers were dredged at several (ASK), Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), points on a 25.5 km stretch and the rest 4 km stretch will also be dredged.

Lawyers Association (Drivera), Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), Karmajibi Nari (KN), Bangladesh Mahila Samity (BMS), Bangladesh Nari Progoti Sangha (BNPS) and Steps towards Development, organ-ised the conference Siltation and years of neglect on the part of the authorities had reduced river depth at these points so much that even shallow boats could not ply. At places shoals had appeared in the middle of the rivers, prompting local people to claim ownership of those.

Project officials said acquisition fulfil its election pledge, adding, by making the move, the government was virtually ignoring the women's of niné acres of land at Aminbazar Gabtoli and Ashuliya are in process On completion of the process two- and a half-decade-long demand. dredging will start in a 2 km stretch on either side of om Gabtoli-Among others, BMP President Aminbazarpoint.

" When we start dredging this 4 km stretch, we will use the soil to fill Director Ivy Rahman, BNS Executive Director Ivy Rahman, BNWLA President Salma Ali and Rokeya Kabir of BNPS were present. Rokeya Rafiq Baby of the KN read out a up some designated areas for building four major landing facilities, which will be converted into river ports later," Director Abul Kashem Kashem.

Despite the absence of government initiative to maintain navigability of the rivers, soil and sand traders somehowkept them flowing.

Hundreds of locally made small dredgers engaged by traders kept on dredging the river round the year illegally for selling sand and soil to the booming construction sector in the capital.

"We knew without such illegal dredging, shoals would form in the rivers rapidly and make plying of all sorts of vessels impossible. So we overlooked the matter," said a top offcial.

But dredger owners alleged they were forced by the authorities to pay for extracting soil and sand from the riverbed.

JS session adjourned till Feb 8

UNB, Dhaka

The winter session of parliament that began on January 18 was adjourned last night till February 8 for holy Eid-ul Azha.

The session will resume at 4:15pm on Feb 8.

AAG's house robbery Sons of ward commissioner, ex-cop remanded **COURT CORRESPONDENT**

Rise above local pressures, PM asks DCs

She also illustrated the achieve-

To establish the rule of law, she

ments in the last two years of the

said, the government passed 78 laws

including 29 new and 49 amended

For modernisation of the admin-

policy, national youth policy and

national information and communi-

cations policy and policies for setting

up new upazilas, police stations and

investigation centres were formu-

The government has taken effec-

The government has also pre-

pared the public procurement

egulation 2003 and preliminary

decision has been taken to form a

senior management pool bringing together officials from four clusters --

general administration, economy,

social infrastructure and regulatory.

over three-hour meeting from 12:20pm, Cabinet Secretary Sa'adat

Husain said 21 deputy commission-

ers spoke on the occasion and most

of them sought logistical support

from the government for further

improvement in the quality of ser-

vice and rapid implementation of

He said the district administra-

tors sought adequate number of

computers with internet connectiv-

ity and networking with headquar-

ters, larger number of vehicles and

government policies and directives.

Briefing newspersons after the

alliance government.

ated.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked deputy commissioners to be impartial and sincere to cut crime and establish the rule of law.

"No-one would be allowed to ones as part of the 'revolutionary' neglect implementation of governsteps. ment orders and policies on the ame excuse of pressures from istration, she said several policies like locally influential people or groups," she said. public administration training policy, information technology

Addressing the annual conference of the district administrators at the Cabinet Division of the Secretariat, she said: "The administration must be neutral and welfare-oriented."

"Don't make implementation of government decisions subject to tive measures to bring about transanyone's liking or disliking or parency and accountability in govwillingness or unwillingness. The ernment purchase and other finanofficials who will show neglect and cial management, she said, adding laxity in executing government arrangements have been made to orders will be held responsible," separate the government audit and she added. account systems.

The premier said the governnent was providing all support for the administration so that no quarter could hamper its activities by putting illegal pressures on it.

On land-grab, she said the gov ernment identified it as a national problem and was working to protect oublic and private land from encroachers, recover the occupied land and take legal actions against the occupiers.

She asked the deputy commissioners to take legal actions against those engaged in deploying muscle in such occupation regardless of the law and justice.

Khaleda placed emphasis on all employees' stay at field-level workstations and reminded them that it was mandatory for them to stav at work for the first 40 minutes from 9:00am every day.

She listed her government's steps

to improve law and order and estab-

lish good governance and the rule of

Alo reporter gets

in Khagrachhari

'death threat'

Our Correspondent, Khagrachhari

'Ejlash" in the district headquarters. She also asked them to increase They demanded the posting of contact and coordination with local more class one magistrates and people and officials and employees wireless facilities for greater coordiof other organisations. She reminded the district admin-

nation with police. Sa'adat said the government strators of their important position, recruited about 500 magistrates in saying: "The image of the governthe past year to fill up the vacancies of ment brightens or suffers depending magistrates and provided larger on the good actions or mistakes and logistical support. failures of the deputy commission-

Senior ministers and high officials were present.

Benapole C&F FROM PAGE 1

districts as the indefinite strike called by the Exporters and Customs Clearing Agents Association (ECCAA) of India at three land ports and land customs stations (LCS) continued for the fifth day yesterday.

With the Eid-ul-Azha to be celebrated on February 2, cattle prices almost doubled in Satkhira due to the strike on the Indian side, said Lutfor Rahman, secretary of Abder Hat Cattle Traders' Association.

The prices of a cow that sold at up

to Tk 20,000 three weeks ago soared

to Tk 25,000 in the last couple of days.

The prices of rice and sugar soared by Tk 2, flour by Tk 1 and onion by Tk 6 a kg and edible oil by Tk

The ECCAA called the strike on January 23 protesting new export rules enforced by West Bengal cus-toms authorities, sources said.

Nearly 800 trucks loaded with

goods including perishable items have been stranded on the Indian

side of Sona Masjid, Hili and Burimari land ports and other LCS for the last few days, a customs

official said on condition of anonym-

Blair govt cleared

could deploy weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes of an

order Lord Hutton said Gilligan made a "very grave allegation" when he said in one broadcast that the govern-ment probably knew the claim was

wrong when it put it in the dossier. It "attacked the integrity of the vernment and the integrity of the Joint Intelligence Committee," he

But even though Prime Minister Tony Blair could stay clear of Kelly charges that have been threatening to upset his race in the next election,

His future is still in doubt after he suffered a blow to his authority during a crucial parliamentary vote on university fees, newspapers said.

Blair won yesterday's ballot or tripling university tuition fees by 316 votes to 311, but the press seized on the narrowness of the victory, noting it was the biggest revolt by MPs in his own Labour party on a domestic issue since Blair took office in 1997.

The Financial Times business daily said that the narrowness of

services in the run-up to the next election, expected in 2005. For the rightwing Daily

vernment's majority was a sign of deep divisions in the Labour party over Blair's "presidential" style. Some Labour MPs are now

the paper said.

his troubles are far from over. crime unit.

The leftwing Guardian said in an editorial: "It is a very odd kind of victory in which a government with a

nominal majority of 161 scrapes home by five on a major bill in a key policy area. By any conventional standards, this was not a victory but a humiliation.'

Blair's win raised questions about whether he could now press on with his plans to reform Britain's public

Bush backtracks

testified to lawmakers in September 2002.

Other senior Bush aides shied away from using the word "immi-nent" but agreed with that charaction-year scrutiny because the former head of the US-led effort to terisation in exchanges with reporters.

elegraph, the narrowness of the

penly speculating that he might not

lead the party into the next election

Rab to come FROM PAGE 12

anywhere in any circumstances according to sources. Considering activities of organised criminal gangs and drug traffickers, it will also have a gang crime unit and a narcotics

Rab will also have DNA laborato ries and the apparatus to fight cyber crime, sources in the ministry said.

Besides, a specialised investigation unit will be there to probe money laundering, fraudulence, homicides and other social crimes.

To deal with criminals possessing sophisticated firearms, it will have two Special Weapons and Tactics (SWT) teams. Rab will have its own diving team and an air wing to launch operation successfully in water or air, the officials said.

Majumder, 53 Inspector general of police, directors general of BDR and ansars, representatives from the army, navy and air force, armed police battalion (and members of the intelligence agencies were present in the meet-

others get bail UNB, Dhaka

A fresh law on blasphemy is not necessary, as Section 295/A of the Penal Code can deal with the hurt of The High Court (HC) yesterday granted anticipatory bail to Awami League leader Kamal Majumder religious sentiment, he pointed out. "Islam does not urge its followers and 53 others in the case of an to rectify any body who disregards the messages of Allah with worldly attack on the motorcade of (BNP) Chairperson and the then opposition leader Khaleda Zia at punishment. The holy Quran speaks of punishment only in the after-world," said Abdul Awal Khan

avar in June 2001 on her way to the southwestern region. Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh. Granting bail for three months, a division bench of the HC com-

prising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Afzal

the petitioners should not be

The orders came upon petitions filed by Kamal Majumder and the

others, seeking anticipatory bail to

granted regular bail.

Three shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three persons including a timber traders' leader were shot and

injured in three incidents in the

capital in a span of 18 hours till 3:00pm yesterday.

Extortionists shot president of local timber traders association Tajul

Islam inside his shop near IG Gate at

Critically injured Tajul was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and admitted

Witnesses said a gang of eight local extortionists led by 'Rogkata' Imran stormed into his shop at about

The victim's brother said Rogkata Imran threatened to kill his brother

over mobile phone about a week ago.

bother, also a timber trader, about

eight months ago for the same rea-son, locals said.

The gang members posing as bassengers hired the auto-ricksahw

at Dhanmondi and went to Madhya Paikpara at about 9:00 pm. Then two

of them drew out pistol and tried to

drag him (driver) out. As he grabbed

one, another shot him, Liton said.

this report yesterday evening.

Paikpara in Mirpur.

fled.

admitted to the DMCH.

The gang also shot Tajul's another

avert arrest.

in city

Shyampur.

thevadded.

there

religion, adding it was not the responsibility of any individual, group or state to penalise anyone for Any anti-blasphemy act will por-tray Bangladesh as an uncivilised country to the world, speakers told a non-compliance with religious tenets. Citing a verdict of a British magis

trate's court, Professor Muntasin Mamun alleged, "The BNP govern-They alleged the pro-Pakistan factions of the ruling alliance were hyperactive to dent the country's ment works in close ties to proaliban elements.

ised the conference.

written statement.

BMP General Secretary Aysha Khanum said it would be a breach of

democratic norms, if the BNP did not

Hena Das, ASK Executive Director Sultana Kamal, BMS Executive

The statement said only by

Professor AK Azad Chowdhury former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, accused the government of trying to gain support by creating fanatic sensationalism among the

masses. People should now build up a huge pressure on the judiciary, the administration and parliament to get rid of the situation, he suggested.

intends to execute a blueprint to turn Bangladesh into a monolithic Muslim country by evicting the marginalised people from home by means of minority repression," writer Shahriar Kabir told the roundtable, organised by South Asian People's Union against Fundamentalism and Commu-nalism.in the city. "Any anti-blasphemy act will be an excuse for perpetrating repres-sion on the open-minded people," said Shyamoli Nasrin of Women Voice.

The principal aim of religion is to establish harmony among human beings, not to create divides, said Rosalyn Costa, a human rights activist. Writer Shamsul Huq, human

rights activist Father Tim, advocate Sultana Kamal, Costina Preira of Ain

O Shalish Kendra, Professor Ajoy Roy and columnist Mohiuddin Ahmed

April 24 last year despite objection by the Bar and senior Supreme Court

on October 29 last year upon a presi-dential directive following the allega-tion against Shahidur by Supreme

Court Bar Association President Rokanuddin Mahmud. Shahidur

went on leave ever since the allega

Meantime, the Bar would stymie any attempt by the judge to become its member, which he was before

becoming deputy attorney general.

lawyer," Rokan earlier observed.

8 Palestinians

"If he resigns, the Bar Council should also cancel his licence as

The first-ever council was formed

find banned weapons in Iraq, David Kay, said recently that he did not think such stockpiles existed on the eve of the invasion.

Polish President Aleksander

The case for war has drawn elec-

FROM PAGE 12

Kwasniewski.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan, who also refused to say he thought Kay's successor would succeed, mounted a defense of the administration's pre-war warnings about the threat posed by Saddam.

"I think some in the media have chosen to use the word 'imminent.' Those were not words we used. We used 'grave and gathering' threat,' he insisted.

But if Bush never called Saddam's Iraq an "imminent threat" in so many words, he said it was "urgent," Vice President Dick Cheney called it "mortal" and it was "immediate" to Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

In an October 7, 2002 televised speech to the nation. Bush likened the standoff with Iraq to the October 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when Soviet missiles were revealed to be based just 145km off US shores.

In that same speech, he warned that Saddam "could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists" like the al-Qaeda network behind the September 11, 2001 attacks.

"No terrorist state poses a greater or more immediate threat to the security of our people and the stabil ity of the world than the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq," Rumsfeld

Village policeman FROM PAGE 1 from the scene.

Police took 17 people into custody for interrogation and launched raids on suspected hideouts in the upazila, about 20 kilometres south of Khulna city that is still reeling from the killing of New Age news-man Manik Saha in a bomb attack on January 15.

The murder of Haroon came five days after unidentified criminals injured three policemen in a driveby bombing on a police camp in Rampal in Bagerhat on the night of January 22.

Senior police officers visited the scene in Mulghar in Fakirhat after the incident, reminiscent of the killing of another VDP member Abdul Jalil in Paikgachha in Khulna on the evening of January 21.

Shahidul Golder, injured in exchange of fire with police and arrested for suspected ties to the banned outlaw outfit, confessed to his part in the killing of Jalil in a statement to a first-class magistrate.

The southwestern region dubbed as the valley of death saw killings of 16 policemen in armed or bomb attacks in the last two and a halfyears.

Mild tremor jolts Ctg

UNB, Chittagong,

mild earthquake jolted Chittagong and its adjoining areas

Advocate Abdul Baset Majumder appeared for the petivesterday morning. Officials at the Seismic Observatory at Ambagan in the city said there was no report of casualty

or damage in the quake that hit the district at 7:18:26am and lasted for eight seconds. The epicenter of the tremor,

measuring 3.05 on the Richter scale, was 162- km off the port city.

India gets FROM PAGE 12

Hindi-speaking heartland in December that were seen as a dry run for the national polls, was huddled in strategy sessions Wednesday.

The biggest and brightest names in Indian advertising were working overtime for Congress to spin a campaign around a 500 million rupee (11 million dollar) slogan -the fail-good factor", a media report

The Congress was planning the multi-million dollar ad campaign to try to prick holes in the ruling coali-tion's "India Shining" media blitz highlighting the country's economic performance.

Mystery Disease FROM PAGE 1

doctors said.

Experts probing the disease in Rajbari, Manikganj, Tangail and Joypurhat districts reported the patients were out of danger, said the control room set up by the health directorate to coordinate information about the disease information about the disease.

The directorate yesterday formed a high-powered team to probe the still unexplained disease with symptoms like high fever, headache, nausea and spells of unconsciousness.

According to government statistics, 55 patients are undergo-ing treatment at Goalanda, two at Manikganj, four at Tangail and four at lour utbat Joypurhat.

A team of doctors from Rajshahi Medical College and another from Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research is likely to visit four patients at Joypurhat today

Meanwhile, the authorities were yet to receive the report on the tests of samples collected from patients and sent to the Centre for Disease Control at Atlanta in US on

neither the Quran nor the Hadith Hossain Ahmed issued rule upon called for enactment of law to protect the government to show cause why

Chowdhury, central missionary of

The Ahmadiyya leader said

by Justice KM Sobhan.

awvers

tions were raised.

receive calls.

Judge to be sacked

should no longer hold the post because of circumstantial evidence and backdrop of the situation, sources in the law ministry quoted the report.

The council handed its probe report to President Iajuddin Ahmed Monday.

The law ministry will now pen down the removal letter of Shahidur according to the president's order and send it to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for her concurrence.

Ministry sources said even if the judge resigns now, his release order would be considered as dismissal.

In 2000, High Court Judge Latifur Rahman resigned after a move to form the Supreme Judicial Council. Allegations of taking bribe from deposed president HM Ershad to influence the verdict in the Janata Tower graft case were levelled against him.

Shahidur was earlier accused of embezzling funds from the Supreme Court Bar Association when he was its treasurer. He was appointed on

11:00 am, shot him in the throat, Bird flu chest and abdomen and fled. He was attacked as he persuaded local traders to unite and stop paying toll,

FROM PAGE 1

countries," said a top-ranking official of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI).

"The only facility we now have is that we can only identify bird-flu positive or negative poultry. We don't have expertise to identify the virus or tackle the problem. But we are trying to be well prepared on an urgent basis," the official said.

Police said Tajul is an accused in a case filed under the Speedy Trial Act. The BLRI has collected samples No case was filed till the filing of from poultry firms where several thousand chickens died suddenly. A Earlier on Tuesday night, three alleged hijackers shot a CNG autoreport will be submitted to the mini try within three days, the BLRI rickshaw driver as he resisted their sources said. bid to hijack his vehicle at Madhya

The prices of poultry, including day-old birds, broilers and other chickens, have slid in weeks. Driver Mohammad Liton was

"Our sells have dived as people are less interested in chickens because of the virulent virus," retailer at Karwan Bazar told this correspondent vesterday.

The retail price has dropped to Tk 50 a kg from Tk 60 two weeks ago.

Broiler now sells at Tk 35 a kg on As locals rushed to the spot, they the wholesale market, down from Tk 55 a kg two weeks ago.

"Scared small growers are unwill-ing to hold their stocks. They are now In another incident, a 15-year-old boy, Arif Dewan, was injured in a crossfire between two local gangs at North Basil in Mirpur at about 3:00 pm yesterday, family members said. selling their birds at prices below the production costs," said a farm offialso spoke at the roundtable, chaired separate cases yesterday.

They are Imran Chowdhury, son of Harun Chowdhury, commis-sioner of ward no. 48, and Javed Kaiser alias Imtiaz, son of Ejaz Ahmed, a retired additional police superintendent.

Two vouths arrested on charge of

robbing an additional attorney

general (AAG)'s house in the city's Dhanmondi area Tuesday were

The Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, granted a fourday remand in connection with one case filed under the Speedy Trial Act and a three-day remand for another case under the Arms Act after Dhanmondi police produced the two men before the court yesterday.

The cases alleged that the two robbed Tk 80,000 and gold orna-ments at gunpoint from the house of Additional Attorney General A Mohammad Ali at Dhanmondi Road 11/Abefore fleeing in a car.

Shortly afterwards, police gave chase to the alleged robbers responding to a phone call from Ali's house. Several attempts to contact Shahidur failed, as he refused to

The suspects' vehicle knocked down five rickshaws as the driver tried to weave his way through traffic to avoid arrest.

The high-speed car chase ended on a bridge near Road No. 8 where police arrested the two suspects and recovered Tk 38,040 and two pistol magazines from them.

Ali's son Riaz Hossain Khondoker said Imran and Javed forcefully entered the house and threatened his father after the caretaker prevented them from dumping broken pieces of glass inside the compound of the house.

He said the two came back some half an hour later to commit the robbery and also ransacked the house.

Imran's sister denied the allegations. "Javed and Imran went to AĬi's house to seek compensation from him for the damage of their car by falling debris from Ali's under-construction house."

She said the money found with Imran was drawn by him from the Lalbagh branch of IFIC Bank.

Lankan woman

detained lawfully and the DG had no clear idea about the Inland Shipping Ordinance (ISO) 1976. FROM PAGE 1 husband both used to work with a company in Kuwait and they got married four years back. She came to Bangladesh with her husband, who went back to Kuwait after a few months to resume his work there leaving his wife and son behind.

DG AKM Ahsanul Azim had issued a letter challenging the action of Munir Chowdhury against MV Abu Bakar in November last year. He had also observed that the vessel was not under the jurisdiction of the ISO, 1976 Based on the preliminary inspection, the officer-in-charge of Shaympur Police Station told The Daily Star that the killers did not rape her. But hospital sources said she was murdered after being raped

1976.Meanwhile, another case was filed against MV Abu Bakar with a marine court for illegally crossing the Bay. The vessel was caught plying without survey certificate and registration. An inspector of the marine court filed the case, a source said

raped. The body was sent to Salimullah Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

placed on a seven-day remand in two an unidentified political quarter threatened the district correspondent of the daily Prothom Alo with death here Tuesday night.

A miscreant allegedly appointed by

Sources said Azim-ul Haq of the daily Prothom Alo was talking with Nurul Azam, district correspondent of the daily Jugantor, at Hotel Labiyat at around 8:30pm when one

ers.

Saiful showed up. Saiful said he was looking for Azim and identified himself as a hired goon of a political quarter, which paid him Tk 10,000 to kill Azim before the Eid-ul-Azha.

Khagrachhari Press Club yesterday in a statement condemned the incident and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

the families of the army officers

killed in air crash in Benin, natural

gas exploration and South Asia

Replying to Syed Makbul

Hossain (BNP-Sylhet), the prime

minister expressed the hope that

Malaysia would soon resume

recruiting workers from

Bangladesh as memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed

following her government's hectic efforts, the Malaysian government

permitted some 1.13 lakh

. Bangladeshi workers, whose work

permits had expired, to legally

Referring to her recent visit to

Brunei, Khaleda said they showed

interest to recruit Bangladeshi

physicians, nurses, engineers and

teachers. Also, the Middle-eastern

She mentioned various steps

taken by the Expatriates Welfare

and Overseas Employment

Ministry to ensure more transpar-

ency in exporting manpower. She

said the cost for a person to go to

Malaysia should not be over Tk

Responding to Muhammad

Giasuddin (BNP-Narayanganj),

the prime minister informed the

House that the families of the army

officers killed in air crash in Benin

would get financial assistance from

the government and the United

work in Malaysia for five years.

She informed the House that

on October 22, 2003.

many.

70,000.

Free Trade Area (Safta) agreement.

FROM PAGE 1

A general diary was filed, while Bangladesh is incurring a revenue loss of Tk 2 crore a day due to the strike, he added. the district administration has been informed about the incident.

Khaleda urges

Nations (UN).

4 a litre.

Responding to a supplementary from Golam Habib Dulal of the Jatiya Party, she informed that at present, about 5,000 Bangladeshi peacekeepers are working abroad. Wherever there is a crisis, the UN seeks peacekeepers from us. We are proud of them," she said.

Referring to various programmes in the energy sector, including for development, transmission and CNG, the prime minister told the House that gas production in the country increased to 1,300 MMCFD from 1,215 MMCFD in past two years.

BSF tries to push in 6 **Bangalees**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, countries are recruiting more Bangladeshis while Italy legalised

> The Border Security Force (BSF) of India tried to push in six Banglaspeaking people in to Bangladesh through Buro Saro Dubi border under Barokhata of Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat on Tuesday.

> According BDR and local sources, the BSF tried to push in three women, a child and two men near the main pillar No. 887 at the outpost of Barokhata.

However, Bangladesh Rifles and locals foiled the push-in bid. The locals said the six were from Sitai thana in Kuchbihar district of West Bengal.

flashpoint, witnesses said. Stop interfering FROM PAGE 12

FROM PAGE 1 Preparations, meanwhile, moved into high gear for Israel's planned release Thursday of 436 prisoners, most of them Palestinians, in a

They will be freed in return for a kidnapped Israeli businessman and three troops presumed dead after they were abducted while on border

Germany, where part of the exchange will take place. Early Wednesday, two Israeli tanks and several armored bulldoz-ers moved out of the Jewish settle-

ment of Netzarim, a frequent

German-mediated swap with the Lebanese guerrilla group Hizbollah.

patrolin 2000.

Israeli army forensics experts and rabbis responsible for identifying the soldiers, if dead, headed for