Cop raid

residences of AL presidium members Tofail Ahmed, Sajeda Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Dhaka city unit AL President and former Dhaka mayor Mohammad Hanif, city AL General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and AL lawmaker Sheikh Helal Uddin.

Mir Ashraf Ali, an assistant commissioner (AC) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, who led the series of raids, told The Daily Star yesterday that the raids were conducted upon receipt of a court order to search those houses.

Police did not find any illegal weapons or unauthorised persons during the raid at the AL leaders' houses.

Terming the incident unfortunate, Tofail Ahmed told this correspondent that this was the fifth time since the 2001 general elections that police raided his house. "I would not blame the police. They just carried out the orders but I feel sorry for the attitude of a political government."

He said policemen did show him a search warrant and scoured all the rooms of his two-storey Gulshan residence from 2:30am to 3:30am.

AL presidium member and former minister Sajeda Chowdhury said a huge contingent of police raided her Gulshan residence at about 3:00am and conducted an hour-long search.

"They came with ropes and handcuffs, went upstairs and searched all the rooms, but found nothing (illegal)," she said.

Deploring the incident, she said: "What a country we live in! Is this a correspondent.

canisters and foiled every attempt of

the demonstrators to gather and

At least 40 people including AL's

youth front Awami Jubo League

General Secretary Mirza Azam and

The Inquilab photojournalist

Shafiuddin Bitu were wounded in

the police swoop. Police also picked

up some 200 opposition activists

from the city including Paltan,

Mouchak, Central Shahid Minar

led JSD towards the Prime

Minister's Office at about 4:00pm

was also dispersed when it was

Police put up barbed-wire barri-

cades on all four main avenues

leading to Hawa Bhaban, located on

road number 13, block D in Banani

and BNP leaders and workers

played cricket in the ground adja-

cent to Hawa Bhaban. Residents,

businesspeople, office workers and

commuters going through Banani

area said police continually

schools and universities in Banani.

were not allowed to enter Banani

despite showing IDs. Vehicles

driving from Tejgaon link-road area

toward Gulshan-1 and Gulshan-2

circles were also barred from pro-

ceeding further and diverted

towards Badda at the point of

National Shooting Complex in

his office on Road No. 15 in Banani

without any staff, said police did not

I was trying to enter my office at

9.30am. They swept my car, my

shouted and argued until a high

pay for the losses I would incur

because of their illogical behaviour

and after I answered to their query if

I were the tenant of the office space

they finally let me in. But they said

nobody else will be allowed to go to

patrolled the area to stop pedestri-

ans and instructed them to either go

back to their homes or outside the

urgent appointment with a doctor at

a clinic on Road No. 8, but police

stopped me and said even the

doctor was not allowed to enter the

area," said Abdur Rahim. "Now she

will have to suffer until a further

Gulshan 1 and 2 through Tejgaon

Link Road were waylaid at the

roadblock in front of National

Shooting Complex and diverted

despite sparse traffic around the

city, as police blocked all alternative

At Paltan Maidan, the demonstra-

tors fought pitched battle with police

for hours from 3:30pm, who chased

the demonstrators at least 12 times.

Prior to the police attack, Mirza

Azam, also an MP, told reporters

that the programme was successful.

"Police and BNP cadres sealed off

the entire Dhaka city and confined

off all entries to the AL headquarters

on Bangabandhu Avenue with

barbed-wire fences and mounted

quard since morning. "We are just

carrying out the orders of govern-

ment high-ups," said an on-duty

police official without elaborating.

The law-enforcers also sealed

its one crore people," he said.

Traffic clogged the Airport Road

Commuters who tried to enter

"I came with my wife for an

Police vans ceaselessly

"I argued whether they would

bag and told me to return home.

police official came," he added.

allow anyone to go to his office.

A businessman, who had to run

"I was harassed irrationally when

People, who have their offices.

BANANI SITUATION

harassed them

Gulshan.

my office."

area immediately.

appointment."

towards Badda.

roads through Gulshan.

PALTAN MAIDAN

PITCHED BATTLE

A foot march of Hasanul Haq Inu-

take out processions.

Cops seal off,

democracy? People cannot even

sleep at night." Reply to a question, Sajeda Chowdhury said: "On demand, the police officer produced a search warrant to look for explosives or illegal weapons in my house and left empty-handed after an hour. Does it look like I could possess explosives or illegal weapons? It's nothing but sheer political harassment."

Police also raided the Banani house of another Al presidium member and former minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP at about

Selim said police searched every single room for about 30 minutes and wanted to know the identity of everyone in the house, but found nothing objectionable.

He said: "As they were leaving, I told the police officer it was not the right thing to do at this hour of night thout a specific charge. How can police search the house of a parliament member without any specific

Condemning the police action, Selim said: "We're worried about my mother, who is 86 and ill. She had witnessed the massacre of August 15 (in 1975) and witnessed the murder of my brother (Sheikh Moni), mv sister-in-law and others. Now the mere sight of police frightens

"Is this called democracy? They don't have a minimum sense of democratic norms."

The houses of Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and Mohammad Hanif were also searched at 3:00am and 1:30am, the AL leaders told this

and hawkers to pack up and leave

the place. Locked were the gates of

between Noor Hossain Square and

Golap Shah Mazar were also

Jubo League, Sramik League and

Krishok League began to gather at

different places near Paltan Maidan

from 2:00pm and by 3:30pm a few

hundred people gathered at the

south end of Paltan Maidan. Scores

of opposition workers were roaming

the adjacent areas in separate

groups. At 3:40pm, police chased

and dispersed the protesters. A few

minuets later, police attacked a

League in front of the Rajuk

Police cordoned an opposition

gathering led by Mirza Azam and

barred the activists from taking out a

procession from the VIP gate of

. Bangabandhu National Stadium.

They charged batons to disperse

the gathering and picked up at least

Master MP and Krishok League

President Mirza Jalil reached the

spot and along with Mirza Azam

once again tried to bring out a pro-

cession. Police foiled the attempt

and dragged a few others to the

The demonstrators encircled the

van when it was speeding from the

area with a fellow activist. The

At about 4:00pm, Ahsanullah

MORE POLICE

five from the scene.

police van.

SWOOP

All modes of vehicles on the road

. . Leaders and activists of Awami

adjacent Ramna Bhaban Market.

stopped.

tion government to quit by April 30.

the city on these three days to end the alliance's misrule," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said last evening at a press conference held at the party's Dhanmondi office.

He said the exact mode of the three-day no-confidence demonstration would be announced later, adding yet sterner programmes would be declared on April 24.

city this afternoon to protest yesterday's police attack on leaders, workers and supporters of its front organisations. The party will also stage demon-

strations across the country tomorrow, besides taking out separate processions in all the eight parliamentary constituencies of the capital. Frontline leaders of the AL will lead the processions.

agitation programme, AL lawmakers would march towards the Jatiya Sangsad on April 25 demanding withdrawal of the proposed 14th amendment bill to the constitution.

ment for yesterday's police attack on his party's front organisations, the AL general secretary said the government was desperate to cling to power by any means.

He claimed around 7,000 opposition workers including 2,000 women were arrested during the last few days to thwart the apposition's anti-government movement. 'The days of this government are numbered, as the people of the country have already shown notrust to it for its total inability to govern," he remarked.

AL workers

opposition workers from assemthe authorities for the gathering.

Regarding the AL's allegation against Hawa Bhaban, he said, " Their allegation is not against Hawa Bhabhan, rather against the govern-

He said the AL should come up with the documents that substantiate the allegation against Hawa

The most common violation that the Rajuk inspectors come across is of the environmental space code, which requires a developer to construct a building leaving a preprocession of Bangladesh Chhatra

Other frequent violations by the developers include those of parking requirements and zonal restrictions. Raiuk has identified around 2.000 buildings in the residential areas of Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi and Uttara that are being used for com-

Raiuk officials are now at a loss how to stop this malpractice. "We are trying our best to contain irregularities but are unable to do much due to lack of resources, which is haunting the Rajuk for decades," the

BSF

FROM PAGE 12

Gour, commanding officer of 106 BSF Battalion, headed the BSF team. Earlier on Tuesday, the BSF

demonstrators tried to snatch away the worker from the van, prompting the law-enforcers to fire at least 10 rounds of tear shells, injuring Mirza Azam as one of the shells hit him in the abdomen. Opposition workers

Police also attacked a procession of Awami Sechhasebak League near Mouchak crossing at about 3:45pm. Angry demonstrators damaged a number of cars in pro

rushed him to a city clinic.

Tarique, brother FROM PAGE 1

Tarique in his reaction to the press. UNB adds: Tarique dismissed as nonsense the complaint of corruption and crime against Hawa Bhaban, asking his party's opponents to specify the sweeping allegations.

"It's politics of falsehood of the Awami League. Why don't you ask them if they have evidence? Let them speak specifically if they can, he told reporters in the playground.

Asked why he preferred to play cricket on the day Awami League's front organisations decided lay siege to Hawa Bhaban, Tarique retorted: "All wanted to play, so we played.'

Asked if he finds any similitude between cricket and politics. he said, "No". The two are different subjects, he added.

Tarique and Araft led the two teams, and the elder won the friendly match.

Replying to a guestion about the opposition demand for midterm election, the BNP leader said nothing happened in Bangladesh that calls for such snap polls.

According to democratic process and constitution, elections will be held every five years. People who are source of all powers would take the decision after five years on who will run the country. The demand for midterm election

is only the demand of a single party, he said, other political parties or people did not ask for it. " I don't think that they (AL) possess that power for taking such a big decision."

AL calls 3-day

from across the country to join in the three-consecutive-day programme to force the BNP-Jamaat-led coali-

We urge the people to gather in

The AL will demonstrate in the

Jalil said, as part of the new

Bitterly criticising the govern-

bling, the state minister said that AL did not seek any permission from

Rajuk's drive FROM PAGE 12

scribed space around it.

Rajuk chairman said.

Battalion, led the BDR side, while RC

getting 82 seats and Congress bagging 55.

stopped the construction following the BDR's resistance.

Sylhet flood

FROM PAGE 12 Dyke at Ishabpur, submerging 14

villages in Sultanpur, Barothakuri and Barohal unions, sources said. The government sanctioned 50

tonne of rice and Tk 50,000 for affected Jakiganj residents. Water levels in the rivers Surma,

Kushiyara, Piain, Gowain were still over danger mark at different points in the afternoon, official sources informed. The river Surma was flowing 6cm

above the danger level near Sylhet city in the afternoon. It was 117cm over the red mark at Kanaighat upazila headquarters point, they

The river Kushiyara was running 147cm higher over the red mark at Amolshid at Jakiganj border while it was 77cm above danger mark at Sheolaghat in Beanibazar during the same time.

The situation would start improving within a day or two, Bangladesh Water Board officials hoped, once rainfall in upper region stops.

BB seeks

FROM PAGE 1

soared soon after the amendment of the act, which was said to be soft on loan defaulters.

"Some cases are often re-routed to the High Court from where defaulters obtain stay order on money loan court proceedings. In that way some big defaulters are staying out of the reach of the act," he said

The figures of default loan cases are however too staggering to believe. Until December 31 last year, 79,367 cases involving Tk 14,185 crore were filed under the Money Loan Act. Of them, 47,679 cases involving Tk 7,512 crore belong to

The courts could settle 35,412 cases so far to recover Tk 1,398

Don't create artificial crisis | Suicide bombers

FROM PAGE 1 processing zones (EPZs), she sugfarsightedness and commitment for gested

welfare of the people, they observed. She listed a number of steps taken Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain by her government including lowering Chowdhury, Adviser of Commerce the rate of bank interest and hoped Ministry Barkatullah Bulu, Prime that the private banks would also Minister's Political Secretaries Harris reduce their interest rate Chowdhury and M Mosaddek Ali and Referring to the measures for

Commerce Secretary were present at development of power sector, the prime minister called upon the private Other members of the DCCI entrepreneurs to invest in the sector delegation included AM Mubashshar, She hoped that consumers would M Abu Horaira, Ahmed Hossain help improve the utility services by Majumdar, Zillur Rahman, K Atiq-e-

paying the bills regularly. Khaleda also mentioned her government's steps taken for the development of agriculture sector and improvement of Information Technology (IT) in the country.

She said the foundation of the country's economy would be strong enough to run forward independently it the development activities continue for next three years.

Change of government and abandoning of development programmes in the past had affected the pace of progress, she observed.

While appreciating the achievement of the government in economic sector, the DCCI delegation pointed out that the national growth rate rose to 5.33 in 2002-03 from 4.42 in 2001-02 and it is expected to cross 5.5 in 2003-Prime minister said the revenue

income increased by 9.18 percent in the first nine months of the current fiscal while remittance by 11.4 percent. The overall export income increased by 14 percent in the first eight months. The foreign exchange reserve reached 2.70 billion US dollars in the current months (April). Presenting the statistics, the DCCI

Responding to a proposal of the leaders appreciated the government DCCI, the prime minister said her for achieving the success despite government was encouraging adversities. They also appreciated different government measures for improvement of business and invest-

The Congress is shown by all five

exit polls to be making major gains in

Andhra Pradesh and (barring NDTV)

also in Maharashtra but facing setback

in Karnataka where it is the ruling party.

might think in terms of looking for new

political allies in the post-poll situation

and how to tread the tricky ground of

coalition politics with all its pulls and

tuning their strategy for the remaining

four phases of the elections which will

cover the key state of Uttar Pradesh

which has the highest number of 80

seats and where the party is hoping to

do better than in 1999 when it had got

that exit polls should not be made

public till the last phase of polling on

May 10. The party, which had urged

the Election Commission to take an

early decision on the issue of banning

exit polls, said airing exit polls at the

end of each phase of polling would

Singvi said the party was not opposed

to exit polls per se but was only against

their broadcast before voting was

completed in all constituencies across

virtually ruled out a ban on exit polls.

"The commission feels that the only

way to regulate exit polls is through

advice as to what can be done.

But the Election Commission

Congress spokesman Abhishek

influence the subsequent phases.

Meanwhile, Congress reiterated

The BJP leaders are now busy fine-

Given the scenario, BJP leaders

ment and observed that government steps to enhance local and foreign investment were dynamic.

The business leaders expressed gratitude to the government for its sick industry rehabilitation programmes

that rejuvenated at least 2000 sick industrial units across the country. The DCCI delegation suggested a number of measures, including reduction of business cost and availability of bank loan at low interest for small and

enhance business and investment. It felt the need for more importalternative and export-oriented industrv in the country.

medium entrepreneurs to further

The DCCI leaders also suggested massive economic diplomacy and appointment of professional persons in foreign missions to this end to augment market abroad. Regional cooperation can also help the country, they observed

They praised the government's emphasis on agro-based industry and sought assistance for capital for the

The DCCI delegation also felt the need for a full-fledged human resources development institute to create efficient entrepreneurs in the

Bridge built

FROM PAGE 1

the communications ministry said construction of the roads will start very soon after necessary approval from the RHD.

The bridge will establish direct road link between Chandpur and Noakhali and some other districts.

FROM PAGE 12 among the lawyers, relatives of the accused and others present in the court, who shouted protests and

questioned the validity of the ruling. Some of the aggrieved attorneys called on the magistrate at his chamber; but he said he acted as per instructions received from higher authorities'. Later in the afternoon, the magistrate granted bails to the women.

The advocates also alleged some of the arrestees were charged under Section 74 of the DMP Ordinance, which is applicable to immoral activities.

men and women on Tuesday, ahead of yesterday's opposition programme to lay siege to Hawa Bhaban, the office of the BNP chair-

hajat and had to be hospitalised. picked up about 200 people from different entry points to the city, mostly from bus, launch and train

Motiiheel Police. and explosives from outside the capital for subversive activities

yesterday.
Until Tuesday night, police legislation. We have sought legal arrested over 2,000 people. Seven Deputy Election Commissioner AN hundred of them were produced before court until 5:00pm court sources said

siege programme of Hawa Bhaban as a part of their movement to unseat the four-party alliance gov-

4 more appointed FROM PAGE 12

The recruits who could not join office were seen roaming the establishment section. Some alleged they paid different political leaders and RÚ teachers a large amount of money for recruitment. One of them told The Daily Star, "I am worried that the money I paid may go down the drain."

IO dropped

FROM PAGE 12

office of the inspector general of police (IGP) directed the CMP commissioner to transfer the case to Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for further investigation. Process is on to hand over the

case from Officer-in-Charge (OC) and IO (investigation officer) Ahadui Rahman to the CID today, the CMP officer said. OC Ahad was tasked to investi-

gations were brought against him that he was helping the offloading of the arms and ammunition. Meanwhile, a high-powered probe body led by Home Secretary

staying here for three days. ment of BNP activist Hafizur Rahman, pro-Jamaat labour leader Din Mohammad and Sobhan Haji, who are absconding, with the gun-

FROM PAGE 1

end on June 30 with the formal transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi govern-

A wounded Iraqi, Amin Dinar, said he had heard a huge explosion as he

stood at the door of his house. "I looked around and saw my leg bleeding and my neighbour lying dead on the floor, torn apart," he said from his hospital bed. "I saw a minibus full of children on fire.

AL QAEDAACCUSED The mayor, speaking at Basra police headquarters, said police had recovered the remains of one bearded bomber.

"I accuse al Qaeda," the mayor said. "We have arrested a person disguised in a police uniform. We are questioning him."

U.S. officials have blamed al Qaeda or its affiliates for some of the violence sweeping Iraq. Interior Minister Samir Sumaidy

devastating suicide attacks in the Shia holy city of Kerbala and the Kurdish capital Arbil earlier this year. But he told a news conference it was too early to assign blame. Witnesses at hospitals said 200 civilians and police had been

said the Basra attacks were similar to

wounded. Reuters counted 55 bodies at one hospital. A morque attendant said 39 bodies had been identified and at least 16 others were burned beyond recognition. A British military spokesman said three vehicles had exploded at Basra

killed three Iragis and wounded four British soldiers, two seriously. The explosions sowed panic across Basra, which had been relatively peaceful during this month's

surge of violence in other parts of

police stations at about 7:15 a.m.

. British officials said the Zubair blast

central and southern Iraq DOMINICAN REPUBLIC **PULLOUT**

The Dominican Republic decided Tuesday to withdraw its 300 troops from Iraq in the wake of Spain's decision to pull out, Defence Secretary General Jose Miguel Soto Jimenez said while South Korea is sending more troops.

will leave in a few days, in the next week," the general said after talks with President Hipolito Mejia. They had originally been scheduled to

The Dominican troops were

"The armed forces' troops in Iraq

attached to a Spanish-led brigade that is being withdrawn from Iraq. Honduras, which has 368 troops in the same brigade, announced Monday that they would also be withdrawn.

Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero the Dominican troops would leave when their mission ends in July, but reversed himself after speaking with Honduran President Ricardo Maduro.

Thailand's senate voted to maintain the kingdom's 451 troops in Iraq despite mounting danger and the announced withdrawal of at least three countries from the US-led coalition, a senator said.

In another development, a group of 330 South Korean military engineers and medics left for Iraq vesterday in a troop rotation to replace colleagues already conducting relief work in the war-torn country, officials

troops will be sent to the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah next week, the defense ministry said.

TRUCE SPLINTERS In Falluja, west of Baghdad, fighting violated a fragile truce just hours after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld suggested the cease-fire in the Sunni city would not last.

wounded in clashes between Marines and rebels that erupted at dawn, residents said. "Thugs and assassins and former

city and to oppose peace and freedom," Rumsfeld said Tuesday. Dozens of families who had fled earlier fighting queued on the edge of Falluja Wednesday waiting to be

Marines at the desert roadblock initially turned people back, but let some through as the fighting died

allowed home. The truce deal stipu-

North of Baghdad, U.S.-backed Iraqi soldiers killed four insurgents and seized three explosive-laden cars in a raid overnight, said Iraqi

ians from more than a dozen coun-

Tribunal set up

for the trial of Saddam, who was captured by US troops in December and has since been held by US troops at an undisclosed location in or near Baghdad .

AFP adds: A Jordanian lawyer neading a defence team to represent Saddam Hussein on Wednesday branded the selection process of Iragi judges to try the ousted Iragi president a "violation of international

AFP he was preparing to lodge a suit against the US government and President George W. Bush for preventing him from meeting his client.

Rashdan said. "The defence committee will file suit against this selection if a trial takes place. A senior aide to Iraq's interim Governing Council member Ahmed

vill try Saddam. Entifadh Qanbar, whose boss is also the head of the pro-US Iraqi National Congress, said that seven judges and five prosecutors have

also been selected "By law the country of aggression (United States), has no right whatsoever to change the constitution of Iraq, issue laws or appoint judges

Last month Rashdan said he was appointed by Saddam's first wife,

Saiida, and eldest daughter Raghad to represent the former dictator, who has been in detention since US forces captured him on December

"So far I have not been allowed to travel to Iraq," by the US-led coalition, Rashdan said.

suit against the US government and its president. Bush, because the US administration is preventing us from meeting with our client." he said in reference to a defence committee

Rashdan said the suit "which is being prepared in coordination with French lawvers will be lodged with the French high court ... because France is the mother of all law".

He also dismissed claims by veteran French lawyer Jacques Verges that he has been retained to represent the former Iraqi leader.

family to say that our strategy is the one retained by the family who reject any other strategy," Rashdan said. "Any lawyer who wishes to join the

tee," he added. chief Klaus Barbie and terrorist "Carlos the Jackal" as clients, said last month that Saddam's nephew, Ali

Barzan al-Tikriti, asked him to repre-

Last week, Washington ordered non-essential diplomats out of the Gulf state and warned Americans they should leave, citing fresh signals of possible attacks on US and Western interests.

residential compounds in Riyadh killed 50 people last year, including nine Americans. Ambulances rushed toward the

Suicide bombings at foreign

site of Wednesday's blast and smoke billowed from damaged buildings in the area, which also houses state television and the Information Ministry.

raging fires. television channel Al Arabiya said a

cilled. Saudi Arabia last week defused five cars rigged with explosives in Riyadh, security sources said

five like this but this one got through," the Interior Ministry source said. Since Monday, police have been

hunting a group of militants after gunbattles in which they also fired rocket-propelled grenades at police. The same group is believed to have killed four policemen at checkpoints Last week, one of Saudi Arabia's most wanted al-Qaeda militants, in

a video carried on an Islamist Web

site, called on Muslims to kill

Americans everywhere and vowed attacks against Arab leaders allied to Washington. Saudi Arabia has blamed the 2003 bombings at Riyadh residential compounds on al-Qaeda, which Washington accuses of the September 11 attacks on the United

States three years ago. US officials have praised recent Saudi efforts against militants, a contrast to earlier disquiet at perceived tolerance for radical Islam in Saudi Arabia -- 15 of the 19 suspected hijackers on September 11, 2001, were Saudi nationals.

Bin Laden, whose Saudi citizenship was revoked by the authorities. has often branded the kingdom's rulers as traitors to Islam and "infidel agents" of the United States.

nous population has been reduced Armed police also forced shopwing -- the Ezzedin al-Qassam from a majority of over 52 percent in last week. of the consignment. keepers to close their businesses 1951 to a minority of around 30 per-

medium industry. Small and medium

Indian polls

Rabbani and AY M Kamal.

cooperation.

The Prime minister told the DCCI

"We are giving emphasis on the

The law and order has improved

much, she said adding that it would

improve further if all quarters extend

She mentioned various measures

taken by her government to improve

law and order, such as, introduction of

speedy trial, reforms in police and

formation of Rapid Action Battalion

has taken some pragmatic decisions

to uphold the interest of textiles and

garments sectors. Both the sectors

would get all possible assistance from

the government also in future, she

She said a national coordination

committee has been formed to help

readymade garments sector face the

challenges of post-2004 period when

the quota system would be phased

Khaleda Zia said the government

leaders that the policies of her govern-

ment were business-and investment

private sector and trying to increase

export and investment." she added.

Vajpayee's BJP played down its hardline Hindu image and campaigned on a feel-good platform of economic growth and peace with

Voters' turnout in two constituen-

cies in Jammu and Kashmir was 40-45

percent despite threat by militants.

EXIT POLLS The exit polls from initial voting in national elections show the Congress narrowing the lead of the ruling Hindu nationalists in the race for the 543member Lok Sabha. The exit polls put out by five TV

networks predict that NDA (National

Democratic Alliance) is likely to get 70

to 93 seats out of the 140 seats in the

first-phase polling. The Congress and its allies are projected to secure between 41 and 53 seats and shown The NDTV exit poll gave NDA 70-80 seats out of the 140 seats which went to poll in the first phase followed

by Congress and its allies with 50-60

Assuming the trend persists in the

remaining four phases of elections, the NDTV exit poll shows NDA will finish rith 260-280 seats at the national level followed by Congress and allies with 165 to 185 seats and 100-115 for others. While exit poll by popular Hindi news channel Aaj Tak gives NDA 93 of

the 140 seats in the first phase, the

same conducted by Star News project

incidents of violence across the coun-

try, including in Kashmir, which has

been torn by a separatist revolt for 14

Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's coali-

tion, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP), will come back to power on the

coat-tails of his personal popularity

But in Tripura, communists are

expected to regain the state's two

seats up for grabs. Counting is set for

May 13 and results expected the same

been collapsing in the rest of the world,

the left has been in power in the

remote northeastern state of 3.3

million people since 1978, barring a

five-year period between 1988 and

empowering people and a people's revolution," Bijan Dhar, a top leader of

the Communist Party of India-Marxist

(CPI-M), the country's biggest left

party, said in Agartala, Tripura's capi-

achieve tribal and non-tribal unity and

peace with Pakistan are key election

issues at the national level, Tripura is

concerned with regional problems like

a separatist insurgency and ethnic

tension between tribals and Bengali

200 ethnic and tribal groups and about

two dozen insurgent groups who

accuse New Delhi of exploiting the

region's resources without developing

the area and allowing outsiders to pour

Over the years, Tripura's indige-

into the region.

India's northeast is home to some

this is one of our key election points.

"To achieve that in Tripura, we must

While the booming economy and

"We communists believe in

While communist regimes have

and a booming economy.

Opinion polls have forecast Prime

the ruling alliance to get 80 seats.

Congress and allies are projected by Aaj Tak to get 44 and by Star News 53 The Sahara news channel exit poll shows the saffron party-led combine

FROM PAGE 12

India plugs

encies is slated for April 26.

cent because of the entry of waves of Bengali settlers from Muslim-majority Bangladesh. "Like the tiger, we tribals of Tripura

are endangered by Bengali settlers," Barma said.

7 Palestinians

Gaza Strip

Jha said.

Medics and witnesses said five people were injured when an Israeli helicopter fired two rockets in their direction.

This latest round of violence raises

the overall toll since the September

2000 start of the Palestinain uprising,

or intifada, to 3,925, including 2,956 Palestinians and 899 Israelis. An army spokesman said troops had been operating in the area since Tuesday in order to "foil the firing of Qassam rockets and mortar bombs at

Israeli communities in and outside the

"Fifteen rockets had been fired

since Sunday, but thanks to our operation, today and yesterday no more were fired" he said, confirming that both troops and a helicopter had targeted armed Palestinians in the "Forces identified a cell of Palestinians planting explosive

hit them." The "operation is ongoing", he added. Military sources said army bulldoz-

devices in the area and an Israeli

helicopter fired at them. The forces

also identified armed Palestinians and

ers levelled agricultural fields in Beit Lahiya to prevent militants from hiding there and firing the makeshift Qassam rockets, named after Hamas' military running but could not trace the origin

Magistrate

The same magistrate doled out the same sentence to another 63

That batch was arrested in Mirpur earlier in the day for putting up obstacles on footpaths. Some of the arrested women fell sick from being kept in a jam-packed court Meanwhile, police yesterday

stations. Of them, the highest number of arrests, 45, was made by Most of the arrests were made under the DMP Ordinance suspecting that the opposition might have been assembling people with arms

The second phase of polling Wednesday. The rest were schedcovering 137 parliamentary constituuled to be produced before the magistrate by 10:00pm last night, Front organisations of the main opposition Awami League called the

vacancies. Several departmental planning committees including of Bangla and political science departments yesterday decided not to accept the new recruits, as they said

the departments have no vacancy.

gate the gunrunning, although alle-

Omar Farook has left for Dhaka after The probe body found involve-

restoration of Iraqi sovereignty. The U.S.-led occupation is due to

Mejia Sunday told new Spanish

Another 330 non-combatant

Six civilians were killed and 10

Saddam henchmen will not be allowed to carve out portions of that

lates that 50 families may return each

Major-General Anwar Amin in Kirkuk. Canada said one of its citizens had been kidnapped in Iraq -- the latest in a spate of hostage-taking this month that has snared foreign civil-

"The appointment of (Sami) Chalabi violates international law,

Chalabi said Tuesday in Baghdad that "lawyer Sami Chalabi was named president of the court" which

and any measure it takes is null and void." Rashdan said.

sent the toppled president.

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crater in the road where dozens of blackened and twisted cars still smoldered and glass shards and concrete blocks lay thickly on the tarmac. Security forces cordoned off the area. Firefighters battled Dubai-based Arab satellite

"So we are preparing to lodge a

which he heads.

"We have been asked by the

defence committee must contact us in Amman because I am now the overall coordinator of this commit-Verges, who won a reputation for controversy by taking on Gestapo

Car bomb kills 10

The explosion gouged a deep

suspected suicide bomber was

Suspected Muslim militants also killed at least five Saudi policemen "We succeeded in preventing