Dhaka-10 by-polls

The court imposed the restriction on journalists Thursday when the special bench of justices M Ruhul Amin, MM Ruhul Amin and MA Aziz started hearing the writ petition.

The High Court on Wednesday stayed the June 6 polls till June 12 on a petition of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh candidate Abdul Mannan, a retired major, on being refused allocation of his desired poll symbol 'kula'. The returning officer however granted another Bikalpa Dhara candidate, Mahi B Chowdhury of Munshiganj-1, the symbol.

Immediately after the stay order was issued, the returning officer of the constituency in a controversial manner filed an appeal with the chamber judge of the Appellate Division on the same day. A special bench was immediately formed to hear the appeal. The Election Commission however denies its involvement in filing the appeal petition.

Journalists started gathering at the Supreme Court premises before 10.30am when the hearing started yesterday. The court security intercepted them, prompting some 20 newspersons to stage an impromptu sit-in in front of the Supreme Court gate used by the chief justice. They put down pen and notebook and microphone and also tied their

hands with handkerchiefs in

Supreme Court Bar Association President Rokanuddin Mahmud, its Secretary Bashir Ahmed and some other lawyers met the dem-

Rokan told the journalists, "We will go to the chief justice and authorities concerned and convey your message." He suggested the journalists write a memorandum to the chief justice through the Bar Association to enable the association to take the matter up with the

Mannan in the petition, also briefed the press on the hearing.

Former judge TH Khan on behalf of the respondent gave his arguments till 11.45am. Rokan did

Rokan told the court that in 1996, the Election Commission gave a directive under which a party will be given a single election symbol for all its candidates In case of Dhaka-10 by-election, Mannan has been arbitrarily denied 'kula' symbol when the EC has already allocated another Bikalpa Dhara candidate the

The court told both sides that it wanted to complete hearing by today and Rokan was optimistic about a court ruling on the matter

Anti-Ahmadiyya

On fundamentalists' demand of the government to declare Ahmadiyyas as non-Muslim, the sect leaders at a press conference said the state was in no position to rule on the issue.

"A quarter is crying for introduction of a blasphemy law and another for declaring us non-Muslim. Fulfilment of the demands would give them heart and push them ahead on their agenda of grabbing state power," Abdul Awal, missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Bangladesh (AMJB), told the press conference at AMJB complex in Dhaka

"Jamaat leader Motiur Rahman Nizami said on May 19 that all ulema were of the opinion that Ahmadiyyas were non-Muslim." he claimed. "Do the ulema have the authority to give the ruling, violating Almighty Allah's verses?"

"We have been hammering since 1993 to make the government understand that the roots of anti-Ahmadiyya militancy are in Pakistan and the instigators in that country want to destabilise Bangladesh as they have done on

The 'chaos-makers' are trained and based in Pakistan, he alleged, adding their movement to and from the South Asian country before any anti-Ahmadiyya agitation in Bangladesh prove the 'sinister links'.

The conference convened hurriedly in the wake of Friday's siege to the sect's mosque in Chawkbazar in Chittagong brought to light the Ahmadiyyas concerns at the rising spate of attacks on them despite demands by national and international organisations to protect the

"We're living under the shadows of extreme insecurity; fundamentalists are scaling up tortures on us, killing us and ousting us from our lands," said Meer Mobashwer Ali, AMJB Nayeb-e-

"The government has banned our books violating the constitution and now the police are seizing the publications from our mosques and hanging signboards reading the mosques are merely Qadiani places of worship.

Rain delays

play FROM PAGE 1

could be possible. Bangladesh are 278 for sever

in their first innings with Mohammad Ashraful on 65 and Mohammad Rafique giving him company on 17.

Coach Dav Whatmore thought Rafique could have a major role to play with his left-arm spin later in the game.

"He loves a challenge and knows what he has to do. I just hope the medium pacers keep chipping away

from the other end. West Indies skipper Brian Lara was not overly satisfied with the first day's play but thought the home

team were having the advantage. "I still think we are in a very good position. I don't think any side batting first would like to lose

seven wickets on the opening day on this pitch. It's important to take the remaining wickets guickly. I would like to see us take it session by session and bat for a couple of

'I don't want to put the horse before the cart because we still have to bat and they have put some runs on the board. They also have a couple of spinners."

BSF stops border fencing near Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday stopped fencing the border along Padma Shakhra in Satkhira district following a flag meeting with Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

Violating a border pact in 1974, BSF members began erecting barbed wire fences along the border in the no-man's land on the Indian side in the morning, locals said. The BDR sent a protest letter to Gojadanga BSF camp asking the

The BSF decided to postpone construction work following a flag meeting agreement with its Bangladeshi counterpart in the afternoon, they added.

Indian side to stop their work,

Anjuman Ara

Masjid-e-Taqwa at Dhanmondi after Asr prayers yesterday. She was buried at Banani Graveyard.

Qulkhwani of Aniuman Ara will be held at her residence (Flat P-10. Road 9-A, Dhanmondi) on June 1 after Asr prayers.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed her deep shock at the death of Anjuman Ara

In a message of condolence yesterday, Khaleda recalled with deep respect the contribution of Aniuman Ara to the cultural arena. The prime minister expressed her sympathy for the members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Anjuman Ara was born in a renowned family of Bogra on January 11, 1942. Her father Dr Kasiruddin Talukder was killed by the occupation army on May 29,

In an illustrious musical career spanning over 40 years, she lent her voice to numerous famous songs in radio, television, film and stage Tumi Ashbe Boley', Akasher Hatey', Key Swaraner Prantore' 'Khokonshona', 'Chadni', 'Brishti Johon', 'Shathi Ronger', etc., are only a few of hundreds of her most popular songs that touched the nearts of people over the years.

Anjuman Ara represented Bangladesh in many cultural functions at home and abroad. In recognition of her outstanding contribution to music, she was honoured with "Ekushey Padak" in 2003.

Abducted staff

FROM PAGE 1

of the alleged abductors identified as Abdul Halim, son of Mahatab Biswas of Barkhada, on the outskirts of the town yesterday.

The officer-in-charge of the Sadar Police Station said, "No one came to file any case of kidnap.still we moved on hearing the incident."

"We didn't seek any police assisnce because the captors threatened to kill Salam if any case is filed." familv sources said.

In village Tekala of Daulatpur upazila, an armed gang of about 10 went to the house of Zarafat Ullah to pick up his son Rabiul Islam 20, a second year student of Daulatpur

College, at about 11:00pm. As the family members shouted for help, the neighbours and 'village defence party' rushed to the spot and ringed the house. The gang then opened fire and hurled crackers on the villagers to make an escape. At least five people including Rabiul

were injured. Police records show at least 13 people were abducted in six upazilas of the district in this month ncrease in the number of abductions, many of which were not reported for fear of reprisal, has caused scare among the people.

Since January, 70 people including 18 school and college students were abducted in the district. Eight of them including three schoolboys were killed and others bought their freedom paying hefty ransom that ranged from Tk 50, 000 to 2 lakh. Police could rescue only three. While talking to this correspondent by phone, Superintendent of Police Saiful Islam, however, denied the allegation of rise in the number of abductions.

New signboard

Local administration has beefed up security measures in and around the mosque fearing fresh backlash following the incident, police officials said

Miah Lutfur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (north) yesterday told The Daily Star, "We are keeping watch over the mosque to avert any untoward incident over removal of the signboard."

Islamic extremists under the banner of the International Khatme Nabuyat Movement (IKNM) placed the signboard, which read: "Place of worship for the Ahmadiyyas. Muslims advised not to take it as mosque to be deceived." in front of the Ahmadivva mosque during an

It's a fraud, CEC

such a file. So how did I give permis-

EC Secretary SM Zakaria was allegedly hyperactive in filling the appeal against the High Court stay

official of the attorney general's office came to him after the delivery of the High Court's stay order.

to the Appellate Division while filling

about it. We are waiting for the court

order," he told The Daily Star at his office vesterday.

However, a vokalatnama of the solicitor wing of the law ministry was

submitted in favour of the appeal. Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud questioned the legality of the appeal. "I will argue tomorrow

(Sunday) (in court) on who filed the

appeal," he told reporters yesterday. According to the election law, the service of Mia Mostak Ahmed, who is also the divisional commissioner of Dhaka, is under the EC as he is

take departmental action against

Asked about the provision, the CEC declined to comment, saying: "I would like to talk on the issue

Zia's 23rd anniversary

Nationalist Party (BNP) and its front organisations have drawn up a 10day programme to observe the anniversary of its founder.

yesterday, includes laying wreaths at the grave of Zia. Qurankhwani. milad mahfil, feeding of the destitute, discussions, photo exhibitions, blood donation and cultural President lajuddin Ahmed in a

message said the contribution of Zia to establish multiparty democracy in the country has finally determined his status in history. The BNP will hoist party flag at

half mast and black flag atop its central office and party offices all over the country in the morning. Leaders and workers of the BNP

Power crisis

FROM PAGE 12 power over 65 percent its capacity

after gas supply to it was improved. The 230mw Kaptai hydropower plant, which remained closed for some time due to a sharp fall in

PDB tries to keep Dhaka, which consumes more than 1200mw, out of load-shedding by distributing the power shortfall across the country.

and its front organisations will place wreaths, offer fateha and participate in a milad mahfil at the Zia's grave. Khaleda will offer fateha and

place wreaths at the grave on behalf of the government and the BNP at 10:00am today. As part of the announced

national programmes, the BNP will begin a three-day programme at Dhaka from today.

16 killed

FROM PAGE 1

seriously, when a Dhaka bound passenger bus skidded off the Hatikundal-Bonpara Highway and fell into a ditch at Charhamkuria village in Tarash upazila early yes-

Of the dead, one was identified as Shahadat Hossain, 27, of Kashinathour in Pabna.

The injured passengers were admitted to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

Our Comilla correspondent reported that a truck rammed a bicycle on the Comilla-Sylhet Highway at Kangsanagar under Burichang upazila at 4:00pm yesterday, leaving two people killed on the

One of the dead was identified as Shafiullah, 14, son of Abu Musa of Kangsanagar.

Water sharing issue

FROM PAGE 12

development partners cannot resolve this sort of problem. The whole issue has unfortunately landed in to a political trap. The people of the region must come forward to resolve the differences People of India would not like to see their good neighbour Bangladesh suffer," said Kuldip Nayar.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, the Netherlands Ambassador Sjef lizermans, UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner and Country Representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature Dr Ainun Nishat was among speakers at the seminar, organised by the Centre for Water, Environment and Energy, a non-governmental

organisation. A N H Akhter Hossain, managing director of Dhaka Wasa, and Dr Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University presented two keynote papers on impact of water withdrawal from the upper basin and on legal aspect of

water sharing treaty. Moudud Ahmed said the new government of India seems to be cooperative on the issue of water sharing and has opened a window

project. It is a mega project and any government cannot ignore public opinion on it, he added.

Morshed Khan said the transboundary problem can be resolved only by changing the mindset. Any it until the mindset is changed, he

Bangladesh needs the help of Indian people to get its due share of water. International development partners also have a great role to The UNDP resident representa-

tive said development partners cannot solve the regional conflict but can help improve the unequal relationship.

boundary water sharing issue should be resolved immediately as the entire eco-system of Bandladesh is based on river waters. The problem can be resolved through political intervention, he thought.

Muhammad Zamir also addressed

Graft case

FROM PAGE 12

executive director of Asian Surveyors Ltd., and Giausuddin Al Mamun of Rahman Group of Industries Ltd.

Barrister AKM Fokrul Islam, the chief defence counsel of the accused, in the discharge petition said the case was filed during the tenure of the Awami League government with a motive to politically harass them.

He also told the court that the charges brought against them were false, fabricated and concocted. Moreover, the names of two other accused. Afzal Khan and Atosh Khan, were dropped from the charge sheet though their death certificates were not put on the judicial case file. Special Public Prosecutor Fazlur

Rahman Khan submitted a petition in favour of framing of charges

accused received about Tk 3.5 crore in loan from the principal branch of the AB Bank producing "forged documents" against the mortgaged property through "abuse of power and mutual understand-The loan was sanctioned for the

purchase of Jadz Distillery Limited. a disinvested unit of Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha, it adds. It also alleges that the land mortgaged with the bank in 1994

was already sold out to another person and that the price of the land was inflated The bank officials, without surveying the land or examining the

documents, recommended sanc-

The government also approved a tioning of the loan, the case further block allocation of Tk 40 crore for The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) filed the case accusing

5 Indians' Capture al-Qaeda attacks

2 Biman staff,

owner shown

A Dhaka court yesterday showed

arrested two Biman Bangladesh

Airlines staff and the Euro Garden

guesthouse owner in a regular case

filed in connection with the sneaking

Magistrate, Dhaka also placed

Biman staff Mamunur Rashid and

Abdul Hannan, held on Friday, and

guesthouse owner Abdur Rouf

Chakladar, on a 10-day remand,

Airport police picked up Mamun

and Hannan after their cell phone

numbers were found in the call list of

a mobile phone seized from one of

the five arrested Indians, police

link with the trafficking gang during

interrogation," said a top police

sending them abroad, police said.

Singh, Nirmol Singh, Manjeet Singh,

Mangas Singh and Sandeep Singh,

all Sikhs, as they holed up in a Biman

aircraft at Zia International Airport

The ruling alliance have made

Bangladesh a country where the

prime minister has no control over her

administration. That is why her

(Khaleda) reported order to arrest

Bangla Bhai is yet to be executed." the

. Hasina categorically blamed

Jamaat-e-Islami for its involvement

with at least 12 extremist organisa-

tions that are smuggling illegal arms

into the country and giving training to

government has extended retirement

age of the chief justice through the

14th amendment to the constitution

iust to get a like-minded person as

chief of the next caretaker govern-

BNP's international affairs secretary in

crisis abroad due to criminal activities

and unabated corruption by the ruling

two aircraft, Hasina said, "Two 30-

year-old aircraft were purchased for

Bangladesh Biman and ruling alliance

loyalists have made huge money from

the deal as new engines were bought

Netrakona Sadar Paurasava and

Shahid Igbal, chairman of Mohangani

paurasava also spoke on the occa-

Tavebur Rahman, Two constables

of Special Armed Forces (SAF)

been taken into custody for sus-

pected links with PBCP (J). The OC

bombs were recovered from the

Station lodged two separate FIRs in

this connection yesterday without

Sources claimed both the fac-

tions of outlawed PBCP have

reunited recently to renew assaults

on police in Khulna and Bagerhat

districts. A secret meeting held in

Jhenidah with top leaders of the two

Police are helping the Islamist force

as they are helping Bangla Bhai's

men in the northern districts, the

statement said and added

Bangladesh is going under a

The statement urged the con-

factions took the decision.

FROM PAGE 12

Taliban-like rule.

Next ADP

FROM PAGE 1

NFC auditorium.

S Asian body

naming anyone as an accused.

Four bombs including two petrol

SI Rafiqui Islam of Khulna Police

Meanwhile, four youths have

Nazrul Islam Khan, chairman of

ment. The incumbent chief justice was

The country is now facing an image

Referring to the recent purchase of

The opposition leader also said the

They are now on a 10-day remand.

Bangla Bhai

taking law in his own hand?

FROM PAGE 12

ALpresident said.

their activists.

the past, she added.

alliance men, she said.

to operate the old aircraft."

6 cops hurt

were injured in that incident.

refused to divulge their identity

FROM PAGE 12

spot of the fight.

official seeking anonymity.

"The Biman staff admitted their

The guesthouse owner has a link

sources said.

sources said.

The Court of Chief Metropolitan

of five Indians in a Biman aircraft.

guesthouse

arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A statement purportedly from Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network posted on Islamist Web sites claimed the attacks.

The group blamed for the September 2001 attacks on the United States has vowed to destabilize the US-allied monarchy and the world's leading oil exporter.

Witnesses said a body had been dragged through the streets, apparently by militants, in the third attack against foreigners in less than a month in the birthplace of Islam. It appeared aimed at the crucial and in part Western-run oil industry. Al Arabiya aired footage of a

slumped in his car, apparently shot dead by the gunmen. It showed a charred car and a third blood-spattered vehicle. The attack came two days after the top al-Qaeda leader in the

man with Western features,

kingdom, Abdulaziz al-Muqrin, issued a battle plan for urban guerrilla war, specifying steps militants needed to topple the royal family. Earlier this month, militants

with the trafficking group. The gang used to bring Indian nationals to killed five foreigners in an unprec-Bangladesh and kept them at the edented attack on a petrochemiquesthouse with false identity before cal site in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea town of Yanbu and dragged the Last week police held Pargas body of an American through the streets.

Muqrin claimed that attack and vowed more in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim states. A German was also shot dead this month in a shopping district in eastern Riyadh

In Saturday's spree, militants opened fire at the Al-Khobar Petroleum Center building, believed to house offices of major Western oil firms, before storming into the compounds housing oil services offices and homes of employees working there, the security sources said.

Witnesses said two cars with military markings drove into the Apicorp complex where militants shot dead the child. The gunmen, in military uni-

forms, also went into the Rami

and Oasis housing compounds,

Saudi Arabia. Anti-Western sentiment in the

mages carried by Arab media of US troops abusing Iraqi prisoners and Israeli tanks razing Palestinian homes

India, with which it has fought three wars since both countries won independence from Britain in

Analysts say the test was meant to tell the Indian government that Pakistan would not lower its quard despite peace

also convey to the new Indian government that we are going to remain militarily strong," former military general Kamal Matinuddin said.

"It's a combination of all." A Pakistan military statement said Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali also watched the test-firing, but did not say where

Ghauri and Shaheen are different versions of a Pakistani missile series named Hatf in reference to an ancient Islamic weapon.

Shaheen II, with a range of 2,000 km (1,250 miles), in March. It said t was capable of carrying nuclear warheads to every corner of India.

New Delhi has itself been developing a range of missiles

capable of delivering nuclear warheads, and plans to test sometime this year the longest-range version yet of Agni, its nuclear-

Pakistan had informed its neighbors about the test beforehand, the military statement said. Pakistan first test-fired the

capable ballistic missile.

Ghauri missile in April 1998 ahead of tit-for-tat nuclear tests responding to tests by India. The Ghauri missiles were formally inducted

into the military in January 2003. The latest Ghauri test came a day after the sixth anniversary of kistan's nuclear tests

system oped by Khan Research

Laboratories, Pakistan's main

which was named for Abdul Qadeer Khan, once revered as the father of the country's atom But Khan was sacked this year

from his job as a special government adviser after he admitted to exporting nuclear secrets to Iran,

Some experts say the Ghauri missile was developed with North Korean help in return for nuclear

over from US rule next month, seemed to have been completely taken aback by the way the 23member Governing Council

also caught on the hop by the speed of the announcement. But as a long-time exile in the pay of the CIA, Allawi was always a strong candidate in Washington and US officials were clearly

man who spent more than 30 years abroad, first as a medical student in Britain supporting Saddam Hussein's Baath party and later as a wealthy exile who founded the Iragi National Accord with funds from the CIA.

Aides to Allawi said he was meeting various fellow members of the Governing Council, which will give way on June 30 to the interim government. One said he also expected to meet Paul Bremer, the US administrator in

al Qaeda-linked Islamists In the northern city of Kirkuk, where rival ethnic groups are competing for a share of Irag's oil wealth, a prominent Kurdish politician was killed yesterday in a drive-by shooting -- the third assassination of a Kurdish offi-

cial this month. Colonel Mohammed Hamid, the head of Kirkuk's fire department as well as a senior member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party, was killed with his wife, sister and another relative when their car was strafed by gunmen in another vehicle

Desa

FROM PAGE 12

officials of Desa involving over Tk 5, 000 crore have remained unresolved for a long time. A total of 5,738 objections were

raised with regard to the irregularities in Desa since 1971 to March 2004. But during the last 32 years only 1405 objections have been resolved. Today, 4,333 audit objections involving Tk 5,469 crore stand

steps to settle the pending issues.

Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

press, but also the people from symbolic protest. accessing public information.

onstrating journalists.

Rokan, who represents

his afterwards.

"When they (anti-Ahmadiyyas) tortured our people, vandalised and looted our houses in four villages at Badargani in Rangpur police refused to record any

case," he alleged.

leader in Jessore, confinement of the people of the sect in Kushtia terrorising of Ahmadiyyas in Panchagarh and Barguna. 'The state minister for religion assured us that they banned our books on January 8 temporarily to calm the agitating anti-Ahmadiyyas and will lift the

embargo soon, but he is yet to

He said the Ahmadiyya com-

deliver the promise.'

Mobashwer pointed out the

recent killing of an Ahmadiyya

munity could not take any legal steps against the ban as the government did not serve them any notice or make any gazette notification "Encouraged by the government roles, the fundamentalists

Quran from our Nakhalpara mosque on April 16," Mobashwer Police seized the Quran and books of Hadith from Patuakhali mosque on May 12 and a local

seized translated copies of the

asking people not to mistake the structure as a mosque. Chittagong police on Friday hung similar signboard at their mosque at Chawkbazar in Pakistan-style when a few hundred fundamentalists went there

in procession, he alleged. Guantanamo experts

FROM PAGE 12 commander in Iraq, on his findings in the next week, a senior Army

official told the paper. The Times quoted a senior military official in Iraq as saying five interrogation teams, or about 15 interrogators, analysts and other specialists, were sent in October from Guantanamo to the US command in Iraq "for use in the interrogation effort" at Abu Ghraib. A Washington defence official said only three teams were sent, the

paper added. The newspaper said Miller played a central role in recommending an overhaul of interrogation procedures at Abu Ghraib, including changes to bring about closer coordination between guards and interrogators. The paper added it was unclear whether his report or the Guantanamo teams explicitly recommended tougher interroga-

Pre-paid meter

FROM PAGE 12

tions at Abu Ghraib.

Prepaid meters will replace postpaid meters in the entire city in phases, Desa and PDB sources

The new system will also enable

consumers to buy electricity on an hourly basis from any power offices, which will provide a card with a magnetic kit on its front side Consumers will get power connection by inserting the magnetic kit in the prepaid meter. Moreover, there will be provisions to reserve power to meet

contingencies. Consumers willing to

do so will have to inform power

officials while purchasing card, the

sources mentioned.

or receiving ghost bills, he added.

sion to file the appeal?'

"Truth will come to light." he said. order on Wednesday.

EC secretariat sources said an

After discussion with the official Zakaria himself signed a vokalatnama and initiated the move to file the appeal, they claimed. But his vokalatnama was not submitted

the writ Zakaria continued to refuse to comment on the issue. "The matter is sub judice. I cannot say anything

acting as the RO. If he violates the election law, the EC, as a quasi judiciary body, can

Chittagong Circuit House. The ruling Bangladesh

The programme, which began

water level, has resumed production of 125mw per day.

treaty or convention cannot resolve thought. Hafiz Uddin Ahmed said

play, he added.

Dr Inun Nishat said the trans-

Former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University M Moniruzzaman Miah and former ambassador

scious citizens and progressive political parties to get united to resist the religious extremists.

Saifur claimed to have taken a number of steps to ensure proper implementation of the ADP. "We have designed the projects in such a way that more projects are

raise additional resources," he told

journalists after the meeting at the

allocation of 14.72 percent followed by the transport sector (14.47 percent). Education and religion get 14.25 percent of allocation, rural development 10.59 percent and health and

implemented in the rural areas," he

The power sector gets the highest

development works through the newly formed Gram Sarkar.

population 9.78 percent.

Shell, Honeywell and General Electric lived in one of the compounds. The five-star Oasis residence has housed executives from oil majors Royal Dutch/Shell, Total and LUKOIL who are carrying out gas projects.

where they took a number of

hostage. Lebanon later said its

Some employees working for

people, including five Lebanese,

citizens had been released.

"This is clearly targeting the oil sector," said a senior Western

executive in the capital Riyadh. "Gunmen are still on the loose. People are staying in their homes, keeping their heads down. Nobody can give a final figure on the deaths," a Western diplomat told Reuters.

Oil markets have been on edge over the possibility of a strike on oil facilities in the kingdom, the world's biggest crude exporter, that would disrupt supplies. The attack in the main Saudi

oil-producing region came a week

after Saudi Arabia pledged to hike oil output to stabilise spiralling prices, and ahead of an Opec meeting next week. Saudi security forces have arrested or gunned down at least eight of the country's 26 most wanted militants, but their defi-

De facto ruler Crown Prince Abdullah has pledged to hunt down militants for "decades" if needed The kingdom, a pivotal US ally,

has been battling a tide of Muslim

militancy linked to al-Qaeda. A

string of al-Qaeda-linked suicide

ance of the crackdown has raised

questions about security.

bombings in Rivadh last vear killed 50 people, including nine Americans. Last month the US embassy

strongly urged its citizens to leave

kingdom has also been fueled by

Pakistan test fires

FROM PAGE 12

"It's meant to meet technical equirements, ease domestic pressure on peace with India and

the test was done. "The Ghauri missile....is secand only to Hatf VI Shaheen II in terms of range," it said.

Pakistan test-fired the

an interim government to take

involved in steering the choice. Ordinary Iraqis know little of a

A spokesman for Brahimi said

The meeting was held at the

The military statement said the test aimed to confirm improvements in the Pakistani missile The Ghauri missile was devel-

uranium-enrichment facility. bomb.

Libya and North Korea.

New Iraq PM

announced its choice of Allawi. The US administration was

The parliamentary body urged the authorities concerned to initiate

A senior Desa official said there against the accused. the envoy would now work with agitation programme after the Juma The government has also given a Morshed and eight others on will be no scope for pilfering power All the accused including M Allawi to form a government. Its block allocation of Tk 560 crore to pravers October 19, 1996. The investigation once prepaid metering is intro-Morshed Khan, now on bail, main task will be to organise The IKNM organised the Dhaka City Corporation, information officer pressed charges against duced. It will also enable consumers appeared before the court at Iraq's first free elections in the and communication technology field programme demanding declaration to avoid hassles like standing in long Morshed and five others on 4:00pm. new year amid widespread vioand some projects under power, rail of the Ahmadiyya sect as non-December 13, 2000 showing 14 queue in banks to pay electricity bills The case filed with Motijheel lence from sectarian militias and Muslims Police Station alleges that the people as prosecution witnesses.