6 more taken hostages by Iraq militants

A militant group said yesterday it had taken six more hostages -- three Indians, two Kenyans and an Egyptian -- and would behead them if their countries did not immediately announce the withdrawal of their citizens from Iraq. The US death toll since the start of the war rose to 900 when a roadside bomb killed a soldier.

The seizure of the hostages came a day after a Filipino truck driver was released in exchange for Manila's withdrawal of its 51-member troop contingent -- a move criticized by Washington and other allies as encouraging more abductions.

Those fears seemed to be realised with the new kidnappings.

In a statement given to The Associated Press, the group, calling itself "The Holders of the Black Banners," said it had abducted the six truckers and would behead one

under the circumstances and was

treated with caution by Tendulkar

and Ganguly, who are acknowledged

old conceded just 17 runs in his 6

for the second wicket before the

captain departed with his side need-

three fours and as many sixes,

including two against left-arm

spinner Mohammad Rafique. A wily

Rafique however had the last laugh

by having Ganguly caught at deep mid-wicket for his 50th one-day

Man-of-the-match Tendulkar,

whose previous best against the

Tigers was 54, struck ten boundaries

and a six in his 127-ball knock. It was

his 67th one-day half-century. Earlier, sent into bat, Bangladesh

tumbled against some fine swing

bowling from left-arm paceman

Irfan Pathan, who struck twice off

successive deliveries to dismiss

playing at a delivery that nipped

back sharply. Rajin was trapped lbw

The highlight of the innings was Mohammad Ashraful's brilliant

The PSC will announce a fresh

date for the test later but the seating

arrangements and venues will

The PSC meeting presided over by PSC Chairperson Professor Dr ZN

Tahmida Begum, discussed the

difficulties of the candidates as

communications are mostly cut off

in the flood-affected areas and

educational institutions closed.

Candidates from some areas, espe-

cially from greater Sylhet, could have faced difficulty in taking part in

candidates were supposed to sit for the preliminary BCS test at 111

centres of Dhaka, Chittagong,

Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet

A record number of 1.5 lakh

Bashar was bowled for two while

Habibul Bashar and Rajin Saleh.

Bangladesh at 10-2.

FROM PAGE 1

remain unchanged.

BCS exams

ing another five runs for victory.

The two Indians added 154-run

Ganguly's 55th fifty featured

overs with the new ball.

masters against spin. The 21-year-

of them every 72 hours starting at 8 p.m. (noon EDT) vesterday if their nations did not pull out of Iraq and the company they work for did not close its branch here.

"We have warned all the countries, companies, businessmen and truck drivers that those who deal with American cowboy occupiers will be targeted by the fires of the Mujahedeen," the statement said. 'Here you are once again transporting, goods, weapons and military equipment that backs the U.S.

None of the countries are part of the 160,000-member coalition force in Iraq, however Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi appealed last week to India and Egypt to join the coalition and send troops.

More than 60 foreigners have been taken hostage in Iraq in recent

Tigers go down meekly

Also yesterday, U.S. allies Poland, Japan and Bulgaria rejected threats

knock that ended prematurely on 35

Pathan once and drove Laxmipathy

Balaji twice for boundaries to sal-

vage the side to 92 for three after

Ashraful and Faisal Hossain (17

off 34 balls), who whacked

Harbhajan Singh for a six, were

going smoothly but the fragile mid-

dle-order gave in to the Indian slow

Ashraful was run out while chas-

ing a single. The lower order put

some meat to the total with Khaled

Mahmud (22) and Razzak (21) pro-

ducing 36 runs for the ninth wicket.

partnership to finish with 3-32.

Tendulkar also took three wickets for

35 for a virtuoso all-round perfor-

Bangladesh will play their next match against hosts Sri Lanka on

Pathan returned to end the

The fluent stroke-maker pulled

after a lot of promise.

Kapali wasted a good start.

of new attacks by militants if they don't pull their troops out of Iraq.

In violence Wednesday, a car bomb went off in eastern Baghdad, killing at least three people and wounding one, witnesses said.

New clashes between U.S. forces and insurgents in a residential area near the city of Ramadi killed five Iraqis and wounded 17 others, said Dr. Mohammed Ali of Ramadi emergency hospital. Some of the casualties occurred when a U.S. military helicopter attacked a building in the area near Ramadi, 70 miles west of

The U.S. death toll as counted by The Associated Press reached 900 with the report by Maj. Neal O'Brien of the 1st Infantry Division, who said the bomb killed the American soldier shortly after midnight during a patrol in a Bradley fighting vehicle in Duluiyah, 45 miles north of

Car bomb kills 3 in eastern Baghdad

AP, Bagdad

A car bomb went off in eastern Baghdad on Wednesday, killing at east three people, witnesses said.

Associated Press Television News footage showed at least three bodies covered in sheets, including one that was dismembered by the blast.

At least one person was wounded by the explosion, which occurred about 5:30 p.m. in the al-Jadida

The sedan used in the attack was reduced to a charred skeleton without a roof, but the force of the blast seemed to have been confined to the narrow alley-like road where the car blew up. An unexploded artillery shell lay on the street.

possessing a time-expired licensed

mechanisms and funds for imple-

mentation of Saarc programmes

Bangladesh will also host a min-

isterial meeting on implementation

of the Saarc Convention on

Terrorism and its Additional

The council decided to confer the

first ever Saarc Award on late presi-

dent Ziaur Rahman in recognition of

his vision and initiative for the

establishment of the regional entity.

Also, the foreign ministers

decided to appoint Ambassador

Lyonpo C. Dorji of Bhutan as the

next secretary general of Saarc from

March 1, 2005. He will succeed

Ambassador QAMA Rahim of

The council accepted the

Foreign Minister M Morshed

Khan had bilateral meetings with his

counterparts from Sri Lanka,

Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal on

They discussed important bilat-

eral issues and exchanged views on

regional and international issues of

mutual concern. Khan is scheduled

AL complains

commission today for flouting

electoral and government service

rules. An election inquiry commit-

tee, formed following an another AL

allegation, primarily found the

government officials to have been

working for alliance candidate

The AL in yesterday's complaint

illeged the two high government

officials are forcing the subordinates

of their directorates to campaign for

directorate and teachers of primary

schools under the primary educa-

tion directorate are being asked to

work to ensure victory of the alliance

Rahmat Ali told The Daily Star

resterday the government wants to

ig the polls and it has been violating

to bag the set by any means and they

are applying all unlawful methods

after realising that people will reject

Rahmat said people would lose

heir confidence in the commission

if such unlawful activities of govern-

ment officials continued and if they

them in the by-polls," he said.

"The BNP high-ups are desperate

candidate", said the complaint.

electoral rules for long.

go unpunished.

"Field workers of the agriculture

Abdul Mannan.

the sidelines of the meeting.

Bangladesh offer to hold its 26th

session in Dhaka January 7-8, 2005.

Bangladesh.

13th Saarc

Iwo cases filed FROM PAGE 1

Most shops after two cases were filed by his wife

small businesses. and daughter-in-law under Woman "The strike was completely successful...we will hold a meeting and Child Repression Prevention today to decide on the next Meanwhile, Tejgaon police filed programmes," Delwar Hossain, an arms case against Golandaj for

oint convenor of the Parishad, told The Daily Star yesterday.

President of Bangladesh Dokan Malik Samity (shop owners' association of Bangladesh) Amir Hossain Khan, who termed the strike 'meaningless' to a section of press earlier,

said all the members observed the Members of Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association took out a procession and submitted and projects were discussed.

Bangladesh will also host their demands to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) chairman yester-

The NBR chairman assurance the association leaders of discussing their demands in future.

The minimum annual VAT for shops in the capital is Tk 4,200 and an additional 15 percent for higher income. According to the shop owners' organisation, there are 200,000 shops in Dhaka.

The government introduced VAT 1991 for different businesses, which in 1997 was extended to the

Rab's midnight raid

and London.

the exam.

FROM PAGE 12 team of the elite anti-crime force, armed with automatic weapons, crept onto the first floor of the fourstory building and entered the house breaking open a door. The colonel's 13-year-old son

and his daughter, who were watching television in the room, got so frightened that they ran away shutting the other door of the room. The Rab men also broke open that door and kicked on the door of the room where Sirajul Islam and his wife were

A terrified Sirajul did not open the door fearing that robbers had entered his house but he contacted over phone DOHS security section, Cantonment Board and Kafrul Police Station. The Rab men threatened them with dire consequences if they did not open the door.

Meanwhile, the other Rab men sealed off all alleyways around the house and confined DOHS guards at

The three Rab men then went to the second floor of the building where a garment office is situated Then they went to the third floor. and as soon as a Pakistani national residing there, Shahed, opened the door they knocked him down and handcuffed him as his wife and two small kids watched with horror.

Shahed, a businessman, has been residing at the flat for the last nine years and he had returned from Pakistan on the same day after a holiday

The family members failed to understand why this was happening till Islam's former colleagues gathered in front of the house and informed them about the Rab oper-

A police sub-inspector from Kafrul Police Station visited the house yesterday.

Sirajul went to Kafrul police but they allegedly refused to record any case or general diary. He however

left a complaint on the desk of the

duty officer at about 12:30pm. A senior police official told newsmen the officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station had informed him about the incident at 4:00pm yesterday. He also said the 'victim' did not file any complaint.

The colonel's wife told The Daily Star yesterday the incident shows how faulty are the information they (Rab men) act on.

Sirajul said the team members later apologised and said they had made a mistake due to a wrong address.

He protested the incident and demanded an investigation into it and sought compensation for the damages caused.

The commissioner of Dhaka Metropoltan Police said it was matter with the Rab and that he knew nothing. He also declined to comment on police refusal to record a

The Rab in a press release last night said Lt. Commander Shahed led several teams of Rab men in carrying out an operation in new DOHS on information that three listed criminals were hiding in a

The armed miscreants managed to flee from the house due to direct and indirect help from the house owner. Had he (owner) helped the Rab team, they could be arrested,

the press release said. It also said the house owner made undesirable comments on the Rab action in a private television

channel. The Rab team arrested six young girls and five men in the operation, the release added.

Natwar, Kasuri talk

FROM PAGE 12 Natwar Singh, on his first visit to Pakistan as foreign minister, and his counterpart Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri were expected to touch on the 56-year-old territorial dispute over Kashmir, the thorny issue at the heart of their rivalry and the cause of

two of their three wars, and to review

the progress of resumed dialogue. Dialogue between Pakistan and India was reborn after a 30-month hiatus at an earlier regional summit in Islamabad in July, when President Pervez Musharraf and then Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee struck a landmark agreement to restart talks on all issues including

Kashmir.

Since then the South Asian foes have held two rounds of talks on peace and security, including confidence-building measures and Kashmir.

Those talks resulted in a joint pledge to "continue the sustained and serious dialogue to find a peaceful, negotiated final settlement" of the Kashmir dispute.

Singh vowed on his arrival in Islamabad Monday to "take the peace process further," saying he had brought with him "a message of goodwill" from the Indian govern-

Pakistan's Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat told the opening of the regional summit Tuesday that his government was committed to making peace with India. "Pakistan has under the leader-

ship of President Musharraf embarked on making meaningful efforts to overcome all differences and disputes with India including

A spokesman for the Indian High Commission in Islamabad said Singh, a former envoy to Pakistan, was paying a "courtesy call" on

"It is a courtesy call on the sidelines of the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit by the foreign minister of India on the foreign minister of Pakistan," the spokes-The two sides' foreign secretaries

met on Monday to lay the ground for the ministers' talks. They discussed progress in confidence-building neasures and a proposed bus service between their respective zones in Kashmir, Pakistan's foreign secretary Riaz Kokhar said. Six other rounds of talks have

been scheduled from July 28, starting with two days of talks in amabad on a controversial dam on the Jhelum river, which is sourced in Indian-ruled Kashmir but feeds Pakistan. Three rounds of talks are slated

for the first week of August in New Delhi, followed by talks on terrorism and drug trafficking in Islamabad August 10 to 11 and economic talks on August 11-12.

Kashmir, divided between India and Pakistan and claimed in full by both, caused two of their three wars and nearly triggered a fourth conflict in 2002.

Relations began to thaw in April last year after Vajpayee's offer of dialogue and both countries embarked on reciprocal confidence

Armed Forces Div

FROM PAGE 1 Kamal Uddin Siddiqui and Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Haq made the claims in their replies to a July 12 HC rule, which are to be submitted to

the court by today.

The rule was served on them for their alleged violation of a July 29 HC order. The HC directed them and two other officials to deploy the necessary number of army personnel at each polling centre on the election day of Dhaka-10 prestige

TH Khan, lawyer for the respon-dents, told The Daily Star last night the affidavits of the replies of the two secretaries were completed on Tuesday. He added these have been sent to the lawyer for Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh candidate Abdul Mannan who filed the contempt petition against four top government officials for violation of the HC directive on army deployment.

MK Rahman, the lawyer for the petitioner, acknowledged receipt of the replies and observed the top government officials cannot duck their responsibility for army deployment since they exercise executive power of the state. If they want to duck responsibility, then they would have to say in clear terms who are the people responsible for the contempt of court.

Two other respondents -- Home Secretary Omar Farooq and Acting Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division at the Prime Minister's Office Brigadier General Iftekhar Illias Rasul -- are yet to send their replies to Mannan's lawyer till vesterday

The HC will hear the case on July

Quoting the rules of business, Kamaluddin Siddiqui said, "The responsibility for deployment, control and coordination of the Armed Forces in aid (of) civil power lies with the Armed Forces Division (AFD) and accordingly, the official files/papers emanating from the AFD is directly dealt with and never through Principal Secretary/ Secretary/ any other officer of PM's

"That the Principal Secretary,

PM's office has nothing whatsoever to do with the deployment, control and coordination of armed forces in aid (of) civil power; that indeed, it is not neither his work nor (is) he supposed to know anything about (it), "Siddiqui contended.

He claimed that he was not responsible for the army deployment and that he was not involved for committing contempt of court for disobedience of the June 29 HC The defence secretary, also

quoting the rules of business, said, deployment of armed forces in aid (of) civil power is the responsibility of the Armed Forces Division, not the Ministry of Defence." ...It is abundantly clear that the

secretary, Ministry of Defends is in no way responsible, nor has he any jurisdiction over deployment of armed forces and as such the question of contempt of court by the secretary, Ministry of Defence does not wise, "his reply said, denying the allegation of his committing contempt of court which he termed motivated and unfounded.

The High Court bench of Justice Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Zinat Ara issued the contempt rule on July 12 on the four government officials and asked them to submit their replies in 10 days.

It also asked the Election Commission (EC) to submit a report on whether army personnel were deployed at each polling centre in line with its directive. Sources said the EC has prepared the report and would submit it today.

UP chairmen

an end to 'intervention' by lawmakers in development work, specifying duties of female UP members and direct block allocation of funds for the UPs in Annual Development ogramme. UP chairmen and members from

different parts of the country were present at the press conference held at China-Bangladesh Friendship

HC asks govt

Justice MA Matin and Justice Tarik-Ul-Hakim passed the rule on a writ petition filed by opposition political parties and civil society members on July 19, challenging the new constitutional provision for 45 reserved seats for women in the Jatiya

The respondents are to reply to the rule in three weeks.

The court will simultaneously hear the matter and a pending, similar writ petition, which eight women-rights activists filed on June 20 and obtained a court ruling. Lawyers for the petitioners told

court that the election manifesto of the ruling BNP before the last general election pledged to introduce direct election for women and increase the number of reserved seats for them. But it did not live up to the promise, which amounts to cheating people and breaching the constitution

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam and Barrister Tania Amir moved for the petitioners while Deputy Attorney General Adilur Rahman Khan opposed the move. Prof Rehman Sobhan of CPD, Dr

Anisuzzaman, educationalist, Awami League lawmakers Advocate Rahmat Ali and Asaduzzaman Noor, Jatiya Party lawmaker Anwar Hossain Manju, Hasanul Hague Inu. JSD, Fazle Hossain Badsha of the Workers Party, Ayesha Khanam of Mahila Parshad, Prof Jahanara

Haque of Women for Women, Shireen Akhter of JSD, Rekha Chowdhury of Mahila Parishad, Mahbuba Begum, of BAWSE, Rekha Saha of Steps Towards Development, Farida Khanam of Mahila Muktijoddha Sangsad and Advocate Momtaz Begum filed the petition. The petition said the 14th

amendment to the constitution, which parliament passed on May 16 introducing 45 reserved seats in the House for women, goes against the fundamentals of the constitution.

The provision for reserved seats will be effective for 10 years from the first sitting of the next parliament.

The incumbent parliament will also have reserved seats as the 14th amendment inserted a sub-article in the fourth schedule of the constitution to this effect. However, election to the reserved seats is yet to be held, as the government has not enacted the law.

Sonali Bank

FROM PAGE 1

principal branches of Sonali Bank, directing them to immediately reduce classified loans by 25 per-

The letter also directed Sonali's management to increase cash earnings, including fees and commissions, and cut bank costs by at

High cholesterol key to drugmaker

REUTERS, New York

profits

Pfizer Inc. yesterday posted solid quarterly earnings on surging sales of cholesterol treatment Lipitor, while results of rivals Merck & Co. and Schering-Plough Corp. were hurt by increased competition for

keydrugs.

Merck and Schering-Plough are awaiting imminent approval for a new cholesterol treatment that combines their two drugs and should spark a reversal of fortune.

Wyeth reported strong second-quarter sales growth from its key drugs for depression and ulcers, despite the ongoing litigation from its recalled diet drugs that has forced it to set aside more than \$16 billion in liability reserves.

Overseas, Roche's profit nearly

doubled on strong cancer drug

Shares of all five companies rose on Wednesday, with Wyeth enjoying the biggest boost -- a3 percent gain.
"There's a sigh of relief today on Wall Street that there were no major

disappointments among the drugmakers that reported earnings," said David Moskowitz, an analyst for Friedman, Billings, Ramsey. Demonstrating that cholesterol

is king in the current pharmaceutical climate, Pfizer said sales of Lipitor -- the world's top-selling drug -- rose 17 percent to \$2.36 billion for the quarter.

Merck's cholesterol drug, Zocor, had sales of \$1.4 billion but grew at a slower rate than Lipitor.

Merck and Schering-Plough expect approval -- possibly as soon as this week -- for a new cholesterol tablet that combines Zocor with newer Zetia in a single pill. Wall Street believes the new drug,

Vytorin, will eventually reach annual sales of up to \$8 billion, providing much-needed good news for Schering-Plough and insurance for Merck as it faces the loss of Zocor patent protection in 2006.

Over 2cr live

FROM PAGE 1 situation improves.

Passengers from Dubai, London and New York, bound for Sylhet, will be brought to the northeastern district via Dhaka by alternative arrangement, a civil aviation official

Another 25 people drowned or died of diarrhoea in the last one week in different districts, spiking the death toll to 118 since the beginning of monsoon blamed for the delage in two other South Assin countries India and Nepal. Neither An 8-year-old girl drowned

slipping down into the water from a raft near Bhuiyarmura in Jakiganj upazila in Sylhet. The authorities put the Kaptai dam and Chittagong port on high

alert as the river waters are swelling by the day. Rail links between seven northern and northeastern districts and the capital remained snapped and

cut off yesterday. Army and paramilitary personnel have been deployed in northern districts to streamline the relief operations, but the relief is much inadequate, our correspondents reported from different districts.

Low-lying areas in and around the capital, especially on its eastern fringe, are reeling under water. The flawed drainage and sewerage system already full of water prevents stagnated rainwater receding from lanes and by-lanes.

A storm damaged at least 1,500 houses on Tuesday night and more than two lakh people there are affected by food and drinking water

At least 12 people drowned in floodwaters in 10 upazilas in Netrokona in a week. Thousands of flood-hit people started shifting from swamped areas to town and other safer places. At least seven people died in boat

capsize on the ever-rising rivers or from snakebites in Habiganj.

Thousands of people hit by flooding in the wake of breaching a flood control dam in Dhunat upazila in Bogra did not get any relief in the last seven days.

The water levels in the rain-fed rivers are climbing in Pabna, one of the worst-hit areas. Five people went missing and 60 others were injured as a storm lashed Vangura

A one-year-old child drowned in floodwaters in Sherpur on Tuesday.

House-owners

with the businessmen of Old Dhaka during the business strike. The businesspeople convened the meeting to discuss the current row

over Vat with the mayor. Witnesses said the agitating house owners shouted at the city father that he should develop the services before raising the holding tax. They consider self-assessment of holding tax as a ploy for an unjustified raise.

'Now I give Tk 900 as holding tax. If the latest bid is imposed, it will raise the amount to Tk10, 000," said one of the landlords.

As the protesters tried not to allow Khoka to proceed, police went into action to clear the roadblocks. The law enforcers also picked up five agitators from the scene. Police and personal staff of the

mayor, however, said the procession was brought out by main opposition Awami League and they tried to create a situation knowing that Khoka would take that way.

Holding tax assessment

FROM PAGE 12 holding will assess municipal taxes himself and the city corporation will

Khoka said, "The reassessment of holding tax through self assess-ment system will help the house owners escape harassment and will reduce corruption. The assessment form is simply designed so that the owners can fill it up easily. Around 1,500 volunteers have also been deployed to reach the forms to every holder and collect the filled up

forms from door to door." The mayor said the DCC has not imposed any new tax and there is no ground to fear that the selfassessment system would increase holding taxes, as the reassessment is mainly aimed at bringing the newlyconstructed houses under the holding tax net.

He said thousands of new houses were constructed in the last 14 years, but the DCC has no accurate statistics on the number of new holdings and assessment of their exact tax

Besides, thousands of buildings were reconstructed and renovated in the period, from which too the DCC is not getting actual amount of tax due to lack of assessment, Khoka

The mayor admitted that the city corporation has for long been being deprived of a considerable amount of tax revenue due to corruption of a section of its officials.

On the campaign against the reassessment of holding tax through self-assessment system, Khoka said the reassessment has no connection with any government body. "In the last two and a half years, we have increased services for the city dwellers and want to further expand our services. That is why we need the reassessment," the mayor explained.

Khoka said the DCC earned around Tk 125 crore in last fiscal as holding tax and hoped it would be more than Tk 200 crore after the reassessment.

week ultimatum to the DCC to

ALULTIMATUM The main opposition, Awami League (AL), yesterday gave a one-

IS body

FROM PAGE 12

navy headquarters. Army officials also expressed ignorance about the issue saying the navy high officials would talk about it in detail. The navy chief was not

present at the meeting.

The Jatiya Sangsad body also discussed the activities of the Ordnance Company and recommended that the government modernise and diversify it to meet the demand of small arms and ammuni-

Commandant of the Ordnance Company Major General Jiban Kanai Das presented a report on its present situation at the meeting also attended by committee members Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Reazaul Bari Deena, Samsul Alam Pramanik, Syed Eskander and Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Hasan Mashud

tem for reassessing holding tax and threatened with tough agitation programmes, including hartal, siege and road blockade if its demand was not met by the deadline.

Dhaka City Unit AL President Mohammad Hanif alleged the new system is a complicated one and nothing but a scheme to increase taxes, adding it will also cerate new

avenues of corruption. "It will badly affect thousands of tenants, as the house owners will be compelled to increase rents in proportion to the rise in holding

tax," Hanif predicted. At a news conference at the Bangabandhu Avenue office of AL, the former DCC mayor said AL would hold opinion exchange meetings with professional bodies and social organisations from today to July 27 to arrive at a consensus on the issue and consolidate people's

voice against the new system. The party will organise a citizen rally on July 28. "From that rally, we will announce fresh agitation programme if the authorities ignore our demand," Hanif added.

AL leaders told the newspersons that instead of increasing earning of the city corporation the system would create more scopes for corruption, as it is too complicated a

way to fix taxes. 'Many of the house owners are unable to understand the complicated self-assessment form and are running to lawyers and city corporation officials just for filling up those," Hanif said, claiming, "Even I who was the mayor of the city for eight years have failed to comprehend the form".

Dhaka City AL General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury was present at the conference.

Westmont

FROM PAGE 12 June 30, would reach Chittagong

Port outer anchorage by July 30. "We hope to install the plant at Baghabari within two months of its reaching Bangladesh," he added. The government also has given

the joint venture company nod to set up two more units, which will generate another 170-MW electricity. Westmont on March 28 signed agreements with the Power Development Board and on May 22 with the government on import and installation of the third and fourth "In the second phase of the expansion, we will import two

chief said, adding, "After installing all the four plants, we will have a total production capacity of 340-MW electricity by December this According to the new agreements, the unit price of electricity produced by the new plants will be

plants in September," the Westmont

Tk 1.63, he said, which was Tk 2.35 for the power produced by the first plant. Westmont began its operations with a 90-MW production capacity

on June 26, 1999. Faruque said the investment of the company at present stands at \$100 million, which will rise to \$250 million with commissioning of the

Media men slam

said the government is contemplating to enact a policy to restrain satellite TV channels transmitting programmes, which is undesirable in the context of the country's social norms and religious values.

"Information ministry officials

are working on the issue to control satellite channels, which air obscene programmes, "he added. Some journalists alleged that a number of satellite channels, including some Indian ones, are transmitting late night programmes

contrary to social and religious "The sky is open and it is difficult to control," the information minis-

ter commented. The government is considering piracy check in films and tightening film censorship rules. Although the piracy issue falls under the jurisdiction cultural affairs ministry, both ministries are working together to resolve the issue, he said.

On another question, the minister said the government would allow more TV channels and radio stations The government may also allow

radio channels for information on traffic situation in the capital, he added. On the recent killing of journalist Humayun Kabir Balu in Khulna, the information minister said the gov

ernment provided security for Balu

as per his desire but later on he

discontinued police protection.

"The government has asked all DC's and SPs (deputy commissioners and superintendents of police) to provide security if any journalist asks for it," he told media people.

The minister said police had so far arrested 11 people in connection with the Balu killing and the charge sheet would be filed as soon as the investigation is completed.

Among others, Information Secretary AMM Nasir Uddin, Principal Information Office Khandaker Manirul Alam, Director General of BTV AKM Mustafizur Rahman, Director General of Bangladesh Betar Jafar Ahmed Chowdhury, were present at the press conference.

Underscoring the need for a

concerted effort to successfully

tackle this year's flood, he also

stressed the need to work out a

strategy for a permanent solution to

Oikya Mancha calls

FROM PAGE 12 establish a violence- and corrup-

tion-free state. He welcomed a similar call by Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh chief AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury for an all-party unity to tackle the flood that is taking a turn for the worse by the day. Dr Kamal said the state should employ all its resources to save people from drowning in flood-

waters and dying of hunger. Millions of endangered people are passing their days without foods, pure drinking water and waterborne diseases are spreading fast among them, he said, adding relief materials are very meagre compared to the

Asking the government to allo-cate adequate relief, he suggested deployment of defence personnel for orderly distribution.

"Preparation should be taken now to rehabilitate the affected people, especially the farmers, after recession of floodwaters," he said.

Demanding formation of a national committee to decide and implement an emergency and a long-term national plan, he said, "Since Bangladesh lies in the downstream, it is impossible to work out such solution without regional cooperation."

Condemning some government officials' attempt to portray media coverage of the flood as imaginary, he asked them to show sympathy and work for millions of distressed Oikya Mancha leaders Saifuddin

Ahmed Manik, Mahfuzul Islam Khan, Abul Kashem, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Zahirul Islam and Abdur Rouf were also present in the press conference.