Mystery lingers around Yasser Arafat's death

The Pails Star

REUTERS, PARIS

What killed Yasser Arafat? It's a mystery that could keep the . rumour mill churning and fuel con-

spiracytheories for years to come. Internet Web sites are spilling over with speculation that Arafat, who died in a French hospital on Thursday, had anything from stomach cancer or a rare blood disorder to AIDS - an idea ridiculed by Palestinian officials.

A top Hamas official, who was poisoned by Israeli agents but survived, accused Israel of poisoning Arafat -- a theory which his private doctor did not rule out despite being discounted by the Palestinian foreign

Hopes of the riddle being solved

The French chief doctor who announced Arafat's death in the early hours of Thursday is bound by privacy laws invoked by Arafat's widow which preventhim releasing details.

there is still no diagnosis, and medically it is known that when there is no diagnosis, the doctors carry out an autopsy," Ashraf al-Kurdi, a Jordanian doctor who treated Arafat for a quarter of a century, told Reuters in the West Bankon Friday.

"I ask for an investigation into the investigation to find out why he died," said Kurdi, who had apparently felt squeezed out after Arafat was transferred to Paris.

Asked about suggestions that Arafat had been suffering from a rare blood cancer, he said: "What is this? I still don't rule out that Arafat was poisoned.

Arafat, 75, was flown from the West Bank to Paris on Oct 29 suffering from stomach pains, diarrhoea and vomiting. He had blood and urine tests,

Aides quoted doctors saying he had weight loss and a low count of platelets, blood cells which help the blood clot. They said the doctors

quicklyruled out leukaemia. The aides eventually said Arafat had gone into a coma, suffered a brain hemorrhage and lost the use of his vital organs one by one, but did not say what illness caused this.

Ruling out cancer or poisoning, Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath said in Paris on Tuesday that doctors had not identified the illness but: "Weknowwhat it is not."

Medical experts who have not seen the results of the tests on Arafat have speculated that he might have had a condition such as a form of cancer where the body consumes the platelets, or chemical toxicity as a result of a

rare blood condition. Palestinian leaders could whip up anti-Israeli sentiment by continuing to suggest Israel was partly responsi-ble for Arafat's death by keeping him trapped in his West Bank headquar-

"The doctors by and large favour the explanation that his age, his difficult life, the last 3-1/2 years incarcer-ated in a very small office which had very little oxygen and a very bad sanitary situation, under siege by the Israeli army, contributed to a variety of

digestive tract ailments," Shaath said. The militant Islamic group Hamas could continue citing the rumour of poisoning to discredit peace moves

Israel by killing Arafat is sending a clear message to Palestinians and Arabs that this will be the fate of whoever rejects a settlement according to Israeli conditions," said Hamas political leader Khaled Meshaal, who himself was poisoned by Israeli agents in 1997 in Jordan but survived after an embarrassed Israel provided an

Eid tomorrow

Thursday, which was a public holiday, followed by weekend yesterday and a four-day Eidholiday from today.

In Dhaka, shopping centres and shopping malls were crowded with Eid shoppers yesterday as on the last

fewdays.
President lajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, in separate messages yesterday, extended warmest greetings and heartiest felicitations to the people of the country and to all heads of state and government of Muslim countries on the occasion of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina also issued separate message greeting the people on the eve of the

home this morning from Saudi Arabia, will exchange Eid greetings with people from all walks of life including political leaders and workers, professionals and senior civil and military officials at the Prodhanmontri Bhaban from 11am to 12noon on the

Khaleda will also exchange Eid greetings with diplomats and other guesis from 10:15 am to 11am at Jamuna Guest House at Hare Road on

In Dhaka, the main Eid congregation will be held at the National Eidgah at 8:30 am or at Baitul Mokarram mosque in case of inclement weather. There will be separate arrangement

The first Eid congregation at Dhaka University Central Mosque will be held at 8:30am and the second one at 9:30. Besides, congregations will be held at Salimullah Hall at 8:15am and at Shāhidullah Hall at 8:30am.

The national flag will be hoisted at offices. The main streets and road islands from Dhaka Gate at Banani to the Bangabhaban will be decorated with flags imprinted with 'Eid

Mubarak' both in Bangla and Arabic. Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television will air special programmes on the occasion of the Eid.

Newspapers brought out special Special diets will be served in government-owned

children and shelter homes, socially handicapped and vagabond welfare centres and shelter homes for destitute people, said a press note.

Seminars and discussions will be held highlighting the significance of

underprivileged children on the day. Cultural functions, friendly foot-

ball matches and the Eid gatherings of children will also be held across the

Divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners, thana nirbahi officers and officials of local government bodies will organise the programmes

Hepatitis cases

diagnosed in different diagnostic

Experts said the most common hepatitis infection is hepatitis B which can pose a threat to life in about 10 per cent of the cases of chronic infection.

Sources at a leading diagnostic centre in the capital reported about one third of the suspected cases of infection referred to their centre were found positive for hepatitis A and B.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMUH), more than 200 patients were diagnosed mostly with hepatitis A and B in the last two weeks.

Over 80 patients with typical symptoms of the infection -- abdominal discomfort, nausea and vomiting, mild fever and fatigue -- are now being treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Shaheed Suhrawardi Hospital,

2 killed, 50 hurt

FROM PAGE 12 Fazal; Syeed Mollah, 45, of Alinagar Garpara village; Malek, 40, of Char Garpara village; Suvaton, 60; Nurjahan, 40; Laljan, 60; Jamena, 50; Surupjan, 45; Sajia, 60; Chan Baru, 55; Sajeda, 50; Awlad, 50 and

Moynal and Sujon were moved to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical conditions.

About two thousands people, most of them women, had gathered in front of the gate of the house for Jakat saree at about 6:30 am. As the gate was opened later, they rushed and scrambled to go inside, creating the stampede, police and inmates of

BIRDEM hospital and Mitford Hospital have also reported treating patients with the viral infection. Some of the patients have chronic

infection (suffering for over six

Moreover, a number of patients with acute infection were admitted to different private hospitals including Bangladesh Medical College Hospital, Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, Samorita Hospital and Comfort Nursing Home in the past two weeks.

An expert pointed out many patients infected with hepatitis A, B or Cviruses have few or no symptoms

Incidence of hepatitis B is the highest among the younger generation, the hospital reports show.

According to the Liver Foundation of Bangladesh, an estimated 7- 10 per cent or 9.1 to 13 million people in Bangladesh carry hepatitis B virus but all of them may not develop the disease until the virus turns active from its incubation period that can last one year to several years.

Life threat

Justice Faisal Mahmud Fayezee and 110 other lawyers published in the daily Bhorer Kagoj on October 30

Samaresh filed a general diary with the Kotwali Police Station. CUJ (Chittagong Union of

Journalists) leaders in a statement last evening strongly condemned the threat and asked the administration to identify and punish the

Extortion peaks FROM PAGE 1 he did not pay up Tk 2 lakh in tolls

demanded a few days earlier.

A physician who practises in Mirpur Section-1 said on condition of anonymity he had to pay Tk 20,000 to local musclemen facing a threat of dire consequences if he did not come up with the sum. Businessmen and shopowners of

Farmgate area alleged some local leaders of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, the youths' front of ruling BNP, had been sending their cadres or making phone calls demanding tolls. On an average, they charged a business house Tk 5,000 to 'meet their Eid expenses'.

"I closed my office two days before the scheduled vacation as they started to make repeated phone calls asking an Eid-toll of Tk 5,000," said an executive of a private firm seeking anonymity. "I don't know what they will do when I open my office after the Eid;" the man really was a little scared.

Former operatives of underworld kingpin Pichchi Hannan, who was killed on August 7 in 'crossfire' during an operation of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), have been squeezing tolls harder from the businesses at Karwan Bazar throughout Ramadan, a number of traders told The Daily Star. The band has lately been commanded by a new chief, Masud, with a man named Badal as his right-hand man.

"I paid Tk 35,000 to Masud and Badal after they had threatened to kill me on my way back home," said a trader of the market preferring not to be named.

Toll collectors employed by police widely known as 'linemen' have also been charging additional money on occasion of the Eid, alleged hawkers of Gulistan area, who claim to pay regular tolls to police for doing business on foot-

"Normally I pay them Tk 150 a day, but now, ahead of the Eid, the linemen charge me Tk 300," said Mohammad Miraj, who sells clothes on the footpath along Bangabandhu Avenue. He said there are more than 1,000 hawkers like him in the area, who have to pay 'protection money' to both police and mafiosi.

Kala Jahangir

sister Khadija Begum, adding that Monir was taken to the Detective Branch (DB) office later for interro-

Members of Cheetah and Cobra, both comprising DB personnel, took him to Kafrul area at 1:30am yesterday 'to arrest criminals'. The criminals opened fire on

them, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate, a Dhaka Metropolitan Police press release said. "Monir received bullet injuries

and the Cheetah and Cobra men seized a 7.62 bore revolver and two bullets from his possession," said the press release.

Later Cheetah and Cobra men handed over Monir's body to Kafrul Police Station.

Kafrul police Sub-Inspector Abul Kashem took him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead at

Two separate cases -- one for possessing illegal firearms and the other for police assault -- were filed against Monir with Kafrul Police

Meanwhile, Monir's sister said they would file a murder case against Cheetah and Cobra men after receiving his body on completion of autopsy today.

BTTB acts

service quality of BTTB, Post and Telecommunications Minister M Aminul Haque said a few days ago, We will look into the matter and take necessary action if any subscriber complains."

Considering the BTTB's scenario, a substantial number of people and businesses now depend more on mobile telephony than land phone. The number of mobile phone subscribers is now four times the number of fixed phone users. While BTTB has less than nine lakh subscribers, more than 35 lakh people are now using mobile phone

One of the reasons why BTTB could not perform well is the lack of a corporate structure to run the show, industry sources said.

In January last year, the government formed a committee for restructuring BTTB that recommended transforming the stateowned board into a public limited

But corporatisation of BTTB still remains a far cry due to legal hur-dles, complications in job descriptions and lack of systematic inventory and accounts of its assets and

Besides, lack of financial audit, fixation of tariff, and allocation and redistribution of human resources are the other major obstacles to making BTTB public.

Industry sources said BTTB as a corporate body would be able to provide telecommunications access to many more people. The country's main line per 100 inhabitants is now 0.34, which is the lowest in the South Asian region, which is 1.13 even in Nepal, 2.65 in India, 2.21 in Pakistan and 3.64 in Sri Lanka.

US claims controlling most of Fallujah

Fighting goes on in Mosul

US troops controlled most of Fallujah yesterday but were forced to confront rebels in Iraq's northern city of Mosul and officers said there were signs of insurgents resurfacing in other Sunni Arab strongholds across Iraq.

The officers said they feared that some militants fled Fallujah before the battle for the city started on Monday and are now in flashpoint areas such as Mosul, where a US soldier was shot dead on Thursday. On the fourth full day of the

battle for Fallujah, US tanks rolled through the entire city as thousands of US troops, backed by Iraqi soldiers, moved from house-to-house to root out pockets of insurgents. "What is left (to take), compara-

tively speaking, is a small piece of

what we started with," said marine spokesman Lieutenent Lyle Gilbert.

'We control it (Fallujah) in the sense that we are ever-present but it will still take some time to secure it," he told AFP, without giving a

As of Thursday evening, the US military said 18 US and five Iraqi soldiers had been killed and 178 US and 34 Iraqi troops wounded in the

At the same time, the military says more than 500 rebels have died. There are no clear figures on the number of civilian casualties. At least two-thirds of Fallujah's 300,000strong population is thought to have

In the face of the onslaught in Fallujah, some insurgents appear to have shifted elsewhere, with bomb-

left the cityahead of the fighting.

ings and other attacks being carried out across Sunni areas of central and northern Iraq. These attacks have prompted the authorities to impose

curfews in seven cities. In Mosul, US military operations to try to quell unrest continued on Friday after clashes during the week prompted the provincial governor to ask US forces for help.

The military said it launched air and ground attacks on Thursday during which one US soldier and several rebels were killed.

Three other towns also saw continued violence -- Ramadi, a Sunni rebel bastion 50 kilometres west of Fallujah, Hawija, another staunchly Sunni town in northern Iraq, and Samarra, which was retaken from insurgents in an offen-

Tribute to an undying flame

FROM PAGE 1
of the TV commentators pointed out, it amounted to asking Israel not to allow Jews from Russia or elsewhere not to come to Israel. It was far more significant than that, for the Jews from Russia or elsewhere were not driven out of their homes in Israel as the Palestinian refugees were from their homeland.

Yasser Arafat's greatest achievement was to turn his people who were dispersed all over the Middle East in refugee camps into a Nation. Under his leadership they could dream of having an independent state of their own and look forward to living there someday. He was also able to unify his people under one organisation -- The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) -and, most significantly, make the world recognise PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The ability to speak with one voice was most crucial for till that time several Arab countries, especially Jordan and Syria, also wanted to speak on behalf of Palestinians who lived in their territories.

In paying our tribute to Yasser Arafat we must remember that he had to navigate the PLO and the struggle of his people not only against Israel and the US but also against narrow parochial interests of many Arab countries. We recall here the massacre of the Palestinians in the hands of Jordanian troops forcing the PLO to move its headquarters away from Jordan and into Beirut. Later after Israel attacked Beirut he had to shift to Tunisia for a while. Several Arab countries used the Palestinian cause for their own

Egypt's director of intelligence, tried to emerge from the helicopter, but

were kept back by the huge, chaotic

Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat, who traveled in the Egyptian

military helicopter with Arafat's

coffin. "At the same time, we had to

do the burial before sunset in Islamic

tradition. ... I expected much better,

more organised, but things got out of

The red, white, green and black

The failure of police to control the

pandemonium augured poorly for

Palestinian hopes to maintain calm

and order in the wake of Arafat's

Earlier, people burst through gates of the Muqata and climbed over

walls to pay their final respects to the

man who embodied their dreams of

As Arafat's helicopter landed, the

crowd cried out "Welcome, welcome

Abu Ammar!" using his nom de

guerre. "Welcome, welcome old

Armed policemen had tried for

several hours to keep people back,

but mourners, eager to get close to the gravesite, pushed their way

through. Police scrambled to keep

people off the landing pad. Buildings and windshields in the

West Bank and Gaza were plastered

with Arafat's photo and people

waved black and white scarves, the

colours of the late leader's Fatah

on rooftops, streets and apartment

balconies in hope of catching a glimpse of Arafat's helicopter. Barred from attending the burial, tens of

thousands of Gaza residents held rallies and symbolic funerals across

the strip. A small group of masked

gunmen marched into the Mugata,

ignoring calls from official Palestine

TV not to carry arms or mask faces, as

is common in Palestinian funerals

during times of crisis. However, the

gunmen calmly submitted to inspec-tion by plainclothes security person-

nel who ensured there were no bul-

The cooperation between mili-tants and policemen was a likely reflection of Palestinians desire for

lets in the chambers.

In Gaza City, hundreds gathered

flag was ripped off the casket as it was

hand, unfortunately."

statehood.

carried through the crowd.

"It is not what we expected," said-

Arafat laid to rest

held it as situation suited them. The Arab unity, on which so much depended as for the future of Palestine, proved elusive over time as leading Arab countries pursued their own independent agenda visa-vis the US. The disintegration of the Soviet Union was a severe blow for Arafat and the Palestinian cause as the socialist bloc was a constant supporter -- both in terms of resources and military hardware -for the PLO and its cause.

Arafat realised that with the emergence of the US as the sole superpower he had no alternative but to use its good offices for a negotiated peace with Israel. Thus the Oslo and Camp David peace accords followed. Arafat perhaps genuinely believed in the sincerity of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton as honest brokers but became disillusioned with them on the questions of East Jerusalem and return of the Palestinian refugees. In 1991 he made what can be termed the biggest mistake of his life when he sided with Saddam Hussain in supporting the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq. In one stroke he divided the Arab world many of whom withdrew their support of the PLO and Arafat himself. This also alienated him from many non-Arab Muslim countries that could not support occupation of Kuwait. He also lost a lot of support from Europe, that traditionally backed the Palestinian cause much

to the chagrin of the US. His worst days began with Ariel Sharon being elected as Israel's PM and George W. Bush becoming the President of US who gave the former a free hand to do whatever he

consensus in the wake of Arafat's

the Palestinians for four decades,

died Thursday at a Paris hospital

from an undisclosed illness that had

plunged him into a weeklong coma.

He had spent his final three years

confined to his Ramallah headquar-

ters never leaving out of fear the

onto the walls of the compound

chanting "Whoever poisoned Arafat,

we will drink his blood." Others cried

out, "Allahu akbar," Arabic for "God is

great," and "We want to see Abu

Rahim emerged from the compound

and asked the crowd to stop chant-

now on television and we have to

reflect our real picture," he said.

Top Arafat aide Tayeb Abdel

"The whole world is watching us

In Jerusalem, hundreds of

Palestinian youths scuffled with

Israeli police outside the al-Aqsa mosque -- the third holiest site in

Islam -- after police barred them from praying amid fear of riots and unrest during Arafat's funeral.

the sidelines of the burial, were on

their highest state of alert and can-

celed all leaves, worried that the

prayers for the last Friday of the holy

month of Ramadan, together with

mourning for Arafat, would get out of

Cairo, even though he never realised

more than 50 countries waited in a

red patterned tent as pallbearers

placed the coffin, draped in the black,

red, green and white Palestinian flag,

After a short procession, the coffin was loaded on to a helicopter for the

journey to Ramallah in the West

The service began amid heavy security with humble prayers at a

mosque in a military compound and

ended with the procession, his flag-

draped wooden casket set on a horse-

drawn gun carriage and followed by a

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah as well as Abbas and Farouk

Kaddoumi, the newly chosen leader

crowd of presidents and kings.

on the traditional gun carriage.

his dream of Palestinian statehood.

Egypt gave Arafat a state funeral in

Presidents and dignitaries from

Israeli police, ordered to stay on

Yesterday, teenage boys climbed

Israelis wouldn't allow him back in.

The 75-year-old Arafat, who led

Palestinians. Thus began his days of humiliation when he was literally held as a prisoner within his comcorruption and financial patronage.

Arafat. His passing away will no doubt create a vacuum that will be hard to fill. This is also the first time in four decades that enemies of Palestine have a chance to manipulate events to affect Palestinian unity importance that Palestinians and History, as we know, is always

written by the victors. In the case of Palestine and Yasser Arafat we are sure the battle is far from over. But given the stage in which we are now much will be written about Arafat by those who would have liked to see him dead much earlier than November 11, 2004. For them we would like to say Arafat may not have fulfilled his dream of an independent Palestinian state but he has been able to deeply implant that dream in the mind of his people and today or tomorrow that dream will be realised. The question is how much more blood will have to be spilled before that comes true.

freedom fighter, a patriot, a most devoted leader, and one who has pray for the Eternal Peace of his Soul.

of the Fatah organisation, were

among the dignitaries who marched

behind the casket on a residential

street a short distance toward a

military airfield. Doors and shutters

of homes along the route were closed,

and the street was cut off to the pub-

their rarely seen 9-year-old daughter,

Zahwa, wept as the Palestinian and

Egyptian national anthems were

played by a band before the casket

was loaded aboard an Egyptian

attended the Cairo ceremony were

Syrian President Bashar Assad,

Sultan Hasanal Bolkiah of Brunei,

South African President Thabo

Mbeki, European Union Foreign

Policy chief Javier Solana and Pope

Shenouda III, head of Egypt's Coptic

labeled Arafat an obstacle to peace,

sent Assistant Secretary of State

William Burns. Israel sent no delega-

King Abdullah of Jordan, Lebanese

President Emile Lahoud and

Zimbabwean President Robert

Bangladesh, Yemen and Indonesia

were also present, as were the prime

ministers of Turkey, Pakistan and

Sweden. Many countries including

France, Germany, Britain, Spain, and

tant for Palestinian identity than

their flag and their national anthem,"

said Terje Roed-Larsen, UN envoy for

the Middle East and a key player in

the talks that led to the 1993 Oslo

peace accord, in an interview to

Associated Press at the funeral ser-

He said he hoped the new

Before the chaotic scenes at the

Palestinian leadership would return

Muqata, workers raked sand to level

the ground as they laid gray marble

slabs around the base of tomb. The

Palestinians consider the gravesite a

temporary resting place for Arafat's

body until they can honour his

request to be buried in Jerusalem.

to peace negotiations with Israel.

"Yasser Arafat was more impor-

Iran sent their foreign ministers.

The presidents of Algeria,

The United States, which had

Other world leaders included

Among the dignitaries who

militaryhelicopter.

Orthodox Church.

Arafat's veiled widow, Suha, and

pound in Ramallah, isolated and nowerless. This was also the time he showed his vulnerability as an administrator and brought upon himself criticism of nepotism, More than 60 percent of the Palestinians are below the age of 40 and have known no other leader but

and leadership. Thus it is of utmost their leaders maintain their unity.

For us in Bangladesh Yasser Arafat has been and will remain a valiant sacrificed his life for the cause of his people. We salute his memory and

PM's letter to Chandrika BSS, Colombo

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday handed over a letter of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, inviting her to the 13th Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Summit to be held in Dhaka January 9-11.

pate in the summit. Later, the foreign minister met

Change of govt

FROM PAGE 1 threefold: to re-evaluate US-Bangladesh relationship after the Bush re-election, visiting Chittagong and, "We remain concerned about the direction of this country. I think overall the country is doing the right thing, but it must make progress in peace, stability, and law and order and

against corruption."

The US State Department functionary was speaking at a press brief-ing at the American Center before his departure for Washington at the end of the five-day trip.

POLITICAL CONCERNS Asked about his comments about a mid-term election, Patterson said, The constitution allows a change of government in the middle of its term, through such things as vote of no

Expressing his concern about the recent attacks on political programmes of Jatiyo Oikya Mancha attended by its leaders former President Badruddoza Chowdhury and Dr Kamal Hossain he said all political parties should be allowed to

Patterson also reiterated his concern over investigations into the August 21 grenade attacks on an Awami League rally in Dhaka, May 21 grenade attacks on the British high commissioner in Sylhet and the large arms hauls in the country, particularly the April 2 arms haul in Chittagong.

He said the US offers to help in the investigations were still on the table and Dhaka had sought assistance on a small scale only, when they asked for the help of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to probe the August 21 grenade attacks.

Easy answers to the problem are not enough, the answers to all the questions in the investigations must bè found in their fullest extent," he asserted, adding the issues had to be investigated by the fullest capability of

the country.
"We will not be satisfied until the real perpetrators are brought to justice," hesaid.

On corruption, he said if leaders at the top, especially in the government, do not do anything to curb corruption in the country, "then people get the message." But, he said, the government's promise to form an anticorruption bureau remains crucial andheislookingforward to it.

Patterson said not only military and economic assistance but the new Bush regime would also like to see how US 'brains' could contribute to any country in the world, adding, besides Iraq and Afghanistan, Bangladesh is one country that would attract keen

ON ECONOMIC . COOPERATION

On providing greater US market access to Bangladeshi goods, Patterson said, "I do believe the most important thing we could do for Bangladesh would be to allow greater market access...... We should try to do that. But I don't know the specifics of how to do that or what's the proper

FM hands over

During the meeting at the President House, the foreign minister briefed the Lankan president about preparations of the summit.The Lankan president accepted the invitation and expressed her keenness to partici-

his Lankan counterpart Lakshman Kadirgamar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They discussed the issues relating to the forthcoming

mechanism. I think it's something we can study more."

He also insisted that the US government has not been pushing specifically for a US company to develop a private port in Chittagong. It rather considers privatisation of Chittagong Port as crucial for Bangladesh's economy, he explained.

Underscoring the potentials of the port's regional location, Patterson said the impact of a modern and efficient port would be significant for the country's economy and any efforts for privatisation could be assisted by Asian, American or transnational financial institutions.

He was also of the opinion that any plan for a future deepsea port in Chittagong would be an excellent one and US assistance for that might come after careful consideration.

The US high official expressed disappointment at the lack of economic activities at a larger scale saying that not many major highways, bridges or other large infrastructure projects were undertaken here to facilitate a vibrant growth of small and medium industries.

He however said he was impressed with Bangladesh's moves against human trafficking and satisfied with what he had seen at a rehabilitation centre for rescued victims of women and children trafficking.
Stressing shared ideals between

Bangladesh and the US, he said both the countries have vibrant press, religious tolerance and numerous

Patterson informed the reporters that the number of student visas issued to Bangladeshis has gone up by 50 percent over the last two years, issuance of non-immigrant visas has also gone up and Bangladeshis account for the largest number of winners of the US Diversity Visa (DV)

He said, since the birth of Bangladesh, the US has given it \$4.5 billion in aid and assistance, has been the largest partner in bilateral trade and the biggest source of foreign private investment.

Kala Monir

they opened fire on them, prompting them to retaliate," said Akbar. Monir collapsed on the ground receiving four bullets in his legs, but his accomplices managed to flee.

Police found a Czechoslovakian

pistol loaded with two bullets and 250 rounds of .22 bore bullets after the 10-minute gunfight. Monir was admitted to Dhaka

Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and was being treated till filing of this report at 1:30am today. Bullet-hurt Mahbub and Humayun were admitted to

Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital Police said Monir and his gang were taking preparation for an operation. But, talking to The Daily Star Monir denied having any firearms or ammunition and said he went to Jurain to see his sister.

DU student

Rabbani, 17, son of Jalal Ahmed of Purba Kachhar village in Sadar upazila, died on the spot when a speeding truck hit the autorickshaw he was travelling in.

Four people were killed and eight

with a tempo on Laxmipur-Chaumohani road at Matabi in Sadarupazila yesterday. The dead are Liton, 25, Fancy, 15, Javed, 6, and Abul Kalam, 20.

others injured when a bus collided

The injured are undergoing treatment at a local hospital. Police seized the killer bus. In Jhenidah, a Dhaka University student was killed in a road accident

at Hamdoha bus stand in the town yesterday morning. Police and witnesses said Rajib. 25, a student of Accounting Department and son of traffic inspector Fazle Haque, now posted in Jhenidah, died on the spot when a speeding truck rammed his bicycle

Raiib went to Ihenidah to meet

his parents during the Eid vacation.

Police seized the truck, but its driver

at about 10:30am.

FROM PAGE 12 They said a section of the BNP bigwigs also lobbied to ensure a top position on the committee for L Rahman, president of BNP Dhaka

Nabi Solaiman, L Rahman and Sahabuddin organised a rally on October 24 under the banner of

death of Sahabuddin, followers of Pichchi Hannan went on hiding for the time being. But, some said they are still collecting 'protection money' from the bazaar in secret.

them, only a half or 11 markets—eight owned by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), two by private houses and one by Bangladesh Railways are legal. The rest include four fish markets on Railways land adjacent to Hotel Sonargaon, one on

few lakh taka a day in tolls from these markets. A big amount of hush money also goes to the dishonest government officials concerned so they do not create trouble for the illegal markets. Sources said around 10 gangs including the one once headed by

Karwan Bazar who, among other things, even abduct businessmen to force them to pay up.
"Hannan's chela (an accomplice) Badsha and two others kidnapped me at gunpoint and confined me to a room in July, a few days before Hannan was arrested. They demanded Tk 2 lakh from me. But I

Pichchi Hannan are active at

managed to buy freedom by paying only Tk 40,000," a vegetable ware-house owner told The Daily Star requesting anonymity. Over 300 businessmen had to wind up their business from Karwan Bazar since 1998 when the gang of Pichchi Hannan and four rival groups led by Saidul, Ali, Sobhan and Raipura Shailya started mugging, abductions and toll collection

Traders said since then at least seven traders were killed in their hands and on an average the mafiosi abducted five businessmen a day and collected huge ransom, adding after Hannan's death the situation improved a bit.

Karwan Bazar

'Committee against Criminal Activities and Toll Collection' at Karwan Bazar, which also raised a lot of eyebrows. Sahabuddin was killed four days later, on October 26, in another Rab 'crossfire'. Market sources said, after the

Karwan Bazar, stretching from Tejgaon Railway Station to Bangladesh Film Development Corporation gate, houses over 22 markets and 10,000 businesses. Of

the DCC children's park, three on public footpaths and four squatting on commercial plots.

Locals said the mafiosi collect a

Afajuddin, 60.