Cattle prices

FROM PAGE 1 of musclemen forcing cattle-loaded trucks to markets of their choice took place this year, unlike in the past.

During a visit to three cattle markets at Golapbagh, Kamalapur and Gandaria yesterday, the supply of Indian cattle was found to be lower than that of the previous years.

The prices of a medium-sized cow ranged from Tk 15000 to Tk 20,000 vesterday. Lessees of the makeshift market are to get five percent of the

At Kamalapur market, the seller demanded Tk one lakh seventy thousand for a bull and buyers offered up to Tk one lakh twenty five thousand. Interestingly, the seller offered a goat free of cost to one who would buy the

Owner of the bull and goat M Anisuzzaman from Chuadanga said, " The bull named Samrat and the goat named Saddam used to take feed together always. So, I decided to give away the goat with the bull free of

"I did not face any trouble on the way to Dhaka," said Anisuzzaman, who has brought 20 bulls and 100

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) selected 16 sites for makeshift

cattlemarketsthisyear.
These include the open spaces beside Armanitola playground, at Khilkhet Tanpara, Agargaon slum, Taltola bus stand, Banani-Kakoli railwaystation and Sector-12 in Uttara and near Alam Market at Postagola, Golapbagh ground, Rahamatganj playground, Dhupkhola ground, Hosseni Dalan Road, Kamalapur eastern ground of Bangladesh Bank Colony, Meradia Bazar, Jigatola-Hazaribagh playground, Sunrise Sporting Club ground and Rayer Bazar

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong reports: the cattle market in Chittagong has yet to witness a momentum in sales and purchases as expected by traders, especially those who brought high priced sacrificial animals from different parts of the country and also from India and

Badruddin Biswas from Jhenidah, who usually brings high quality and high-rated cattle to the markets of the port city before the Eid-ul-Azha, came here three days ago with 32 large cattle of 'Nepal Shah' breed. He looked disappointed yesterday at Sagarika cattle market as none of his cattle had "I've got no customers offering the

prices I expected far," he said in frus-Badruddin wanted Tk 1,20,00 for each of his cattle while buyers offered

Tk70,000 to Tk80,000. Another trader, Anwar Sowdagar, imported 10 camels from Rajasthan in India two days ago but he too couldn't

sellanyofthose A Sagarika market vesterday, a local trader sought Tk 60,000 to Tk 70,000 each for a camel but he found

stocks of DAP, MoP and TSP ran

short because they have not been

able to procure them during the last

thirty days, following the declara-

tion of a subsidy in the sector.

Instead they are still selling from

their old stock at previous non-

Following the approval of the fertiliser subsidy, the imported consignments of TSP, MoP and DAP

are being approved for subsidy-eligibility by the finance ministry.

Dhaka yesterday, Agriculture

Minister MK Anwar said a subsidy

proposal for 26 consignments of

18,000 metric tons of TSP and 52,000

metric tons of MoP has been sent to

the finance ministry and is expected

to be approved within the next two

different hats and bazars in the

Kurigram, Rangpur and

Lalmonirhat districts, enquiring about the rate of TSP, DAP and MoP

during the last few days. It was found

that MoP was being sold at between

This correspondent visited

Addressing a press conference in

subsidised rates.

Fertiliser still sells

Hasan Bepari from Comilla brought 20 'Hariyana' type cattle from Nepal two days ago but was unable to find any buyers. He was demanding Tk40,000 to Tk50,000 each.

A trader from Comilla, Shamsul Haque brought two big goats at Sagarika market on Tuesday and was seeking Tk 15,000 for each. Only one buyer yesterday offered Tk8,000.

Traders said however that well-off families would come to the markets on the day before the Eid and give their esaboost.

All of them were happy at the law and order this year. "We didn't face any extortionists or criminals yet," one of them said.

Prof Miah

FROM PAGE 1 man and other member over several decisions and steps including the inclusion of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) staffin the commis-

"Formation of the commission is a good step but you're obstructing its activities. Stop this," Prof Miah

quoted the caller as saying.

The former Dhaka University vice-chancellor said he could not realise whether the person was calling from Sweden or Dhaka.

"I invited him to my office for a talk today and waited for him all day long, but no-one turned up," Miah said yesterday. "I've learnt at the office today that one of the five Bac directors we asked to withdraw has relatives in Sweden," he added.

Meantime, ACC Commissioner Maniruddin Ahmed yesterday sat with four of the five directors and received a list of the corruption allegations under investigation. sat with them (directors) for

knowing everything as they may be withdrawn anytime," Maniruddin told The Daily Star.

On letters seeking the where-abouts of government vehicles of different projects under 22 minis-tries, he said, "After sending letters to 13 ministries, yesterday we approved sending letters to rest of the minis-

The planning ministry earlier informed the commission about 4,230 vehicles, which were purchased for various government projects under 35 ministries. The vehicles are being used for personal purpose on completion of the pro-Maniruddin said most of the nine

ministries who sent their reply earlier did not provide adequate informa-tion about the vehicles being mis-used. Four other ministries did not even reply to the commission's letter.

"We're again sending letters to them seeking complete information," he said, adding that the ministries will get 15 days to reply.

Former Bac director Lt Col MA Hannan Mridha, one of the five directors, has been tasked with

Khulna police hunt for suicide squad women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) started special drive to nab members of women suicide squad from Tuesday night.

We have already sent photos of nine women outlaws of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddho faction to all the police stations of Khulna division, a senior KMP official said.

Besides, two women outlaws of Rupsha upazila and two of Batiaghata upazila are being closely watched suspecting their secret connection with Janajuddho leaders.

Members of law enforcing agencies, journalists, some business tycoons of Khulna and political leaders are targets of the women suicide squad, police said quoting two arrested women outlaws Rashida

Hearing on the prayer for their seven-day remand will be held today. Women outlaws belonging to the newly formed suicide squad work on monthly salary drawn from the top Janajuddho leaders whose source of money is toll collection, KMP sources

Tsunami toll tops 226,000

REUTERS, Indonesia

The global death toll from the Asian tsunami shot above 226,000 vesterday after Indonesia's Health Ministry confirmed the deaths of tens of thousands of people previ-

ously listed as missing.

The ministry raised the country's death toll to 166,320. It had previously given a figure of 95,450 while Indonesia's Ministry of Social Affairs had put the death toll at around 115,000 before it stopped counting.

Dodi Indrasanto, a director at the health ministry's department of health affairs, said the new death total reflected the latest reports from the provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra, which were directly in the path of the killer tsunami spawned by a magnitude 9 earthquake the day after Christmas.

Rice denies she is Bush yes-womanono total

AFP, Washington

Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice denied yesterday she was a yes-woman for President GeorgeWBush and pledged to argue her case vigorously if she disagreed with him on foreign policy.

But Rice said on the second day of her Senate confirmation hearing that the government must ultimately speak to the world with a single voice and "we are one administration with the president in the

During her four years as Bush's national security adviser and one of his closest aides, Rice was accused by critics of blindly following his hardline policies in Iraq and elsewhere in Washington's war on ter-

Train barely

department official.

the spot, a railway employee said. threatened the local railway authorities of doing sabotage, sources said.

3 cops caught

owner of Bismillah Fish, hoping to realise a toll of Tk 2 lakh that they had previously demanded from him.

But Mullik challenged their authority and then contacted by phone a high RAB official, who confirmed the men were falsely identifying themselves as members of RAB. A physical altercation then ensued between local traders and the false RAB members, who were seriously beaten. Two of them managed to

include three police constables identified as Amarat Ali (No. 276), Yar Ali (No. 266) and Litu Mia (297) of the police training centre, Khulna. Four others were identified as Ishrat Hossain of Jogipole village, Shiromoni, Khulna, Akbar of the same address, Asaduzzaman Asad of Kashipara village of Lalpur thana in Natore district and Lalmohon of

Asaduzzaman Asad said he had brought the other eight persons with him to realise his dues from Ohidul Mullik. But Mullik denied this, saying Asad and his companions had demanded a toll of Tk 2 lakh.

the three police constables violated official rules by going to Noulibazar. Departmental punitive measures will be taken against them, he added.

Mad rush to home

taking as much as two hours. Advance booking of cabins in luxury launches has almost finished, although the black marketeers are selling tickets at more than double the regular fare.

Brokers harass passengers if they do not agree to buy tickets at higher rates, passengers alleged.

A ticket seller at one launch said they have no way of preventing anyone from buying five or six tickets at a time and selling them later at higher prices.

As during the past few days, most of the launches have anchored at mid-river, forcing passengers to reach the vessels by overloaded boats, risking accidents.

Many launches were seen overloaded with passengers.

Low and middle-income passengers who usually travel on deck are also paying exorbitant fares as some brokers in connivance with launch staff have already booked all the tickets for the deck.

"I had to pay Tk 200 for a deck ticket for Bhola and the normal fare is Tk 80," said Reza, a small trader at the Sadarghat terminal.

Ticket sellers of the Parabat, Sagar, Rajdoot and Surovi launches were charging Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,500 for a single cabin whereas the normal rates are from Tk 350 to Tk 500.

For a double cabin, Barisal and Patuakhali-bound passengers had to pay the black marketeers Tk 2,000 to 2,500 against the normal price of Tk 600 to Tk 800.

The law enforcement agencies removed all makeshift shops at the terminal yesterday, easing movement of passengers

KAMALAPUR STATION

Although passengers were not getting tickets at the station counters, brokers were selling those at higher prices near the Kamalapur overbridge while the Rapid action Battalion (Rab) was present at the

Railway staff at the counters said all advance tickets up to the Eid have been sold out and authorities are bound to sell standing tickets to avoid gathering of passengers. Hundreds of passengers were

desperately looking for tickets, only to be disappointed yesterday, since they had no option but to look for brokers to collect tickets for an extra

BUSTERMINALS The situation at the Sayedabad, Gabtali and Mohakhali bus terminals was somewhat better yesterday mainly because of the presence of Rab. Harassment of passengers was not seen but some bus operators were charging extra fares.

"We have to pay extra fares to go home on the eve of the Eid, but we forget the sufferings for the sake of reunion with our near and dear ones," said a passenger Abul Kalam.

Dhaka summit

countries agreed to a fresh schedule. According to the revised programme, the Saarc leaders will arrive here on February 5. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will receive them at Zia International Airport.

After attending the inaugural ceremony at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC) on February 6, the Saarc leaders will visit the National Memorial at Savar to pay homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War. They will also visit the grave of

Ziaur Rahman in the capital to pay respect to the late president who had envisioned the regional bloc. The Saarc leaders will hold bilat-

eral meetings the same day before joining a prime ministerial banquet in the evening at the BCFCC. However, the members can also arrange bilateral meets at their own convenient time On the second day, the leaders

will enjoy a retreat at the state guest-

house Jamuna in Dhaka in the morning and later attend the concluding ceremony at the International

be started off by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

spouses has also been planned on the concluding day (February 7). An exhibition of traditional Bangladeshi products, including handicrafts, will be arranged at the state guesthouse Padma. Although the Saarc cultural

festival has been cancelled, a performance by Bangladeshi artistes would follow the prime ministerial banquet at the CBFCC. Fifteen foreign ministry officials

have been appointed to co-ordinate different programmes and events of the pre-summit agenda meetings and the main summit, Reaz Rahman

welfare of the labourers.

Customs, said traders.

and Banpara crossings.

duties for cows.

Traders pay Tk 300 at the Rajabari

Police collect Tk 20 to Tk 100 at

Hired men of BDR collect Tk 300

check post, with the money distrib-

uted among police, BDR and

Kasiadanga, Gourhanga and

Talaimari crossing in the city from

to Tk 600 at the Belpukur Checkpost.

Tk 50 to Tk 100 at Baneswar, Natore

said the toll at Belpukur was collected

from traders who do not pay proper

BDR official denied the allegations

against BDR and said that some other

men might have been using BDR's

Seeking anonymity, he said, "We

Azmatullah, a trader from Dhaka,

Talking to The Daily Star, a top

each cattle truck, said the sources.

Conference Centre at the Prime Minister's Office. The leaders' departures are scheduled for the same day, likely to

A programme for the Saarc lead-

Arms Act, Rab sources said. Hamid, son of former UP Chairman Abdul Mabud of Hoakong, is known in Cox's Bazar as a godfather of criminals. He was involved in various crimes including murder, extortion and abduction. policesaid.

Tiger kills

fisherman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Madar Baria in the Sundarbans.

Police said six fishermen went to

fish in the Sundarbans when a tiger

attacked them. It injured five of

them and dragged Fazar Ali, 14, son

of Mohammad Ali of Gar Komor Pur

village in Shyamnagar upazila, into

Locals later recovered the body

and sent the injured to Shyamnagar

Health Complex in critical condition.

back 8 Indians

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The Border Security Force (BSF) of

India pushed eight Bangla-speaking Indian Muslims into

Bangladesh territory through Hatibandha border in Lalmonirhat

On information, Bangladesh

Rifles (BDR) personnel of Doikhawa

outpost reached the spot and pushed

the Indians back through Mogolhat

border yesterday morning.
BDR sources said the Indian

border guards of Lalbazar camp

assembled eight Indian Muslims

near the barbed-wire fencing adja-

cent to the pillar no 903 at about 11:00pm and forced them to enter

BDR men nabbed the Indians.

provided them with food and warm

clothes and pushed them back at

people are guarding the area to foil fresh push-in bid by the BSE

Rab seizes arms

Maheshkhali Police Station, They

filed a case against him under the

BDR personnel along with local

about 5:30am, the sources added.

Bangladesh at gunpoint.

district at midnight on Tuesday.

BDR pushes

the deep forest.

Sources at Cox's Bazar said Hamid possessed at least four AK47 rifles. He was arrested on several occasions in the past but freed on bail. His brother Enam is now in jail after police arrested him with firearms recently.

Free Mongla Port FROM PAGE 12

officials of Mongla Port Authority, a fertiliser dealer of Noapara in Jessore district and five top former and present leaders of Mongla Bandar Sramik Sangha. Vigorous investigation is already going on against them.

When contacted, Mayor of Khulna Shaikh Tayebur Rahman Mofazzal Hossain, general secretary of the Truck Labourers Union, said none of the mafia group would said the money was collected for the escape punishment under the law of

Meanwhile, most of the 11 mafias have reportedly gone to Dhaka to persuade top officials of the shipping ministry to stop investigation against them. They are also trying to influence members of the parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry, sources said.

One of the two prominent industrialists, who heads the mafia group, is among those now in Dhaka. He was also wanted by Rapid Action Battalion last year on charges of harbouring outlaws, the sources

EC worried FROM PAGE 1

opposition candidates are being published in newspapers," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

The election was scheduled for September 9 last year but the ruling BNP men did not allow any opposition man to submit nomination papers in the polls. The ruling party men were elected uncontested, without voting.

The EC last month declared the polls null and void after an inquiry and a fresh date for the election was announced. In its judgement, the EC asked the local administration to take adequate measures for the security of the opposition candi-

The EC also stressed holding the polls in a free and fair manner.

"It is not possible to hold a free and fair election as the law and order situation is deteriorating day by day," a local journalist yesterday told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity. Local journalists said the chair-

man and commissioner candidates backed by the main opposition Awami League are being intimidated by the ruling party men. "They are feeling insecure and cannot campaign for the polls," said another journalist.

The EC, a quasi-judicial body. had scrapped the September 9 election results finding gross irregularities in the election process. It asked the police and local administration to take appropriate measures for the protection of candidates in the fresh polls.

"Police and civil administration failed to control the situation and maintain the law and order which is necessary to hold free and fair election," said the EC judgement.

said the situation is still uncongenial to hold a fair election as the EC directives are not being followed by the local administration.

Judiciary not sensitive

FROM PAGE 12 Pointing to flaws in probe in rape cases, the attorney general said A Royal Bengal Tiger on Tuesday pounced on a band of fishermen, police should be more victimdlling one and injuring five others in

"Unlike other criminal activities, rape is a more violent crime, as it affects not only the victim but also the whole society," he observed.

"If the property of a person is robbed of or stolen, they could overcome the loss. But if a woman is raped, a crime is committed that destroys her entire life," he added.

On medical test of rape victims, he aid, "I can't imagine how doctors could submit false medical reports." He also emphasised that the local government and community leaders have to work together to prevent

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed told the session that the government has strengthened the Women and Children Repression Act by bringing a few amendments.

"Only stringent laws can't stop rape, rather proper investigation and implementation of effective laws are vital," Moudud said.

The minister said police force

needs to be upgraded with proper equipment to deal with any sort of investigation

On shortage of police personnel, Moudud said the number of police force in New York is 52,000, while Bangladesh has only 113,000 across the country.

The minister regretted that the application of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act is mostly for harassing opponents.

"The rate of conviction under the Act is less than five percent," Moudud

BSEHR Executive Director Elina Khan presented a set of recommendations of the workshop. She said the government must ensure that rapists should not go unpunished.

Different ministries should work together to look after the rape victims so that they can live in the society with dignity, Elina said.

Presided over by BSEHR acting chairman Prof M Afsar Uddin, the session was also addressed by the organisation's Treasure Shirin Sheikh Moinuddin and Project Director Albert Prasad Basu.

65 robbed in 4 days

with foods and by making the sub-

jects smell the substance, sources DMCH sources said about 65 people in an unconscious state were

admitted in the last four days until yesterday afternoon. Of them, 35 were hospitalised since early They later found out that they

had lost everything they were carrying with them. We help the victims to regain

consciousness usually within 12 to 24 hours but we can't find out what chemicals were used as we don't have adequate equipment to identify the substances," a medical officer of DMCH said, seeking not to be named.

Mohammad Habibur Rahman Khan Habi, 54, and his son Shamsul Khan, 24, of Sirajganj, had brought 16 head of cattle and earned Tk 60,000 selling four of them. But they fell prey to muggers in the early morning on Tuesday immediately after chewing betel leaves and

drinking tea at the Gabtali cattle

"I found myself lying on the floor at Dhaka Medical College Hospital when I got back my senses. But I couldn't figure out how I landed here," Habi told The Daily Star adding, "And after a while it all became clear that I'd been mugged and lost whatever I had with me."

Four cattle traders -- Mojibur, 40, Jubaraj, 55, Abu Mian, 45, and Shaheb Mian, 35, all hailing from Meghna Ghat under Comilla district, had lost around Tk 60,000 to muggers at Gabtali cattle market.

We came to Gabtali to buy cattle and take them with us to sell at Meghna Ghat. But we have no idea about how we got caught in the muggers' trap," said Shaheb Mian, who was rushed to a hospital by

Jafar, Assistant Sub Inspector of Tejgaon Police Station, said that they found the four lying unconscious in a BRTC double-decker bus at Farm Gate yesterday evening.

Business climate

economic activities have been expanding, the MCCI said.

According to an interview-based study of the chamber, 23 out of 30 entrepreneurs observed that business environment has improved during the last five months as the government's law and order measures have been able to contain toll collection.

Respondent entrepreneurs in small and cottage industries said they now felt a sense of relief as the law and order measures are working. However, large industries, particularly the export-oriented ones, complained that the government has failed to take advantage of the macrolevel stability due to apparent inaction for improvement of infrastructure services such as port, electricity

and gas, the MCCI said. According to the study, garment exporters expressed their confidence that withdrawal of quota will have little impact of their business. They

The MCCI said in manufacturing sector disbursement of term loans marked a rise of 60 percent and working capital 40 percent. Textile, pharmaceuticals, cement and asbestos, iron and steel, sugar, plastic industries were the major investment sector in 2004.

In the manufacturing sector, knitwear and garment industries will pharmaceuticals, cement and fertiiser sectors will record better performance in 2005, the MCCI predicted.

country received \$89 million in foreign direct investment and Tk 71,760 million in domestic invest-The Quantum Index of

Production marked a 7.91 percent increase during July-October last year on a year-on-year basis. The output growth in manufacturing sector reflects the impact of increased external demand resulting in higher export growth.

Iraq car bombs

FROM PAGE 12

Australian ambassador Howard Brown said the truck bomb that exploded near his embassy was

building where the security people are based. It was quite a substantial explosion," he said.

The al-Qaeda-linked insurgent group led by Jordanian militant Abu

targeted Iraqi soldiers and police in the run-up to the elections. Iraqi forces are due to provide protection at polling stations on election day.

Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and the United States say the elections must go ahead, despite calls from many Sunni Arab politicians for a delay to try to win wider Sunni support for the ballot to choose a national assembly.

s eager for the election as they are likely to emerge in a dominant position after years of oppression under Saddam Hussein.

are delayed.

China opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq but some Chinese are working in the country. 'China's Foreign Ministry and embassy in Iraq should take fast and

effective measures and spare no effort to free the hostages," the official Xinhua news agency quoted President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao as saying. A video released by the workers'

Iraq. "The position of the Chinese was government towards our cause was clear -- not taking part in invasion forces and their aggression against our country," said a voice on the tape, which showed masked gun-

men holding the men against a wall. Xinhua said Chinese diplomats in Iraq were working to free the construction workers, who went missing last week. It gave no details of their work but quoted sources as saying their building project had no link to US-led forces in Iraq.

A new scandal over the abuse of Iraqi prisoners erupted after British newspapers published pictures on Wednesday of Iraqis apparently being abused.

naked Iraqi prisoners appearing to be forced to simulate sexual acts. while in another a soldier had his fist raised above a detainee who was bound in a net. They are pictures to make us

selling Sun daily, as newspapers and opposition politicians warned of long-term damage to the image of Britain's military hours after the court martial of three soldiers

Tk 970 a bag (50 kg), and TSP at Tk First one-day today

five-day battle at the same venue. Bangladesh Television and ESPN will provide live coverage of the game from the Big Bowl.

Buoyed by their 1-Oseries victory, the spirited Tigers now eye their maiden one-day series win against an inexperienced Zimbabwe who are coming to the game on the back of a 17-match losing streak.

were washed out in Bulawayo. same side that have won 12 games out of total 13 between the two teams. Going through a transition period following a revolt of the senior cricketers over selection policy, Tatenda Taibu's side lost ICC Champions Trophy matches.

hiked the price of fertilisers. Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur Rafigul Islam, who is also president of the district fertiliser

Taking advantage of the farmers'

(50 kg). The rate of MoP has yet to be fixed, headded Motahar Hossen, Secretary of the Rangpur unit of the Bangladesh Fertiliser Association, said the dealers are preparing to procure TSP

and DAP at the subsidised rate. Sohel Khondoker, a big potato farmer of the Mahiganj area, said potato farmers would not need ertilisers after two weeks. He asked what the use of the subsidised rate of fertilisers would be after two weeks when potatoes in all fields would be

ready for harvest. According to the record of the Department of Agriculture

Extension (DAE), about 70,000 Tk 670 and 680 a bag (50 kg), DAP at hectares of land have been brought under potato cultivation this year in five districts in greater Rangpur.

> in recent times will make them a much harder side to beat in the limited-overs series. Bangladesh's only win against Zimbabwe also came in March last year when Habibul Bashar's men recorded an eight-run victory at

But Bashar's men reached even greater heights last month when they celebrated their 100th ODI with a stunning 15-run triumph over mighty India at the same venue. Incidentally, it was their first oneday victory on the home soil. But going into the first game,

injuries to some key players remain a worry for coach Day Whatmore. Champion left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique has been ruled out from the first three games. Besides, young paceman Mashrafee-Bin-Mortuza and recordbreaking left-arm spinner Enamul Haque will also be rested for today's

problems for senior paceman Mluleki Nkala and all-rounder Elton Chigumbura. Both teams have decided to

announce the playing eleven today.

ers and retailers of the region have monitoring committee, told The

the rate of TSP (Tunisia) at Tk 606.67 and DAP (Kargil) at Tk 747 per bag

Daily Star that the government fixed

the sleepers at any time on Tuesday night," said a railway engineering

A serious accident could have happened as there is a bridge near Some unknown men earlier

FROM PAGE 1 reached Noulibazar by microbus, No. Dhaka metro CHA-02-3236, at approximately 9pm on Monday night. They allegedly identified themselves as members of RAB and then sought out one Ohidul Mullik,

escape, while the others were handed over to the Abhoynagar than a police.

The seven arrested persons

call, here I am," the pilgrims chanted as they approached Mount Arafat. The OC of Abhoynagar thana said religious authorities, the more zealous climbed up the 70-metre (230foot) high Mount of Mercy (Jabal Al-Rahma) where pilgrims pray for

Belpukur in Puthia, Baneswar, the Abdul Bari, a leaseholder of Natore bypass crossing, the Bonpara Crossing and the Nalka crossing at Mohishalbari hat, said the toll money is usually spent to ensure that the market runs smoothly.

Cattle traders pay

was collecting tolls from a truck at the Rajabari check post point. Two of Nasim's accomplices fled, but Nasim was handed over to Rajshahi divisional customs officials. In another raid, Rab officials rounded up 14 extortionists as they were taking tolls from traders near the Tanore Police station. Tk 4,500 of the collected tolls, along with four

Rab members arrested a Customs

constable, Nasim Uddin, while he

wristwatches were seized from them, according to a Rab press The arrestees are allegedly hired

men of local police and the truckers' The traders are required to pay Tk 200 to 300 for each cattle truck at different hats (large markets), said Kawsar, adding that money is collected in the name of the local truck

"If anyone wants to avoid levies,

he has to pay Tk 300 to the hat lease-

holders. The later will arrange unin-

terrupted passage for the trader".

control it" and called on Muslims to

'rally around their leaders to pre-

of your enemies and let them attack

your nation," the mufti said, warning Muslim leaders against plans by "the

enemies of Islam who want to divide

us and provoke conflict" between

not resolve the problems of the

From sunrise, convoys of more

The faithful -- men clad in a two-

piece seamless white cloth, the

women covered except for the hands

and face -- spend the day praying for

forgiveness and beseeching Allah for

success in a symbolic enactment of

the Final Judgement at the scene of

the Prophet Mohammed's last ser-

for prayers in the Namera mosque on

Arafat, a small plain some 250 metres

(800 feet) above sea level and sur-

rounded by high mountains from all

"Here I am, Allah, answering your

Despite warnings from the Saudi

Tens of thousands then gathered

than 20,000 buses carried the pil-

grims from Mina valley where they

spent the night in a city of tents.

"Kowtowing to the enemy does

Muslims.

nation," he added.

mon 14 centuries ago.

"Don't become a tool in the hands

serve the interests of the nation.

would take action if any allegation is found against any BDR member". Anti-Islam hostility

> mercy in a symbolic re-enactment of the Prophet's only pilgrimage. TSUNAMIVICTIMS Most pilgrims said they were asking Allah for forgiveness and a better future. But among the personal requests were prayers for the nations

> ravaged by tsunami disaster, which

killed 175,000 people, mainly

Muslims. "I am praying to Allah to avert the disasters that are happening to Muslims," said Ethiopian pilgrim Fouad Amin yesterday. We are praying for them in

Indonesia and elsewhere," added

Pakistani Asef Iqbal.

Saudi Arabia has cranked up its largest security operation for the ritual, a once in a lifetime duty for every able-bodied Muslim, fearing attacks or deadly stampedes like one last year that killed 250 people. Being at Arafat is the essence of Hajj," said Khaled Amal, a Burmese

who has spent all his life in Saudi

special forces have deployed around

About 50,000 police and 7,000

Mecca to prevent stampedes, protests or attacks. So far, no major incidents have marred the ritual. The pilgrims will return to Makkah today, the first day of Eid Al-Most will sacrifice an animal,

generally a sheep. On Friday and Saturday, they will return to Mina to stone the "jamarat", or three pillars symbolising the devil.

But the opposition candidates

matic security personnel. "It was a car bomb aimed at the

On Tuesday, Irag's US-backed interim government announced measures to try to prevent bloodshed during the ballot, with land borders to be closed for three days and vehicles barred from getting close to polling stations.

made up the backbone of the ruling class under Saddam, say an insurgency raging in Iraq's Sunni heartland will make it impossible to hold meaningful polls in some areas. Several Sunni parties have said they will boycott the elections unless they

During July-November, 2004, the

expect a sizeable growth in earning.

close to accommodation for diplo-

Musab al-Zargawi said it had carried out three suicide bombings in Baghdad, including the Australian Insurgents have repeatedly

Iraq's 60 percent Shi'ite majority But many Sunni Arabs, who

China said it was deeply con-

cerned about the fate of eight Chinese workers kidnapped in Iraq.

captors on Tuesday said they would be killed in 48 hours unless China clarified what they were doing in

Some of the pictures showed

sick with shame," said the top-

FROM PAGE 1 The day-night match, starting at lpm, will certainly test the nerve of both teams 48 hours after a gruelling

After the match, the series will go for a three-day Eid break before the second ODI in Chittagong on January 24.

Zimbabwe's only two ODI victories in 2004 came against Bangladesh at home in March last year when they took the five-match series 2-1. The first two matches Zimbabwe, however, are not the

series to Sri Lanka, Australia, Pakistan and England and both their Still, it is expected that experi-

ence of playing against the big guns

Harare to take a 1-0 lead which they could not prevail in the end.

Khulna. Zimbabwe also have injury