Saarc to limp if members

invest our capital in re-building and

upgrading cross-border infrastructure with each of them (neighbours).' "We do expect that they (neighbours) demonstrate sensitivity to our vital concerns. These vital concerns relate to allowing the use of their territories for cross-border terrorism

and hostile activity against India, for

example, by insurgent and secession-

ist groups," Saran said. He said India would deal with whichever government is in power in the neighbouring countries, but that it would prefer democratic and secular governments.

India. Saran added, would welcome more democracy in its neighbourhood. "But that too is something we may encourage and promote and it is not something that we can impose upon others.

At least some states in South Asia perceive security threats as arising from within the region, Saran said, adding that it is "regrettable that the countries of South Asia, while occupying the same geographical space, do not have a shared security perception and, hence, a common security

"This is different from the European Union or Asean, "Saran added.

The Indian secretary said New Delhi does not want some Saarc members to perceive the group "as a vehicle primarily to countervail India or to seek to limit its room for manoeuv-

Ruling MPs FROM PAGE 12

artificial crisis of fertiliser

Another BNP lawmaker. Mozammel Haq, echoed his party colleague and put the blame on dealers appointed unfairly. He demanded of the government to cancel the dealerships of these unscrupulous ones. Jamaat MP Abdul Aziz said more

than two of a family obtained fertiliser dealership in a single union, whereas "there are instances that no dealership has been given in many unions."

BNP member Moazzem Hossain Alal asked the government to print the retail price on every sack of fertiliser so that dealers cannot sell them at a

In reply, Industries Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami admitted to some irregularities in dealer appointments but denied any fertiliser crisis has been there since the coalition came to office "There is adequate supply of all

types of fertilisers including urea in the country." Nizami said, claiming that certain quarters had conspired to create a fertiliser crisis but failed.

He assured the House to take steps against the dealers involved in schemes to push fertiliser prices up.

Nizami said the total urea fertilise production target of the country's six fertiliser factories for the current year is 19.75 lakh metric tons, against a demand of 26 lakh MT. "We'll go for import to meet the rest of the demand."

Meanwhile, responding to a call attention notice, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar also dismissed the allegation of a fertiliser crisis and said fertiliser prices are stable.

He said the government is going to offer subsidy in fertiliser to benefit the

Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmaker Hafizuddin Ahmed asked the government to ensure uninterrupted power supply for irrigation in rural areas.

BNP member M Salek Chowdhury supported the opposition MP and said farmers in his constituency have been suffering from lack of irrigation due to power shortage.

In reply, State Minister for Power Igbal Hasan Mahmud said his ministry would take action to arrange uninterrupted power supply for farmers in

y. "The challenge [for Indian diplomacy] lies in convincing our neighbours that India is an opportunity not a threat, that far from being besieged by India, they have a vast, productive hinterland that would give their economies far greater opportunities for

mestic markets alone. He said it was India's expectation that "the dynamics of promoting crossborder economic linkages among South Asian countries would help them overcome mutual distrust and suspicion, which prevents us from evolving a shared security percep-

growth than if they were to rely on their

But "this remains our hope today, even though the record of Saarc in this respect has hardly been inspiring," he

Saran said Saarc in its 20 years of existence "has shied away from undertaking even a single collaborative project and there is a deep resistance to doing anything that could be

Unless Saarc countries promote cross-border economic linkages and prevent transit routes among membercountries from falling "prey to narrow political calculations," the foreign secretary concluded, Safta would "remain a limping shadow of its true potential

Indigenous people to resist

eco-park

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Indigenous people in Bandarban yesterday declared that they would resist construction of a proposed Mro community in Bandarban.

The call for resistance came from a rally held at Empu Para, 36 kilometres off the Bandarban district headquarters. Committee to Protect Land and Forest Preservation organised the rally of 500 family heads of the Mro com-

Rang Lai Mro, president of Mro Social Council, said as many as 700 Mro families would be evicted if the government implements its plan to an eco-park on 5500-acre tract of land in Sadar, Roangchhari, Ruma and Lama upazilas.

Two BNP men

District Magistrate Court yesterday after the completion of the five-day

Meanwhile, Abdul Quiyum, vice president of Habigani district BNP and president of Zia Gabeshana Parisahd (7ia Research Council). as well as Joynal Abedin Momin, a BNP activist of the Baiddyarbazar area, are still being questioned in the JIC at Dhaka, sources said.

At the same time, Zahedur Rahman Zahid, general secretary of the Awami League Laskarpur union on February 7, is still in remand.

The joint team, who are investigating the carnage, picked up three AL leaders on Monday night, including Habigani district vice president and former municipality chairman Shahiduddin Chowdhury

The team questioned the three separately at the office of the district Superintendent of Police (SP).

Sources said the team inquired about the AL rally at Baiddyarbazar held on January 27.

Work on leather

lakh people.

Addressing the foundation-laying function, the prime minister sought cooperation from all in maintaining a stable and peaceful atmosphere in the interest of the country and to accelerate the pace of national advancement. "A congenial environment is

imperative for advancing on the path of development," Khaleda told the function, attended by ministers MPs, political leaders, bureaucrats and local people

"Today the city that is being set up on the bank of the river Dhaleswari is a sign of the acceleration of our economy," the prime minister said.

Industries Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami, State Minister for Labour and Employment Amanullah Aman, local MP Dewan Mohammad Salahuddin, Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather Goods and Footwear Exporters' Association President M Tipu Sultan and Bangladesh Tanners' Association President M Harun Chowdhury also

spoke at the function. The prime minister formally unveiled the foundation plaque and switched on land digging for construction work. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation

(Bscic) is implementing the project. Apart from modern facilities, a latest effluent-treatment plant will be set up in the leather industry city, the prime minister said. As result, there will be no health risks for workers and employees at their workplacea great relief from serious health hazards they are exposed to in the outmoded tanneries.

"Now the workers and employees of this field will feel much comfort at work that will increase skill and productivity of workers and factories alike," she told the audi-

The central effluent plant will cost Tk 77 crore, and the new leather industry city will not have any harmful impact on the adjacent areas, the

function was informed.

The prime minister said export earnings from leather and leather products will multiply when the tanneries from Hazaribag and other leather-based industries from other parts of the country will be transferred to the new hub of leather

Presently, Bangladesh earns nearly Tk 1,600 core in foreigr currencies per annum by exporting leather and leather goods, she informed the function.

Explaining some contents of her government's recently announced industrial policy, the prime minister said priority has been given to small medium and cottage industries as well as export-oriented and importsubstituting industries. Adequate incentives have been provided for foreign investment.

She urged the entrepreneurs of this sector to be more attentive in enhancing quality of products and in bringing diversity in design.

The prime minister requested the owners of industries and factories to always consider the matter of protecting environment and urged them to set up new industries outside She also discouraged establish-

ing various offices, hospitals, clineducational institutions and commercial establishments in residential areas of cities violating rules and regulations.

These establishments should be shifted to appropriate areas "as soon as possible". She said it is 'very urgent for protecting environment, maintaining discipline, smooth transport movement and the planned building of cities".

BB probe finds FROM PAGE 1 (IPO) of Premier Bank after around

25,000 suspected fake beneficiary owner's accounts had been found in a preliminary investigation.

The capital market regulator's move prompted the central bank to launch its own investigation into the scam from Sunday. BB investigators will visit all Premier Bank branches in phases and are directed to submit their findings within a few days.

Meanwhile, at a meeting of the

Premier Bank board yesterday, some of the directors said the scam would seriously damage the image and credibility of the bank. They asked the management to take exemplary actions against those responsible for the irregularities, meeting sources

Sources said the Premier Bank management yesterday called all branch managers to the head office and warned them not to pass on any information to the press about the account opening or related to the

The management also tried to coax written statements from the branch managers that the bank's chairman and managing director were not involved in the account opening irregularities. But the branch managers did not oblige the head office management, sources said.

When the central bank came to know of this stratagem, it warned the Premier Bank management that such ploy would not work, BB sources said.

Premier Bank in a press statement yesterday said it has formed an internal team headed by its deputy managing director to probe the allegations. The bank management has also asked the branch managers to extend all-out cooperation to investigators of the BB and the SEC in this regard, the statement claimed.

Tita draft FROM PAGE 1

tight-lipped about the contents of the final draft. When asked, Ahmad also

declined to say whether the final draft includes a clause relating to transparency, bribery and corruption that was in the earlier draft prepared by the Office of the US Frade Representative and opposed by the Bangladesh side. However, sources said Dhaka

later softened its stance on the issue.

The US government originally proposed the Tifa to Bangladesh in 2002. An inter-ministerial meeting in January 2003 assigned the commerce ministry to begin negotiations with the US on it. Since then, the two sides have held several rounds of talks and also worked to prepare a draft of the agreement. According to the draft prepared

by US, the areas Tifa is to cover nclude removal of non-tariff barriers, implementation of intellectual property rights, promotion of trade and private investment, improvement of workers' rights and pursuing WTO talks on the basis of Doha Development Agenda.
In the draft, the US side proposed

that the two governments establish a and Investment' under the Tifa. The council is envisaged to meet at least once a year to discuss bilateral trade

dozen countries including Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Bangladesh enjoys a favourable position in trade with the US. US exported \$281 million worth of products to Bangladesh in 2003-04, while it imported \$2.3 billion, making a more than \$2 billion trade deficit.

US is also the single largest nvestor in Bangladesh, with total investment topping \$1.4 billion, mainly concentrated in the energy and power sector.

Magurchhara FROM PAGE 1

Responding to another question from Jatiya Party lawmaker GM Qader, the minister admitted the shortage of gas supply, saying that setting up of new industries and increased use of gas as well as wastage are responsible for it.

He said a well in Sangu gas field was closed and as a result, the government is receiving 112 mmcf f gas instead of 200 mmcf.

Besides, a well in Moulvibazar gas field, which was supposed to supply gas to the national grid, failed so because of last year's floods that damaged 78-km of gas

The minister, however, said the shortage would not continue for

ong.
With the availability of gas from Moulvibazar field from March and another gas field in Feni, there will not be any shortage from April 2005 to 2010, he said, adding that rather, there would be surplus of gas during the period.

Dinkal, Inqilab FROM PAGE 12

answer session, replying to a query from Jatiya Party (Ershad) law-maker Golam Habib Dulal.

Of the other Bangla dailies, the minister said Manabiamin received 2,470 government advertisements, 2,424, Khabarpatra published by BNP lawmaker Hafizuddin Ibrahim 1,490, Jugantor 1,166, Ajker Kagoj 953 and Prothom Alo

Among the English dailies, News Today topped the list receiving 1.651 advertisements followed by The Independent with 1,039, New Age 956, Bangladesh Today 942, New Nation 878, Financial Express 685 and The Daily Star 530.

On another query, Islam told the House a total of 119 newspapers have received licence across the country since the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government came to office in October 2001. He said, at present, the total number of dailies in the country is 534.

Hartal ends

between AL and BNP activists in

The hartal followed a series of stoppages since January 29 enforced by the mainstream opposition protesting the killing of former finance minister and AL lawmaker Shah AMS Kibria and four others in the January 27 grenade carnage in Habiganj and also demanding resignation of the BNP-Jamaat-led ruling coalition to pave the way for fresh polls.

In the capital, around 10,000 security personnel were deployed at different strategic points to ward off any violence

Despite the shutdown, most bassenger buses plied the city streets while rickshaws plied as usual. Educational institutions, shopping centres and most private offices remained closed or operated with thin presence. Transactions in banks were almost normal. Train and air services were normal.

Police and anti-hartal elements searched a number of houses in Mohammadpur and picked up at least eight women activists who took part in a pro-hartal demonstration earlier. As on the previous hartal days

police barricaded the roads around the AL central office at Bangabandhu Avenue throughout yesterday to prevent party activists and hartal supporters from gathering there. Only a few senior AL leaders were seen in the barricaded area. Of the injured in police baton

charge in Azimpur, Hazi Selim was admitted to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital. Police picked up seven opposition activists from the Activists of Awami Jubo Mahila League damaged a vehicle at around

noon in Mohammadpur. They fled when the police rushed to the spot. Police along with some ruling party activists searched two nearby houses in a failed bid to arrest the activists.

Later, police picked up eight women activists from an apartment building at Prabal Housing and allegedly beat them up at Mohammadpur Police Station. The eight included Sathi, Sonali, Nasrin, Maya, Nilufar and Shammi, sources said. Unidentified persons set a passen-

AL lawmakers and other leaders of the party brought out a procession from the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban area at around 11:45 am. The

processionists paraded Mirpur road

and held a rally at Russell square.

ger bus on fire at Kutubkhali in Demra

A large number of security personnel including plainclothes police kept vigil on the procession and the rally Police tried to pick up some pickets from the area but failed as senior AL lawmakers intervened.

BNP-backed transport workers brought out an anti-hartal procession from Muktangon and denounced the opposition for calling hartals frequently, crippling life. Processions supporting hartal

were brought out in Mohammadpur, Bangla Bazar in old city, Jagannath College area and some other places.

A correspondent from Madaripui reports : At least 50 people including six journalists and several police mer were injured as AL and BNP activists clashed at Bishaw Road intersection in Banga thana of Faridpur.

Witnesses said OC Abdur Rouf, a sub-inspector and several other cops were injured while trying to bring the situation under control.

About 20 shops were ransacked during the clash. Our staff correspondent in Chittagong adds: The second day of

vesterday though large shopping

Loading and unloading of cargo inside the port was normal and delivery of goods to and from the port resumed after 2:00 pm

Addl SP closed for outlaw link

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An additional superintendent of police in Khulna was disciplined vesterday for allegedly harbouring an outlawed party operative and assaulting Rapid Action Battalion

Additional Police Super Mofazzel Hossain was closed to Dhaka Police Headquarters following a probe by Deputy Inspector General Abdul Aziz Sarker.

Rab men when they went to his office at around 10:00pm on Monday night to arrest Hasan, an alleged cadre of PBCP Janajuddho faction, said Superintendent of Police in Khulna Habibur Rahman.

Mofazzel flew into a rage and shouted at them to let go of the Janajuddho cadre. He hurled abuses at the Rab men for entering his office without permission. He even shot two blanks to scare them into freeing Hasan, said Mofazzal's bodyguard. Rab took Hasan to Khalishpur

Rab Headquarters, where he was being quizzed till yesterday.

police super early last year, used to maintain a close contact with underground parties and criminals for financial gains. He was boozing with Hasan when the incident happened on Monday night, added the

Trade deficit

FROM PAGE 1

week of January after the payment of Asian Clearing Union (Acu) The BB official said the reserve

was \$3.05 billion yesterday and it will drop to below \$3 billion after the Acu payment in the first of week of March. According to the central bank

statistics, the volume of L/C for rice and wheat import increased 107 percent, scrap vessels 524 percent. petroleum products 50 percent and capital machinery 67 percent in the first six months of the current fiscal A high official of a commercial

bank said import of food grain increased significantly this year due to last year's devastating flood. The price of food grain also shot up in the international market.

The government's food stock plunged to 6.58 lakh metric tons (MT) in December 2004 which was 8.36 lakh MT one year ago.

The shortage in food stock has prompted the government to import food to take the stock to a secured level of 8 lakh MT. The government has already

approved import of 1.32 lakh MT of

rice and is also planning to import

one lakh MT more to overcome the

massive production loss of aman and aus paddy. As rice prices are high in the

domestic market, private importers

are encouraged to import more from other countries despite the high The import of rice at exorbitant prices has resulted in an increase in

import spending this year widening the trade deficit, a bank official said. A BB official said oil prices shot

up to a record \$52 a barrel a couple of months ago. Although the price has now come down to \$47, it is still very high in comparison to previous As the demand for MS rod and

steel products is rising due to a booming construction sector, the import of scrap vessels witnessed sharp rise this year, he explained. Apart from import, payment for

overseas education, treatment and travelling and debt instalment also increased in the first five months of FY 2004-2005.

The payment in service sector increased by over \$100 million in the same period, pushing the current account balance to a deficit from a

have not been able to establish a

working relationship with Khaleda

Zia government which, to say the

least, has not been friendly. The

comparison becomes obvious

when her predecessor Sheikh

Hasina was equally irritating, but

not unfriendly," said the veteran

Bangladesh has been drifting

away from India lies in the mes-

sage Kibria (assassinated Awami

League leader) sent to his Indian

friends two days before his assas-

sination. He said that India had

may sound harsh but there is

hardly any mention to Bangladesh

"I believe the reason why

Indian iournalist.

forces," Nayar said.

Delhi's dealing

"Natwar Singh, who presides over the ministry of foreign affairs, is the last person who should be asked to handle the jobs demanding finesse. He is too arrogant and too hawkish to care about tact and nuance," Nayar said in his col-

"Naturally, Bangladesh--the host of the SAARC summit--felt cut up. A country which is always on the edge when it comes to dealing with India felt humiliated. I can't understand why Natwar Singh could not pick up the telephone and inform the Bangladesh foreign minister himself? Would it have ruffled diplomatic feathers or violated some protocol rules?" "The royal coup in Nepal was a

good enough reason for India to stay away. But the way events unfolded, the picture that emerged was different. The meeting was cancelled twice when Dhaka was all set to attract the spotlight."

in India and its media in positive "Our main problem is that we terms," he added.

the 36-hour hartal passed off peacefully in the port city. The shutdown was observed partially as plying of vehicles, excepting long distance ones, was almost normal. Business activities increased

centres remained closed. Banking transactions took place on

Mofazzel assaulted a group of

As Rab men got hold of Hasan,

Sources said Mofazzel, who joined Khulna district as additional

900 makeshift

groups' for the bomb attacks.

FROM PAGE 12

mechanics were busy repairing CNG scooters, produced flames that quickly spread to a dismantled

"The blaze quickly spread to nearby polythene sheets and petrol kept in containers for cleansing purposes," said Md Mazid, a sales man of a shop next door who witnessed the devastation.

"We ran for cover as the blaze grew larger," said Shaheen, a garment factory worker, adding.
"There were at least 75 CNG scooters inside one of the garages belonging to Mosharaff. Some of the scooters were saved as a few of us helped to pull them out, but the rest were burned to ashes.

Firemen from Khilgaon and other fire stations arrived within fifteen minutes, but all their vehicles could not reach the spot of the fire Mirertek colony (no. 16) - due to narrow lanes. Firemen were forced to proceed on foot, carrying hoses to As the fire spread it engulfed

some 900 slums made of bamboo

and wooden planks. Most of the

slums house female garments

workers, but the majority were at

work at the time of the blaze, accounting for the absence of casualties. It took approximately an hour to douse the fire, which sent neighbours in nearby buildings panicking

and rushing away in fear. During the fire, the electricity supply in the entire neighbourhood went out for approximately two hours. Police later blocked commoners from entering the area to prevent pilfering of valuables from the rubble.

Postponement

This is the first time Khan made any comment on the Bangladesh-India bilateral ties since the Dhaka summit, scheduled for Feb 6-7, was put off following India's decision not to participate on the plea of political developments in Kathmandu and "security concerns" in Dhaka. In reply to a question about the

abandoned its liberal and secular holding of the stalled summit, the friends in Bangladesh to face foreign minister said Bangladesh fanatic and fundamentalist has requested current Saarc chair Pakistan to find a date which is This is true to some extent convenient "beyond doubt" to all the because we have been paying member states of the seven-nation very little attention to Bangladesh since the return of Khaleda Zia. It Khan said he was not aware of

any consultation initiated by Pakistan for rescheduling the sum-

US, EU, India recall

JS RESERVED SEATS

Bill seeking

extension of

time for polls

A bill was introduced in parliament

yesterday seeking extension of the

time limit from 45 days to 90 days for

holding elections to 45 women's

The 14th amendment to the consti-

tution has introduced 45 reserved seats

for women increasing the strength of

Law, Justice and Parliamentary

Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed

introduced the Jatiya Sangsad

(Reserved Women Seats) Election

Student strikes

DU students were injured in the blasts

at the TSC road island on the campus.

expressed surprise that police did not

guard the spot after the incident nor

preserve evidence of the explosions.

The place was found cleaned and

washed yesterday and some 'tokai

took away things that could be valu-

Metropolitan Police Mizanur Rahmar

claimed however that all pieces of

Chancellor SMA Faiz said. "So far as I

know, police were deployed at the spot

cleaned the spot or whether the pieces

Dhaka University authorities yester-

day formed a seven-member probe

body headed by Prof AFM Yusuf

Haider, pro-vice chancellor of the

university, to investigate Monday's bomb blasts at TSC, reports BSS.

The committee, formed at

syndicate meeting held at the DU

registrar building last night with Vice chancellor Prof SMA Faiz in the

chair, will submit a report 'within

Debating Society (Duds) Mehidi Hasan Tamim lodged a case with

Ramna Police Station in connection

Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-

charge of the police station, said they

have started investigating the incident

The ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the AL-backed BCL have blamed each

The JCD brought out a procession

and held a rally on the campus yester-

day demanding immediate arrest and

punishment of BCL activists who

destroy the congenial academic

atmosphere on the campus.

hurled the bombs in a planned way' to

The BCL laid a siege to the VC's

office yesterday demanding 'peaceful

The Duds brought out a silent procession and held a rally at the

Central Shaheed Minar demanding

Left-leaning Bangladesh Chhatra

arrest and punishment of the culprits.

Union (BCU) blamed 'fundamentalist

coexistence of all at the DU halls.

and collected evidence from the spot.

President of Dhaka University

of evidence were necessary or not.

INVESTIGATION

shortest possible time.

with the blasts

BLAME GAME

other for the incident.

evidence were 'properly preserved'.

Commissioner of Dhaka

When contacted, DU Vice

He also said he did not know who

able evidence, they mentioned.

DU students and teachers have

reserved seats in the House.

parliament to 345 from 300.

UNB, Dhaka

headed by himself and declared a state of emergency in the

Himalayan kingdom.

Boucher said the United States had "made clear the point" that the king needed to restore and protect civil and human rights. Gvanendra should also release

those detained under the state of emergency and move quickly toward restoration of civil liberties and multi-party, democratic institutions, he added "We will consult with our ambas-

sador and others will consult with their ambassadors about how best to achieve those goals, how we can support those goals," Boucher said. "And we'll be sending our ambassador back after a (week) in

order to convey that message even

more clearly," he said.

Whatever steps taken by the international community would be aimed at "supporting the Nepalese people's quest for democracy. peace, security and development, he added.

India's envoy to Nepal, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, who returned to New Delhi on Monday, had called on the foreign minister Natwar

developments in the restive Himalavan kingdom and his talks

with King Gyandendra last week. Analysts say that among the first actions to be taken if the Nepalese king refused to budge would be freezing military aid to the impover-

ished nation fighting an uphill battle

to suppress a Maoist insurgency,

The United States, Britain and India, Nepal's giant neighbor India have been key backers of Nepal in its drive to crush communist insur-

The United States had allocated 45 million dollars in aid for Nepal in the year to September 2004, 10 percent of which was for security, a US official said. For fiscal 2005, 44 million dollars has been set aside with only one third for security

Britain reportedly is also reviewing defence assistance of 6.5 million pounds (about 12 million dollars) while New Delhi has supplied the illequipped Nepalese army with helicopters, guns and other equip-

Hasina says clues

post-hartal news briefing at Awami League's Dhanmandi office.

Hinting at involvement of a special section, she said it takes trained people to carry out grenade attacks. nternational investigation would be useful to unearth the identity of the perpetrators, she added.

Hasina, also the president of AL, alleged that the ruling BNP is resorting to political persecution to hold on to "They are torturing our leaders and

activists because we have demanded

investigation and trial of the killers."

she said adding, "Is it a crime to seek ustice in a democratic country?" Hasina blasted the law enforcement agencies for failure to ensure security for people's lives. She said they have turned the Dhaka University campus into a security zone by deploying a huge number of police

detectives and Rab personnel, but

they still could not stop bomb attacks.

The opposition leader accused Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of killing people in 'crossfire by Rab'. "Killing people without trial is á flagrant violation of human rights," she added. She described the DU bomb blasts as a pre-planned drama and said bringing out a procession right after the

incident proves that it was stage-

managed with the help of security

personnel. "How could the incident take place despite high security." she The AL president condemned the police excesses on opposition women

She alleged that BNP and its front

activists during Monday's hartal.

of rice, she said it has gone beyond the reach of the commoners. About a minister's comment on the price hike of rice, she said, "They

by an assistant personal secretary at Prime Minister's Office, she accused Khaleda Zia of patronising corruption and said, "The Prime Minister's Office

Programmes

The AL will hold protest rallies across the country on Saturday (Feb 19) to protest price hike of essentials, killings,

the International Mother Language Day on February 21 by organising

He was also introduced to Hamid, a student of the Arabic department at RU and an active member in such operations, he told the magistrate. He also said JMJB operatives

had often held meetings at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque and the Kakrail Mosque, where they discussed many plans of action. "We use bombs that will injure people but not kill them." he added. The RU teacher and JMJB chief

hopes of sending fighters to Iraq and Afghanistan, Shafiqullah added. Many students undertook train-

also impart training to youths in the

China mine blast

FROM PAGE 12

of Shaanxi in November killed 166 miners. Another explosion in October killed 148. Before that, the deadliest recent reported mining accident was a fire in southern China that killed 162 miners in 2000.

country, he added.

the world, including Bangladesh, how best we can face the challenge," Edward Oakden, director, Defence and Strategic Threat of UK, told reporters at the foreign ministry

the matter with the foreign minister, the foreign secretary, the home secretary and intelligence agencies.

terms Bangladesh and Britain can work out that cooperation and effectively pursue terrorists at operation level and take joint action at international levels like the UN. Asked if Britain intends to sign

More than 300.000 Bangladeshis are living in UK, he added.

"We don't need any agreement for such cooperation. We've a developed relation and we want to build on that in a very practical way,

Oakden came to Dhaka yester

Rahman) his commander of opera-

firmed that the chief of Bangla Bhai is their leader too. They also confessed to their

ment spearheaded by Dr Asadullah.

UK offers to help

our development partners around

Oakden said he had discussed He said the discussion is aimed at looking into how best in practical

ing information and training.

day and is scheduled to leave today.

which has claimed more than 11,000 lives so far. gents wanting to set up a republic.

related activities.

strategy of the ruling BNP," she added. Referring to the price hike of essential commodities, especially the price

organisations are causing troubles

throughout the country and blaming

the opposition activists for their mis-

deeds. "The trend to shift the blame on

the opposition activists is all part of a

(minister) can buy rice at Tk 20, because they have embezzled hundreds of crores of people's money." Mentioning the reported corruption

has become a den of corruption.'

and repression on opposition workers. Besides, the party will conduct a mass contact campaign and hold workers' meetings. It will also observe

various programmes The AL will hold a grand rally on March 2 at Paltan Maidan to drum up support for the 'oust-government'

JMJB firm on attacks

ing for Islamic revolution in different parts of the country, he added. He said Shahi Bhai is the chief of JMJB with Bangla Bhai (Siddiqur

> In Natore, our staff correspondent reports, seven of the 12 Jama'atul Mujahidin members in their confessional statements to a magistrate on Monday also con-

Police and court sources said that Farman Ali, one of the arrestees, admitted that he was one of the leaders of Jama'atul Mujahidin at Natore He said he joined the group during Ramadan at the invitation of

any deal with Bangladesh on countering terrorism, he said such agreement is not necessary as Bangladesh is a major development partner and the largest aidrecipient.

Oakden said. Asked about the presence of any

the foreign secretary. After the meeting, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said Oakden praised Bangladesh's commitment and measures to fight

that outrageous attack

involvement with the Islamic move-

Khabbar Ali, ameer of the Mujahidin in Natore district. Dr Galib is the leader in the northern region of the

extremists in Bangladesh, he said

countries to take effective measures against terrorism. Asked whether the British police got any clue to the grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury in Sylhet last May, Oakden said like the Bangladesh authorities, the British government is also distressed at

no country should consider itself

'immune' from international terror-

ism and it is important for all the

for fair investigation, he said. British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, among others, was present during Oakden's meetings with the foreign minister and

"The investigation is being taken

forward by the Bangladesh govern-

ment and we are ready to help them

against terrorism. "We have exchanged views on how best we can cooperate with each other." he said, adding, "They are willing to help us through shar-