NBR probes import

the first half of the current FY, imports marked a 23 percent growth, but the duty and other taxes for imports grew by only eight per-

Worried by this trend, the NBR is now investigating into the matter to find out the root causes.

Sources said the board is also considering ways to seal 'leakage' at the customs clearing level and planning a departmental shake-up by transfers and new postings to check corruption.

"Our central intelligence cell is also probing into the assets and wealth of customs officials." said an NBR high official, admitting that among the departments of Vat (value-added tax), income tax and customs, the latter is the most corrupt organ of the NBR.

FIGURES REVEAL

According to Bangladesh Bank (BB) statistics, in six months to December 2004, import expenditure was \$6.145 billion, registering a 23 percent growth. While, in the corresponding period of FY 2003-04, the import growth was 19 percent with an expenditure of \$4.99

The BB data shows a general uptrend in imports in the current fiscal In seven months to January, letter of credit (LC) opening registered a 23 percent growth, compared to an 18 percent rise in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year.

Bangladesh typically imports 6,799 items. Of them, 519 items fall in the zero-tariff category, import of which marked a 50 percent rise, NBR sources said. It is followed by the 1,510 items under the 7.5percent tariff category, which grew by 30 percent. Import of some 1,879 items under the 15-percent tariff category grew by 20 percent and 2,891 items under the 25-percent tariff category by only 5 percent. The NBR figures, on the other

hand, show a disappointing revenue growth.

In eight months to February, the overall revenue earning grew by 10.36 percent to Tk 17,453 crore. But the budget targets Tk 32,190 crore revenue this year, with a 19 percent growth.

Of the total revenue realised, only 8.17 percent came from import. The NBR earned Tk 9,066 crore in the eight months as against the annual target of Tk 16,000 crore from import duties.

This dismal scenario could have been worse if the growths in income tax and Vat and local-level tax were not good. The former grew by 17

percent and the latter by 13 percent. An analysis of revenue growth at import and local levels shows that the overall revenue collection falls

short of the target entirely because of poor tax collection at import level. During the eight months, duty

tary duty by 7 percent.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number

of importers accused the customs department of corrupt practices and linked that to the government's poor revenue collection.

force them to offer bribe or face harassment. If they agree to come up with the bribes, the customs officials reduce the payable duties by putting the imported items in lower slabs or even the zero-tariff

For instance, there are some chemical items under the zero-tariff category, while some items have duties on them. Some import items get Vat exemptions and some do not. If bribed, a section of customs officials will put an item under the zero-tariff or Vat-exemption category, although it is taxable.

estly, the imported items are not

tried to import some items by paving all the duties and taxes honestly. But, customs officials started to harass me. They asked for money

influential minister to lodge complaints against the corrupt officials. The minister talked to the officials concerned asking them not to harass him. But, when the entrepreneur went back to deal with the customs, the officials challenged him, saying do you think going to a minister will help you get off easily?

me even more. I can't go back to ministers again and again. So I had to strike a compromise with them, the frustrated entrepreneur described.

Admitting to corruption in the board, a top official at the NBR said, "NBR officials, businessmen and

"Because of this corrupt system, an importer, who is bringing in one million tonnes of goods is paying duties for, let's say, 700,000 tonnes. There is also the practice of undervaluation. For instance, internationally the price of sugar is \$350, which the importer is showing at \$200," the

Move to make first

FROM PAGE 1

co-ordinate the reports once they are completed, said sources. The initiatives were disclosed at a meeting of the parliamentary

standing committee on defence

ministry yesterday. Committee Chairman Lt General (retired) Mahbubur Rahman said

the forces' goals once prepared would help to formulate the defence policy. Explaining the need for a

defence policy, the former army chief said question has been raised as to why Bangladesh should frame a defence policy. "We need the defence policy to specify our threat perception. Threats may stem from external or internal subversion," he said adding, "Besides, when the defence will procure any hardware. it should be in line with the defence policy.

Participation of Bangladesh Rifles, police, Ansar, Village Defence Party, cadet corps and cross section of the population will have to be ensured in the policymaking process, said Mahbubur Rahman

The opposition lawmaker and member of the committee Colonel Shawkat Ali at the meeting said that no discussion about strengthening the armed forces would be fruitful without the defence policy, meeting

sources said "We had discussed framing a defence policy in the seventh parliament as well. But it has not yet been

formulated," he said. Replying to the lawmakers, Committee Chairman Mahbubur

Rahman said that they had discussed the issue at its second or third meeting over a year ago, and then asked the AFD to formulate the

The committee chairman assured the opposition lawmaker that the armed forces division will send the draft policy to the parliamentary body once they are done with the task.

Policy on budget allocation

The defence ministry has been working on devising a policy on allocation of budget for the armed forces following the recommendations of the parliamentary body last

The parliamentary body had asked the ministry to formulate the policy with a view to bringing in dynamism and professionalism in the defence service as well as to build combat capability of the

CORRUPTION LANDSCAPE

Importers said customs officials

f the importers insist on hon-

benefits of a lower duty slab."

official elaborated.

people since Sunday night. The government, meanwhile

> uting CI sheets and cash among the victims, though the amount was too

injured patients undergoing treatment at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) was stated to be

that the RMCH authorities did not take proper care of the patients. Many of them are lying at the hospital without Jahedul, a six-year-old boy from

Naldanga union of Sadullapur upazila, s still lying unconscious on the floor of Ward no 10 at the RMCH. His father

leg was fractured, complained that she did not receive any treatment even after 30 hours of her admission. She

was seen groaning in pain. Hospital sources said there is an acute scarcity of lifesaving medicines at the hospital and so the doctors advised the attendants of the patients

to buy them from outside. But Bokul of Dasalia village of Naldanga said they are too poor to buy medicines from outside. Almost all the

victims are from poor families. RMCH Assistant Director Mostafizur Rahman however denied the allegation and told The Daily Star that the hospital authorities were trying

treatment to the injured. Meanwhile, Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulu visited the injured patients at RMCH on Monday night.

He directed the hospital authorities to take proper care of the patients.

FROM PAGE 16 in Gopalganj Brac office on January 17. But Ġalib was not brought to the court on grounds of security, Court Inspector Mohammad Yunus told journalists. The court fixed the date for

further hearing on April 7. Police nabbed the youths from Bashbaria in Tungipara with arms, ammunition and seven time-bombs, who later confessed their crimes

and claimed that they were associates of Galib. Galib was taken to Gopalganj

from Gaibandha on March 19. Jamaat Amir of Gopalganj district Advocate Azmal Hossain along with seven other lawyers pleaded for Galib and his associates

Combine S'pore tech | 45 Ctg journos

Nine news

men sued

nalists of a local weekly magazine

Sources said forest and environ-

ment affairs secretary of the district

Awami League Mohammad

Amiruzzaman Lebu lodged the case

n connection with a news published

in the magazine in its February 27

issue under the headline "three

gamblers held from Awami League

nformation officer to submit a report

sued are editor and publisher of the

magazine advocate Zakir Hossain, executive editor Zainul Abedin,

managing editor Bazlur Rahman

assistant editor SK Sattar, chief

news editor Merajuddin, news editor

Shahriar Milton, chief reporter

Abdur Rafique Majid, divisional

editor Adil Mahmud Ujjal and

Ihenaigati upazila correspondent

Meanwhile. Sherpur press club

Ihenaigati press club and Sherpur

ournalists' council condemned the

case as it was filed without issuing

any rejoinder or asking any explana-

Iornado victims

as relatives of the affected people

rescue workers, medical teams and

iournalists rushed to the villages to see

the devastation and help the victims.

A 28-member medical team of

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has been

working in Gaibandha to extend

medical services to the injured. During

the last two days the team provided

treatment to 154 patients, BDR

Another 8-member army medical

team led by Captain Masud is provid-

weeklong intensive medical camp in

Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary general of BNP, visited

Naldanga in Gaibandha yesterday

and distributed 10 kg of rice and Tk

2,000 in cash among each of the one

He also distributed Tk 10,000 to

Islam Shipbuilders, a private

commercial operator of Bangladesh

Railwav. waived train fare for the

tornado victims and the rescuers for

their free movement between

NGOs and voluntary organisations

Services, RDRS, Gano

thousand tornado-hit families

each of the families of the dead.

Harun-ar-Rashid Dudu.

tion from the magazine.

MEDICALTEAMS

Captain Tanveer said.

the tornado-hit areas.

FROM PAGE 1

after investigating into the matter.

The court has directed district

The journalists who have been

eader's house'.

Chalti Khabar' including its editor.

extend its investment and explore business in Bangladesh. He said Singaporean companies have so far invested \$ 700 million dollars in Bangladesh--and the investment and business operations would

The members of the business delegation accompanying the prime minister and Singapore business community leaders,

among others, attended the luncheon meeting. Khaleda hoped that

businesspeople from both sides would be able to identify more new opportunities for industrial investment and trade for mutual interest of both. The emergence of global production systems has now created new avenues for compatible economics, she said.

"Our government attaches great importance to social development and economic growth. We believe that prime responsibility of our government is to create a congenial business climate where private sector can function and thrive," she told the business leaders. The prime minister said the

government has been pursuing a free-market economic policy, and has made Bangladesh one of the most open and competitive locations among the developing coun-She apprised them that

Bangladesh is endowed with a large reserve of both natural gas and high-quality coal, making the country suitable for establishing energyntensive manufacturing industries. The country also enjoys natural advantage due to its geographical

location, she said, adding that Bangladesh bridges the emerging markets of South Asia with the fastest-growing markets of the Asean countries. Referring to bilateral trade which

favours Singapore, the prime minister said there is a great scope for not only increasing the total trade volume but also reducing significantly the present imbalance to the advantage of both the countries.

under process. Most of them involve

canal digging, river dredging, recon-

struction of sluice gates etc. These

projects are implemented under 'food

for work' programme as well as by

Prime minister's brother retired

major Syed Iskandar MP got six of the

projects while Hafiz Ibrahim MP from

Bhola, who is also a member of the

Among the ministers, the constitu-

encies of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed

Telecoms Minister Aminul Haq, Health

Minister Khandker Mosharra

Hossain, Commerce Minister Altaf

Hossain Chowdhury, PM's sister

Women and Children Affairs Minister

Khurshid Jahan Haq, State Minister

for Land Asadul Habib Dulu, State

Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar

and State Minister for Labour

Amanullah Aman enjoy the benefits of

Jamir Uddin Sircar and BNP lawmak-

ers Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan Ataur

Rahman Khan, Jainal Abedin,

Salahuddin Ahmed, Mazhar Hossain,

Delwar Hossain Khan Dulu, Abul

Khayer Bhuiyan, Reza Ahmed

Bachchu, Shahidul Islam, Abdul Matin

Chowdhury, Mohammad Shahjahan,

SA Sultan Titu, Ruhul Kuddus

Talukder, Sultan Mahmud Babu,

Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur Rahman

Minu and KM Obaidur Rahman have

gone to Jamaat deputy Delwar

Hossain Saidee and Awami League

these priority projects, the meeting

go to areas where the population is

affected by extreme poverty or floods,

and allocations should be given on the

basis of a set of criteria." committee

chairman Akbar Ali told The Daily Star

he distributed more or less uniformly

across the country, he added.

We also think the projects should

Meeting sources said some of the

members remarked that many of

those who bagged the projects could

do so because of their influence, not

because their projects had any priority.

corruption in the Water Development

Board saving the chairmen of union

parishads bribe the WDB watchdog

with Tk 2,000 per tonne of foodgrains

to clear their projects without actually

completing them. The foodgrains are

do such poor jobs in canal digging

They said the project implementers

used as payment to workers.

They also alleged wholesale

What is the criterion for getting

"We believe such projects should

MP Mohammad Ali.

wanted to know.

These remaining two projects have

the rest of the allocations except two.

The constituencies of Speaker

such projects.

standing committee, bagged four.

cash payment to workers.

FROM PAGE 1

A few ministers

Bangladesh offers competitive price and quality for pharmaceuticals, footwear, ceramic, handicrafts, jute goods, leather goods, frozen foods and agricultural products. Singapore may consider importing these products from Bangladesh.

Despite many hurdles, the prime minister said, all relevant economic and social indicators depict Bangladesh as a rapidly and consistently developing country. "I can assure you all that the economy in Bangladesh today rests on a solid foundation."

During the last three years, net annual FDI inflow to Bangladesh has increased by 34 percent. And large TNCs like Orascom of Egypt Tata Group of India, Dhabi Group of UAE, Lafarge of France and TMI of Malaysia have already commenced their investment activities in Bangladesh, she told the meeting.

The total investment outlay of these companies is expected to exceed \$ 5 billion in the next three years, she said.

Delivering a lecture on "Bangladesh Economic Priorities and Challenges" at Suntec Convention Centre in the morning, Khaleda reaffirmed her government's unflinching commitment to democracy, development and human rights, which remain key underpinnings in moving Bangladesh towards a stable, moderate and modern society. The Institute of South Asian

Studies (ISAS) organised the lecture. Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore Prof. S Jayakumar moderated and presided over the lecture session.

She said that \$1.3 billion in foreign investment has flowed into Bandladesh in the last three years and hoped that another \$8 billion will be invested in next three years.

Addressing the function Singapore Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Jayakumar said both Bangladesh and Singapore have embraced the changing global

fined Tk 1,000 each, failing which they are to serve out one month in prison.

The court also handed down similar punishment to Bhorer Kago former editor Abed Khan and Publisher Saber Hossain Chowdhury. The court sentenced Bhorer Kago

reporter Samaresh Baidya to two months of rigorous imprisonment and slapped a fine of Tk 2.000 on him for not only printing the news, but also the photograph of the additional judge in The signatories to the statement

include Řeaz Haider Chowdhury Ratan Kanti Debashish, Alamgir Sabuj and Sujoy Mohajan of Daily Purbokone, Kamal Parvez and Kazi Abul Mansur of Daily Janakantha, Chowdhury Farid of Channel-i, Rowshan Soma and Nasiruddin Haider of Daily Prothom Alo, Komol Dey and Soumen Dhar of Daily Bhorer Kagoj, Shuklal Das and Kirtik Nayan of Daily Azadi, Majumder Nazimuddin and Shimul Nazrul of Daily Amar Desh, Tapan Chakraborty and Rubel Khan of Daily Ajker Kagoj, Arich Ahmed Shah of ntv, Shahnewaj Riton of Daily Ittefaq, Rashid Mamun, Azad Moinuddin and Shantanu Chowdhury of Suprobhat Bangladesh, Zobaer Hossain Sikder of The Daily Star and Shubhashish Barua and Romen Das Gupta of Bir Chattagram Mancha

SENIOR JOURNALISTS

Senior journalists in Dhaka yesterday also gave their reactions to the conviction of the journalists.

Advisory Editor of the Daily Amar Desh Ataus Samad expressed the hope that there will be a better understanding by the court of the press and also by the press of the ways by which a court has to function to give the best

Samad said judges are required to limit their social contact while journalists have to contact many persons and they come under pressure from many sides. "In such a situation it is not unlikely that sometimes there may be a gap in the perception of the two about many things," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the press here has not triggered any debate neither has it created any issue even after the Supreme Court gave verdicts that went against public expectations. He referred to the Supreme Court verdict about citizenship of former Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Golam Azam. "The press here did not raise any question even after a number of judges felt embarrassed to hear cases," he said. "Newspapers could have created

debates about the issues but did not as the press always tries to uphold the independence of the judiciary," said "Clash between the government

and a vibrant press is not unusual in a democratic country and in such a situation the court is the only place where anyone can go for justice. On the alleged certificate temper-

ing by a judge, he said, "A thorough

investigation is necessary (into the matter) to know what had happened at Chittagong University, how the mark sheets were tampered with and who had done it? And, if necessary, the main examination sheets of the judge in question can be rechecked," Editor of The Bangladesh

Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said the judgement would not discourage journalists from carrying out their professional obligation to report irregularities in any sector. "Journalists will work forward to fulfil people's desire to know," he told The Daily Star.

"We would have felt comfortable had the court not given this verdict." he said. The court has rights and independence to give any verdict. At the same time, newspapers have constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression," he noted.

The Observer editor said the nation expects these two institutions (the iudiciary and the press) to work to uphold people's rights and establish democracy. The country's journalist community believes that these two institutions would honour each other's rights and independence.

CPJ CONDEMNS

The New York-based independent nonprofit organisation, The Committee to Protect Journalists, has condemned the conviction of the iournalists.

"We are outraged by this ruling against our colleagues," CPJ Executive Director Ann Cooper said. "Vaguely worded and outdated contempt laws are being abused to silence journalists in Bangladesh who are merely doing their jobs by exposing official wrongdoing.

Suppl chargesheet

FROM PAGE 16 trucks to carry the huge cache of firearms and ammunition off-loaded and hauled at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) Jetty on the Karnaphuli on April 2 last year.

Mirpur police arrested him from Lalkuti area in the capital on March 17. He is now under an eight-day remand and being quizzed by Joint Interrogation Cell. The first chargesheet of the case

submitted on June 11 last year

showed a lot of discrepancies with the first information report. The supplementary chargesheet was submitted on August 26 following a court order.

Seventeen accused including the four other prime accused -Hafizur Rahman, Din Mohammad Abul Kashem Madhu and Sobhan Haji -- who owned the trawlers that carried the arms and ammunition

Hartal shifted FROM PAGE 1 the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition.

AL leaders Abdul Jalil, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Mannan, Akhteruzzaman, 11-party leaders Nurul Islam, Rashed Khan Menon, Dilip Barua and JSD leaders Hasanul Haq Inu and Moinuddin Khan Badal were present at the

JS body for stern move

activities which is also tarnishing the

country's image. State Minister for Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam however told the parliamentary committee meeting that drastic actions have already been initiated to stop illegal manpower business

Quamrul said his ministry will sit with the home ministry today to work out appropriate measures against the human trafficking in the name of manpower business. "An inter-ministerial meeting will also be held to discuss the matter. We

will fix the date of the meeting after arrival of the foreign minister from Singapore," the state minister told reporters after the meeting held at the Jativa Sangsad Bhaban. Members of the committee said a few officials at the passport and immigration department, airlines and police

have link with the unscrupulous travel

agencies. The lawmakers suggested strong monitoring of the activities of travel agencies, strengthening passport verification system and imposing restriction on outgoing passengers having tourist visas to stop illegal

manpower business.

Abdul Qaiyum, chief of the special branch of police, told the meeting that officials at the airport and passport office are involved in the illegal manpower business. He admitted that some members of police may also be

involved, meeting source said. The state minister for expatriates welfare said the illegal business is hindering the ministry's effort to send people abroad legally. "We face

difficulties exporting manpower to

different countries due to the illegal sending of labourers." he said. "When we were making preparations to send 10,000 labourers to a particular country, we found that Bangladeshi labourers were already there and their number was more that the quota for Bangladesh," meeting sources said quoting Quamrul.

Citing Bangladeshi fortune seekers' recent tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara desert, ruling BNP lawmaker MA Zinnah said, "I can't understand how these people manage clearance at the airport immigration. The special branch chief said the

police are investigating the incidents. Committee Chairman Nazir Hossain told the meeting that expatriates welfare ministry is not solely

responsible for sending manpower abroad. "A number of government agencies are engaged in the process. So a combined initiative is needed to stop illegal manpower business," he

Record gas output

FROM PAGE 16 midnight, voltage rises to 110kv and the

plant can start operation. Sources said the plant needs das supply at a pressure of 60 Pounds per Square Inch Gauge (psig) but most of the time the pressure is much below that

"Sometimes it is lower than 50 psig,"

complains the Harbin official. The fall in pressure is taking place because Titas Gas authorities have not nstalled a metering station in the power plant area to ensure a steady gas flow. The existing station is located 2.5 km away from the plant.

fluctuations also threaten some vital equipment of the power plant," said one Load shedding hovers between 450 mw and 800 mw every alternative day

oipeline, pressure drops suddenly, Such

"When gas is pulled from this long

this month and Tongi plant was supposed to improve the situation. The PDB says it is unable to keep all the plants generating power due to gas supply shortfall. The power plants in the country consume about 700 mmcfd gas but Petrobangla, which is responsible for supply of gas, supplies up to 650 mmcfd

Tongi plant requires 25 mmcfd gas

supply.

A top Petrobangla official however said yesterday gas supply in the country is 'very good' right now' and no power

gas. Tongi plant's problem is entirely a local issue' that Titas Gas authorities should address. ' Moulavibazar gas field developed

by Unocal has also started supplying 70 mmcfd gas from today (Tuesday) and our supply has reached 1,450 mmcfd." He went on. "Gas supplied to Tongi plant had magnetic particles because the pipeline is new and it needs proper

and it has been resolved.' Harbin officials however remained sceptical about an immediate solution to Tongi plant's localised problems.

cleaning. This is not an unusual problem

The power project approved at the fag end of the Awami League rule has been facing a lot of difficulty due to political and bureaucratic bottlenecks all along. The present government shelved the project for more than a year by bringing allegations of corruption and then moved

ahead with it in 2002-03. The PDB signed a contract with Harbin, the lowest bidderfor the project, in June 2003 for an 80 mw plant. Harbin later bargained for installing a 110 mw one. The plant was supposed to go into operation by October 2004 but it missed the deadline due to various reasons including lack of proper infrastructure to

80 rivers in death

rivers like the Padma are nearing extinction while the remaining are unusable due to rapid pollution. He was speaking at a seminar

Water for Life: Our Challenges', organised on the occasion of the World Water Day by the NGO, Forum for Drinking Supply and Sanitation (NFDWSS), with assistance from the United Nations. LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the chief guest in the seminar, said Bangladesh is now

facing serious desertification and rapid depletion of the groundwater table due to the construction of dams by India. In the keynote paper, Prof. Md. Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) spoke about pollu-

tion in the Padma and other rivers in the Prof. Rahman said seven hundred cities along the banks of the Ganges dump about 1200 million litres of waste everyday and the downstream community of Bangladesh is forced to deal with

this already polluted water.

Bhuiyan said Bangladesh is absoutely dependent on transboundary water sources as about 93 percent water comes from outside the country. The LGRD minister said a rainwater

harvesting system and pond-sand filter can increase the use of surface water to reduce the pressure on groundwater. Cooperatives Ziaul Haque Zia said the declining groundwater level, the presence of arsenic and excessive salinity in

supply of safe drinking water. Quoting a survey, Prof. Rahman pointed out that a large percentage of both the rural and urban populations in the country are dependent on groundwater. In Dhaka about 85 percent of the

the coastal belts is posing a threat to the

Nor'wester hits

FROM PAGE 1 Fire brigade sources said the storm with lightning caused electric shortcircuit in many places. One such incident took place at the New Age newspaper office and the other at a building behind the New Residential Model School.

Inclement weather in Dhaka forced three flights of Bangladesh Biman and GMG Airlines with about 150 passengers to remain stranded Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport last night, our Chittagong.

606 from Sylhet failing to land at Zia International Airport (ZIA) for bad weather arrived at Chittagong airport at 8.39pm. Many Londonbound passengers were in the flight. Another Dhaka-bound Biman flight BG-618 from Chittagong could

not take off for not getting clearance from ZIA, sources said. The GMG flight 108 left Chittagong airport at 6.10pm for Dhaka but it soon returned for the same

water supply comes from groundwater. He stressed that treating surface water would be cost effective if the level

Prof. Ainun Nishat, country director the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said a strong monitoring and evaluation work in accordance with the water policy. He added that more attention has

management in the urban areas.
Paul Edwards of Unicef presented another keynote paper on the global perspective of water and sanitation systems. Among others, A H M Abul Quashem, secretary to the LGRD ministry, Morten Giersing, country representative, Unicef, Dr. Duangvadee Sunghkhobol, country representative, WHO and S M A Rashid, executive director, NFDWSS

also spoke at the seminar. Prof. M Feroze Ahmed of Buet chaired the discussion session of the seminar held at IDB Bhaban.

Bangladesh. A foreign ministry spokesman, nowever, told The Daily Star yester-

The spokesman, preferring not to be named, said, "we're waiting for the foreign minister and foreign secretary (now visiting Singapore along with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia) to return home."

However, the US embassy spokesperson told UNB: "There are a number of reasons that we in the embassy remain constructively concerned about the situation in

concerned about the deterioration of governance in Bangladesh -especially by political violence and the law and order situation."

concern.' progress in the investigation and prosecution both of those responsi-

ole for political violence, as well as those responsible for the Chittagong arms haul, and other

ongoing reports of corruption which limits Bangladesh's economic growth," the spokesperson said adding the United States values its friendship with Bangladesh and "we support Bangladesh's democracy.

collection on imports grew by 7 in Sherpur for the poor revenue growth. According to official statistics, in percent and Vat by 15 percent, while supplementary duty registered a 3 BDNEWS, Sherpur percent negative growth. On the other hand, at the local tax level. Vat An Awami League leader filed a case grew by 19 percent and supplemen-Monday with the district CR Cognisance Court against nine jour-

released for a long time on various pretexts, importers complained. A textiles entrepreneur said, "I

saving, if I pay them, I can have the This entrepreneur then went to

"After that they started harassing

pre-shipment inspection companies corrupt practices."

materials for export items. But they are bringing these in quantity higher than they actually need and sell off the extra quantity in the market," he

The defence secretary apprised vesterday's meeting that the job of formulating the policy will be com-

implementing the committee's recommendations, the opposition lawmaker raised the question of policy on budget allocation. "It is clear that there is no proper policy regarding allocation of budget for the armed forces and different

pleted by this year, said the meeting

While discussing the progress in

organisations under them, nawkat Ali yesterday told The Daily Star. The AL lawmaker said that the defence secretary told the meeting that the policy will be formulated

The committee chairman said

before the next national budget.

should be rationalised and combat capacity of the forces should take priority over other development "We will ask the government to

allocate budget in line with the

policy," the committee chairman told

the allocation of defence budget

The Daily Star. The parliamentary body also discussed the activities of Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka Cantonment.

There is a shortage of manpower

including doctors and nurses in the hospital, said the committee chair-The army chief however told the meeting that a project of Tk 60 crore has been set up to expand the

hospital, said the committee chair-BSF kills

FROM PAGE 16

Afsar Ali Mondal, 30, son of Karim Mondal of Baradi village of the upazila, and Panchu Mondal, 25, son of Khalil Mondal of Kestoganj village in Krishnagar district in India. The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)

sources said that both were killed in

BSF fire when they were chatting in

the no-man's-land adjacent to pillar

No. 81 at about 1:00am. The bodies were lying on the spot till 9:00am yesterday. Later, the BSF took away the bodies at their Gobindapur camp.

The BDR sent a message to the BSF asking them to return the body of the Bangladeshi national. Villagers, however, alleged that

the BSF killed Afsar, a vegetable vendor, after taking him in Indian

ing medical treatment in the affected areas, our Gaibandha correspondent Bangladesh Medical Association members from Bogra, Rangpur and Gaibandha in cooperation with district health administration will begin today a

are in the same league in such

Naldanga and Gaibandha stations. 'Some importers bring in raw ncluding Bangladesh Extension Unnayan Kendro, Leprosy Care Project and Jibita Bangladesh have been working to help the distressed

> sanctioned 100 tonnes of rice, 1500 bundles of CI sheets and Tk 5 lakh in cash for the affected people. About 5,000 families of Imadpur and Mirzapur unions under Mithapukur upazila who lost their homes are still passing days in the open. Upazila administration is distrib-

INADEQUATE TREATMENT The condition of at least 12 fatally

Relatives of the injured complained

Jamir complained that the doctor visited him only once in the last 24 Kazli, 20, of Dhopadanga village under Sundarganj upazila, whose left

their level best to provide proper

Partha Galib's bail plea FROM PAGE 16 on charge of sending email threat to kill opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, will be furnished today. The other case in which he was

the email threat.

Bangabandhu Avenue last vear. Unknown people sent an email to the Daily Prothom Alo on August 23 last year, threatening to kill AL President Sheikh Hasina Criminal Investigation

Department (CID) arrested Partha

from his Elephant Road house on

August 26 last year and produced

him before the court on August 30, a day after CID filed a case regarding

shown arrested is the one filed for

August 21 grenade attacks at an

Awami League (AL) rally on

projects during the dry season only. Discussing the power scenario. the committee members felt the poor implementation of power projects

in which they failed to spend a single taka," a meeting source quipped. The ongoing massive load shedding specially afflicts the villages, where electricity remains absent for many hours affecting agricultural production, the committee members

output," a meeting source said.

considering awarding contracts for

setting up small power plants up to 50

basis to bring new power plants

Remains FROM PAGE 1

Chairman. Jamaluddin's, also a BNP leader. After inspection by Jamaluddin's

family, police sent the skeleton to

Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) where a medical

(SP) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.
"It is difficult to identify a person

Jamaluddin's son Liton resented the fact that whenever any skeleton or remains of a dead body is found in Kanchan Nagar, it is thought to be that of his father. "It is shocking for us," he

trying to prove Jamaluddin dead in

order to submit the chargesheet and

put an end to the case with an incom-

plete investigation. FROM PAGE 16

employed are Pakistan, India, Egypt meeting.

In case of embankment protection schemes, the implementers chose the rainy season, instead of the dry, to

under the ADP reflects how badly fares the sector. Load shedding is plaguing

At the meeting, the finance minister meet that, sources said.
Saifur also said the government is

"We believe the load shedding will

seriously affect this year's agricultural

megawatt to companies on a selection

kilometres south of the house of local upazila Chairman Abul Kashem Chowdhury alias "Kashem Chairman", the principal accused in the abduction case, and about half kilometre off the house of Kala Mahbub, a close associate of Kashem

board had been formed with experts to forensic tests if required. without having experts' report,

expected to give its report today.

UAE stops visas

Bangladesh, Yemen, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Sudan and Ethiopia, according to a release of the foreign ministry.

schemes that no water flows though those canals.

install protection boulders, they noted This perpetuates the protection schemes, as strong current drifts away the boulders, they observed. This also leads to massive wastage of the national resources. So, the committee recommended implementing these

slow on project implementation, they

the country, yet the ministry is going

admitted that soon after coming to office in 2001, they should have assessed the future demand of the country and the projects needed to

quickly into operation.

Hence a strong suspicion arose that the skeleton might be

examine the skeleton and conduct "Police cannot confirm anything Chittagong Superintendent of Police

from a skeleton. It has to be examined

and tested by the experts concerned,

he said adding that the board is

are now absconding. Liton alleged that the police were

of pollution could be reduced.

to be paid to water and sanitation

US expresses FROM PAGE 1 US Embassy in Dhaka told the news agency, responding to a query about what US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had stated in

India about the US-India initiatives to deal with the security situation in

day that the US embassy had clearly dispelled reports on any US-India move on Bangladesh issue.

The US embassy, along with other donor organisations "are

"We also remain troubled by the

The spokesperson said. staff correspondent report from 'Threats to, and attacks on the press, the political opposition, cultural institutions, and minority The airport authorities could not say when the flights would depart communities are all causes fo Chittagong airport. Dhaka-bound Biman flight BG-"We very much hope to see