NEWS

maior fault.

many there are.

try," said Ali Azim Khan.

government organisations.

NBR," he said.

Aminuzzaman added

Banks object

He admitted that many garment

Though the building suddenly

The BGMEA mainly looks for com-

factories in the country operate in

old buildings, but could not say how

collapsed, the factory which it housed

performed all safety and security compliance for the Garment indus-

pliance with fire safety regulations and

proper outlets of buildings when it

checks safety measures, he said,

adding that the safety of the infrastruc-

ture is supposed to be looked after by

FROM PAGE 16 that he will talk about it with the

"Bankers can not disclose

Bankers said that many of the

professionals, irked by the NBR

move, may withdraw their deposits

account information of depositors in

such a wholesale way,

22 killed, 350 trapped

FROM PAGE 1

Kalam, Jewel, Rafiqul Islam, Monirul Islam, Nesaruddin, Razzak, Rakibul, Shahin Quddus, Al Mamun Palash, Gafur, Shahid, Kayes, Saikat, Zahir and Aleya. The rescue effort will take at least

a couple of days, said the rescuers. who are trying to save those struggling to breathe under the huge wreckage. The feeble voices of those trapped inside could be heard when rescuers were pumping

oxygen late last night. The accident occurred when workers were working the night shift on three floors of the nine-storey factory, which was constructed three years ago on 26 decimals of land at Baipail near Nabinagar-Kaliakoir road in Savar industrial town.

"No fewer than 450 workers were inside the building when it started going down at around 12:45am," Ismail Hossain, knitting in-charge of the day shift of the factory, told The

Daily Star. "I heard a big sound and rushed to the eastern side to find the building was crumbling like a house of cards," said Mostafa, an electrician of the factory, who went out to take tea at a nearby tea-stall. "I yelled out to alert the people inside but do not know if they had heard me." he said.

About 25 people who were on the ground floor managed to run out of the factory, witnesses said.

"At first I thought it was an earthquake. But when I rushed out, I saw dust was rising up and other things were falling as the building was going down," said Rafigul, a knitting employee who had gone to the ground floor and dodged a possible death

"We saw the entire building breaking down right before our eves and heard those who were trapped crying out," he said, putting the number of the trapped at about 350. Four on-duty security guards --

Shamsul Alam, Ramjan, Anowar and Samrat Alam -- were sleeping on the ground floor and did not come out of the building

FRANTIC RESCUE OPERATIONS Locals rushed to the building immediately after the cave-in and started rescue efforts. On information from patrol police, fire fighters from Savar rushed to the scene at 1:05am, joined by Police, Rab and army personnel at 3:00am. But narrow streets are hampering rescue equipment from reaching the site, rescuers said.

Rescuers are using welding equipment to cut through the rubble to try to reach trapped victims and to pump air to anyone who might be alive. Anxious relatives joined Army and Rab men and firefighters and used their bare hands and crowbars to sift through the rubble

The fire fighters used rotary saw, tripping hands, drill, spader, reciprocating saw and other instruments to rescue the victims.

Medical teams of Orthopaedics Hospital, Gonoshasthya Medical College, Enam Medical College and Hospital, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association-UNFP medical team, Dhaka Civil Surgeon's Office, Savar Health Complex, Dhamrai Health Complex and Bangladesh Scouts

The rescuers said the equipment is not enough for the rescue work. "If we had a tower crane, we could have removed the debris quickly. said Porimal Chandra Kundu, a fire brigade instructor.

Although all the expertise of the rmy, police, fire brigade and Rab has been put in, it is not enough for such a massive work," a Rab colonel engaged in the rescue work told The Daily Star. "We don't have the experience

and equipment needed for such a massive operation," Deputy Director of Fire Service Elahi Newaj Bhuiyan told reporters. Officials of the Fire Service co-

ordinating the rescue works said the rescue operations were slower than expected because the owner of the ctory was not co-operating.

"If the owners give us the building plan, it would be easier for us to remove the rubble and pull out the trapped," said Rajuk Chief Engineer Emdadul Islam

SAVE THE LIVING "Our first priority is to rescue those who are still alive under the rubble We will try to bring out the others later," Colonel Igbal Hossain, who was supervising the army rescuers, told The Daily Star

The dog squad was engaged in the rescue operations in the afternoon, he said.

Rescuers dug a hole in the chunk of the wall to supply oxygen to the apped.

Director General of Fire Service Rafigur Rahman said, "We're trying to pump oxygen into the building. We will take all necessary measures keep the trapped alive. The rescuers were preparing to

spread a cover over the debris to protect the site from being washed away. "They (trapped workers) are already suffering from lack of water and food and would die if water washes them," said a Rab officer. The rescuers said they would cut the limbs, if needed, to save the

trapped

PM VISITS SCENE Prime Minister Khaleda Zia visited the scene at 3:30pm yesterday to see the rescue operation and to console the victims' families. She also directed the authorities to gear up the rescue operations and ensure adequate treatment for the iniured.

Khaleda later went to the ombined Military Hospital to see 12 of the injured there arrests. None was arrested as of Earlier, Commerce Minister Altaf

Hossain Choudhury, State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar. Inspector General of Police M Hadisuddin Ahmed, Rab Director General Anwarul Iqbal and Local MP Dewan Mohammad Salahuddin visited the snot CONDOLENCES

President lajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina have expressed their profound shock at the loss of lives and property in the building collapse. CONFUSION OVER CAUSE Civil engineers blamed faulty design and construction for the building

collapse "The building did not have Rajuk's approval," Chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha

BGMEA offers

FROM PAGE 1 probe the incident.

Talking to The Daily Star, Masud

Rana, a civil engineer of Dhaka

struction of a nine-storied building."

Raiuk has formed a five-member

team headed by its Member Nasir

Uddin to investigate the incident.

The committee will submit a report

The state minister for home has

assured the victims of compensa-

factory to compensate the victims,"

would compensate the victims.

Probe body

"He (Shariar) will pay Tk 5,000 for

the burial of each victim, Tk 10,000

to the family of each of the dead and

Tk 5,000 for treatment of the

days. Headed by Prof Abul Hasem,

the committee is formed mainly with

Sources said widespread anger

among JCD activists over nomina-

tions of three Jamaat-e-Islami-

backed teachers for the VC panel

boiled over in Sunday's violence.

which left three teachers and 10

students injured and more than 50

offices including the vice chancel-

the culprits from newspaper reports

and photos and make immediate

filing this report at 7:30pm last night.

Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed,

meanwhile, visited the campus

yesterday. He told newsmen, "We

were taken aback by the incident

and the attackers got away before

Biochemistry and molecular

we could understand the situation "

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police

Some JCD workers however

pro-Jamaat-e-Islami teachers.

"We will consider compensation

building, he added.

PROBE

in three davs

tion

he said

injured," he said.

FROM PAGE 1

lor's ransacked.

Shibir

COMPENSATION

The committee will investigate

Export Processing Zone, said, the cause of the accident and subshowing some pieces of rubble mit the report within five days. "See these materials, these are not BGMEA president Annisul Huq supposed to be used in the conand other leaders remained for hours at the spot and also visited The pillars and rods of the buildlocal hospitals and clinics to check ing cannot take the load of such a

in on the injured. Huq told The Daily Star that a BGMEA team would remain at the accident site for the whole time on a shift basis to provide any emergency requirements.

Factory workers yesterday said the casualties would have been much lower if the owners had not forced the workers to work the night shift. The owners regularly impose night shift work against the will of the workers, they alleged.

and put pressure on the owner of the Mohammad Ferdous Kazi, the husband of Aleya Begum, a worker trapped in the collapsed building, Advocate Mahbubur Rahman, told The Daily Star that the factory father-in-law of factory owner authority withheld payment from Shahriar Sayeed Hossain, told The workers who refused to work the Daily Star last night that Shahriar night shift.

"My wife had come to the factory only to work that day and to collect her salary from last month. She wanted to resign from the factory because of the pressure to work the night shift." Ferdous said.

Ferdous, who works in the same factory, had asked Aleya last night at 9pm not to work the night shift because of her seven month pregnancy. But the need for money compelled her to go. Rescuers last night confirmed

that Aleya died in the accident, although her body has yet to be recovered.

"My wife would have been safe if she had not worked the night shift," a shocked Ferdous said.

BGMEA president Annisul Hug said there is no restriction on conducting night shift work, adding that the building that collapsed was a newly constructed one and had no books

Businesses concerned

FROM PAGE 1

said it was their protest against the told the meeting with the top bankuniversity authorities' depriving their ers that there is a global trend of candidates of quotas for admission high inflation coupled with high to bachelor's courses as well as interest rates, which once used to continued support for Jamaat and be the reverse. Bandladesh has to its student wing Islami Chhatra be cautious in such a situation so that it can control the situation The syndicate at yesterday's without feeling the jolt, he added. meeting asked the police to identify

The central bank also urged the banks to discourage import of items for which there are substantial outstanding LCs in the pipeline.

In the last eight months, deposit marked a growth of 7.3 percent while credit grew at eight percent. Some banks are facing an imbalance of liquidity and credit deposit ratio. To avoid this, all banks need to be careful about a balanced growth of assets and liabilities as per rele-

vant guidelines, the BB said. RIJ Teachers' Association in a Nazrul defended the central bank's position on interest rates saying, "We are not doing it as per the statement vesterday condemned the violence while different teachsuggestion. We have been ers' and students' organisations taking measures to control credit including Bangladesh Chhatra before the IMF made its suggestion." League and ICS demanded a fair The central bank last year asked

all the banks to lower their interest rates in accordance with another biology department teachers suggestion of the IMF saying the observed a full day work abstention rates are already too high. Meanwhile, 10 top business to protest the attack on one of their

leaders in a joint statement yester-

Rescue

FROM PAGE 16 good number of locals have joined hands with the rescuers.

The sobbing and wailing of the relatives of the trapped garment workers filled the air around the spot, while the rescue workers could do little in salvaging.

Fire fighters and rescuers were using three excavators, cranes, rotary saws, tripping hands, drills, spades, reciprocating saws, chipping hammer drills, manual cutters gas cutters, and other instruments to cut the slabs and machinery in a bid to rescue the trapped.

also shouted back. Some even The way the operation is prochanted slogans: "We don't gressing, it might take one week to get the debris removed, said some accept a judge with a fake certifirescuers. cate.'

"If we had a tower crane, we might remove the debris quickly, Porimal Chandra Kundu, a fire brigade instructor said, adding that using tower crane would allow them to remove debris weighing five to six tons from around 150 vards.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury visited the spot of the tragedy.

He said, "We have offered the administration our all out cooperation. Our doctors are ready to assist while many of our volunteers are already engaged in rescue opera-

Saber said they also offered specialised machinery from Unique Group to assist the rescue opera-

Writ petition

leading to its commercial launch. Mesbahuddin Ahmed, an associate professor of the Department of History at Dhaka University, and Nasimul Ghani, an employee of the BTTB and Organising Secretary of Telejogajog Sramik Karmachari Union, filed the writ petition with the

High Court Division of the Supreme peaceful environment. Court.

The court may hear the petition

today. The petitioners sought a rule upon the respondents to show cause as to why the transfer of the licence and allocation of the frequency should not be declared illegal. They also urged the court to stay operations of Teletalk and using the frequency allocated by the BTRC.

The respondents are Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), its chairman, BTTB and its chairman. secretary of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and Teletalk

The telecoms watchdog BTRC granted BTTB the licence to run mobile phone service and later transferred the ownership of the licence to Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd, a newly formed state-owned company, in clear violation of the telecoms law, the petition said.

Golam Mahbub, Advocate Abdul The government commercially Baset Majumder, Barrister launched the cellphone service on Shafique Ahmed and Advocate March 31 Ozaer Faruk met Chief Justice

Police beat

FROM PAGE 16 police made him an accused follow ing a clash with drug peddlers on April 2. When contacted by telephone last night, the Kotwali police station said that Asharf was an accused in a police assault case from April 2.

"I took bail from the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court on 7." the bus ing. "But Kotwali Police came to my shop to arrest me on Sunday night."

Chaos in court

FROM PAGE 1

the court.

onstration

tasks.

dent's room.

When Faizee took his seat at

around 10.45am, the SCBA

secretary told him that the com-

plaint on his LLB certificate is

pending with the Bar Council. He

requested the judge not to sit at

Rahim's statement enraged

the pro-government lawyers and

government law officers present

there. Pro-boycott lawyers then

At one point, Supreme Court

lawyers and BNP Law Secretary

Advocate Jainul Abedin told

Faizee that they expect him to

The pro-boycott lawyers then

came out and staged demonstra-

tion in front of the courtroom.

aizee's courtroom from inside.

pushed open the door and

At around 11.15am, former

of Faizee. He said, "We met the

chief justice yesterday and he will

sit again with all the former SCBA

Majumder urged Faizee to

Faizee however expressed his

At around 11.30am, the pro-

Advocate Jainul Abedin then

said that the pro-boycott lawyers

were doing all these to tarnish the

At around 1.15pm, the pro-

overnment lawyers held a meet-

ing on the Bar Association pre-

mises with Abedin in the chair

protesting the SCBA boycott.

Later they staged a sit-in demon-

stration in front of SCBA presi-

At 2:00pm, SCBA President

Advocate Mahbubey Alam and

six past SCBA presidents

Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, Dr

Kamal Hossain, Advocate Kazi

After the half-an hour meeting.

Mahbubey Alam told journalists

Syed JR Mudassir Husain

mage of the Supreme Court.

poycott lawyers walked out of the

oom chanting slogans.

desire to undertake judicial

refrain from sitting at the court for

the time being for the sake of

presidents this afternoon."

entered the courtroom again.

work as a Supreme Court judge.

that they met the chief justice to request him not to let Faizee sit in the court till the certificate issue is resolved. The chief justice told them that he will look into the matter and sit with them soon.

"The government activities to foil our association's decision are condemnable. Until it is proved that judge Faizee passed LLB, we shall continue to boycott his court," Mahbubey Alam told journalists reading out a statement.

"In the past as our association decided to boycott a chief justice's court, he never sat in his court and the government also did not interfere. We also urge judge Faizee to follow that example," he said.

Agonising wait "Will Faizee accept the decision of the Bar Association or listen to FROM PAGE 1

the BNP law secretary?" said there came a bit of fresh air. Soon Enayetur Rahim during the demwe saw narrow beams of light and a small hole ' At this point, the pro-

They started to crawl towards jovernment lawyers locked the light beams by holding each other's legs, like a snake trying to The pro-boycott lawyers then come out of a hole, he described. 'But we found the hole was blocked by the debris. The sight SCBA president Abdul Baset surely disheartened us, but we did not give in. We started to remove Majumder came to the spot and the debris, fighting for life. After delivered a speech in presence about 15 minutes of struggle we finally managed to came out of the

> hell." he continued. The scream of the trapped Nur Alam could be heard but it was too far for him to rescue him, said Monaem.

> "Save mv life, mv hands are stuck in the rubble," Alam pleaded with the rescuers. Alam, a garment worker, became trapped under the wreckage while working on the sixth floor. He was rescued at 3:30pm, around 15 hours after

the collapse. Though he was only three yards away, it took hours for the

rescuers to drag him out of the rubble. Rescuers said Alam told them that two of his colleagues were

also trapped somewhere near him alive. But the rescuers could not salvage them as of 4:00pm.

A sobbing Abbas Uddin Khokan, brother-in-law of Alam, told The Daily Star that Alam begged him to fetch three-yearold Nisha so that he could have a last sight of his dear little boy.

"Let me drink and save my life," Zindar Ali screamed to his relatives over a cell phone at about 8:30am.

Badrul, brother-in-law of Zindar, told reporters that he could not do anything except informing the rescuers that he was trapped. Zindar, however, was rescued at around 3:00pm.

23 file papers Young knitting workers Rashedul and Imran, now miss-

Sunday to take their last two organised mammoth rallies, the months' salary. four-party alliance for Mir Nasir at "But the office administration tadium Committee for Mohiuddin Chowdhury at the Dampara Jamiatul Falah Mosque premises. Traffic movement was hampered for a few hours as the roads leading to the two venues were virtually blocked by buses, trucks and other vehicles hired by the two sides. At the Nagorik Committee rally Mohiuddin Chowdhury sought people's support to implement his 40-point programme for the development of Chittagong and the benefit of the city dwellers. Speakers at the rally urged supporters to remain vigilant during the May 9 CCC polls and to turn out at the polling centres City Awami League President MA Mannan chaired the rally addressed by leaders of AL and other opposiion parties The BNP led four-party alliance leaders at the Outer Stadium rally called for electing alliance nominated mayoral candidate Mir Nasir Police seized the launch and filed to "free the CCC from wide-spread a case with the Kalkini police station, corruption and to bring about the but the master and other planned and real development of crewmembers have so far managed . Chittagong" to escape. With Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, also the convenor of the local unit of four-party alliance, in the Qatar emir chair former minister for water resources LK Siddiqui MP FROM PAGE 16 addressed the rally as the chief foreign ministry sources said yesterguest day. The official talks between Meanwhile, Chittagram Mohanagar Gana Oikya Parishad, a Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will be forum of professionals supporting Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, vesheld in the evening of April 15 at the terday urged an end to newspaper Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Prior advertisements announcing allotto the talks, the Emir and the prime ment of residential plots and flats minister will have tete-a-tete. developed by the CCC, as these The agreements that are expected to be signed after the might have an "undue impact" on fficial talks will include avoidance the upcoming CCC polls.

FROM PAGE 16 ing, went to the factory at 7:30pm The two major contending parties

supply shocks, production losses decline in productivity, frequent increases in the administrated prices of fuel oil, power and gas, devaluation of the currency, and Bangladesh Ltd. problems of law and order. "Poor law and order conditions constitute a significant factor behind price increases. Businessmen have requently complained that extortion

by different groups of hoodlums at all stages of production, transportation, wholesale marketing and retailing raises the prices of essentials '

For controlling inflation, there-fore, much depends on decisions which have more to do with law and order problems, fiscal and trade policy, exchange rate management, nfrastructural bottlenecks, administered prices, and monetary policy. Raising interest rates without addressing these other problems will aggravate rather than control any inflationary pressure, the business leaders felt.

"In the present situation of the there is thus a nomy

and transfer money legally or ille gally to different banks abroad. tions This will also encourage the spread of black money, they added. NBR officials on the other hand told The Daily Star that many of the professionals have crores of taka as . deposits with the banks while they show very little in their possession in their tax returns

taxes by some professionals

An NBR list shows that some top contractors, developers and engineering companies did not pay any taxes in the fiscal year 2003-2004. Most of the 101 enlisted developers showed zero tax returns. while many of them showed losses in their

the other hand, monetary policy was eased starting from 1989, when the

inflation rate declined to below 2

percent despite significant expan-

sion of credit in the economy. Major

factors which contributed to price

increases are budget deficits,

FROM PAGE 16 The NBR observes that payment does not reflect their lifestyle.

reached the spot to treat the injured Several ambulances were on

stand by for taking the injured to the hospital **RELATIVES ANXIOUS**

The rescuers cut a hole in the wall of the building to bring out the trapped as hundreds of waiting relatives kept their fingers crossed.

Earlier, the law enforcers sealed off the area as scores of relatives were waiting outside for news of their near and dear ones.

The relatives had been conducting rescue efforts themselves since early yesterday morning, until the law enforcers drove them off at around 8:00am

Rab men set up a control room on the southern side of the building, where relatives were directed to contact them.

Only 83 of the missing were enlisted by relatives. INSUFFICIENT EQUIPMENT

DCC cleaners remove

FROM PAGE 16

Rahat Khan, acting editor of the daily Ittefag vesterday visited the North South Road footpaths at 11.30am while the DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka visited several lanes and by-lanes of Bongsal Road in old Dhaka, the DCC's public relations sources said.

Mainul Hosein, chairman, editorial board of the daily Ittefag and the DCC mayor are expected to visit the footpaths of the Bokshibazar area today. When asked about the total

budget of the special drive, Commander Sohel Farouquie, chief conservancy officer, DCC, also the coordinator of the drive, said, "Our department will spend Tk 41 lakh for paying the cleaners and for publicity

to increase public awareness" Abu Taleb, chief estate officer. DCC said. "We are conducting a demolition drive simultaneously in ten zones of the DCC with 12 eviction teams led by respective zonal executive officers and two magistrates of the DCC".

He said illegal encroachments on footpaths would be removed under the special drive from April 10 to 24. He said the eviction team yesterday conducted a drive at Shantinagar and along Kamal Ataturk Avenue and some other roads, following an eviction list.

Without the vigilance of police it is impossible for the DCC to main-

tain encroachment-free footpaths, he added

Under the special drive 50 to 56 cleaners will work daily in each of DCC's 90 wards. Alongside the DCC's 7,000 regular cleaners, 5,000 more will work under the drive every day from 9:00am till 12:00

Shahdat Hossain, a pedestrian in Mirpur said they are facing problems as the DCC cleaners sweep the roads during office hours. He complained, "The DCC cleaners sweep the roads between 9am and 10am which creates problems for the pedestrian.'

Robbers kill

FROM PAGE 1 bank, said the robbers entered the bank's Rajpat branch, breaking open the collapsible gate. They could not loot cash from the vault as they failed

to break it open, he added. There is no night guard at the Krishi Bank's Rajpat branch.

Locals said the gang also looted eight different shops at Rajpat Bazaar and took away Tk 2 lakh and gold ornaments. They beat up eight shop owners, leaving them injured.

Police sent the body of Ayub Hossain to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Kashiani Police Station, but the law enforcers could not arrest any of the gang as of yesterday evening.

Shahid Alam told The Daily Star or the scene.

"It is not properly designed and constructed. Its construction materials and structure do not match the one required of a nine-story build ing." He added that the building did not have the foundation required by an establishment in such a low-lying

area Some law enforcers at the site, however, said the explosion of a boiler on the ground floor triggered the collapse. A top officer of the factory told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity that the boiler exploded after the power was snapped.

"After the building started going down and the upper floors crumbled, the power line was cut off and the boiler exploded. But the explosion by no means caused the collapse: it occurred well after the subsiding started." he said.

Highest security FROM PAGE 16

the city, scene of religious riots in 2002

probe into the incident.

colleagues.

"We want to show our visitors that they are as safe here as in other parts of India, said police officer PK Jha.

India, 2-1 up, could secure at least a share of the series but the momentum is with the tourists, who won Friday's match in Jamshedpur bv 106 runs.

The teams travelled together from Mumbai and were bussed from Ahmedabad airport through a side gate as hundreds of fans waited to welcome them.

Despite Friday's loss, when India were bowled out for 213, home captain Sourav Ganguly remained confident at the half-way point in the series

"We are still ahead in the series. It is going to be close because the wickets are going to be good in the next three matches," he said.

"Whoever holds their nerve on the day is going to win."

Pakistan hit 319-6 and skipper Inzamamul Hag added: "The series is still open if we work really hard."

MP's son

FROM PAGE 1

two-week anticipatory bail from the High Court (HC) on April 3. The HC bench comprising Justices AK Badrul Huq and Fazlur Rahman asked him to surrender before the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, after a two-week period. In accordance with the HC direction, the petitioner appeared before the court and prayed for bail.

The prosecution, however, opposed it and prayed for sending Noman to custody.

On hearing both the sides, the court rejected the bail petition and ordered to send him to Dhaka Central Jail.

The lawyer's son and six others beat up traffic constable Abdul Maiid on Manik Mia Avenue on March 30 for pulling him over for defying the red signal.

The constable, who suffered severe wounds in the forehead, filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station the same day accusing Noman and six of his accomplices.

Police arrested Noman's friend Billal Ahmed Billal at his Asad Gate residence on April 2.

Constable Majid is still undergoing treatment at Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital.

day expressed deep concern over the IMF proposal to increase the interest rates.

"The business community is not aware of the details of the proposal as the IMF mission did not care to have any discussion with it. As reported in the press, the mission wanted increase of the bank interest rate so as to control inflation. The business community strongly feels that if the press reports are true, the IMF's proposal is ill-judged and not based on any proper assessment," said the statement. statement said.

"The country's economy has already started getting the benefits of the lowe interest rate regime. Production costs have declined thereby improving the international competitiveness," added the statement.

Signatories to the statement included Abdul Awal Mintoo, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mahbubur Rahman of International Chamber Commerce Bangladesh, Kutubuddin Ahmed of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sayeeful Islam of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, M Anis Ud Dowla of Bangladesh Employers' Federation Mahbub Jamil of the Foreign Investors Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Annisul Huq of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, MA Awal of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, M Ali Behrouze Ispahani of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association and Fazlul Hoque of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association. The statement said industrial

output has increased by two per-centage points during July-October, 2004 indicating creation of new job opportunities, and there are other indicators to show reduction of poverty. "High cost of credit will negate the on-going growth process," it added.

"At present, interest rates are higher compared to those in the neighbouring countries. In Bangladesh, interest rates are in the 12-15 percent range as against 6-7 percent in India, 5 percent in Pakistan, and as low as 2.7 percent in Sri Lanka. On export credit, too, the interest rate is much higher in Bangladesh, around 7-10 percent, which is more than twice the rate prevailing in India and Pakistan," the business leaders pointed out.

The statement went on, "Historically speaking, inflation in this country has never been a monetary phenomenon alone. For instance, in the second half of the 1990s, monetary policy was made more restrictive but inflation rate continued to remain high at around 8 percent. On

case for further lowering rather than raising interest rates. We, therefore, suggest that the central bank should further reduce the bank rate and refix it at 5 percent, the rate that prevailed in the mid-1990s, and nduce commercial banks to lower their lending rates further. At the same time, the government needs to take appropriate fiscal and other policies that will encourage higher capacity utilisation, more investment, etc., which will bring about a downward movement of prices," the

Most garment FROM PAGE 1

The CIF has only four staff who inspected the 100 factories in the last couple of months following a directive of the parliamentary standing committee on labour ministry. The CIF. a wing of the labour

ministry, submitted its survey report on March 31 to the standing committee stating that the factory workers are at serious risk of accidents.

The report says due to lack of manpower the CIF cannot take legal action against all the factory owners who are violating the safety rules.

The factory owners have to face legal procedures if their factories do not have the mandatory safety arrangements, says The Factory Rule 1979.

Most garment factories in Bangladesh are located in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Chittagong and they account for 76 percent of the total export earnings.

The standing committee at its March 31 meeting expressed dissatisfaction over the poor safety arrangements that often lead to workers' deaths. It asked the authorities and the factory owners to ensure improved safety of the workers

According to available statistics, as many as 295 garment workers died and 2,510 were injured in 22 fire incidents in 15 years since 1990.

The latest such disaster was vesterday's building collapse in Savar that killed at least 15 workers. Around 400 others were trapped inside

The parliamentary body also formed a subcommittee to make a report on the safety measures, salary and wages of the garment workers by the end of June.

"We will discuss the issue at our next meeting on April 24 and then recommend stern actions against the factory owners who violate the rules," Committee Chairman Mosharraf Hossain Mongu yesterday told The Daily Star.

He also said that seven police personnel, led by Kotwali thana Sub Inspector Aslam, came to his Agamash Lane shop dressed in plain clothes and beat him severely before taking him to the Kotwali police station.

"When I showed the bail order issued by the court, the police became furious and did not heed my words," he added.

Police later released Ashraf when people of Agamashi Lane bought out a procession against the police and showed the bail order to the Office in Charge (OC) of the Kotwali police station

Police also admitted that Ashraf was taken to the Police Station on Sunday night but denied the allegation that he had been assaulted.

Ashraf was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital as he received severe injuries to different parts of his body following the police assault.

Faulty construction FROM PAGE 1

piling was not done properly. He said Rajuk will file a case with the local police station against the

building owner. Despite repeated attempts, Shahriar Sayeed Hossain, the owner of the building could not be reached for comment. He did not go to the spot until vesterday evening.

Advocate Mahbubur Rahman, father-in-law of Hossain, opposed the statements of the Rajuk chairman and said, "These kinds of allegations are made after such incidents." He claimed an architect designed the building and it was constructed three years ago.

"It is not true that the building was very poorly built but it did not have a strong foundation. They are making such assumptions without referring to the design of the building," said Rahman, also the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on land.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar said punitive action would be taken against such unauthorised construc-

"People lay foundation of a twostorey building and later build more stories. This must be controlled," he said when he visited the site yesterday. "Such incidents occur due to owners' neglect," the state minister added

BSS adds: The Rajuk authorities yesterday formed a five-member committee to find out the reasons behind the collapse

The committee headed by Rajuk member (planning and development) M Nasir Uddin will submit its report as well as recommendations within next three days, said Rajuk sources.

They will review the approved design of the collapsed building as well as the structural design.

BJP lawmakers

FROM PAGE 16 statements without party decision, they said.

"He has violated discipline of the party," said BJP lawmakers -- Prof MA Matin, Kazi Md Anwar Hussain, MM Aminuddin and Kazi Alauddin. They were elected from BJP in the 2001 general election on alliance ticket

The lawmakers asked Naziur to withdraw his "personal comments" against the other components of the alliance. Otherwise, they warned, "We will be bound to take proper decision against him discussing it in the party forum.'

Emir of Qatar will pay a courtesy call on President lajuddin Ahmed at the Earlier in the day, the lawmakers met Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, at her office

forced them to work in the nightshift, saying that otherwise they would not let them draw their salary," Mariam, Rashedul's

sister, told The Daily Star. "I've been waiting to find out about my brother since the incident, but the law enforcers are not letting us near the site,' she said breaking down in tears.

5 more bodies

FROM PAGE 16

bags full of wheat. The dead bodies were identified as Mansura (6) Tamanna (8), Anifa (07) Joytun (42) and Renuka (38).

A pall of gloom fell over the area vesterday when gathering crowds saw the dead bodies being removed. The trawler sank on the morning

of April 9 after being rammed by a double-decker launch, the MV Tarika-2, at Rafarchar under Kalkini upazila of the district.

of double taxation, reciprocal pro-

motion and protection of invest-

ment, news exchange between

Qatar News Agency (QNA) and Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha

(BSS) and cooperation in the fields

Of the two MoUs, one is likely to

fedúcation, science and culture

be signed between the ministries of

foreign affairs of Bangladesh and

Qatar and the other between Qatar

Chamber of Commerce and Industry

and its Bangladesh counterpart

Federation of Bangladesh Chamber

of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

banquet to be hosted by the prime

minister in honor of the distin-

guished guest and members of his

entourage at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. On April 16, the

Later, the Emir will attend a

the sources added.

Bangabhaban