Toll rises to 46

in a clash after the police charged baton on several hundred demonstrators who were protesting the delay in rescue operation at the

The salvage ship Hamza reached the spot at about 1:00pm and started rescue operations at 5:00pm. Strong currents and high winds hampered rescue efforts but the operations ended at about 7:30pm, our correspondent reports from Patuakhali.

spot, 30 kilometres off Galachipa

Earlier, TI Kadery, deputy director of BIWTA and commander of the salvage ship Hamza, said the rescue operations would finish by Monday night.

The rescuers found 26 bodies inside the sunken vessel but feared that more bodies might be trapped inside it. A police officer at the spot said many bodies might have been washed away by strong currents.

Five of the bodies recovered yesterday were identified as Madhobi Rani, 40, Maleka Begum, 35, Shakil, 6, Ismail, 25, and Lizi, 11, rescuers and police said.

Several hundred people, including relatives of the passengers,

staged a demonstration at the spor yesterday morning, alleging "delay in rescue operations." Police rescue operations." charged batons and fired five rounds of rubber bullets to disperse the protestors.

At least 20 people including three cops and one local journalist were injured during the clash between the police and protestors. The injured police constables were identified as Abdul Halim, Mizan and Sohag.

AKM Jahangir Hossain, MP along with officials of the district administration visited the spot where the overloaded single-decker launch sank at about 11:00am Sunday after sailing from Patuakhali for Char Montaj in Galachipa upazila.

The vessel was registered to carry 80 people but it was carrying more than 200 people and a huge number of sacks of potato during the accident, the survivors said.

Md Sahajahan Khan, owner o the launch, is vice president of BNP

In the last one decade, over 4.000 people died in major launch accidents in the country. The government however put the number at

cials on leave preparatory to retire-

ment (LPR) will now get their salary

for one full year at once instead of

Dhaka will be different from that for

officials living outside. The [allowance] for transport during transfer

has been increased. Medical allow-

ance has been raised to Tk 500 from

Tk 400. Conveyance allowance has

been increased to Tk 100 from Tk

50 percent selection grade, while

Bangladesh Civil Service cadre

officials will get a 100 percent selec-

tion grade. The civil service has 20

The BCS cadre entry-level offi-

The cabinet has decided that a

Pensioners will also get a 25

According to the finance minis-

The government had formed a

An additional Tk 6.712 crore in

budgetary allocation was necessary

to fully implement the recommenda-

tions made in the new pay scale

The current budget has earmarked

Tk 13,477 crore in salaries of gov-

hairman of the sixth Pay

"We had advocated implementa

Commission Mujibul Haq yesterday

said they had recommended the

tion of our recommendations in

phases, but we did not suggest the

size of the pay structure," he said in

his reaction to The Daily Star on the

The new pay approved by the government is lower than the rec-

only after the realities and other

priorities were considered. I have no

dise agriculture; it has to spend for

'This (cabinet) decision came

'The government has to subsi-

'The Bangladesh High Commi-

ssioner in Nairobi informed us that

most of the arrested are Bangla-

deshis and Kenyan police did not

find any proof of their link with terror-

ists and drug peddlers," said a

spokesman of the Ministry of

Bangladesh envoy Major General

Syeed Ahmed as saying the

Bangladeshi nationals are in good

condition and getting food under

Kenyan police arrested 69

"They are unfortunate victims

He said the port city, Mombassa,

is the launching pad used by the

human traffickers where interna-

tional rackets bring the fortune-

seekers from different countries and

try to send them to many developed

countries. There are some nationals

of other countries with the arrested

Nairobi is now in a close contact with

the Kenyan government and trying

to find out the real culprits," the

spokesperson said, adding that

Mofa asked the mission to send a

detailed list of the victims with their

from capital Nairobi, the spokesper-

son said narrating the reason for

delay in communication

Mombassa is around 1,000-km

The Bangladesh mission ir

Bangladeshis, he added.

people in the country's port city on

Friday night and confirmed that the

arrested were all Bangladeshi

The spokesman quoted

new pay structure approval.

mended pay structure.

poverty alleviation," he added.

comment on this."

Kenya

FROM PAGE 1

said vesterday

arrestees

Foreign Affairs (Mofa).

police custody.

ernment's capabilities and wishes.

ernment employees.

five-member secretary-level com-

mittee headed by the cabinet secre-

tary to evaluate the recommenda-

cials will now get a basic salary of Tk

similar formula will be applicable for

the pay structure of defence officials

percent pay rise, the cabinet secre-

ter, the pay hike for teachers under

the MPO scheme will not be stag-

tary told the journalists.

Second class officers will get a

'The house rental for officials in

six months." he added.

80." he said.

different scales

Cabinet's go-ahead

basic pay in July in the second phase. They will get house rent, medical and conveyance allowances and other benefits from July 1, 2006 in the third phase.

According to Saifur, the government employees will also draw the increases in basis salary in arrears for five months together in June.

The pay hike will cost the government Tk 3975 crore. In the first year the government will need Tk 567 crore, Tk 1,663 in the next fiscal year and Tk 1765 crore in the third

Cabinet Secretary Dr Sa'adat Husain told the press after the cabinet meeting that 15.5 lakh civil and defence officials, staffs and teachers are under the MPO payroll, of whom 8.28 lakh are civil servants 1.40 lakh defence staffs and 5.6 lakh teachers on the MPO payroll.

"The army, BDR, ansars and police have different allowances other than salary. These allowances will increase by 30 percent," Husain said.

The new scale also raised some other facilities. For instance, offi-

Judges

FROM PAGE 1 [category of] contempt when a section of lawyers are blocking the chief justice's entrance?"

Referring to instances of contempt of court for 'misconduct' in relation to judges outside the courtroom, the law minister said it depends on the Supreme Court to

uphold its image To substantiate his argument, Moudud cited a number of instances like the arrest of a [railway] station master in Sylhet for not providing a judge train coupe according to his requirement, and an HC judge's suing traffic police for not saluting him and for pulling over a judge's car

to serve case document. "We hope the Supreme Court will

take steps to keep its dignity intact." He also criticised the judges who do not sign the certified copies of their judgements. The government has been deprived of about Tk 1,200 crore in revenues as the National Revenue Board cannot get certified copies of the judgements. "I have a list of 300 cases in which the judges are delaying putting signa-

tures," he added. Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar in a ruling said the Supreme Judicial Council should see whether the delay is being caused by inefficiencies of the judges and if so, those

judges should be removed. Describing it as a 'conspiracy within to undermine the judiciary the law minister said. "The Supreme Judicial Council should take necessary steps in this regard. It is not

possible for us to get involved in the situation.' He said that if the Council does not initiate any steps to this end, the parliament as a sovereign entity has jurisdictions and knows how to

ensure integirity of the judiciary. Responding to ruling BNP lawmakers' demand for punitive actions against the SCBA president and vice chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, the speaker in another ruling

described the ongoing movement of the lawyers as unconstitutional. He said the chief justice (CJ) could draw contempt proceedings against those flouting the constitu-

tion by launching the movement against him. "Blocking the entryway of the

chief justice and asking him to withdraw a certain judge is unconstitutional." Sircar said and mentioned that the case over the judge's fake High Court.

nationals. certificate is still pending with the and fell prey to unscrupulous man-On framing a new law defining power agents. The Ministry of the contempt of court, the law minis-Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas ter said. "Now is high time to define Employment is finding the way to what is contempt and what is not, repatriate them," the spokesperson

and the ministry is working to enact a new legislation by repealing the 1926 law." he said He alleged that a group of law-

yers loyal to a particular political party is unleashing anarchy on the Supreme Court premises.

The minister urged lawvers to refrain from staging demonstrations and resolve the matter through talks with the chief justice.

Earlier, BNP lawmakers Moazzem Hossain Alal, Shahidul Islam and Zahiruddin Swapon on separate points of order demanded

actions against the agitating lawyers. Amid huge table-thumping by the treasury benchers including the prime minister, the BNP lawmakers demanded that the House adopt a censure motion against the leaders of Bangladesh Bar Council and the

BALU KILLING CASE Court accepts charge sheet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

After hearing the journalist Humayun Kabir Balu muder case, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Khulna, accepted the charge sheet in the case on Sunday.

The court has directed police to arrest the absconding accused in the case. Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of

Dainik Janmabhumi, was killed in a bomb attack in front of his officecum-residence at Haji Ismail Road in the city at noon on June 27 last Two separate cases were

recorded with Khulna Police Station in connection with the murder. Later. the cases were transferred to the Detective Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP).

Police arrested 17 people as suspects. Of them, 14 were taken on remand for questioning during nvestigation.

On April 26, charges were pressed against eight extremists. They are founder of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan, Shoiab, Sumon, Shadhin, Nazu, Masum, Rimon and

Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan, Shoiab, Shumon and Nazu

Boy injured in bomb blast in Dinajpur

bomb explosion at Khanpur Bazaar on Sunday night left a boy

injured. Police said unknown miscreants lobbed the bomb from the rooftop of a shop, leaving a 12-year-old boy, Mukul, injured. He was admitted to Dinajpur Medical College and

Police arrested two persons --Mofazzal Hossain and his son Golap --for their alleged involvement in the explosion. They were sent to jail after being produced before the court vesterday.

Galib denied

gered. "They will be able to draw neir new salaries at one go," he Jamiatul Mujahideen and teacher of Rajshahi University, facing criminal The teachers will draw salaries charges under explosive act. under the new scale from July 1.

District and Sessions Judge ASM Zahurul Islam turned down the appeal when his lawyer moved the bail petition in the case filed on February 6 under the Explosive Act, tions of the sixth Pav Commission and place a proposal before the

Earlier, his bail appeals were also refused in the same case on April 7 and May 9.

On tip-off that Jamiatul Mujahideen members were planning to carry out sabotage at the house of Joynal Sarker at Chaksud village in Gabtoli upazila, police raided the house on January 6 and recovered explosive-making mate-

The raid followed confessional statements made earlier by two arrested people -- Safigullah and Monwara Begum.

Muslims

FROM PAGE 16

Faizullah, Mufti Mohammad Tayeb and Junayed Al Hafiz spoke at a rally chaired by Maolana Abul Kashem at the north gate of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque.

The rally was held to protest the desecration of the holy Quran by the US troops at Guantanamo Bay

detention centre in Cuba. Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini and IOJ Secretary General Mufti Mohammad Tayeb said if the US authorities do not apologise in public, the Muslims will hit the US interests around the world.

Without naming Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Maolana Matiur Rahman Nizami, Taveb criticised his (Nizami's) statement in this regard for its

leniency in language. Morcha Secretary Junaved Al Hafiz said, "Prime Minister Khaleda Zia should stand against the US

He demanded that a resolution be adopted by the Jatiya Sangsad condemning the incident of desecrating the holy Quran.

Current political

FROM PAGE 16

election reforms in Bangladesh. The seminar observed that time has come to practise democracy within the political parties first and give it an institutional shape.

The speakers urged the politicians not to practise democracy only on the day of elections. They said democracy will be meaningful when democratic system and institution will get stronger.

They also said formulation of a aw is essential to prohibit participation of former bureaucrats, army officers and justices in active politics in five years of their retirement.

Transparency in selecting leaders is also a must, observed the seminar attended by a large number of distinguished persons.

The roundtable was also addressed by Advocate Enayet Ali, Prof Anowarul Kader, Jahangir Alam Sabuj, ward commissioner Ruma Khatoon, freedom fighter Abdul Jalil, Dr Kudrat-e-Khuda, Khalid Hossain, Selim Bulbul, Lokman Hakim, Monoranjon Mondol, Shaikh Abdul Kayum, Gazi Haider Runu, Advocate Feroze Ahmed.

One minute's silence was observed in memory of slain journalist Manik Chandra Šaha.

Ctg experience

Committee that wrested a resounding win of Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Hasina said the people of Chittagong showed how their vote and verdict could be protected overcoming all 'intimidation, machinations and manipulation'.

"It is the responsibility of the citizens to cast their vote and protect their verdict," she said. " Had we protected the vote in 2001 the way the people of Chittagong did, the alliance would not have dared to hijack people's verdict.

Hasina alleged that an evil move for manipulating the CCC polls results was made despite the massive popularity of Mohiuddin but the unity of people foiled it. But in the national election it is

not possible to do what the people of Chittagong did, she said. So, it has become imperative to reform caretaker government system and the Election Commission to ensure free, fair and impartial election, said the opposition leader. Referring to the inauguration of a

bridge on the river Arial Khan by the prime minister at Madaripur. Hasina said the present government is claiming credits inaugurating proects undertaken by others. Construction of the bridge was initiated by the previous Awami League (AL) government, she said, adding the same thing happened in the case of Rupsha Bridge

Mohiuddin said anti-liberation forces captured power through a conspiracy and is out to destroy the

democratic order in the country. He called upon all to forge a movement at ward level to resist them and help bring about develop-

In reply to a proposal, Hasina advised formation of an advisory council comprising leaders of Nagorik Committee to help Mohiuddin implement his 40-point pledges for the development of Chittagong, and to create pressure on the government in this regard.

Nagorik Committee Vicechairman Mahmudul Islam chaired the nearly two-hour meeting. Earlier, committee leaders urged

Hasina to take steps to maintain unity of people in the committee.

Others who addressed the meeting included AL Joint Secretary Obayedul Kader, Nagorik Committee Secretary General Abu Yusuf Alam, Gono Forum leader M Kafil Uddin, CPB leader Mrinal Chowdhury, Islami Front Bangladesh leader Mamtaz Uddin Chowdhury and Prof Md Jahangir.

AL central leaders Motia Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, former minister Mosharraf Hossain, local leader Moslem Uddin Ahmad and Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Ahmad Siddique attended the meeting

EC to ask govt

chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed discussed the issues and agreed in principle to amend the rules for local government elections in a bid to hold the polls in a free and fair

"If the rules are formulated giving us more legal power, the Election Commission will be more competent in conducting the local government elections," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star after the meet-

ing.

The issues will be incorporated in the EC proposal on reforms to be submitted to the government soon. The CEC at vesterday's meeting said the reform proposal would be finalised at the next meeting, sources The existing electoral rules

empower the government to deploy army personnel only in the parliamentary elections. There is no provision for army deployment in the local government polls, the sources The government however

deploys army to maintain law and order in the city corporation elections, which has become a convention. During the last Union Parishad (UP) elections in 2002, a rift devel-

oped between the government and the EC as the government refused to deploy army in the elections. EC sources said the government does not extend all-out cooperation

to the EC though the constitution says it will be the responsibility of the executive authorities to assist the EC in conducting any election. Against the backdrop the EC is for provisions that would make the EC

recommendations obligatory. commissioners said the EC should have legal power to recommend army deployment in the local gov-

ernment elections. "It is true that deployment of army personnel in each Union Parishad during the election is not possible. But the Election Commission can ask the government to deploy army in the union parishads considered as vulnera-

ble," Mohammad Ali said. "It is possible to deploy army personnel in the municipal elections," he added.

About the electoral enquiry committee, the EC observed that in absence of such committees the EC cannot take stern actions against irregularities in the local govern-

ment elections. The enquiry committees can play a vital role in checking electoral irregularities in the rliamentary election.

"If the rules are amended and the EC is provided with power of forming electoral enquiry committees while conducting local governmen elections, it will be helpful to hold the polls in a free and fair manner

Contempt rule

FROM PAGE 16 bond of Tk 1 lakh with four guarantors. The PP did not oppose the bail petition despite being the prosecution lawyer since the case was filed

on January 24 last year. During hearing on the bail petition, PP Hassan had told the court that he would have no objection to the bail move since the court grants the accused bail with proper guarantors.

On April 2, the same court rejected the bail petition of the accused on the ground that the charges brought against him had been primarily proved. The prosecution had also opposed the bail petition, saying Shoaib through his activities had offended the religious

sentiments of Muslims On March 28, the HC bench in a rule ordered the government to show reasons within 10 days as to why Shoaib would not be granted bail.

The law stipulates that no lower

court pass any orders on a matter if any rule on the same matter is pending with the higher court. Shoaib's getting bail in the lower

court drew the attention of the HC bench that viewed the matter tantamount to contempt to court. Police arrested Shoaib from Zia

International Airport on November 2003 for his alleged ties to Mossad. Israel's counterintelligence agency. Mohammad Abdul Hanif, officer-in-charge (OC) of Airport Police Station, filed a sedition case against Shoaib with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka on January 24

last vear. Shoaib was scheduled to present a paper at a Tel Aviv seminar, and faxes and e-mails seized from his possession proved that he had passed sensitive information out,

stated the complaint. A project profile seeking a fund of Tk 12 crore from the Jews in Israel was also found on him. The fund was sought to publish three dailies, namely the Dainik Sonali Din, Dainik Rupantar and Dainik Paribartan, the

"Lessons learnt from operating

43 CCs showed PPP approach is

practical and feasible since local

community involvement gives some

sort of ownership to the beneficia-

ries," said Dr Md Azam Ali, Team

Leader of Northern Ireland Centre

for Health Care Cooperation and

ownership of local people in operat-

ing the CCs, it would not work effec-

tively. So, the idea of local level

ownership of the CCs would eventu-

ally lead to accountability and quality services," said Habibul

Hasan Siddique, Director

Programme of Thengamara Mohila

Secretary A F M Sarwar Kamal said

the government is considering

commissioning private bodies or

NGOs to run CCs through

Management Support Agency

(MSA) which will, in turn, contact,

finance and monitor NGOs and

"We hope to begin contracting

private sector providers of health

out initially 350 CCs to NGOs within

three to four months. The piloting

When contacted, Health

"If the aovernment ignores

Development, NICARE.

Sabuj Sangha (TMSS).

services

Govt sits on community

FROM PAGE 16 selected CCs mostly in remote

A total of 73 CCs were commissioned to provide Essential Services Package (ESP) particularly for the hardcore poor and most vulnerable population

Five NGOs (Brac, TMSS, PAPAN, DUS and JAKAS) were partners in the PPP for running 43 CCs under DFID and NICARE funding and the rest 30 CCs were run by PLAN, NSDP and BPHC/PHD partner NGOs under projects funded by CIDA and other development partners.

The health ministry appreciated the PPP approach to run the CCs at the final dissemination workshop and launch of NGO network for the PPP in December 2004. Earlier, a national workshop

report titled 'Community clinics and community mobilisation for ESP delivery' prepared in May 1999 praised primary healthcare delivery from the CCs by village health volunteers (VHV) under thana functional improvement pilot project (TFIPP). A remarkable increase of patient attendance was observed in CC approach, it said. The CCs were built to serve an

estimated 6,000 people in every union with the aim of replacing traditional home visits by FP workers and weekly satellite clinics so as to provide both healthcare and FP services under a single roof termed, 'one-stop-shopping'. But the government is now going for more piloting on the use of CCs

by NGOs or private sector, which

some policy makers term unneces-

sary, sources said.

would last up to 36 months and a technical team (TA) will be appointed to undertake the development, management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the CCs programmes." The CCs were built by the

Construction, Maintenance and Management Unit (CMMU) and the Local Government-Engineering Department (LGED) during fiscal 1999-2001 on land donated by people roughly at the centre of each union to facilitate easy access

Removed **CMP** commissioner made DIG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Amzad Hossain, removed before the city corporation elections, has been made deputy inspector general (DIG) of Chittagong range. Police headquarters removed

him on May 2 after the Election Commission ordered for his removal on his failure to discharge duties impartially in the run-up to elections. In a major reshuffle yesterday in police top positions, the government

also gave MA Mazed, additional DIG of Chittagong range, the charge of the CMP commissioner, sources The former superintendent of

police (SP) of Sherpur, Nivas Chandra Majhi, has been transferred to Sarda Police Training Rowshan Ara Begum, commanding officer (CO) of Armed

Police Battalion (APBn)-8 of Dhaka has been made the CO of APBn-9 of Dhaka, while CO ZA Morshed of APBn-9 (Dhaka) has been transferred to the Sylhet APBn.
Rangpur Additional SP Harun-

ur-Rashid, who was on deputation to Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), and Pabna ASP Kazi Fazlul Karim have been promoted SP and transferred to Chandpur and Sherpur.

Khokon admits taking photos of staged minority persecution

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Mizanur Rahman Khokon yesterday gave confessional statement to the magistrate court that he and other associates of Sanjoy Ghosh fabricated a minority persecution drama and took photographs of it with a view to seeking political asylum in France on grounds that were actually false.

Police arrested Mizanur Rahman

Khokon, 29, and Sanjoy Gosh, 28,

on May 12 on charge of staging a sequence of minority persecution and took them on a three-day remand for interrogation. Meanwhile, the magistrate court granted a prayer for seven-day

remand to interrogate Sanjoy by Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka. Barisal district police administration formed a three-member enquiry committee headed by Additional Superintendent of Police Manirul Islam and directed to submit report

as early as possible. The team visited the Barisal Kotwali Police Station and interrogated the arrestees on Sunday.

Sanjib, Niranjan, Palsh, Khokon Mamun, Ashok, Mizan and other associates of Sanjoy participated in the staged minority persecution, activities of Islamic fundamentalists in the field adjacent to a local community clinic and Buniadi High

bigger Annual Development

Programme. The inflation is on the

rise and private sector credit is on

year ago, it would have been better.

It's best for any elected government

to announce new pay structure

"If this pay increase took place a

"The government may have to

borrow from banks for the new pay

and the ADP implementation will

demand huge money. If inflation

rate increases due to these factors,

it may offset the benefit of the pay

increase." Prof Mahmud observed.

impact of the new pay scale on the

economy, ultimately depends on

how efficiently the government

handles its budget and manages

Shibchar Police Station were

Police recovered a homemade

In Beribandh area of

Mohammadpur, the two 'muggers'

were injured when a shooting broke

out between the members of Rab-4

and a gang in the early hours yester-

The injured identified as

Mohammad Nadim, 28, and Md

Mizanur Rahman, hailed from

Shekhertek of Mohammadpur. They

were admitted to Dhaka Medical

told BDNEWS that they arrested the

two with a pistol and four bullets at

Mohammadpur on Sunday evening

nab the rest of the muggers' gang.

returned fire triggering the gunfight.

evade the capture.

Rab-4 Commander Saber Sharif

College and Hospital (DMCH).

pipe gun and 12 bullets from the

financial sector," he said.

Criminal

FROM PAGE 16

iniured.

"Whether there will be adverse

lax gain

the rise too," he noted.

during its mid-tenure.'

FROM PAGE 1

PM goes to Vietnam investments. The two sides will

FROM PAGE 1a 34-member official delegation including State Minister for discuss specific areas for promotion of trade between the two Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam countries. Alamgir and Adviser for the Foreign Following an official reception at Ministry Reaz Rahman, as well as a

> May 18, Khaleda Zia will lead the Bangladesh delegation in bilateral talks with the Vietnam delegation led by her counterpart, Phan Van Khaleda will meet the Vietnam

the Presidential palace in Hanoi on

president in the evening and attend a banquet in her honour hosted by the Vietnam premier. On May 19, Khaleda will visit the

receive Khaleda at Noi Bai Airport in monument of heroes and martyrs The Bangladesh PM will stay and the mausoleum of late presiat the Hotel Daewoo during her dent Ho Chi Minh at the Ba Dinh Square before her flight to Dhaka.

Robbery

FROM PAGE 16

Elephant Road in Dhanmondi when armed robbers entered the flat of Khandaker Abul Masud and looted Tk 26,000 at 10:30pm.

She is expected to arrive in Dhaka at

Rupa Hasan of East Rampura in Khilgaon lost cash and gold worth Tk 2 lakh to robbers when they entered her flat at midnight.

Ministries asked

ions there.

India and pursue a corridor facility in exporting goods to Nepal and

13-member high-powered business

International Airport on a special

aircraft of Biman Bangladesh

The deputy head of the govern-

ment office and vice minister for

Foreign Affairs of Vietnam will

In the evening today, Khaleda Zia will attend a reception of

Bangladeshi expatriates and

businesspersons and high officials

of Vietnam to be hosted by the

Bangladesh ambassador in

Vietnam. There are around 100

Bangladeshis employed in the

garment industry and UN organisa-

During the visit, Bangladesh and Vietnam will sign an "Agree-

ment on Promotion and Reciprocal

Protection of Investments" to

enhance the scope of reciprocal

She will depart from Zia

delegation.

Airlines at 1:20pm.

The meeting, chaired by the commerce minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, asked all the ministries concerned to finalise their positions within the next week before striking a final deal with India. The meeting, held at the Energy

Ministry, was also attended by State

Minister for Energy and Mineral

Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain and State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood. Secretaries of the Commerce and Power ministries, an additional secretary of the Foreign Ministry

and a joint secretary of the Home ministry also attended the meeting. Earlier, Bangladesh placed three ore-conditions before India for going forward on a final deal for the proposed gas pipeline, including allowing Bangladesh to export its goods to Nepal and Bhutan through its corridor; allowing the import of electricity from Nepal through Indian territory; and measures to reduce

the trade imbalance with Bangladesh. The next inter-ministerial meeting will be held soon after finalising the Bangladesh position, the source said, adding that after finalizing the strategy, Bangladesh is expected to invite Indian Oil and Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, for a discussion on the tri-nation gas

pipeline project. Earlier, at a meeting of the Energy Ministers of the three countries in Yangon on January 12-13. Bangladesh agreed in principle to allow the pipeline to be laid through

its territory. A technical committee, com-

prised of experts from the three countries, prepared a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on February 24-25 in Yangon, where Bangladesh again made its position clear to India and Myanmar. India responded by asking Bangladesh to prepare

Myanmar had earlier proposed

specific proposals.

start from Arakan, entering the North-East Indian states of Mizoram and Tripura before penetrating Bangladesh through the Brahmanbaria area and running to the Rajshahi border to reach Kolkata in India.

tion to involve 350 million dollars. Bangladesh is expected to earn 125 million dollars a year in transit fees from both countries, sources esti-

ing, all three ministers were almost tightlipped about the outcome of the

Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf

Hossain, who convened the meet-But he was hesitant to disclose what particular issues were dis-

where 16 were killed and more than 100 injured, to Pakistan to Indonesia to Gaza. In the past week

by the Arab League. On Sunday, Afghan Muslim

war against the United States. "We regret that we got any part of our story wrong, and extend our sympathies to victims of the violence and to the US soldiers caught in its midst." Whitaker wrote in the magazine's latest issue, due to

on abuse at Guantanamo Bay said interrogators flushed at least one copy of the Quran down a toilet in a

bid to make detainees talk. But Newsweek said the source later told the magazine he could not be certain he had seen an account of the Koran incident in the military report and that it might have been in other investigative documents or

drafts. Whitaker told Reuters that Newsweek did not know if the reported toilet incident involving the Quran ever occurred. "As to whether anything like this happened, we just don't know," he said in an interview. "We're not saving it absolutely happened but we can't say that it absolutely didn't happen

The acknowledgement by the magazine came amid heightened were fabricated or plagiarised.

Following leads extracted from

Pentagon spokesman Lawrence DiRita reacted angrily when the magazine asked about the source's continued assertion that he had read about the Koran incident in an investigative report. "People are dead because of what this son of a bitch said. How could he be credible

The May 9 report, which appeared as a brief item by Michael Isikoff and John Barry in the magazine's "Periscope" section, had a huge international impact, sparking the protests from Muslims who

consider the Koran the literal word of God and treat each book with deep reverence. Desecration of the Quran is

Newsweek, which said opponents of the Afghan government including remnants of the Taliban had used its report to fan unrest in the country, said it was not contemplating disciplinary action against

transparent about exactly what happened, and we leave it to the US officials opened an investigation but maintained that members of the Guantanamo security force

obviously we will take action against those responsible," Hadley said on

CNN's "Late Edition." Newsweek's Whitaker said that

organisations had already aired charges of Quran desecration based "only on the testimony of detainees.'

said government investigators turned up this evidence. So we published the item." Whitaker said. "Our original source later said he couldn't be certain about reading of

Bangladesh to sit for the MOU signing meeting on April 20-21, but Dhaka deferred the date, awaiting the issues to be settled with New The proposed gas pipeline will

The 181-mile pipeline will cost one billion dollars, with the Bangladesh portion of the construc-

UNB adds that, after the meet-

parleys on the mega-project. "We have widely discussed the pros and cons of the proposed gas pipeline and the three conditions to negotiate with India." said State

Newsweek now says

it was condemned in Egypt. Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Malaysia and clerics threatened to call for a holy

appear on US newsstands yester-The weekly news magazine said in its May 23 edition that the information had come from a "knowledgeable government source" who told Newsweek that a military report

scrutiny of the US media, which has seen a rash of news organisations fire reporters and admit that stories The Pentagon told the magazine the report was wrong last Friday,

them, a Rab team took the arrestees saying it had investigated earlier to the Beribandh area at about allegations of Quran desecration 4:00am to recover hidden arms and from detainees and found them "not But the muggers' accomplices Newsweek reported that opened fire on the Rab men who

Sharif claimed that the bullets that the two received were fired by their associates, who managed to He said the 'criminals' left a shotgun and three cartridges on the now?" DiRita told Newsweek punishable by death in Afghanistan

"This was reported very carefully with great sensitivity and concern and we'll continue to report on it,' said Newsweek Managing Editor Jon Meacham. "We have tried to be readers to judge us."

were sensitive to the religious beliefs and practices of the detainees in US custody. US national security adviser Stephen Hadley earlier on Sunday stressed the report had not been confirmed. "If it turns out to be true,

when the magazine first heard of the Quran allegation from its source, staff approached two Defence Department officials. One declined to comment, while the other challenged a different aspect of the May 9 story but did not dispute the Quran The magazine said other news

"We believed our story was newsworthy because a US official

the alleged Quran incident in the report we cited," he wrote.