ponement of HSC examinations. Police yesterday evening clubbed a pre-hartal procession of Awami Jubo League at city's Zero Point area leaving at least 30 Jubo League activists including its chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanok injured.

The 11-party and Jatiya Oikya Mancha--two major allies of the AL-however, did not extend their support in favour of today's hartal.

Earlier, the Jatiya Oikya Mancha at its steering committee meeting held at the Workers' Party office on Thursday had urged the AL to reconsider its decision of enforcing another dawn-to-dusk shutdown considering the plight of the 4 lakh HSC examinees. The meeting also decided not to extend its support in favour of today's hartal.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has postponed today's HSC examinations under seven education boards due to hartal. Dhaka University and National

University have also postponed al

The Al and its front organisations have made all-out preparations to make today's hartal a suc-The AL Dhaka city unit exchanged views with different professional groups and held meetings at different thana and ward units during the last few days.

To drum up support in favour of today's general strike, the AL and its front organisations yesterday brought out processions in the city and many other areas of the country. AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil issued a statement yesterday urging the people to make today's hartal a success.

The government has also taken up measures to maintain law and order during the 12-hour hartal including assigning a joint force of around 5,000 police, BDR and ansar personnel in the capital to contain any untoward incidents.

Too feeble to speak out

FROM PAGE 1 her parents. She could only say that she has four sisters, all of whom were forced to work as domestic helps in the city, while their iobless father and mother stay at their village home with TRIALS OF MEENA

Not far from Pakhi's bed. Meena is living the same nightmare. The police admitted the 8-year-old domestic help to the hospital on May

Neighbours told the police over telephone that her employer, Aleya Begum, and an elderly domestic help, Mosammat Navan, tortured Meena at a house at Sutrapur.

"Aleya and Nayan both beat me up that day. I could not walk. Then the police rescued me from the house and brought me here," said the ruthlessly abused child.

Sutrapur police arrested Aleya and Nayan, filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act and then sent them

to jail.

Meena's story highlights the many dangers faced by young girls sent into domestic work. Meena's family was so poor that her mother offered her a year ago to one of her aunts, Ayesha Begum, who lived at the city's Sayedabad.

But Meena got lost once when Ayesha sent her shopping and was unable to find her way back home. It was then that Nayan picked her up and took her to Aleva's house where the abuses on her began.

Beatings were a routine in that house, Meena described. "Whenever Navan was alone at home, she would compel me to work continuously and would hit me with hot rod if I made any mistake," she said, adding Aleya also beat her frequently.

Like Pakhi, Meena's recovery in the hospital is but the beginning of a new challenge to face. Meena does not know her home district and could only tell The Daily Star that she has three sisters and a brother.

"Tortured at so early an age these girls have become very weak and mentally unbalanced," one of the physicians at DMCH One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) said. "I don't know what their fate will be after they are treated here, because none of their relatives has come to inquire

after them," he added.

REFUGE FOUND Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association took Pakhi to its Agargaon shelter home on Tuesday, while Sutrapur police took Meena to safe custody on Thursday

Sub-Inspector Abul Khair received

her from the OCC Doctors at the OCC on Thursday said the two hapless children are now physically well. What they need now are shelter and care. Though they have recovered from the physical wounds, they face a tougher challenge now -- finding their way back to their home and family.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1 birth anniversary

Hasina said Advocate Khorshed Alam Bachchu was gunned down in broad daylight, but the government could not arrest the killers. "Doesn't it mean the government has hands behind the killing?"

She urged people to observe today's hartal to protest the political

The opposition leader also criticised the government for "resorting to repression on women" during the anti-government protests and hartals. Being linked with Jamaat, BNP has intensified its torture on women," she said.

Rejecting the government's claim of improving the law and order, Hasina said Rab, Cobra and Cheeta were raised by spending crores of taka, but innocent people like Mafizul Islam Dud Mia, a leader of Meghna upazila Awami League,

Hasina accused the government of preparing a list of AL leaders and workers and handing it over to Rab for killing them in 'crossfire'. She called for protecting the country and the people from the "misrule of the alliance government.

among the winners of the children's drawing competition, said the new generation must know the true

sided over the function.

Hasina, who distributed awards

Prof Salahuddin Ahmed pre-

Surge in investments

Besides, export players foresee future benefits of sticking to Bangladesh. The country is currently lobbying for duty free access to the US market, and there is a good chance of winning in this bid. Secondly, Bangladesh has duty free access to Australia -- but has not yet tapped its potentials because this facility is tagged with a condition of "rules of origin". To fulfil this condition, Bangladesh must be fully equipped with the backward linkage industry and get the upperhand.

Presently China is beating Bangladesh in garments exports (and other products as well) due to its unusually low price. "But export players are aware that China is controlling their prices by artificially devaluing their currency against the dollar. Presently their currency is 40 percent devalued. Sooner or later. China will have to free their currency. When it does that, their prices will jump up accordingly -- giving Bangladesh the upperhand," the Bepza chairman noted.

This is also why Chinese investors themselves are also coming to Bangladesh, he added. "About 40 percent of our garments sector inkage items are imported from China. As this is a huge earning for China, they want to move these linkage industries to Bangladesh to

retain their sales," he added. "Overall, the EPZs' productivity remains very high because these are not affected by hartals and labour unrest. Sixty-nine percent of

the employees are women," the chairman points out. The Bepza targeted 1.5 billion dollars of export earning in the current fiscal. By March, it fetched

1.2 billion dollars. "We are set to exceed the target," he quips, "and as more units are coming up, we aim at fetching 3 billion dollars in the next fiscal "Even the existing investors are

expanding their units because of their business boom," the chairman

"Now that we have investors' attention, we have two concerns to keep their interest alive. The number one concern is the port and number two a power crisis. Chairman Hossain noted. "We want a dedicated jetty for the EPZs at the Chittagong port. To deal with the power crisis, we are now going for captive power generation as a

short-term measure. But there should be a long term solution. Investors also express their concerns about shortcomings in the country's infrastructure. "We see a grim power supply scenario in the coming years because the government could not initiate any new major power projects in the last three years," notes an investor of a joint venture company, requesting

Benza public relations manager Nazma Binte Alamgir says, since the government in the last fiscal year announced 30 percent cash incentives for agro processing units centred around the Iswardi EPZ, a large number of investors tilted to agro processing units

The foreign investors also seek this incentive. We believe such ventures have good potential. In the north Bengal, huge supplies of bananas or mangoes rot due to lack of proper storage. Once agro processing units come online, the north Bengal farmers will get their full benefit," Nazma added.

The country's first EPZ, set up in Chittagong in 1983, now has 121 units and the Dhaka EPZ set up in 1993 has 76 units.

The other EPZs set up after 2001 have only a few units -- the Mongla EPZ has 10 units, the Comilla EPZ 7 units, and the Syedpur and Iswardi EPZs only 1 unit each.

These EPZs combined fetched 9.57 billion dollars since their inception and are currently employing 1.51 lakh people.

Other than garment related industries, these have electronics footwear, metal products, chemicals and other types of units.

Among these, South Korea has 56 units, Bangladesh 51, Japan 22, China and Hong Kong 22, US and UK 10 each, India 8, Taiwan 7 Malaysia 5. Germany 4. Pakistan 4 the Netherlands 3, and one each for Thailand, Switzerland, Panama, Denmark, Italy, Belgium. There are several joint ventures which include Australian and Canadian investors.

Among the new investors, who represent the aforementioned countries, there will also be Ireland ngapore and Nepal.

The EPZs attract investors as they offer a 10-year tax holiday and duty free import of export raw mate-

eye-witnesses said.
Identity of the victim aged about 45 could not be known. Seventeen of the injured were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH).

Thirteen of them were identified as Shafig. 22. his wife Rahima. 20. Madan, Gani 30, Raisuddin, 45, Amena, 25, Abdullah, 30, Fulbanu 43, all hailing from Netrokona district, Razib, 20, from Mymensingh, Jovnal. 22. from Jamalpur. Kadir from Phulpur in Mymensingh, Nazma, 20, Lalon, 25, and Abeda

Condition of five were stated to be critical, hospital sources said.
The running train hit the bus in its

front side when the bus got on the railway track through the open crossing, locals said, adding that the gatekeeper had left the place during nor'wester with heavy downpour.

Hearing the screaming of the bus passengers, locals rushed to the spot and sent the injured to the ЙМСН.

Police took the bus under their custody. The body was sent to MMCH morgue for autopsy. Despite repeated attempts, the stationmaster of Mymensingh

Railway Station could not be con-

MoU today

tacted áfter the accident.

MA Awal at the BTMA conference

Chinese investors can enjoy the GSP (generalised system of preference) facility of Bangladesh while we can get benefit from their techno-

BTMA president. China is facing safeguard restriction from the two biggest export

logical advancement, said the

On the other hand, Bangladesh is enjoying GSP facility of the EU

Sylhet blasts

FROM PAGE 16

May 21, grenade blast on a car shortly after an AL meeting at Gulshan Hotel on August 5, and twin blasts in two theatres two days later.

Yet another bomb attack of 2004 took place on December 24 at the residence of former AL lawmaker and district women's AL President Syeda Zebunnesa Haque that left eight women leaders including Zebunnesa seriously wounded. All the blasts caused death of 11

ncluding a sub-inspector (SI) of the police, one AL leader, one AL activist and a street urchin. The investigators, however,

claimed on different occasions that heir probe was in progress. Five of the cases filed with the

Kotwali Police Station in connection with the blasts were transferred to the CID for investigation. However, only one CID officer was tasked with the probe into four incidents. Investigation officer (IO) Munshi Atiqur Rahman told The Daily Star

yesterday that investigation into the twin cinema blasts is almost complete. "I will submit the charge-sheet very soon," he said. 'But probes into the grenade blasts

at the Shah Jalal Shrine and Gulshan Hotel incident will take more time." he said adding that the nature of these attacks were also serious. The CID failed to make any

headway into the January 12 blast at the Shah Jalal Shrine that killed five people. Police arrested at least 50 in connection with the incident, but are yet to find any clue.

The May 21 grenade attack killed three people including SI Kamal Uddin and injured 70 others including the British high commissioner.

Police picked up about 30 persons but found no significant information. Four months after the incident, investigators from the Scotland Yard visited the shrine several times and probed into the incident. Munshi Atiq, the IO of this case, travelled to Singapore and London to guiz an under-treatment man who had sustained injuries from the blast.

The grenade blast at the Gulshan Hotel, which took place minutes after the departure of city Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran after an AL meeting on August 7, killed city AL publicity secretary Mohammad Ibrahim Ali and hurt 30 others

The CID interrogated and took statement of some 60 people including AL leaders, besides interrogating expatriate AL leader SM Nunu Miah Nunu was later released after intervention of British MP Oona King.

Street urchin Shahad, 11, was killed in one of the twin blasts at the entrance to a city cinema hall on August 5.

Police are probing the two other cases

RU violence

FROM PAGE 16 Zahid Hasan Milky said the authority was not inclined to advance further over the incident as all in the meetng described it as "a minor inci-

Asked about the bomb blasts and recovery of a bag full of cocktails, Milky said if those crackers were used, the incident might have turned into a severe one. Meanwhile, the sub-inspector of

the Motihar Police Station filed a case under the explosives act accusing Siraiul Islam, an outsider from Meherchandi area, who was arrested from the campus with the bag filled with six cocktails. Blaming the violence on the

administration some senior teachers said the fostering of terrorists by the administration would result in an unpleasant situation.

Both the feuding groups who engaged in sporadic clashes on the campus over domination in their workers' council at the Quazi Nazrul Islam auditorium on Thursday staged separate showdowns on the campus yesterday.

However, no untoward incident was reported.

Extra-judicial killings

'Probe into all the deaths will be conducted and action will be taken against the members if found guilty," LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, chairman of the committee, told reporters after a meeting of the committee.

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar said orders had already been given to law enforcers, especially Rab men, for carefully carrying out investigations before they capture or arrest anyone. "Executive action will be taken if any innocent person is arrested, harassed or punished," he said.

But no one responsible for the killings have been brought to book. as the government remains totally indifferent to rights organisations outcry against the killings and demand for ensuring people's right to be tried in the court for any

'NO RIGHT FOR CRIMINALS" The government defends the lawenforcers' actions by saying the people killed in such 'crossfire' and 'encounters' were criminals and criticised those expressing concerns over the extra-judicial kill-

ings.
"Criminals cannot have any human rights," Babar said at the end of last year, adding that the tough stance of the police and Rab has earned them people's support and that the law enforcers had harassed no innocent people.

He slammed the human-rights organisations for criticising death of criminals in 'crossfire'. "When criminals are being killed in encounters, human-rights organisations speak out. But when policemen get killed by the criminals, no one speaks about human rights." Babar said at Rab's first anniversary programme on March

The state minister said the lawenforcers fired in self-defence, but records do not show any of them having received any major injuries during the operations that caused such a large number of deaths.

According to Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, the criminals are dying when Rab men are opening fire to protect themselves from their armed attacks. He argues that Rab has no alternative to opening fire; firstly, to save themselves and, secondly, to keep the arrested criminals in their control. POLICE RULE

The Police Regulations of Bengal (PRB) say firearms should not be used other than in emergency situa-The PRB says use of firearms

will be applicable in three cases -for self- protection and possession of property, for foiling illegal gathering and, in some cases, for making arrest. It mandates a full executive probe by the deputy commissioner. district magistrate, additional district magistrate, superintendent of police (SP) or additional SP for justification of use of firearms.

According to the PRB, the nvestigators are to send reports to the government and submit a copy to the SP or range deputy inspector general for sending it to the inspector general of police (IGP).
VERSIONS OF POLICE AND

RAB HEADS

Although Rab, which launched formal operations on June 21 last year, sent an ominous chill through social veins by such killings, the police and their specially trained forces Cheetah and Cobra also came up with similar actions and shortly surpassed Rab.

According to rights bodies, 270 people have died in police and 115 in Rab actions since June 2004 to April this year and 23 more were killed in last 18 days in 'shootouts', but Rab puts the figure at only 83.

IGP Abdul Quayum said on May 12 he did not have reports of fault of any policemen in such 'encounters' that led to any of these deaths.

"Executive inquiries have been done into most of such incidents. But, till date, I don't have any report that anyone died because of the fault of the policemen." he told The Daily Star.

"Whenever any encounter takes place, the district magistrate applies the rule to conduct an executive inquiry, instructions are already there.'

Asked whether the police are conducting any investigation into such incidents, the IGP said: "The police cannot run such investigation. Since they are a party to such incidents, the PRB (Police Regulations of Bengal) stipulates investigation by a neutral authority, that is, a magistrate."

Rab sources, meanwhile, said a full executive probe is being conducted into 58 of 61 incidents of use of firearms. The additional divisional commissioners are carrying investigations into six incidents and the district magistrates into 35, while the SPs and magistrates are doing the remaining probes. Reports of 35 investigations have already been sent and nothing 'negative' was there against the Rab men.

"There is a legal provision of probe into use of firearms and investigations are going on according to the law," Rab Director General Abdul Aziz Sarker told reporters last week. Rab itself is conducting a departmental inquiry beside the executive investigations, he added. The same old story of the victims'

getting arrested and killed in 'crossfire' or 'encounter' or 'shootout' during operations for retrieval of illegal firearms and arrest of criminals at deserted places, mostly in the small hours, has become a Police and Rab authorities send

to newspaper offices press

releases in the same format, with

changes in the details of victims

and 'recovered' firearms. The releases keep claiming that the victims died when his accomplices opened fire on the law-enforcers to

snatch him or the victims tried to

"CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WITHOUT TRIAL"

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain has identified deaths in 'crossfire' as extra-judicial executions that are in flagrant violation of the constitution and the international human rights convention, to which Bangladesh is a signatory.

"The law says minimum force

should be applied for arresting a

person. We should see whether proper law is applied since people are dying during arrests," he said and emphasised a proper probe into the deaths "as everyone has the right to seek trial". Former chief justice and chief adviser to caretaker government Muhammad Habibur Rahman said at a seminar recently: "The law and

order men would have been more

cautious if a report on every death

in 'crossfire' was asked for since the first such incident occurred." Protesting the extra-judicial acts involving deaths, United Nations Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir said "Although the government is trying to justify the extra-judicial killings here in the context of a grim picture of law and order, the police have become more and more unaccountable and corrupt with such power, and there

is no rule of law." Human-rights activist and legal expert Shahdeen Malik recently said: "Reports quite clearly indicate that purported crossfire did not take place, persons concerned

were killed in a different manner." "In any country with minimum respect for the rule of law, the lawenforcement personnel concerned certainly would have been suspended and proceedings by a judicial body would have been nitiated immediately. This sort of killing would have certainly stopped after second or third such instance." Supreme Court Bar Association

(SCBA) protested the government decision on only executive probes into the extra-judicial killings and reiterated its demand for a judicial probe for the sake of neutral and legal investigation. The SCBA leaders have dismissed the government decision

as 'mere eyewash' and an 'ill

attempt to suppress the facts'.

They say the decision was taken in the face of protests and condemnations from home and abroad. "While the administration is supporting each killing through press notes, the decision on the executive probe is nothing but a merely childish one and an ill attempt to fool conscious people of Bangladesh as well as the world, says a joint statement by SCBA

Secretary Enayetur Rahim. Senior Supreme Court lawyer Dr M Zahir says executive inquiries are not enough. "Any inquiry whether at the instance of the cabinet committee or the SCBA should have representation of the iournalists whose iob is to investigate and find out the truth."

He maintained that the inquiry

mmittee must be independent

President Mahbubey Alam and its

and journalists should sit on it. But he has reservations about a purely judicial inquiry. "It is because judges are not good at investiga-US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina

Rocca said at a press conference in Dhaka on May 12 that incidents of crossfire are not acceptable to the US "The US government wants to see that Bangladesh has taken

involved in such extra-judicial killings," she told the government. The state minister for home was not available yesterday for comment on the demand for a judicial

initiatives to bring to trial those

Khorshed

FROM PAGE 1

law affairs secretary of Dhaka city AL, was gunned down in city's Tejgaon area by unknown assailants while he was on the way to his office on May 17.

Kabir received the docket of the case vesterday from the former IO Sub-Inspector Giasuddin of Tejgaon Police Station. Earlier on May 18 the case was transferred to DB.

The IO vesterday visited the spot and met Jahan Akhtar, the complainant.

"Jahan could not talk much as she has been ill since the incident,' Shahin, Jahan's sister, said yesterday. When asked if an intra-party feud resulted in her brother-in-law's murder, Shahin said, "We never told the press anything like this, and we don't have any idea of who might be the killers." Police sources had said that the

tasked with choosing the committee

May 18.

nvestigators were also looking into whether any hostility he had earned from forming Kafrul Thana unit AL committee led to the killing. Khorshed headed a seven member committee, which was BIWTA and we are trying to do

Hossain, officer-in-charge of Char members. Tazmuddin Police Station. Besides, the investigators are gathering information if he was in dispute with anyone for personal matters, IO Kabir said. They are yet to extract any

information from Ismail Hossain Our Barisal correspondent said alias Sujon and Mohammad Sohel, that the chairman of Char Kazalia the two arrestees who were placed Union Parishad, where the launch on a seven-day remand each on tragedy took place, listed 88 people dead and 75 still missing.

Pictures show 4 US soldiers killed Saddam in his The politician, Fawwaz al-Jarba,

REUTERS, London

underwear

A picture of Saddam Hussein in his underpants was splashed across the front-page of Britain's biggestselling newspaper yesterday.
The Sun newspaper quoted US

military sources as saying they had handed over the pictures "in the hope of dealing a body blow to the resistance in Iraq.' Other photographs showed

Saddam, with short, dyed-black hair and a moustache, washing clothes by hand and asleep on his bed. But a US military statement said

the pictures might be a year old,

contravened Saddam's rights as a prisoner and could have broken the . Geneva Convention. "Multi-National Forces-Irag is disappointed at the possibility that someone responsible for the security, welfare, and detention of

these photos for public release," the "This lapse is being aggressively investigated to determine, if possible, who took the photos, and to ensure existing procedures and directives are complied with to prevent this from happening again,

Saddam would take and provide

it said. Toppled from power in the US war in Iraq in April 2003, Saddam was captured hiding in a small underground bunker in December of the same year. Apart from a brief court appearance last year, no images of Saddam have been made public since then.

in next year on charges of genocide, torture and crimes against humanity. If he is found guilty he could face the death penalty. "Saddam is not superman or God. he is just an ageing and hum-

Saddam is expected to stand trial

ble old man," The Sun quoted the military source as saying. "It's important that the people of Iraq see him like that to destroy the myth. Maybe that will kill a bit of the passion in the fanatics who still

follow him.

Saddam's Baath Party are never coming back - and here's the proof,' the source said. The newspaper said the pictures were taken at a top secret location where Saddam was being held in a 12-ft by 9-ft (3.6-m by 2.7-m) cell,

"It's over, guys. The evil days of

circuit television by special forces and military police. It is not the first time pictures of US detainees in Iraqi jails have been leaked to the media

watched 24 hours a day on closed

A year ago graphic photographs of the abuse of detainees in the notorious Abu Ghraib jail outraged world opinion and were described as the best recruiting campaign for Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda.

Citizenship

granted a certificate of naturalisation under the Naturalisation Act 1926.

It sets three classes of citizen-

deprivation and for residing abroad If a man ceases to be a citizen of Bangladesh, all of his minor children Il also lose their citizenship

ship cancellation -- renunciation,

A citizen by registration or naturalisation will lose citizenship if he resides outside Bangladesh for five or more consecutive years. The rule however does not apply for those who are employed abroad as government employees or stay abroad for treatment, studies or any other valid reason.

The draft interprets that a person born in a ship or aircraft registered in Bangladesh or hired by or belonging to any Bangladeshi citizen, company or statutory corporation and either of whose parents is a citizen of Bangladesh will be considered as one born in Bangladesh.

Floating bodies

FROM PAGE 1 our divers were unable to go deep in

the water due to strong currents, said Reaz Ahsan Khandakar, chair man of the BIWTA Abuoy marking the accident spot was also swept away by heavy

currents. Rescuers were trying to locate the vessel until evening. M V Raipura went down on Tuesday night with more than 200 passengers on board and about 20 of them swam ashore. It is lying at

least 30 feet under water. Our Manikganj correspondent reports that people present near the accident spot said their hopes for any more survivors have faded Hundreds of anxious relatives of the missing still crowded the riverbank for their loved ones, alive or dead. Many of them blamed the authorities for their failure to salvage the launch

As the rescue operation is taking time, they (victims' relatives) could be impatient," said Reaz Ahsan. He however hoped they would be able to salvage the vessel by tomorrow if the current in the river is

even three days into the accident.

"I am staying at the salvage ship

In Bhola, BIWTA was yet to go for rescue operation for the sunken trawler yesterday. The local administration was carrying out a search using nets and ropes. "We did not get any help from the

whatever we can." said Mozamme

weaker than today's.

The Aricha tragedy occurred only three days after a twin-decker -- MV Prince of Patuakhali-- capsized in a storm in the Bura Gouranga river in Patuakhali district.

"Most of the ships now weigh 500 tonnes on an average. That's why those decades-old ships can't lift up any heavy vessels," said Md Rafiq Alam, director (planning) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Bisad, 30, and Star, 26, sons of Authority (BIWTA).

Rustam and Hamza were effec-Moyez Uddin, of Harirampur village tive as long as wooden light vessels Sixteen labourers from Chilmarir plied the rivers, he added. "It's now mpossible to lift up a sunken ferry

"The government has a plan to make an umbrella treaty with the Korean government. If signed, we Sattar had survived the accident may buy the ships under the treaty, said Alam. The average speed of Hamza

and Rustam is around six kilometres per hour that delays the ships in reaching the spot. "Sometimes they reach the spot 48 hours after an accident takes place," said a BIWTA official.

Currently, Rustam is trying to lift the twin-decker MV Raipura, which sank with over 200 passengers aboard on Tuesday afternoon.

countries are cooperating closely or

briefed his counterpart on

Bangladesh's achievements in

economic and social sectors includ-

ing women empowerment, poverty

alleviation, education, health and

family planning and increased food

lished World Economic Forum

report on women empowerment

that placed Bangladesh on the top

among South Asia and all the

The foreign minister appreciated

Muslim majority countries.

He referred to the recently pub-

During the meeting Morshed

this issue.

production

Rice showed US interest in

will continue to work with Bangladesh for further strengthening democratic institutions. The secretary of state termed Bangladesh "a good friend" of the

economic and social advancement empowering women "fantastic.

together as partners.

and political cooperation. Khan hoped that the US would

ment to continue to work with all in the fight against international terrorism and observed that the two

publicly accused the armed wing of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which was part of the Shia coalition that won a majority in parliament in Jan. 30 elections

Dhari's Muslim Clerics Association called for a three-day closure of Sunni mosques in protest at the killings and said Sunnis would

not keep silent The top Badr Brigades official has denied the accusations and said Sunnis and Shias should avoid

Shia Arabs and Kurds, who

dominate Iraq's parliament, have promised to give Sunni Arabs a kev role in politics, even though the minority won only 17 of parliament's 275 seats

away from the elections and make up the backbone of the insurgency. So far, most Shias have heeded calls by moderate clerics to show restraint. But the recent explosion of

More than 50 bodies have been found since Saturday. Most victims were Shia Muslims but some were Sunnis. Four more bodies were found on

Thursday, near Hussein's home town of Tikrit. Police said they had been shot Top Sunni cleric Harith al-Dhari this week publicly accused the Badr Brigades, the militia of the main Shia political party, of assassinating

Sunni preachers, in a sign of wors-

ening sectarian tensions.

said his driver and three guards

were among the dead. He said US

troops responded to his request for help. Witnesses said the deaths

were caused by clashes between

Jarba is distrusted by some Sunni Arabs because he won elec-

tion to parliament as a member of a

In Baghdad, a car bomb near a

Shia Muslim mosque killed at least

two people and wounded five, police

A university professor was shot

dead, an Iraqi soldier was killed in a

suicide bombing, and four others

Gunmen opened fire on a US

convoy, and two soldiers later died

from wounds suffered in the attack

the military said. A roadside bomb

also killed an American soldier in the

The escalation in violence has

raised concerns the country could

erupt into a full-scale civil war.

Discoveries of people killed execu-

tion-style have stirred sectarian

capital, the military said.

US troops and the insurgents.

Shia-dominated coalition.

were kidnapped.

passions

Sunni Arabs were the most powerful group in Iraq during Saddam's rule, but largely stayed

olence has strained their patience. In Mosul, hospital officials said two people were killed when a bomb exploded prematurely in their car during a suicide mission. Police said a roadside bomb

a police officer and his father were shot dead in Samarra. In the province of Anbar, gunmen killed a loca police chief. In Iskandariya, just south of Baghdad, another roadside bomb

killed a policeman and wounded

killed two policemen in Baquba, and

The living & the dead A pall of gloom surrounds Salam's wife, three daughters and

two sons, who lost the sole earning

Rupsha bridge

Minister Nazmul Huda, city Mayor

Shaikh Tayebur Rahman and Ali

constructed hostel buildings of

Khulna Collegiate Girls' School and

Azam Khan Commerce University

She will also inaugurate newly

constructed buildings of Khulna

Shishu Hospital and Imam Training

been thrown on Khulna metropoli-

tan area and Rupsha upazila of the

district on the eve of the PM's arrival

to make an umbrella treaty with

Hamza, which was bought in

1964, cannot lift more than 60

tonnes. A rescue ship usually

expires after 20 years, and Hamza

But authorities still keep it in

operation due to a rise in launch

bought in 1984 and is also unable to

meet the demand of the rescuers.

passed its expiry date in 1984.

Rescue ships

Meanwhile, security blanket has

The PM will inaugurate the newly

Asgar Labi MP.

College in Khulna city.

Centre in the city.

FROM PAGE 1

no-one of them could make it.

A few hours later Shahid touched the shore and saw Rana, son of Habibur Rahman Mollah, ahead of nim with a buoy. His neighbour could not say a

word, but the signs he made and tears in his eyes showed he had had The two came back alive, but the village still mourns its missing men. The villagers and the relatives of the

seven missing people keep waiting for them with the hope they may Abdus Samad, 18, son of Abdur Rahman, Hasibul, 25, son of Abdul Hakim, Ashraf, 40, son of Abdur Rashid, Motallib, 17, son of Abul Kashem, Saban, 35, son of Sadek, Rabiul, 26, son of Nazir Uddin, and Shamsul, 40, son of Moslem Uddin,

tions this year. His mother is mourning holding her son's admit card in "My son went to earn money for books and fees for his admission to

Samad took the SSC examina-

are missing.

a college," she wept.

Ashraf's wife Minara has gone mute as she and their only son. Tariqul, were sitting beside her shanty badly damaged by a storm 10 days ago.
"Ashraf told me he would rebuild

the house after his return," she said.

The houses of the other missing

persons present a similar scenario Motallib's parents Kashem and Piara faint from time to time Mothers of Hasibul, Saban and Shamsul stopped taking food since

Shahid and Rana returned with the

Elsewhere in Bagha upazila, 35 people from three villages are missing since the launch sinking, said two survivors. Three brothers. Moslem. 37

are missing.

Char in Daulatpur upazila in Kushtia boarded the lunch, but only four of them have so far returned. Zillu told his village people over cellphone he, Babu, Mollah and

Abdus Salam Dorji, 55, of Aricha in Shibalava upazila is one of the 137 missing passengers trapped nside the twin-decker MV Raipura, reports Md Zahangir Alam Biswas from Manikganj. Salam was returning home from

Dinajpur with Tk 57,000 and 2.5 tola

gold ornaments he got by selling his

and are trying to trace others.

and for the marriage of his youngest daughter Akhter Banu. He was scheduled to go to the groom's Nayabari house on Sunday, the day the launch sank, to set the marriage date.

But its rescue wire is snapping again and again due to the strong currents and heavy load.

US to offer more trade

Thursday afternoon.

Bangladesh's democratic process and expressed confidence that the next general elections will be free Describing Bangladesh as "a democratic force and voice of moderation", she said her country

United States, saying that Dhaka and Washington should work

and termed its achievement in During the meeting, both the foreign ministers expressed their intention to have closer economic

Rice praised Bangladesh's

extend duty-free access to Bangladeshi products including ready-made garment to help sustain its economic progress. He reiterated Dhaka's commit-

US contribution to Bangladesh's social and economic development. Bangladesh Ambassadoi Shamser Mobin Chowdhury, US Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca and Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy and State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher were present at the meeting. Earlier on the day, the foreign minister met National Security

Adviser Stephen J Hadley at his White House office. Khan briefed him on socio-economic development in Bangladesh. Hadley took keen interest in the non-party caretaker government system.