NEWS

Shocked Muslims

demands of terrorists."

against terrorism.

Wahhabism.

of Sunni Islam prevalent in Saudi

Arabia more commonly known as

globalisation of terrorism without

eradicating the ideology on which it

"Don't wage war against terrorists"

the article argued that "the perpetra-

tors of the heinous Sharm el-Sheikh

bombings, just like all of us, are

We all deserve what happened

Sharm el-Sheikh because we

terror fears after the strikes on

London's underground system and

buses on July 7 that left 56 people

victims. The murderer is one. He

carries a black passport and a black

ideology, and victims carry one

nationality -- peaceful innocent

people who suddenly found them-

The Al-Ittihad newspaper in the

(AFP, AP)

'This is terrorism and we are the

dead including the bombers.

victims of the Salafi ideology."

into Egypt," it said.

Under the provocative headline

rests," said a front-page editorial.

"It is impossible to face down the

FROM PAGE 16

clues yesterday and struggled to identify bodies from the 88 people killed in three bomb blasts that rocked this Red Sea resort, sending foreign tourists scrambling to catch flights home.

More than 70 people have been detained in Sharm el-Sheik and elsewhere on the Sinai Peninsula for questioning over the bombings early Saturday. But none have been accused of involvement in Egypt's deadliest-ever terror attack, said security officials, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the inquiry.

The roundups appeared similar to police operations after last October's attacks at the Sinai resorts of Taba and Ras Shitan, when 3,000 people were detained and many complained of torture, according to locals and human rights groups.

Some 200 of those are believed to still be in custody, including two remained silent when the Wahhab Egyptian suspects whose trial is set school of thought started creeping to resume vesterday.

Egypt's interior minister has said Thousands of Egyptians went to investigators are looking into the Gulf during the oil boom years of whether there were links between the 1970s, many returning as the Taba and Sharm blasts on the wealthy citizens and with Saudi's Sinai, a strategically important area conservative way of thinking. bordering Israel and the Gaza Strip. The Gulf press also denounced the attacks, which added to global

Most of the 88 people killed when bombers unleashed carnage in the popular Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh were Egyptians, with some nine foreigners reported among the dead.

"The deadly bomb blasts in Sharm el-Sheikh are another despicable act of faithless and cowardly people," charged the Englishlanguage Jordan Times. The attacks were claimed in an

selves a fuel for evil plots," Kuwait's Internet statement by an al-Qaeda Al-Rai Al-Aam wrote. linked group which said it was a response to "the global evil powers United Arab Emirates challenged which are spilling the blood of those who sought to find excuses for Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, such attacks. Palestine, Chechnya.

But Jordan's independent news paper Al-Ghad said: "Killing innocent people in Sharm el-Sheikh will not contribute to the liberation of Palestine, and the killing of innocent Iraqis will not accelerate the American withdrawal."

Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, a Lebanese authority in Shiite Islam, published a Fatwa or religious decree, saving: "We forbid barbaric acts against innocents who have nothing to do with the political

Negotiations

FROM PAGE 16 said an official. who attended the meeting, as the Safta agreement is scheduled to be effective on January 1,2006.

Saarc members exchanged their respective sensitive lists of products at the Committee of Experts (COE) meeting, with the hope of finalising the negotiations--the crucial one being the sensitive lists -- in the next meeting in September in Kathmandu.

"The members will explain their respective position on the sensitive lists in the 10th meeting," the official told UNB, as the Bangladesh delegation returned home Saturday after attending the COE meeting July 18-21.

Bangladesh, at the meetin placed a sensitive list of around 1,300 items to protect domestic industries from free flow of commodities within the trading bloc. He said the negotiators came closer on three other outstanding issues--Safta rules of origin, compensation mechanism for the revenue losses by the least developed members and technical assistance for the LDCs within the region. The 10th COE meeting in Kathmandu will try to finalise the Rules of Origin under which the memberstates will be able to identify the actual place of manufacturing or production for offering duty concessions The seven South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries had signed the Safta agreement for the promotion of trade within the region on the occasion of the 12th Saarc Summit held in 2004 in Islamabad. Official trade experts from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal are negotiating the issues in the COE meetings to minimise the differences to find a common ground on the

CEC to ask FROM PAGE 1

"It has now become a demand of the people. I also think the secre-"These are not martyr operations tariat should be independent," he but barbaric suicide attacks and the said. "I will just send the proposals culprits deserve only God's punishand it is up to the government ment." he said, urging the world's whether it will implement those or Muslims to take a united stand not."

He said the EC secretary is now Egypt's independent daily Alaccountable to the government as Masri al-Yom called for a war he is appointed by the executive. against "Islamist Salafist ideas" The CEC also said the existing referring to the conservative school

ceiling of election expenditure should be raised and it should be monitored strictly. About the EC's authority to

cancel candidatures and initiate contempt proceedings which was scrapped. Aziz said the provisions should be reintroduced.

The caretaker government before the 2001 parliamentary election had made the provisions to empower the EC, but later it repealed them in the face of pressure from the major political parties

The CEC said introduction of voters' identity card is the only way to check the use of black money and muscle power in elections.

"But it has some disadvantages also. Voter identity cards may be snatched from voters before votng. In that case they will be deprived of their franchise," he said, proposing a new system of ntroduction of voter list with pictures of the voters.

About the EC-initiated dialogue with political parties that starts tomorrow, the CEC said they would take decision about the voter list on the basis of the opinions of the parties. Work on voter list will begin next month. he added.

Asked about the rejection of the EC invitation by the major opposition parties, he said it would be better if they participate in the dialogue. "Quality of the dialogue will not be different in absence of any political party," he continued.

representatives from Dhaka Wasa,

Narayanganj district administration.

The minister also directed the

authorities concerned to stop fishing

in the ponds that absorb water and

near the Buriganga river.

help to ease water logging.

said.

FROM PAGE 16

inside the water.

Asean boost FROM PAGE 16

If its application is successful Bangladesh would become the forum's 26th member.

Fledgling nation East Timor will be formally admitted as the ARF's 25th member this week. The forum is Asia's biggest

official platform in which the region's top diplomats discuss security issues ranging from the North Korean nuclear crisis to tensions across the Taiwan Strait and terror-

It gathers the Asean foreign ministers and their counterparts from such powers as the United States, the European Union, China, Japan, India, Pakistan, Russia, Canada and Australia.

35 accused FROM PAGE 1

Investigation officer (IO) Subinspector Kazi Abu Salek pressed charges against 35 alleged operatives of outlawed New Biplabi Communist Party (NBCP) on December 15, 2002.

Govt mulls life term

FROM PAGE 1

several crores of taka by adulterating food, if you fine him just Tk 1 lakh, he would pay the fine and continue his evil task," said an official related with the recently formed government mobile court.

Other officials concurred with this viewpoint. "If the government really wants to do something in this field, the authorities have to strengthen the law, otherwise it will not be possible to stop," said a high official from the ministry of health affairs, requesting anonymity.

Among these laws, the BSTI (amended) ACT-2003 ensures the highest punishment, calling for Tk 1 lakh in fines along with four years imprisonment if the court finds anyone marketing his goods with fake BSTI certificates.

Another section of this law ensures Tk 50,000 in fines and two years imprisonment.

But the Pure Food ordinance-1959 is not worth applying under the present situation. Under this law the court can only fine Tk 800 or one month in jail for the first offense. For the second offense, criminals will be punished either a Tk five thousand fine or six months jail or both.

However, sources said the government has taken an initiative to amend this law, which will ensure lifetime imprisonment for food adulteration

Aside from these provisions, the magistrate court can punish adulterators under section 151 (1) and 151(2) of City Corporation Act. fining Tk 10,000 for the first crime and Tk 25,000 for the second crime. This law mainly deals with unhygienic food and adulteration.

The magistrate courts have also

DMCH 'death trap'

hospitals.

ers first."

FROM PAGE 1

Tk 233cr project doctors here are forced to discharge some 20 patients a day to make way for new ones, sources say.

and Dhaka and Narayanganj district They say, as Bangabandhu administrations attended the meet-Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Hospital, Mitford and other The meeting decided to form a public hospitals in the city do not technical committee to identify the admit emergency neurosurgical causes of water logging and find out patients beyond their capacity, the DMCH has to bear the major bulk of ways for free flow of water from the load. So, obviously, the service The chief engineer of WDB will standard slides.

"On an average 21 patients are head the committee comprised of admitted to the ward a day. In 2004 a total of 7,004 patients were treated Rajuk, RHD, LGRD, Dhaka City here. It is real tough for only three Corporation (DCC) and Dhaka and neurosurgeons and a dozen of interns, without any medical officer, The meeting also decided to to tend so many," says formulate a master plan for DND Neurosurgery Department Head with the assistance of Rajuk and Prof Mainul Haque Sarker.

Wasa and install a new pump station "We cannot even examine them properly. Sometimes we have to Of the total 1749 illegal structures kneel on the floor to examine them. in the DND area, only 495 have so he adds. far been evicted, the WDB sources

According to Sarker, the department urgently needs more doctors and anaesthesiologists to operate on the patients with complicated head and neurological injuries. But no steps have been there to fill the

FROM PAGE 16 after the telecommunications requ been penalising small scale adulterlator Bangladesh Telegraph and ators under section 272 and 273 of Telephone Board (BTTB) had directed them to sign it by Saturday. the Bangladesh penal code, which

Teletalk has gradually been ensures a Tk one thousand fine. or one month to six months jail. emerging as a rival to private cellu-Major improvements to the legal lar operators, sources in the industry observe.

| Teletalk, GP

It has already signed intercon-

The company has a plan to cover

They said the company will

It will also introduce lower call

launch GPRS (general packet radio

service) and MMS (multi-media

tariff "Friends and family" packages

like other private operators within a

2.5 lakh subscribers by this year and

The company has a plan to reach

messaging) by next month.

month or two, they added.

system are necessary to stem the tide of adulterated food, experts say. According to a lawyer, if someone nection agreements with Telekom Malaysia International Bangladesh falls ill after having poisonous ice the brand operator of AKTEL, and cream, he can not lodge a case. Under the current system, the Pacific Bangladesh Telecom local sanitary inspector will collect a Limited, the service provider of

sample of the product and send it to CityCell. the Institute of Public Health lab. and after having the test report the all 61 administrative districts by inspector may file a case against the December. Teletalk officials said. producer in favor of the consumer. The law of Tort, a law from the

British era, exists to protect consumer rights, but no one has filed a case under it. said the lawyer.

Meanwhile, the government has for years shelved a draft of a consumer protection law, which was approved in principle in the cabinet meeting.

After repeated hammering from introduce electronic refill system. rights group, environmentalists and Rejoinder civil society, the government took an initiative one decade ago to formu-FROM PAGE 16 late a 'Consumer Protection Act' since 1955 generating a total of 85 But the government is still sitting idle on the draft of the law despite fre-

"In the last week also I knocked at the Commerce ministry but they could not say anything. We do not know when they are going to place it in the cabinet for the final approval," said Qauzi Faruque, the president of the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

the DMCH, as full-fledged neurosur-

million kw. **OUR REPLY** quent public and media outcry over Our report was against the decision consumer rights violations. of the PDB and it did mention that TPE provided the staffs in accor-

dance with the PDB's request.

The reference of TPE being inefficient or corrupt stemmed from an inter-ministerial investigation on the rehabilitation of Ghorashal units 1 and 2 after 2000. The investigation

led to a suspension of the project due to corruption; the suspension was later withdrawn but the contract was never made effective.

Most areas across the country are brought to

FROM PAGE 1 told The Daily Star yesterday evegery department exists only here ning that it would take three to five and in Chittagong, Sylhet and hours to restart the other trans-Rajshahi medical colleges and former to restore normalcy in power supply

A five-member committee headed by Chief Engineer of PSC (Power Stations Construction) Monzil-e Morshed Khan was formed yesterday to probe the accident. The committee has been asked to

The port city suffered the unprecedented power outage on Saturday after two transformers at Khulshi substation tripped due to technical glitch, leaving 60 percent of city areas under five substations without

Make loan FROM PAGE 16

the poor countries like ours. BB Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed said the council has directed the central bank to lend necessary supports to the commercial banks in importing essentials, fertilisers and oils, but at the same time to avoid unnecessary imports.

London cops killed

FROM PAGE 16

chances of blunders.

London.

death of the man at the Stockwell

subway station, identified Saturday as

defended a policy of shooting to kill

suspected suicide bombers despite

Brazil has demanded an explana-

tion from Britain after police searching

for four men suspected of trying to

bomb London's transport system last

Thursday shot the Brazilian at an

underground railway station in south

that the policy is right, but of course these are fantastically difficult times,"

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ian

was a suicide bomber, he said: "Cor-

heavy, padded coat when plainclothes

police chased him into a subway car,

pinned him to the ground and shot him

Commissioner Ian Blair said the victim

was "directly linked" to the investiga-

tions into attacks Thursday and July 7.

In the latter, suicide bombings on trains

and a bus killed 56 people, including

"For somebody to lose their life in

such circumstances is a tragedy and

one that the Metropolitan Police

Service regrets." a spokesman said on

condition of anonymity, which is police

policy. However, police did not explain

what went wrong or say whether

In Brazil, the Foreign Ministry said it

was "shocked and perplexed" by the

Menezes had done anything illegal.

Hours after the shooting, Police

about five times in the head and torso.

Witnesses said he was wearing a

rect. They have to be that."

four attackers.

London bombings."

"I think we are quite comfortable

But British police yesterday

Jean Charles de Menezes, 27.

death of Menezes, whom it did not name but described as "apparently the victim of a lamentable mistake.

The ministry said it expected British authorities to explain the circumstances of the shooting, and Foreign Minister Celso Amorim would try to arrange a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw during a visit to London.

Brazilian media reported that Venezes was an electrician who had been legally living and working in England for the past three years. He originally came from the small city of Gonzaga, some 500 miles northeast of Sao Paulo in the state of Minas Gerais.

"He spoke English very well, and Blair told Sky Television. Asked if the instructions were to had permission to study and work there," Menezes' cousin Maria Alves shoot to kill if police believed a suspect told the O Globo Online Web site from her home in Sao Paulo.

Menezes' family was Roman Catholic. When asked if he had become Muslim in Britain, Agostino Ferreira Rosa, a policeman in Gonzaga said: "According to his family, he had nothing to do with Muslims or Islamism. He was Catholic."

"There was no reason to think he was a terrorist," Menezes' grandmother, Zilda Ambrosia de Figueiredo, told the Globo TV late Saturday. "He was very easygoing and very communicative with everybody. It's terrible what they have done to him."

Police initially said the victim attracted police attention because he Mayor Ken Livingstone said the left a house that was under surveillance killing was a "human tragedy" that was after Thursday's bungled bombings, in a consequence of the attacks. which devices planted on three subway trains and a double-decker bus failed to "The police acted to do what they believed necessary to protect the lives detonate properly. Stockwell is near

Oval station, one of those targeted. of the public." he said. "This tragedy "He was then followed by surveilhas added another victim to the toll of lance officers to the station. His clothing deaths for which the terrorists bear and his behaviour at the station added esponsibility." to their suspicions," police said Friday.

Livingstone drew a hard line before But Saturday, a police official said the mistake became clear, declaring condition of anonymity that that anyone believed to be a suicide Menezes was "not believed to be bomber faced a "shoot-to-kill policy." connected in any way to any of the The shooting was an indication of

the nervousness and anxiety around the city of about 8 million people. A police watchdog organisation, the Independent Police Complaints Commission, said it would investigate he shooting but make sure not to hinder the bombings probe.

Shami Chakrabarti, director of the civil rights group Liberty, said such an investigation was critical for reassuring the public.

EC grapples with

STRENGTH OF THE PARTIES The minor political parties in previous elections hardly won any seat unless

the major political parties made any

concession to them. The big parties

give such concession usually when

their rivals, mainly the opposition

41 political parties could not field any

In the 2001 parliamentary polls

time, for example, the EC secretariat officials have been faced with an uphill task to invite 99 political parties to a dialogue with the Election Commission (EC) on the voter list, officials at the EC secretariat said.

The EC had initiated steps to discourage the political parties that exist only on paper from taking part in 2001 general election. But the effort fell flat, as the commission could not make the provision of registration mandatory in the face of fierce opposition from major political parties.

Thirty minor political parties had applied for registration while the major parties kept aloof, prompting the EC to scrap the provision for registration.

In the previous parliamentary elections, the minor political parties had failed to obtain any seat and got a trifle of votes. It has been reported many a time that such parties often sell their agents to major political constituencies across the country parties' candidates during the elec-But none of them [33parties] tions. It is some kind of status symbol obtained any seat. for some people to head these Seventy-five parties participated parties. in the fifth parliamentary election in Fourteen political parties partici-1991. Of those, 16 declared candidapated in the country's first parliamenture for one seat, nine for two and tary election held in 1973. but the three for three seats out of 300 number rose to 96 in the last parliamentary election in 2001 constituencies across the country in the election. In the second parliamentary **CEC ON MUSHROOMING** election which was held under military rule in 1979, the number of the POLITICAL PARTIES political parties climbed dramatically Visibly dissatisfied with the increase to 29 while the third parliamentary ing number of political parties, CEC election in 1986, which was boy-MA Aziz said a condition should be cotted by BNP-led alliance, saw 28 attached for the parties to take part in parties taking part in it. the national election Boycotted by the major opposi-tion parties---AL, Jamaat-e-Islami, "A party which failed to bag at least two percent of votes cast in the left alliance, and others -- political last election should not be allowed to parties participating in the sixth participate in the next one," he told parliamentary elections on February reporters, elaborating on the pro-15 in 1996 totalled 43. posed condition. The number stood at 81 in 1996 "It must be done in parliament. I election. am not the one to table such propos-The parties keep on proliferating als, rather the government should take the initiative," the CEC said and recently when the EC had taken nitiative to hold talks with the political referring to enacting laws providing parties on the issue of voter list. EC for such conditions. sources said the number might rise Citing names of democracies like before the three-day dialogue begins the US. UK. he said there are no on July 26 as several other parties more than two or three national have appealed to the EC for a chance to attend the discussion political parties in those countries

FROM PAGE 1 difficult for the election officials. This

candidate though they were granted election symbols. Of the other parties having election symbols, 50 fielded over 333 candidates for some seats but together they failed to secure one percent of votes or a single seat. Of them, 25 fielded one candidate while the number of other parties' candi-

parties stand aside.

dates ranged between 3 and 20. Eighty-one political parties contested the seventh parliamentary election in 1996. Of them, 33 offered candidature for one seat, 10 for two and five for three seats out of

Former head of the department Prof Shafiquddin Ahmed says, "Emergency patients usually with unnecessarily large numbers of attendants are brought to the DMCH from every place in the country. Hordes of relatives come at every submit its report in seven days.

hour to see them, resulting in overcrowding and raising the infection risks. We must end such unwanted visits and free the ward from outsid-

Ahmed also suggests turning the electricity. ward into an intensive care unit, as is the norm at hospitals abroad When the patients improve to a

certain extent, they would be transferred to general wards. He says, "It is one way to reduce the death rate." There are also allegations that as soon as a ward becomes vacant. the general surgery and medicine

departments capture it, as they are

more influential and the authorities

Moudud blames

FROM PAGE 1

reporters at his office yesterday.

A martial law court in 1982 sentenced Jintu to death in absentia for murdering businessmen Abdul Khaleq Rana and Firoz Al Mamun of Demra the same year.

After evading arrest for more than two decades, Jintu, who claimed himself to be the founder president of BNP's Sweden chapter, surrendered to a court on January 3 this year and managed the presidential pardon within next 12 days.

The parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry at a meeting on Thursday slated the law ministry for not furnishing appropriate opinions, examining in detail documents of the double-murder case.

Moudud yesterday said, "The home ministry prepared the summary and sent it to the president through the prime minister. We did neither make a comment on it nor send any summary to the president.

It is a custom that the home ministry sends the summary to the law ministry before dispatching it to the president through Prime Minister's Office, he added.

Quoting the case summary prepared by the home ministry, Moudud said the name of the JCD leader was not in the FIR and there was no witness account against him.

The court in its verdict said there is no clear evidence that the journalist was murdered.

abducted and killed Shukur for writing a report against them.

Benapole port FROM PAGE 1

Association, Exporters-Importers Association, Transport Owners Association, C&F Agents and Workers Union, and Port Handling Workers

Meanwhile, Indian truckers continued the strike for the fourth consecutive day yesterday, resulting in a total deadlock in export-import activities. Hundreds of trucks with goods were stranded on both sides of the port.

port after unloading goods.

'The summary mentioned Jintu as

ministry summary. "When they sent us the summary

asking whether the President can grant amnesty, we just replied that the president has indeed the power to do pardon one or not. We did not make any comment for or against the amnestv." said Moudud.

There is no room to blame the law inistry for it, he added.

Besides, he described as contradictory and baseless Awami League lawmaker Suraniit Sengupta's accusation that the amnesty has been granted in exchange for financial gains and also for the fact that Jintu is a ruling party man.

nnesty?'

minister's asking the home secretary on Saturday to probe the allegations of concealing facts in the case summary The initiative to probe the allegation will bring out the fact and identify the persons involved in the concealment. Moudud said adding that leading a life of fugitive is a violation of rule of law and a crime.

Salahuddin Ahmed MP of Dhaka-The FIR said BNCP extremists

Association

The Indian truckers demanded return of four trucks which were seized by the customs and BDR after the vehicles were illegally sold at the land

When contacted, Customs Commissioner said they were examining the ownership of the four trucks.

must have opposed it," Moudud told

a JCD leader and said the case was filed with political motive. But nowhere was it mentioned that the other two convicts had already been executed." the law minister said about the home

it, but it rests entirely on him whether to

He asked, "If he is a party man, why would he spend money for the

He said he welcomes the LGRD

4 observed that the canals, most of which have been encroached and nently locked and one occasionally filled, should be dug and maintained with tree plantation programme Daily Star found an unconscious involving the local people and their

representatives. "Frequent electricity snaps obstruct pumping of water during operation within an hour. water logging," Sharif Rafiqul Islam, Director General of WDB said, adding that the Power Development Board should look into the matter Sarker answered in the negative. urgently.

Rajuk should set a framework to build houses in the area considering the water drainage system, said Water Resources Secretary Md Abdul Aziz.

Niko skirts plan

FROM PAGE 1 plan as drilling of a 'development well' in the name of a 'relief well' at the cost of insurance money, the sources added. Niko had insurance claim of 20 million dollars from an international insurer after each of the blowouts.

A relief well is drilled to seal a damaged or blown-out well, while a development well is drilled only for commercial purpose.

Following the blowout. Niko last month gave a plan of action which was verbally approved by the ministry. As per that plan. Niko had mobilised a drilling rig owned by a foreign company Century, from Unocal's Moulavibazar gas field. Niko wanted to drill a horizontal relief well.

However the joint committee under Niko and Bapex's Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) that is supposed to approve the plan in writing objected to this plan. It noted that due to two rounds of blowouts, the geological condition of Tengratila is unstable. The drilling of a horizontal well may lead to a third

blowout and the best solution is to drill a vertical well. However the Century operators

refused drilling a vertical well and said that Niko should better find a new rig operator. A rig is not only costly, but it takes quite a long time to mobilise.

In this situation. Niko devised its new plan to drill a well completely out of the affected well area. The energy ministry adviser gave the company a green signal, saying that 'the plan sounds good"

"In any case, we will not see any drilling pretty soon in this area, quips the ministry source.

Among the 24 operation theatres But the DMCH director brushes

of the hospital, one remains permaoff the allegation saying every ward at the hospital is overcrowded. for lack of anaesthesiologists. The Though it has only 1,700 seats, he says, it is the only hospital which patient aged around 60 turned away does not bother about seats and from an operation theatre thrice, time. Its only mission is to serve the though the doctor had prescribed patients, any way it can, he adds.

The director says when the When asked whether they had neuroscience institute under conapplied to the authorities to shift the struction at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar ward to a more hygienic place, comes into operation within the next two years the crisis will be solved. Neurosurgery deals with disor-

However, only the foundation ders of or injuries to the brain, spinal stone of a building has been laid but cord or peripheral nerves. Patients no construction work has comwith head injuries, brain tumours menced vet for the institute. and internal haemorrhage from

Dhaka tries hard

FROM PAGE 1

Chargé d'Affaires Chamas on July 6 met Foreign Minister M Morshad Khan and apprised him of the looming crisis. However Bepza sources said

Bangladesh parliament in May 2004 passed a law ensuring freedom to form workers' representation and welfare committee (WRWC) at every factory in the EPZs.

High officials of Bepza that runs the country's six EPZs had a twohour meeting yesterday with AFL-CIO representative in Bangladesh Rob Wayss to convince him about the existence of labour rights regime in the FP7s.

"I tried to convince him about our position, while he came up with their arguments. We had differences of opinion," Bepza Executive Chairman M Zakir Hossain, a retired brigadier general, told The Daily Star last night.

"Tomorrow [Monday] we'll meet US Chargé d'Affaires Judith Chamas and apprise her of our position. Four leading foreign investors, who have big financial stakes in Bangladesh EPZs. will also visit the US mission tomorrow to make their points." added the brigadier.

He refuted the AFL-CIO allegation that labour rights were curtailed in the EPZs, saying, "Out of some 200 industrial units at the six EPZs, we've elected WRWCs at as many as 175 and their [AFL-CIO] representatives have even witnessed some of their elections.'

Despite repeated attempts, Rob Wayss could not be reached yesterday for comments. However, sources in the local labour rights groups having links with the AFL-CIO told

The meeting tasked the commerce ministry with taking necessary steps to make sure that the imported essential goods reach the market smoothly so as to bring the

The Daily Star there were allegations against the factory owners of forming pocket committees' in the name of WRWCs. Such weak bodies, in no way, can guarantee the rights of EPZ

workers, they noted. The Bepza executive chair, however, contested the blame, claiming, "Upon receipt of such allegations of 'pocket committee' formation, we from the Bepza investigated and found the allegations

incorrect." The WRWC representatives are allowed to bargain with the factory owners on production aspects. working conditions, and training and

Bepza sources. Any sort of election among the EPZ workers had been banned in the original Bepza Act, which was amended in 2004 following pressures from the AFL-CIO and the US government.

The latest AFL-CIO petition to make Bangladesh ineligible for GSP benefits came at a time when one of the major investors at Dhaka EPZ just opened its laid off units after a week of labour unrest and terminated

as many as 45 workers. Bangladesh earned \$1.55 billion through export from EPZs in fiscal vear 2004-05. About 155.000 workers are currently employed at the factories in Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla, Iswardi, Uttara (Nilphamari) and Mongla EPZs. As of June 2005 the total investment in the EPZs is

around \$900 million.

prices under control, Ahmed added. The council was formed on March 10, 2003 by amending the Bangladesh Bank Órder, 1972. The

amended order gave limited autonomy to the BB and assigned the council with co-ordinating fiscal issues between the central bank and the government so that corrective measures could be taken wheneverneeded

Headed by the finance minister, the council is manned by the commerce minister, BB governor, secretaries of the finance ministry and the Internal Resources Division, and the member (Programming) of the Planning Commission.

But, although exchange rate of dollar against taka has been rising steadily and inflation marking a crazy upward trend, the council failed to find time to sit and devise measures to address the issues. On this point, Saifur said, though the council did not hold any meeting before yesterday, its members did sit unofficially on various occasions to discuss outstanding issues.

Rotten meat FROM PAGE 16

caused by bacteria built up in the freezer

"We have built our reputation over the last 15 years. Several ministers, diplomats and high officials come here on a regular basis for dining as we educational programmes, said maintain quality and have a good reputation," Khan told The Daily Star over the telephone last night.

Afterward, the mobile court went to Wimpv's, the popular fast food shop in Gulshan, where they found sauce that does not have BSTI labels. The court fined them Tk 10,000.

The representative from Sajna came to The Daily Star office and acknowledged that the court seized Kikkoma soya sauce, Hunts's Barbecue sauce and Rose water of Rigard Chemical industry. Those products do not have any approval from the BSTI. But they showed another sauce which had the BSTI label.

"We don't make the sauce but buy it from the market," said the representative of Sajna. The government should not allow the importers and the sellers to sell those products here without the certification of the BSTI, he added.

"We alone should not be punished." he said.

Truck bomb kills 40

momentum.

a statement.

take over.

constitutional drafting committee in a

bid to broaden support for the vital

document, whose adoption in a refer-endum set for October 15 is consid-

ered crucial to maintaining political

The government, dominated by

Kurds and Shias, also hopes

increased Sunni Arab participation in

the political process will undermine the

Meanwhile, US and Iraqi authori-

ties are to set up a joint task force to fix

the criteria under which US troops will

hand over responsibility for fighting

criteria and conditions that will help

determine when Iraqi Security Forces

responsibility to secure Iraq," US

ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said in

timeline; but, instead, identify condi-

tions sanctioned by the leadership of

he Iraqi government and the multi-

refused to set a timetable for the

withdrawal of the 138,000 US forces in

Iraq, but has said that US forces would

stand down as Iraqi forces gradually

US President George W. Bush has

national coalition," Khalilzad said.

will be capable of assuming full

"This task force will establish no

The joint task force will establish

insurgents to Iragi forces.

community's support for insurgents.

Al-Sammarai, number two in the

constitution," he said.

said Adnan Al-Dulaimi.

long-term

Sunni leader.

early as tomorrow (Monday)."

Sunni-based Islamic Party, told AFP.

"Circumstances forced us to

suspend our participation, but this is a

very delicate time and we must partici-

pate and give our opinion on the

"We might rejoin the committee as

The leader of the Sunni Waqf, a

religious endowment body, said the

boycott was only meant to be a tempo-

rary measure to protest at the mur-

drawing up the country's constitution,'

"Sunni Arabs must have a sav in

The government was responding

"Taking part in drafting the constitu-

strategic decision," said

positively to several of their demands,

ncluding one for better security for

tion is very important because it's a

Sheikh Zakaria Al-Tamimi, another

the country's population, but are

currently under-represented in parlia-

ment because much of the community

boycotted the January general elec-

tions. The government recently

increased Sunni representation on the

Sunni Arabs account for a fifth of

committee members, the officials said.