Power sector in mess | 6 GIs

"But now there is no coherent leadership. There is a confusing signal in the market. The confidence and team spirit (of power sector staffs) are lacking, and structural problems have become deeper," he pointed out.

Former chairman of the PDB Shamsul Islam presented the keynote

CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya mentioned a CPD 2004 study saying, "The study found that the economy incurred a loss of Tk 6.850 crore in 2004 due to power outage. This is equal to 2 percent of the GDP. The major affected sector is the commercial and industrial sector. This scenario is worst now."

Leading multinational executives feel that Bangladesh power situation is the worst in the world, he added.

President of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) AK Azad said why didn't the government approve the 450 MW Sirajganj bid by Summit? "Was it driven by any political bias?"

He mentioned the bids for small power schemes, saying, "We hear these schemes are being given to ministers and MPs. Is this how the sector will

improve?" Power Secretary MM Nasiruddin asked the forum if they were sacrificing all procurement in the name of trans-

"Once we select a bidder in a tender, the other bidder files complaint to us or the World Bank. Then we come up explaining. If we then switch to another bidder, there will be complaint again. What are we going to do? How best can

we ensure transparency? World Bank Country Director Christine I Wallich said nontransparency in procurement cannot be

defended as transparency ensures value Expressing her shock at the remarks of the power secretary, she said it is

inappropriate to weigh transparency versus procurement. "I did not like what I heard.

Transparency is not the goal, it's the means to ensure value of money," she Turning to concern expressed by the

power secretary that independent power projects (IPPs) are draining out foreign exchange, Wallich said, "It is naive to think that payment for power projects can be made avoiding foreign exchange. Whoever buys a plant from whoever supplier, you will need to pay in foreign exchange. It is not the fault of She observed that as donor, the WB

is committed to helping Bangladesh improve its power sector. But to handle the crisis, the government must ensure better procurement and take some "There is a simple solution which is

well within the grasp of the donors or other financiers. But simple things turn complex. We need to find a long term and a short term solution," she said.

In the short term covering 12 to 18 months, the government may go for 100 $MW\ small\ power\ plants\ after\ fixing\ how$ the payment will be made. The government may also go for one or two bargemounted plants in the short term, she said. "If there is will and leadership, it is not difficult to achieve this."

The WB will provide support for small plant schemes. "But the government must award the large power projects of Sirajganj, Meghnaghat 2 and 3 as per the guidelines of the Public Procurement Regulation 2003, which is set to become a law soon," wallich

There is a question about leadership problem being responsible for the current scenario in the power sector, she said.

"Do we have financial problems in the power sector? No. The donors are willing to finance. Sector coordination is a problem but it is not the number 1 problem. Policy is good but implementation is in question. Is there any problem induced by the PPR? No," she said.

Former energy minister Nuruddin Khan, Shakhawat Hossain Bakul MP, former PDB chairman Nuruddin Kamal Mahmud, President of Energy Association of Bangladesh Moazzem Hossain, Former president of Foreign Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) AK M Shamsuddin, PDB

individual clients on Wednesday, the

last working day before Eid," said M

Tahmilur Rahman, managing director

nationalised commercial banks

(NCBs) as they do not have automated

teller machines (ATMs) like the private

quarrels with the bankers over delay.

But we were really under pressure and

overburdened," said a bank manager

All banks will remain closed today

Meantime, call money rate yester-

day hit as high as 12.5 percent for

meeting the liquidity demand of the

leasing companies. Bank-to-bank call

money rate remained comparatively

amounting roughly Tk 8,000 crore,

which is the main reason the call

money rate did not increase for this

year. As demand for liquidity is less,

banks invested Tk 215 crore in the

central bank's reverse repo vesterday

"Despite sanctioning loans, some

and Tk300 crore on Sunday.

Banks have adequate liquidity,

at an NCB in the city's Mirpur.

lower at eight percent.

on the occasion of Shab-e-Qadr.

"In some cases, clients locked in

There were long queues in the

of Sonali Bank.

and foreign banks.

Banks face heavy

Chairman Akhter Hossain, Zafrul Hasan, Prof Shamsul Alam, Aziz Khan of nmit Group and Prof Dil Afroz of BUET also took part in the dialogue.

Nuruddin Khan stressed decentrali sation of power generation system, consideration of coal-based power and resumption of Rooppur power plant to increase power generation

Nuruddin Kamal opposed the view that there is no power crisis in the country, rather it is a power shortfall. "If a shortfall of 1100-1200 MW is not a crisis, then what is a crisis?" he asked. The present crisis is due to lack of

foresight among the policy makers, he He stressed political will to solve the

The former PDB chairman suggested setting up power plants of 100 MW capacity each at six places to meet

Zafrul Hasan said the present situation is the result of frequent policy

the immediate need.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud claimed the government has the political will to improve the situation but there are some lapses which are impeding desired progress. Explaining the government's plan to

increase power generation, he said at least 300-500 MW power would be added to the national grid by implementing short term measures.

He also emphasised rehabilitation of existing power plants to increase gener-

for power would be around 4300-4500 MW while the generation would reach 3,700 MW, according to his prediction. "Still there would be a shortage of around 700-800 MW," he said.

In the next six months, the demand

The ministry needs at least Tk 4,000 crore annual allocation from the budge to meet the demand for power, the state minister said. "The current allocation is not enough for this".

The tariff in power sector is not cost effective because the PDB sells power to various distribution agencies at a price lower than it gives for procurement from the generators, he mentioned.

Around Tk 2,000 crore was lost after the formation of Desa on the donors prescription. Donors often commit funds but delay disbursement.

'Hawa Bhaban'

His observations instantly sparked an argument with BNP lawmaker Shakhawat Hossain Bokul who, in reference to the mentioned Mamun asked Selim, "Tell me who was (Sheikh) Helal [who used to interfere with the ministry during the (AL) regime]?" The state minister for power who

chaired the seminar asked Selim if he had any proof of Hawa Bhaban's

To this Selim pointed out that the wer sector problems stem from the nterference and lack of leadership. He said the state minister for power could not take a decision in four years and resorted to re-tendering the same project over and over again.

\$1.8b ADB

assistance grant program amounting to about \$13.8 million.

The new results-based CSP is part of a joint strategy worked out with the UK's Department for International Development, government of Japan, and the World Bank, which together provide about 80% of development assistance to Bangladesh.

ADB Country Director in Bangladesh Hua Du said: "The ADB will now strengthen its engagement in sectors where reforms are difficult but are of fundamental importance to the growth of the national economy."

ADB will increase its assistance to

improve local governance by helping to boost local governments' planning and delivery of services through partnerships with the private sector and civil society. These will be complemented by support to address critical constraints to good governance, including measures to combat corruption, improve access to justice, and build management skills.

of the banks could not disburse loans

as the borrowers are shy to invest

money because of unstable global

market and political uncertainty at

home, which is another reason behind

the adequate deposit in the banks,'

A couple of months ago, the

Bangladesh Bank raised the margin for

statutory liquidity reserve (SLR) and

cash reserve requirement (CRR) in a

bid to rein in inflation and ease pres-

banks have also improved their effi-

ciency in fund management that

helped them not to borrow money at

banks improved significantly as

Bangladesh Bank issued guidelines

and took other measures to help them

in this regard," Khondaker Ibrahim

Khaled, managing director of the

Pubali Bank Ltd, told The Daily Star

crore pieces of different currency,

including Tk 2 and Tk 10 notes, on the

occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The Bangladesh Bank issued 16

higher rates from other banks.

Besides, new generation small

'Fund management in the small

sure on imports.

said a high official of a private bank.

Saturday "of wounds sustained from an enemy improvised explosive device attack on his vehicle," the military said. The attack took place in a town near Falluiah, some 50km west of Baghdad.

The latest death brought to 2,014 the number of US military personnel killed in the Iraq operation since the March 2003 invasion, according to an The Iraqi deputy trade minister,

Kais Dawud Hassan, was wounded when gunmen opened fire on his convoy in western Baghdad. He was rushed to hospital after the attack, an interior ministry official said.

Two bodyguards were killed and six injured in the attack. Earlier in the day cabinet advisor

Ghaleb Abdel Mehdi, brother to Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi, died of vounds after being ambushed in his car in Baghdad. His driverwas also killed. The attacks came one day after a

bomb hidden in a truck packed with dates exploded in the Shiite village of Huwaider, some 60km north of Baghdad, killing at least 26 and wounding at least 45.

The bombing was apparently the work of Sunni extremists bent on sparking a sectarian war in the run-up to the December legislative elections.

Massive

FROM PAGE 16

'We are going through calls originating from 18 cellular towers at the three blast sites because we believe the attacks were coordinated with the help of mobile phones," the commissioner

"It's hard work but at the end we will get what we want," he said.

Police guarded Delhi's 18 exit points and prowled airports, rail and inter-city bus stations for suspects in what a police spokesman said was one of the biggest ever manhunts in the capital.

7 die

FROM PAGE 16

The victims--Halima, 4, daughter of Md Ishaq, and Nargis, 5, and Bilkis, 3, daughters of Abul Bashar--died instantly. Another child named Rehena Begum was slightly injured.

Police recovered the bodies at around 11.00am and sent those to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) morgue for autopsy. An unnatural death case In another incident, three

women on a CNG-run autorickshaw and its driver died as a speeding truck hit the vehicle near Amin Centre Shopping Mall in Lal Khan Bazar area at around 7:30am. One of the passengers was identi-

fied as Shammi Akhter. A case was filed in this regard with

the Doublemooring Police Station.

HC verdict

issued to legalise all acts of the martial

aw government prior to that time. Maksud Alam, owner of then

Moon cinema at Waizghat in Dhaka and now managing director of Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Limited, filed the petition.

Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury stayed the High Court judgement at midnight on the same day after the government filed a

On August 31, the full bench of the Appellate Division extended for two months the stay order. The tenure of this order ended on Sunday. Counsels for the writ petitioner

were not present in the court yester-

Labour wings

will be vacant as present Counsellor Abdul Hamid, a deputy secretary recently promoted to joint secretary, had been asked to return home by last First Secretary (labour) ABM

Rashedul Islam in Kuala Lumpur is also returning to the country on completion of his tenure. Expatriate ministry officials said a

total of eight officials--two for each of the four posts--were selected for consideration on the basis of their previous records and formal inter-

Of the eight Harunur Rashid, private secretary to Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, was selected for the post in Riyadh, Abdus Sobhan Sikder, former deputy secretary of the expariate ministry, for Kuala Lumpur, and Aftab Hossain Pramanik, private secretary to Communication Secretary Shafiqul Islam, for Singapore. The process of selecting a labour

counsellor for Jeddah and first secretary (labour) for Kuala Lumpur will start very soon, sources said.

The appointments will be given for four-year term each. Manpower export from the coun-

try has declined 19 percent this year

compared to previous year. According to sources, a total of 91,447 Bangladeshis went abroad for job during January-May this year against 1,13,056 in the same period last year. Reluctance of many countries to recruit foreign workers, trade union

activities of Bangladeshi labourers abroad and the government's restriction on workers without documents were cited as the main reasons behind the decline in manpower export. Non-cooperation of the

Bangladesh embassies and lack of initiative and efficient manpower in the labour wings have also caused this decline, sources pointed out.

Altaf proves failure

FROM PAGE 1 marshals have to give in to reality at some point. So did Altaf. At a recent press briefing, he at last admitted that his ministry does not have the tools required to contain the soaring market prices of essentials. Then, in an obvious attempt to excuse his office, he said, "We do sit at inter-ministerial meetings to build coordination among the agencies concerned. But, as differ ent market regulating agencies lie with different ministries, it often hampers our coordination measures.

So far so good, but the press was amazed when, in a childish contradiction to his own foregoing statements, Altaf 'dutifully' added the refrain that the four-party alliance government in the last four years of its tenure has been quite successful in reining in the market PLANNEDWATCHDOGS

Γwo new market regulators -- a 'consumer bureau' for monitoring the domestic market and a 'consumer council' for protecting consumers interests -- were supposed to start functioning by 2004 to help the government control the market of essential

Though his predecessor, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, left behind the draft documents for the twin regulators ready to be tabled before the Cabinet, Altaf could make no visible progress in this regard. He also failed to push ahead with the proposed Consumer Rights Protection Act lying for long with the law ministry for FAILED TCB DRIVE

After keeping the TCB dormant for some three and a half years, Altaf this year engaged it again in import and sales of essential commodities, expressly to check the price spiral.

The state-owned trading agency imported a good quantity of onions grams, sugar and pulses ahead of Ramadan to keep their prices under control during the month of fasting. It launched a sales programme of those goods at 40 places across the country outside Dhaka and engaged 10 mobile teams to sell the items at 33 points in the But, a mass of irregularities has

rendered the move a failure and the consumers have not seen any positive impact of it on the soaring essentials THOUGHTLESSNEGLECT

The commerce minister's lack of lead-

ership skills has clearly been demonstrated in the case of Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute (BFTI), which he heads as the chair of its board of gover-

The BFTI came into being in 2003 with an aim to fortify the country's international trade and investment capacity. It was meant to act as a thinktank, do research on trade issues and prepare position papers for Bangladesh on bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations, particularly at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). But the institute has not been able to

make any notable contribution in any of those fields due to a shocking dearth of nanpower and finance that Altaf has done nothing to address or assuage. He simply has failed to lead and mould the newly established body into a definite Although the BFTI memorandum of

articles allots it a 28-strong staff, it has been running since inception with a skeleton three-member staff comprising a junior administrative-cumfinance officer, a computer operator and a messenger. Its board of governors over six months ago formed an eightmember search committee to recruit a chief executive officer (CEO) within the shortest possible' time. But the BFTI still lacks a CEO.

The government also has not disbursed the fund pledged to it. And so it needs no more explanation why the institute is yet to start any research work. A few researchers who had become affiliated with the institute in the beginning eventually became frustrated with the situation and finally abandoned it.

EXPORT DIVERFICATION REMAINS A FAR CRY No significant progress has been made

in diversifying the country's export basket and markets, though Bangladesh has been able to increase its export income by more than \$1 billion over the last fiscal year, thanks solely to the burgeoning apparel sector.

With a single sector, readymade garments, accounting for around 75 percent of it export proceeds, the degree of vulnerability of the country's export sector remains very high. The risk is so high also because the buyers, particularly of the US and the European Union,

have been increasingly raising different compliance issues, prompting the

country's leading exporters apprehend

that the RMG sector is going to see a bad The exporters said most of the commercial counsellors at Bangladesh missions abroad have been appointed on political considerations and typically are not trained on how best to promote the country's exports to prospective buyers. The commerce minister also failed to chalk out any specific plan for promoting Bangladesh's products in the global market.

However, the ministry last year took a decision to call back some of the under-performing commercial counsellors. But, bowing to political pressures it later shelved the decision. No action has so far been taken against any poorly performing counsellor, although almost half of the 46 missions have been failing to achieve their export targets. AN EŎUALLY INEPT HOMEMINISTER

As the minister for home affairs, too, Altaf had been widely criticised for his failure to maintain law and order.

Crime statistics of the first three years of the coalition government's tenure indicate the performance of the home ministry headed by Altaf was not satisfactory, as its anticrime measures had little impact on the widespread criminal incidents prevailing across the

Grenade attacks on political rallies religious shrines and cinemas, killings of political leaders and journalists in broad daylight, increased activities of communist outlaws, religious bigots and militants, and abductions of businesspeople were a few of the criminal acts and trends that outflanked the ministry's anticrime

It was the period when people in the northwest saw the frightening rise of Bangla Bhai, the self-styled operations commander of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, whose operatives killed at least 15 people, brutally tortured hundreds, sending a terror wave across the

According to press reports and human rights watchdogs, about 4,500 people were killed in 2003, up from 4,000 in the previous year. Home ministry statistics however show 3,550 people killed in 2003 and 3,503 in 2002. The ministry records also show a total of 127,616 crime incidents in 2002 and

month following the arrest of a top Islamist militant leader, Mufti Abdul Hannan, by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on October 1 in Dhaka.

plot to assassinate the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina on July 20, 2000 at Kotalipara in Gopalganj, is the operations commander of the recently banned Islamist militant organisation Harkatul Jihad's Bangladesh chapter and is also linked with different international militant groups.

ress that he has not fled the country as Altaf, who was then the home minister assured him of "nothing to fear" if he staved on. Hannan submitted a mercy petition

come to power, I appealed to the then home minister Altaf Hossain for "It was Moulana Mohiuddin [editor of monthly Madinal who mediated between me and the home minister and

Asked what the then home minister had assured him of, he said, "He told me to stay on in Dhaka, not to get frightened and to move freely until the situation normalises. It was because of his assurance that I did not consider fleeing the

But before Altaf could take any move for his mercy, he was made the commerce minister, Hannan said, adding he has been staying at Badda in the Dhaka suburb since then.

the commerce minister in Patuakhali,

The elite crime-busting force has been on a hunt for Mashiur, against whom there are many allegations of extortion and other criminal activities. Mashiur, known as a close aide to Altaf went into hiding after the Rab raid

Acting on the information obtained

city's Mouchak area on Friday. Accused in several cases including five for murder, he had long been on the run from police. He was a member of sadar

Taking Biswajit with them, as a Rab-8

team reached Munshibazar Ghat to recover firearms at about 3.30am, his accomplices opened fire on them. Rab men returned fire and a gunfight followed. While trying to escape during the shootout, Biswajit got shot and died said Rab sources. Rab recovered three shutter guns

was accused in nine cases filed with

Police said Rab-6 in Kushtia arrested top Janajuddho man Mazed at Katchubaria

Rab handed over Mazed to Mirpur police on Sunday evening

PROTECTOR OF

Altaf hit newspaper headlines this Hannan, the prime accused in the

At the Rab office, Hannan told the

to Altaf to drop charges against him for the attempt to assassinate Hasina, as he admitted, "After this government had

submitted a petition through him to drop my name from the case on the attempt on Sheikh Hasina's life," he

Altaf again became news on October 14, when Mashiur, a Jubo Dal leader who had escaped a Rab raid on his house to arrest him just four days back was seen travelling in the same car with

Altaf's home town.

Three killed in 'crossfire

upazila unit Jubo Dal. He was handed over to Rab-8 in Faridpur on Saturday.

and 12 bullets from the scene. Faridpur sadar police said the slain different police stations in Gopalganj and Faridpur districts. KUSHTIA

village in Mirpur upazila on Saturday and recovered a shutter gun from his possession. During interrogation, Mazed admited to having more firearms hidden in different places across Balidapara

from him, a police team went to Balidapara to recover the firearms. When PBCP operatives ambushed them near GK canal in Mirpur upazila at about 4:00am yesterday, police fired on them setting off a two-hour gunbattle.

At one stage, attempting to flee the

scene, Mazed died in crossfire, police

He stood accused in five cases including the one for killing Mirpur upazila BNP president Azizur Rahman

SHERPUR

district robbers' ring, in the town on Saturday morning. Later during an interrogation at Sherpur Police Station, he admitted to having firearms hidden at different places of Nalitabari upazila.

Gahenpara to recover the firearms at about 3:25am, Badar's associates fired on them, prompting the police to return fire and start off an hour-long shootout which left the robber dead on the spot. Police recovered a revolver, five

bullets and six machetes from the spot Badar was accused in 18 cases including five for murder.

14-party

FROM PAGE 16

democratic forces against the rising communal politics in the country. In the national programme the

combined opposition may pledge that the components will not keep any person having criminal records in the party, meeting sources said. Besides, they are discussing the proposal to make pledges to reopen

state-owned mills and factories and

reinstate the workers in their previ-Yesterday's meeting also discussed the price hike of essentials and decided that the opposition will identify the reasons behind the price

'We are in a process of formulating the minimum common programme for not only change of power, but for a qualitative change in state functioning," Menon said after the meeting.

spiral and find out ways to contain it.

Members of the committee and AL leaders Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, Samyabadi Dal leader Dilip Barua, Gono Forum leader Saifuddin Ahmed Manik and Panka Bhattacharya, ISD leader Hasanii Hag Inu, Sharif Nurul Ambia and Workers Party leader Bimal Biswas were present at the meeting held at the Workers' Party office.

Meanwhile, the subcommittee has started discussion with professional bodies to incorporate their suggestions into the common national programme. A meeting with women leaders was held on Sunday and more such meetings will

302 die

the need for holding trial for each

killing by law enforcers through proper investigation. A report by Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) said law enforc-

ers physically assaulted 2,127 people

during the ten-month period. The BIHR report said 99 political leaders and workers, including 44 of the main opposition Awami League and its wings, 36 of the ruling BNP and its wings and 19 of other political

parties, were killed during the period.

Human rights organisation Odhikar said 25 people were killed, of them 19 in "crossfire" and seven in custody, across the country in last month while Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights put the number at 31 for the same month. Of them, 13 people were killed by

Rab, 10 by the police, one by Cheetah Cobra and another by Detective Branch of police in October, said an Odhikar report based on information published in different national dailies. Political violence left 21 killed and 1005 injured and police arrested 56 for

their alleged involvement in the violence, the Odhikar report added. Thirty-eight women and children were raped in October and of them three were killed after rape. During this month, 21 people including five children, 10 women and six men received acid burns, the report said.

Twenty-six women were report-

edly victimised for dowry and of them

15 were killed while nine were to: tured, one was acid-burnt and another committed suicide, the report The Odhikar report also said twenty-four children were killed, 12 raped, 31 smuggled out, 13 abducted

month. Four journalists were injured in last month while five were assaulted 14 were given death threat and seven

and five suffered acid burns in last

others implicated in cases, it added. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a women organisation, in its press release said 702 women were tortured in October while Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha's press release put it at 144 for the same month.

Nepal king

which was scheduled for February 9-11 in Dhaka, following the February 1 royal move for which the king is expected to garner additional support

from the South Asian nations.

King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev one of the founders of Saarc, attended the first four Saarc summits before the establishment of democracy in the kingdom. The then prime minister of the interim government Krishna Prashad Bhattarai attended the fifth summit,

while former prime minister Girija

Prasad Koirala attended the sixth and

seventh summit as the head of the

According to Nepal News, the late

government. The then prime minister Manmohan Adhikari, who was leading the minority government of the CPN-UML, attended the eighth summit. The then prime minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand attended the ninth summit as the head of the coalition government Koirala also led the Nepalese

delegation to the tenth summit, while Sherpur police said they arrested Badar Sher Bahadur Deuba attended the Uddin alias Badu, chief of an inter- $11 th\, and\, 12 th\, Saarc\, summit.$ Other Saarc heads of state and government who will be attending the

13th Saarc summit are Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Prime Minister of As a team of sadar police reached Pakistan Shaukat Aziz, President of Sri Lanka Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Prime Minister of Bhutan Lyonpo Sangay Ngedu. The foreign ministers of the Saarc

nations are set to arrive at Dhaka on November 10 as they have a meeting of the council of ministers on November 11.

Biman too asks

visit, returned home yesterday and forwarded a supplementary agenda to the cabinet division for hiking Hajj fare as the agenda for tomorrow's cabinet meeting had already been fixed.

Five foreign airlines--Gulf Air, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines and Emiratesquoted as high as \$1350 to \$1360 for carrying a pilgrim to Saudi Arabia while South Asian Airlines and Air Bangladesh, two out of nine private airlines, quoted \$1250, said sources at the civil aviation ministry. While the five foreign airlines

would all together be able to carry 12,000 intending pilgrims, the two private airlines have offered to carry 30,000 more by chartered planes. These would supplement Biman's capacity of carrying 4,000 pilgrims.

people intending to perform Hajj in January 2006. Biman sources told The Daily Star vesterday that in the last resort it would suspend its other international flights including the one on Dhaka-New York route for several weeks to fly

carried would fall short of the religious

affairs ministry's estimate of 60,000

the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia and bring Last year, Biman ferried over

23,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia at a fare of \$950 each and incurred a loss of Tk 21 crore. Biman fears it would suffer almost the same amount of losses this time by carrying only 4,000 pilgrims as price of jet fuel has risen sharply in

Although the price of jet fuel had shot up by 30 cent a litre over the last one year, the cabinet in its August 15, 2005 decision on Haji fare did not take into account the price factor and fixed the fare at \$950, the same rate that the pilgrims paid last year.

civil aviation ministry to fix the fare at \$1350 per passenger. The ministry brought it down to \$1250 before placing the proposal at the cabinet. But the cabinet meeting did not pay

for non-ballotee pilgrims.

Foreign travellers

have been directed to keep their eyes on about 150 wanted criminals and on several terrorists groups in the Saarc region ahead of the summit to be held on November 12 and 13.

cerned usually do not keep their eyes on travelling foreigners. "They do not crosscheck the reasons for their travelling and do not monitor if they are leaving the country on time," he The move was made to foolproof the security of the summit following a

emphasised on the issue of travelling foreigners during the period. The home ministry asked the foreign ministry to direct the high commissions around the globe to scrutinise the backgrounds of prospective foreign travellers and reasons for their travel to the country

ocal authorities concerned to moni-

tor whether the travelling foreigners

before issuing visas during the sum-The ministry also directed the

countries find it difficult to enter series of home ministry meetings that Bangladesh during the summit, the official said.

feasibility studies of some poverty

states, individual philanthropists or donor agencies for implementing projects to alleviate poverty since a paltry amount of six million dollars is not enough to run any project, the foreign ministry official said.

deal with Avian Flu and foot and mouth disease of the cow in the Saarc region, he Besides, there are some smaller

assisted by Japan, EU, UNDP, Unctad, Unicef, Asean, Escap and APTC.

The Saarc information ministers at a recent meeting decided to set up a Saarc Media Development Fund in Kathmandu with an initial fund of \$100,000, an official said, adding that

draft agreements concerning customs

Bangladesh has also proposed a "Fund

FROM PAGE 16

The court also found Kabab being

prepared using coal which Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) does not permit. The same court also fined

courts yesterday fined around Tk 6 lakh, filing as many as 180 cases, and sentencing 21 people to imprisonment to different terms for producing and selling sub-standard and unsafe food products in restaurants and shops, as well as irregularities in the transport services in different areas of the city.

of Al-Amin restaurant at Nilkhet to two months' imprisonment for the unhygienic environment in his restaurant. Another mobile court of the Mirpur Police Station gave the same sentence against the owner of Hotel Noor for the same reason. A mobile court at the city's Jurain area sentenced the owners of two

nal activity, the ministry is apprehending that foreign criminals may also try to enter the country to avoid arrest in their respective homelands, said the official. As the investigators observed that the suspected perpetrators had fled

the country following a major crimi-

The move is also to thwart any possible entry by those foreigners who have links with the local militants or terrorist groups and to restrict the

The government also instructed the immigration authorities at airports and land ports to remain on high alert about the existing blacklisted people before the summit,

Saarc Summit

FROM PAGE 1

alleviation projects, but those projects could not be launched due to lack of initiative from the private sector. will concentrate on raising fund by way of contributions from the member-

FAO would finance some smaller projects in animal-husbandry sector to

projects financially and technically

There are 10 Saarc centres on various matters in the seven capitals. Of them, Saarc Agriculture Information Centre and Saarc Meteorological Research Centre are in

for Differently Able Persons". Earlier Saarc officials finalised two

Hotel Purbani

any ventilation.

Destiny Shopping Centre at Paltan area in the city Tk 80,000 for selling food and cosmetic products without the BSTI seal. Meanwhile, 29 other mobile

A mobile court of the New Market area of the city sentenced the owner

restaurants, Hotel Asma and Hotel Comilla, to one month's imprisonment each for providing substandard and unsafe foods to the customers.

recent months.

Biman had originally asked the

Meanwhile, various platforms of prospective Hajj pilgrims have urged the government not to raise the airfare

Some of them alleged that although the government has set the fare for all pilgrims at \$950, a vested quarter in the national flag carrier is out to increase it by \$410 on the pretext of having aircraft shortage and effects

leave the country on schedule Local criminals sometimes leave

The official said officials conthe country after the recent spate of bomb blasts in the country, the measure has been taken so that the perpetrators of the blasts in Delhi or in other

> movement of the listed criminals and terrorists groups in the region.

centre and some minor issues regarding the protection of investment, sources

Besides, negotiations have not yet unleted on the auestian of mas favoured-nation status under an article of the agreement entitled Promotion and Protection of Investment.

double taxation and Saarc arbitration centre will be placed in tomorrow's

Delhi asked

FROM PAGE 1 and deal the situation carefully,'

Safar Rai said.

counterpart VK Duggal for keeping the Tin Bigha Corridor open for Bangladeshis in Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves round the clock.

"They earlier agreed to keep it open

for 12 hours during the day. But our

people living there may need to move

in the night for emergency like ill-

"The 1974 treaty said Tin Bigha Corridor will be given to Bangladesh permanently. Although Bangladesh parliament has ratified the agreement much ago, India is yet to make any progress in this regard," he told They also agreed on coordinated

efforts to stop smuggling of drug,

arms and explosive and providing

ciated the Bangladesh government's

consular access.

the operation at Kamalganj in the northeaster border a few months ago. Asked whether any extradition

agreed to begin repairing of bound-Asked whether India raised the security issue during the Saarc sum-

concern over security.

management and avoidance of double taxation, while there are disagreement about the place for Saarc arbitration

More discussion will be required regarding the establishment of the Saarc Arbitration Centre as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan expressed willingness to set up the centre in their capitals.

Meanwhile, the drafts of the agreements on cooperation in avoidance of

weekly regular cabinet meeting for

approval, foreign ministry sources said.

The cabinet earlier approved coop-

eration in customs administration.

It may be mentioned that Border Security Force (BSF) officials at a meeting in Dhaka in last April also assured of 'restrained action' to put an end to such killing. The home secretary requested his

Both countries exchanged lists of top criminals. "We'll sincerely try to stop cross-border criminal activities," said Safar Raj while declining to disclose number of criminals. He told reporters that India appre-

policy against criminals, especially

treaty was signed, he answered in the negative, saying that it is 'under The officials of two countries

mit, he said: "The issue was not

discussed, and they did not raise any