Ex-NSI staff held for renting

FROM PAGE 1 visited the site of the recent suicide bombing in Chittagong yesterday and the police recovered a 3kg bomb planted inside a shop owned by a former municipality chairman Netrakona Tuesday night while JMB threatened to kill former Awami League (AL) MP Abdul Latif Mirza in

Sirajganj yesterday for speaking against the spate of bombings.

The police arrested Mohiuddin Faruqi, suspected regional commander of JMB's Khulna division also an Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) leader in the early hours of yesterday and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) raided a camp operated by Bangla Bhai at Bagmara in Rajshahi on Tuesday night.

A team of Gazipur police raided a fivestorey under-construction house on road No 7 in Sector 11 of Uttara Model Town in Dhaka in search of former NSI iunior officer Nesar Uddin on early morning yesterday.
They found Nesar and his friends

Mizanur Rahman and Helali on the first floor of the building. The three run a buying house located in the building 'We arrested Nesar and his friends on charge of renting a house to Jewel who, we've learnt, made all the bombs blasted in Dhaka, Gazipur and Tangail." Gazipur Superintendent of Police (SP) AtiquI Islam told The Daily Star last night.

Acting on information extracted from arrested JMB cadres, the police raided Msitripiara village yesterday and arrested Faruki, a suspected trainer of

At the end of Tuesday's hearing, Saddam told the judge to "Go to

hell," saying he would not attend an

"illegal" trial. He has repeatedly said

the trial is a US-staged sham and

has berated the presiding judge and

chief prosecutor.

Court officials say that in princi-

ple the trial, which began on

October 19, can go ahead without

the defendants present, but the

court source said the chief judge

A week before Iragis vote for their

first, full-term parliament since US

forces overthrew Saddam in 2003,

the government led by his Shia

Islamist enemies has been keen to

show their long-time tormentor is

facing Iraqi justice.
Officials summoned reporters to

the gallery before 2 p.m. (1100

GMT), anticipating the day's pro-

ceedings would finally start. But a curtain screening the gallery from

the courtroom remained shut and

journalists were soon escorted back

complained that he had not been

allowed to shower or change his

shirt and underwear for days, and

asked the judge if he was trying to

be the fifth session in the trial of

Saddam and seven co-defendants

accused of crimes against humanity

stemming from the killing of 148

people in Dujail after a 1982 attempt

to assassinate the former president

in the Shia Muslim village north of

On Tuesday, the court heard five

witnesses who said they were jailed

after the killings. All spoke from

behind a curtain and through a voice

Minister's Assistant Private Secretary

(APS) Shamsul Alam told The Daily

returns from Makkah tomorrow, will

finalise the schedule of the dialogue

based on the responses of the

letter many political observers believe

setting the dialogue schedule may

take quite some time, as some parties

and professional bodies are yet to

our executive committee will sit in a

couple of days to take a decision.

Assistant Publicity Secretary Shahidu

Islam Kabir told The Daily Star yester

day.
Sources said Ershad, chairman of

the second largest opposition party in

parliament, has decided under 'gov-

ernment pressure to sit in the dia-

logue, though a section of his party

lawmaker of the JP faction led by him.

said his party does not believe in

negative politics. "We want to share

our concerns on what is happening in

the country," he told The Daily Star

avoiding a direct answer to the ques-

dialogue or not.

ion--whether his party would join the

Kader Siddiqui of Krishak Sramik

Janata League, said, "We have no

objection to sit in a dialogue with the

government on a national issue. But,

we will not attend any dialogue if

way the letter had been addressed.
"My name was only on the envelope.

But the letter inside did not address m

party or me. It just said 'dear colleague'... the letter could have been meant for anyone," he noted.

Kader Siddiqui also criticised the

Jamaat-e-Islami is there

Another lone lawmaker. Abdul

Anwar Hossain Manju, the lone

leaders are against the decision.

"We have received the letter and

invitees, PMO sources said.

decide whether to join it or not.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who

Watching the reactions to the PM's

Wednesday's hearing was due to

On Tuesday, Saddam had also

was keen for Saddam to appear.

Trial in chaos

the banned Harkatul Jihad (HuJi) also a divisional leader of JMB and a leader of IOJ. He was staying as a tenant in the house owned by Ashigur Rahman. He was sent to Barisal for interrogation in suspicion of his connection to August 17 bombing in Barisal. RAJSHAHI

Rab members raided a camp operated Bangla Bhai at Bagmara on Tuesday night and picked up Korban son of the owner of the house where the camp was situated.

According to local residents, the banned Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) cadres beat Dipankar and a former army official Ershad to death in April last year at the camp The house is owned by Ramzan Kaya. Local residents also saw JMJB men torturing Shahidullah and Abu Taleb in the adjacent garden and are of the opinion that they too were killed and their bodies dumped mewhere

Rab also arrested Bachchu, father JMB suicide bomber Bipul Abdur Rahman, from Kathalbaria village and ght others from adjacent villages. NETRAKONA

The police recovered a 3kg bomb from Machua Bazar at Satpai rail crossing area in Netrakona on Tuesday night.

Sumon, son of an AL leader Matiur Rahaman, found the bomb at the corner of their shop while he was closing it at 9:30pm. The police and Rab rushed to the

scene and recovered the bomb on information from Sumon.

The police failed to ascertain the

Shibir men

FROM PAGE 16

found to be involved in terrorist activities, but also should help in arresting them," the minister said while addressing a seminar on 'Responsibilities of Imams in Prevention of Terrorism and Bombings' organised by the National Association of Imams' in Bangladesh at Hotel Abakash in the capital.

type and power of the bomb. Bomb experts will defuse it after inspection,

An unknown caller who introduced

himself as a JMB cadre phoned a

former member of the parliament,

Abdul Latif Mirza on his cell-phone

and threatened to blow him up with a

suicide bombing if he continues to give

speeches against JMB activities,

The deputy commissioner (DC) and SP of the district received death

threats from JMB on Tuesday, accord-

special dishes as you like. Bombs will

be thrown into your building. The SP

will also be blown up," reads a letter sent to DC Nurul Islam on behalf of

Saying that a probe is on into the matter, SP Rezaul Karim said, "Similar

threats were issued earlier, but those

Two of the eight-member foreign team

of explosive experts yesterday visited

the site of suicide bomb attack that

killed three people including a police-

man and the bomber on the

Chittagong Court Building premises

some photographs and examined evidences collected from the spot

Visiting the site, the experts took

Meantime, the district administra-

were proved to be baseless.

"Get ready with shrouds and eat

they said. SIRAJGANJ

enorts BDNEWS

CHAPAINAWABGANJ

ing to a BDNEWS report.

'JMB Brotherhood'.

CHITTAGONG

on November 29.

He also called upon the madrasa authorities to help the police in arresting those students who have links with militant activities.

On the demand of the madrasa authorities that the law enforcers should take permission from them before conducting raids in their institutes, Mosharef said such a requirement will delay carrying out of such raids which may help the militants to escape.

The minister also alleged that his speech delivered at another meeting of imams held on December 5 is being misinterpreted by paraphrasing him as saying that the ministers shelter the terrorists.

"I want to say militants may hide among the people who come to lobby the ministers," he said.

"I made the comment to make the ministers aware of such a possibility. not to mean that they are sheltering the militants." the minister asserted.

Secretary to the Religious Affairs Ministry Rafiqul Islam, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Mowlana Ubaidul Haque, Jatiya Imam Samiti President Md Khalilu Rahman and its Secretary General Kazi Abu Huraira also spoke

The minister had given rise to a controversy by saying at the December 5 meeting that if any minister had provided shelter to any

Gold, cash

FROM PAGE 16

Gomti Jewellers and 25 tolas of gold valued about 3 lakh and 1.5 kg silver from New Sharmin Jewellers. Meanwhile, they stole a cellphone

and ten phone cards from Sheuli cosmetics and crockery's, Tk 4,300 in cash and cosmetics from Vingo Cosmetics, valuables and cash worth Tk 15,000 from CD Gallery and Tk

President of the Traders Association of Pallabi Shopping Centre Mahfuzur Rahman said the stealing took place after the market was closed at 10:00pm. He believes that the guards, Abul Hashem and Ratan, are involved with it.

Police arrested Abul Hashem, but Ratan has been absconding since the

Bhuiyan, Saifur FROM PAGE 1

the government will eradicate the militant forces whether or not the opposition sit in the dialogue.

Expressing hopes that the opposition will give a second thought to the government's proposed dialogue, Bhuiyan said it is a national crisis and the people want to see all the political parties, civil society, and professional groups sit together to see an end to this issue.

Asked about the opposition's accusation that the government is wasting time in the name of dialogue, he said, "The government is doing whatever it is supposed to do. A large number of militants have already been netted and attempts are on to nab the remaining ones. FINANCE MINISTER'S

REACTION Expressing disappointment at the opposition's refusal of a dialogue, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said, "When the militants are threatening to destroy different national institutions we all should come

forward to save them.

The government will go on with its actions, he told journalists at the

LAW MINISTER'S REACTION The AL's rejection of the govern-

ment's dialogue proposal deepened

The constitution and democracy will be under threat if the militancy problem cannot be solved, he

Cabinet body rejects

using its departments concerned. The purchase committee meeting also rejected a health ministry proposal for construction of the main building of the proposed National Institute of Neuro Sciences in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

and maintain the road on its own.

The health ministry sought Tk 42 crore for the building job, which the committee found to be highly inflated. It asked the ministry to revise and reset the expenditure at a sensible amount, meeting sources said. However, the meeting approved

four proposals--one from the communications ministry, two from the Power Division and the last from the industries ministry. The communications ministry

proposal approved yesterday was for extending by 11 months the contract period of its consultant for developing an integrated Strategic Transport Plan for the Dhaka Urban Transport Project.

The committee approved the Power Division's proposal to endorse an agreement between the Rural Electrification Board (Reb) and Summit Power to expand Summit's 11 MW power plant at Savar by 25 MW. Summit will charge the Reb Tk 2.02 per kilowatt power. The contract also makes Summit

the least-cost power supplier, as it has agreed to always charge the Reb at a unit rate Tk 0.03 lower than that of any other power supplier. The purchase committee also

okayed the Power Division's proposal for extending the tenure of an adviser to the pre-paid power metering pilot project under the Power Development Board (PDB). The PDB has appointed Fichtner GmbH as consultant for this pilot project

The industries ministry proposal cleared by the meeting was for importing 62 thousand metric ton

EC pledges

donors. We are believed to be a

dor that this is not right. "We do not distinguish between 'big' and 'small' donors. A country helps us according to its capability, and it is not the amount but the intention of a country that matters," Saifur told Frowein.

Asked about the negative relationship between Bangladesh and the EC. Saifur told the reporters that Bangladesh does not have any experiences in its relationship with India and Pakistan. The previous EC ambassador had to work with different ministries and departments in our country, and there may have been some problem of attitude from either side, he added.

Bangladesh from Africa as the new FC ambassador three months ago, told the finance minister that he was "happy and comfortable" working

convince me about it and until understand it, I am not in its favour,

Rajuk skirts

thoroughfares between Shooting Club and Circle-2 of Gulshan and Kemal

Ataturk Avenue and Baridhara. The complainant in the petition stressed serious constraints on civic amenities and environment if con-

struction of high-rise buildings is allowed. On July 10, 2005 the HC bench of Justice Md Abdul Matin and Justice Mamnoon Rahman served a show-cause notice to Rajuk and the ministry, imposing a stay on

approval of plans for such buildings. Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), which is assisting the case, says Rajuk was immediately notified of the court order.

Since the court order, Rajuk has approved 'at least' 10 new building plans on the Gulshan and Banan avenues after the owners paid conversion fees for commercial use and obtained clearance from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB). An unspecified number of land-

owners have moreover obtained Rajuk approvals to build two additional floors on top of their six-storey buildings said sources in Raiuk and tute of Architects, Bang Mohammad Shahid Alam, Rajuk

chairman, told The Daily Star his office did not receive any 'official notification' of the court order so the matter remains 'unofficial' and therefore Rajuk has no legal bindings against any building approval. He however said since his office

learnt about the court order from media reports, they are 'being extra careful about approving new structures on Gulshan and Banani ave-

"I am under pressure from two

forces, one demanding approvals for high-rise buildings in Gulshan and the other opposing it," Alam

approvals are completed in the office of the two authorised officers without 'much knowledge' of the

Some of the building plans approved by Rajuk are in gross violation of the Building Construction Rules, they added.

Shamsur Rahman admitted approving "several" eight-storey building plans in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara, saying, "I have heard about the stay order, but received no official notification. "We are under no compulsion

about approving eight-storey building plans on Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara avenues. But we'll implement the court order as soon as we receive it.

residential area where. "We already have a severe crisis

of electricity, water, gas and other civic amenities for which we pay tax but instead of helping improve the situation, Rajuk has embarked on destroying it," she said.

ties. Rajuk should have looked into these pressing problems first."

Go for UN investigation

the alliance government. We cannot sit with the militants for a dialogue. This government cannot combat militancy since it consists of mili-

tants, she said. "If the prime minister takes action

against the patrons of militants in her cabinet, militancy would be eliminated. And for this, any dialogue with the opposition is not needed," she said. The government does not want

militant kingpins like Bangla Bhai to be caught. It just says 'catch' Bangla Bhai but that is merely eyewash, she said. The former prime minister said

the militants arrested in different parts of the country so far confessed to police that they were linked to Jamaat-e-Islami or Islami Chhatra Shibir. "So it is clear that Jamaat-Shibir are militants." She went on, "The prime minister

blames JMB (banned Islamist outfit) for countrywide bomb blasts, LGRD minister accuses Awami League, Nizami (industries minister and Jamaat chief) blames India and Israel, many BNP lawmakers accuse their cabinet members and fellow MPs for the rise of militancy. Whom the people will believe?" The opposition leader accused

arrested JMB cadres as asked for by Jamaat leaders. This proves Jamaat is surely linked to JMB and Harkatul Jihad She pointed out that Islam never

encourages bomb blasts or suicide attacks. She urged the Imams of mosques to explain to people that this is not the way to promote Islam.

Hasina blamed the coalition novernment for the killing of judges lawvers, political leaders and workers, police, journalists and other professionals. She said the people now want an

end to militancy, terrorism, corruption and misrule. They don't want a so-called 'dialogue drama', arranged by the government.

people to build a united movement to free the country from the misrule of this government and evil grip of militants.

Leaders of various political parties and professional bodies. renowned teachers, physicians, engineers, lawyers and journalists also spoke on the occasion.

Speakers inlcuded AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, Prof ASM Nazrul Islam, Advocate Mahbubey Alam, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Dr Abdus Sattar Mandol, Dr Rashid-e-Mahbub, Syed Shamsul Haque, Dr Mohammad Aktheruzzaman, Dr Qamrul Hasan Khan, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Shirin Akther, Principal Quazi Farook Ahmed, Prof. Ruhul Haque, IEB President Moniruddin Ahmed, Advocate Abdus Sattar; Golam Kuddus and

Altaf Mahmood Those present included AL Presidium members Zillur Rahman, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon, General Secretary Bimal Biswas, JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu, General Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad, Gonotantri Party President Nurul Islam, Gono Azadi League President Abdus Samad, Gono Forum General Secretary Saifuddin

Natwar finally

After an unscheduled meeting with the ruling Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi. Natwar called the media at his residence and read out a brief statement announcing his resignation as a minister without portfolio.

"I reiterate that I am completely innocent and that no charges have either been framed or brought against me. However, the parliament and my party are above individuals. I do not wish to be the excuse for the opposition to stall the functioning of Parliament. Hence, I have decided to resign from the union cabinet, despite the fact that I have not violated any law in letter or spirit," Natwar said. The opposition had stalled pro-

ceedings in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha since last Friday pressing for the resignation of Natwar. UN-appointed Paul Volcker's

committee reported that Natwar was the beneficiary in the oil-for-food programme during Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2001.

JMB's explosive

FROM PAGE 1 However, no law enforcement agencies officially acknowledged it to be true, brushing it aside as merely a

Taking a cue from Babar's claim, some officials said the minister referred to the arrest of JMB's regional commander Jewel in Gazipur with huge explosives the same day.

But sources confirmed The Daily

Star that the minister indeed referred to the Rajshahi arrest.

The sources said the government might be intending to keep the matter undisclosed in a bid to quiz the arrestee first to gather information about the top JMB leaders and master minds of the attacks and their whole network of explosive supply. "He must know a lot of significant information and the investigators first

want to conduct some operations accordingly before disclosing the details about his arrest and identity, said a source.
The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) also did not disclose the arrest of Muft

Abdul Hannan, commander of the Bangladesh chapter of Harkatul Jihad, in Maddhya Badda on October 1 morning, until 7:00pm. Although a few high officials did not

KEPZ shocked

FROM PAGE 16 allocated to the KEPZ.

KEPZ officials told The Daily Star that the government had allocated the

land through all necessary legal procedures, including gazette notification. Any attempt to reduce the allocated land will therefore have no legal basis, they said. "Besides, curtailment of already

allocated land will go against the government's policy on foreign investment," one official pointed out. The Board of Investment (Bol) at a

meeting on November 20 unilatérally decided to take back half of the KEPZ's 2,500 acres of land, which Korean company Youngone purchased for the special zone back in 2001. Youngone invested Tk 100 crore for this and has been waiting for four years for government licence to operate the private EPZ. But it is vet to get the licence for mysterious reasons.

The officials also said Bol neither invited the KEPZ chief to its meeting nor informed them about the meeting's decision.

"We received a phone call from Bol on November 17, saying a meeting will be held on November 23. The next day, they (BoI) informed us the meeting will be held on November 20. The KEPZ chief was on a visit to US at the time. If they really wanted a discussion, they could have given time and asked the KEPZ formally to participate in the meeting," said one official.

Meanwhile, Bol's proposal to halve the KEPZ land has not yet been finalised. Once it finalises the proposal, i will be forwarded to the private EPZ governing board headed by the prime minister for approval, sources men-

UK minister

FROM PAGE 16 development activities and improve-

ment in people's standard of living. During his visit, the UK minister will meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman to discuss bilateral cooperation to make faster development progress in Bangladesh, says a news release of the British high commission in Dhaka.

The development challenges facing the country remain considerable, and I am looking forward to seeing the progress being made to improve the lives of poor people since my last visit in 2002." Benn said in London this week. The UK minister, who will be visit-

ing Bangladesh on his way to the Hong Kong meet of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) from December 13-18, also expressed his wish to find out how the readymade garment sector, the largest source of export revenue for Bangladesh, is coping with the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement. "And I will be interested to explore

what is being done to attract higher level of investment to Bangladesh," Benn added Benn is also the cabinet minister for

the Department for International Development (DFID), a British government initiative to fight against world DFID works directly in over 150

countries worldwide, with a budget of nearly £4 billion in 2004. It works in partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector as well as with multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies, and the European Commission The DFID's support to Bangladesh

is set out in its Country Assistance Plan (CAP) which, in line with the Government of Bangladesh's Poverty Reductions Strategy Paper, seeks to reduce poverty and address the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through a programme promoting growth, better governance and human development

CEC keeps on kicking

FROM PAGE 1 understanding and tolerance as the preconditions of democracy, has unfortunately failed to maintain the preconditions in EC and damaged the integrity of the commission to a large extent, experts say.

The CEC's unilateral decision to prepare a fresh voter list has been guestioned on legal grounds also. Legal experts referring to a judgement of the Supreme Court said the CEC cannot take such decisions on his own.

In Jatiya Party vs Election Commission case of 2001, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court reaffirmed that for exercising powers and functions of the EC under The Representation of the People Order, 1972), "the Acting Chief Election Commissioner must get authorisation from the Commission itself, otherwise his action under the Order will be coram non judice and without jurisdiction.

About the formation and functions of the EC, eminent jurist Dr. Kamal Hossain said it is not proper for the CEC to take a decision without consulting the other election commissioners

"If the chief election commissioner makes a decision on his own, then he must give the other election commissioners the opportunity to review the decision and if necessary to revise it. The legality of the decision may be questioned if the CEC does not discuss it with the other commissioners, noted Dr Kamal, one of the architects. of the constitution

On taking any decision, former CEC Abu Hena earlier told The Daily Star, "It is preferable to take a unanimous decision on any issue. If it is not possible, then the majority view should be considered as the decision agreed. There is no scope to decide anything unilaterally."
CEC MA Aziz however claimed

that the Election Commission has decided to prepare a fresh voter list. About the disagreement of the two election commissioners, Aziz on August 7 told reporters, "There is no need to have a consensus of all

UNILATERAL MOVE FOR The CEC decided to prepare a fresh

voter list and the EC secretariat under his directives has completed recruitment of about 3 lakh manpower for the job, ignoring the objections of the two election commissioners that questioned the legality of the task. The CEC did not convene any

meeting to review the progress of the voter list preparation. He sent several files to the two commissioners seeking their opinions on recruitment of manpower for preparing the list, but they did not consented to the recruitment. "The election commission has

not taken any decision for preparing the new voter list, but took decision for revision of the existing list. So the order for recruitment of assistant registration officers has been passed in the name of the Election Commission is not done in accordance with law," sources said quoting the opinion of Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali put in the file on recruitment. "All necessary appointments

may be made for revising the existing voter list." the election commissioner suggested in the file that was sent to him on October 12

Another Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali gave the same opinion, sources said. "I clearly said that the existing voter list should be revised," Munsef Ali earlier said Finally on Tuesday, the EC

secretariat declared a timetable for preparing the voter list fixing date for enumeration from January 1 and publishing the final list on June 1 next year. Sources said the CEC has finalised the timetable consulting with the EC secretary. "We don't know anything about it.

The Election Commission has not approved any such schedule for the voter list. We did not even see any file regarding this," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star on Tuesday. In last August when the election commissioners were speaking

talking to the press. Amid severe criticism the restriction was withdrawn later Recently the CEC has intro-

against the CEC's unilateral deci-

sions, a restriction was imposed on

duced a procedure for journalists who want to talk to him. Now they have to submit written questions to the CEC and they are not allowed to ask any supplementary question. CEC HIMSELF CONFUSED?

Assuming the office on May 23 this year, Justice MA Aziz said on several occasions that he would send proposals to the government seeking an independent EC secretariat, revival of its authority to cancel the candidature and increase the ceiling of election expenses.

In last July, when the EC first initiated a move for preparing a voter list, the CEC started giving contradictory explanations of the electoral rules that created contro-

versy.
On the one hand he said the electoral rules must be amended to prepare a fresh electoral roll, but on the other, he said there is no need to

amend the rules.
On July 20 after an EC meeting. MAAziz said there is no provision for preparing a fresh voter list in the 1982 ordinance that suggests revision of the existing one. The two election commissioners expressed "The laws will have to be

list. We will ask the government to amend the law if majority of the political parties want a fresh list," the CEC said at a dialogue with the political parties in last July. The following day, the CEC referred to section 19 of the

amended to prepare a fresh voter

Electoral Rolls Rules. 1982 and said there is no legal bar on preparing a voter list afresh. Finally the CEC on August 6 took the decision to prepare a fresh voter list despite the two election commissioners' suggestion for revision of

the existing list. When the EC secretariat was taking preparations for a fresh voter list, the CEC made another confusing remark on his own decision. "No comment...I don't know whether a fresh voter list is being prepared, CEC MA Aziz told journalists on October 27.

Before taking the decision for preparing the electoral roll, the EC arranged a series of dialogue in July with the political parties to seek their opinion on the voter list. The talks turned into a farce as

only 53 small political parties out of

invited 117 joined the dialogue, boycotted by the mainstream oppo-In the dialogue, the CEC expressed his dismay over the conflict among the political parties. He said it is unfortunate that there

are two or three factions in each party and they do not agree to sit together.
"Trust, understanding and tolerance are the preconditions of democracy, but all these are absent here," the CEC said. He also observed the conflict among parties, mistrust and lack of tolerance

fair election.
Unfortunately, all these preconditions for holding a free and fair election are virtually absent in the Flection Commission

are obstacles to holding a free and

Niko wants

FROM PAGE 16

made the overture to Petrobangla's compensation claim for the two blowouts at Tengratila gas filed. The reply came in response to the claim made by Petrobangla in a letter to Niko on Tuesday.

State-owned Petrobangla claimed compensation for the two blowouts that burnt 8.89 billion cubic feet of natural gas and caused environmental damage worth Tk 84 Niko in its reply said it would abide by the terms and conditions of

the joint venture agreement (JVA) on Tengratila gas field in settling the compensation issue. Niko mentioned it would give a comprehensive reply latter after thoroughly reviewing the claim in all aspects -- internally, externally, technically, legally and professionally -- maintaining the international

norms and standards. Niko again requested Petrobangla to make payment for the supply of gas from the Feni field The payment to Niko for supplying gas from Feni field remained suspended for more than a month following a Supreme Court order.

OIC summit opens

FROM PAGE 1

Muslim identity ... and to having a society that rejects isolation,"

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who

is leading the Bangladesh delegation, attended the inaugural ceremony, reports BSS. Washington has been pushing for an initiative to encourage democratic reform and economic liberalisation in Arab and Muslim

countries in a bid to abate the frus-

tration and poverty on which terror is thought to thrive. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said Tuesday the summit was meant to counter the "harsh offensive on Islam from enemies abroad and some of its own children with deviant ideolo-

On Tuesday, OIC foreign ministers held a preparatory meeting in the Saudi city of Jeddah to draft the agenda of the summit. which is expected to adopt two main documents: a "Makkah Declaration" and a 10-year "plan of action to confront the challenges of the 21st century" Saud said the Makkah

Declaration would "present a general view of the situation as well as the common aspirations and hopes of our nation". The Muslim world "calls for forgiveness ... among peoples and for combating injustice, aggression

and corruption", he said.

"meant to confront the challenges faced by our Islamic nation, and is based on the recommendations visions and ideas reached by scholars and intellectuals. The plan also provides for a restructuring of the OIC, including

its Islamic Jurisprudence Academy

which "should become the highest

He said the 10-year plan was

reference in jurisprudence ... and put an end to the multitudes of references and conflicting fatwas." Saud was referring to the religious edicts issued by extremists, ncluding al-Qaeda in Iraq, that have tried to legitimise deadly attacks on

The Islamic leaders are expected to approve a name change for the body to become the Organisation of Islamic Countries. The OIC, founded in 1969, is facing a financial crisis, as several

annual contributions.

civilians and assassinations.

Non-Muslim leaders of OIC member states will only participate in the Makkah summit via videoconference from Jeddah. about 80 kilometres (50 miles)

member states have not paid their

Non-Muslims are forbidden entry to the cities of Makkah and Madina, which are home to Islam's holiest

Another opposition political party represented by a lone lawmaker in parliament, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, is yet to get the invitation if they are invited, they will not join the

The other political parties having

representation in parliament invited to

the talks are partners of the ruling alliance -- Jamaat-e-Islami, factions of Bangladesher Jatiya Party Khaleda from a November 30 public meeting urged all political parties and the civil society members to sit across the table to find ways and

means to put an end to terrorism

National consensus

Leader and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, who however refused to receive it and rejected to participate in the dialogue. Of the professional bodies. Dhaka

tion," he told The Daily Star. President Barrister Rokanuddin invitation, turned it down, "There wil be no dialogue with bombers and

SCBA) President Advocate Mahbubey Alam also received the letter but dismissed the invitation terming it a farce. However, the SCBA

said Zahid Hossain, also the president pro-BNP Doctors' Association of ngladesh. Sources said pro-opposition factions of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Dhaka Union of Journalists will not attend the dia-

The possibility of Bangladesh Bar Council and the Duta participating in the dialogue is also slim, sources

SAFF

after a goal-fest opening day of the Wednesday. in Dhaka in 2003, thrashed ghanistan 9-1 in the opening match

improving island nation. Hosts Pakistan however scored a struggling 1-0 win against Sri Lanka thanks to a 37th minute strike by Imran

before flying back to Dhaka. tion yesterday started evicting make-shift structures that mushroomed around the court building at Parirpahar

modifier out of fear for their lives The court source said the tria was communicating with Saddam's lawyers through clerks The lawvers were in direct contact with Saddam, whose whereabouts have been kept secret amid tight security at the fortified Baghdad

The trial has rekindled painful memories for many Iraqis just ahead of the parliamentary election. However, after four sessions. some observers have voiced doubts

about the strength of the Dujail

case, and the judge has instructed

some witnesses to focus their

The UN's human rights chief in

rambling testimony.

FROM PAGE 1

Iraq says he sees little prospect of the trial meeting international stan-International human rights and legal observers have raised concerns about witness protection security and the fact that the death penalty cannot be commuted if it is

1.5 kg heroin

Liton, 27, Iqbal, 35, Kabir, 42, Nur

Hossain, 25, Masum, 25, Kazi Reazuddin, 26, Babul Hossain, 18,

and Shukkur Ali, 32, with 1250 grams of heroin while they were processing the drug at 8:30pm Following the statement of Liton police later arrested Selim, 32, from East Rampura in the city and seized 250 grams of heroin and Tk 40,000

in cash that he earned by selling the

FROM PAGE 1 the date and time of the dialogue would be fixed in consultation with -party opposition combine rejected e dialogue proposal outright. "We have sent the prime minister's letters to about 30 political parties and 15 professional bodies," Prime

> University Teachers Association (Duta) President Prof AAMS Arefin dique received the invitation letter

> those who have been patronising militancy in the country," he told a discussion yesterday afternoon. Supreme Court Bar Association

> will take a decision in this regard at a meeting soon, he told reporters at his Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Secretary General AZM Zahid Hossain said the apex body of doctors I join the dialogue. "We are yet to ge the letter, but the prime minister's APS has informed me about the invitation,

logue while their rival factions will.

will again look for a convincing victory egional championship on Maldives, who finished runners-up

of the eight-team meet with Fajeel and Tarik scoring hattricks for the ever-

of religion. But the Awami League-lea

formal invitation process on Tuesday by sending a letter to Opposition

on Tuesday night. "We have to decide the matter at a meeting of our associa-Bangladesh Bar Council Vice Mahmud, who also received the

FROM PAGE 1 previous three games against Bhutan,

the public suspicion over the party's hand in the recent string of bombings, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said at a discussion arranged by Jatiyatabadi Writers' Forum at the National Press Club yesterday.

the government of releasing

The AL president called upon the

Ahmed Manik and Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua.

In reply, Saifur told the ambassa-

tension with the EC as it sometimes Dr Frowein, who came to

Regarding the Saarc cumulation Saifur said he does not understand it and he is still against it. "Perhaps the commerce ministry has failed to

acknowledge any such arrest in Rajshahi, they said last night that they will inform the media "in due time" Rajuk sources said most building

The authorised officer, Engineer

In her immediate reaction to Rajuk's violation of the court order, Shirin Shila expressed concern and said Rajuk is virtually choking a

"Look at the commercial buildings along the avenues, almost none has any proper parking facili-