Rumsfeld's visit to Cabinet may Iraq bolsters handover strategy

REUTERS, Mosul, Iraq

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld left Iraq on Christmas Eve confident that his cautious strategy to hand over security responsibilities to Iraqi forces - a critical component for eventually declaring victory-was working so far.

The unannounced two-day visit ending on Saturday, which followed stops in Pakistan and Afghanistan, was considered a "stock-taking mission" that had been planned for months with the intention of capitalizing on Iraq's relatively peaceful December 15 parliamentary

In public pronouncements and private meetings, Rumsfeld showed he clearly believes that the Iraq war has entered a new phase in which the US role is shifting from occupier to supporter of Iraqi forces assuming control of their nation's security.

He was careful to avoid any prediction or timetable for a US withdrawal. Asked by a soldier how he would define victory, Rumsfeld calmly replied: "a situation where the political process is successful, where security forces are sufficiently competent to take over the security responsibilities.

The strategy in place amounts to a delicate balancing act in which US forces slowly hand over security responsibilities to Iragi forces they are training, while at the same time increasing logistical and intelligence support.

It was the first time that Rumsfeld has stayed overnight in Iraq since the war began, visiting U.S. troops at bases around the country under heavy military escort and staying at one of Saddam's former luxury resorts near Baghdad. Extra security, including decoys, was provided for his last stop in Mosul for a Christmas Eve meal with the troops in one of Iraq's most volatile cities Rumsfeld played host, serving lobster

tails and steak to troops who waited in line, and posing for photographs. In a speech later, he thanked them for their service. his voice choking up at times.

The trip was highlighted by Rumsfeld's announcement a day after he arrived in Iraq that the U.S. would not deploy 7,000 combat troops from two brigades - one currently in Kuwait and the other in the United States - that would scale down troop numbers from around 138,000 over the past year to around

"The size and composition of US forces will fluctuate as commanders continue to shift focus to emphasize supporting and training the Iraqi security forces." he told US troops in Falluia where he made the announcement.

Officials travelling with him insisted on calling the strategy a "cautiously optimistic adjustment" that marked the start of the next phase of Iraq's transition to self-rule. Some officials believe if progress continues on the security, political and economic front, US forces could be below 'NOTACONVENTIONAL WAR'

The US commander in Iraq. Gen. George Casev, said he would likely make further adjustments after a spring evaluation that would consider whether Irag's new military can handle further responsi-

"This is not a conventional war," he said. "In this type of war we're fighting, more is not necessarily better and in fact

70 shops FROM PAGE 16

out gutting 70 shops and eight houses, sources said.

As there is no fire station at Patharghata, firefighters called in from Barguna, Mathbaria and Bhandaria managed to get the fire

under control at 4:30am. Electricity supply and telecommunication were disrupted in Patharghata due to the fire.

of dependency." he said in an interview with reporters. He cited Iraqi soldiers, backed by US troops, deployed near the border with

in Iraq less coalition at this point in time is

better because it doesn't leave the notion

of occupation, it doesn't court the culture

Syria to disrupt a supply network for insurgents, saying they had managed to reduce the trafficking significantly. Sounding more like a diplomat than a defence secretary, Rumsfeld

emphasised the need for an all-inclusive government that would govern from the centre and would appoint competent people to run the ministries of defence erior, finance, and planning. Despite elections. Iraq remains

wracked by violence and is threatened by political instability rooted in deep divisions among its main religious and ethnic

emphasised that the new government should recognise it needs the support of the international community, including the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

"I would suggest that the kinds of things other nations would be looking for would be that the new government govern from the centre and be inclusive: that given the security situation in this country the new government and new ministers be people who are competent of governing in a difficult environment; and that there be a clear opposition to corruption." he added.

Ihousands FROM PAGE 16

Tk 10 a day and said they will return us Tk 10,000 after two years," Baby, a beggar from Moghbazar Wireless Railway Gate area, told The daily Star

during the demonstration yesterday.

Mother of three girls and a boy, workers promised a bright future for her children and to take care of them

ing money with the association about three years ago. Though they completed the two-year term about a year ago, the association leaders have not en them the promised returns.

When we pressed for our money, thev started dilly-dallying and gave us one date after another. When we would go to them on the next date, they used to repeat the same excuse of having fund constraints from losses incurred in some projects," said Nasima Begum from Banjanagar in Sutrapur, whose day-labourer son

Finally on December 15, the aggrieved members laid a siege to the ssociation office to realise their

the office told us to return with our papers to the office today to receive the money." MAAziz, a small-business

the police and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), who arrived at

the office yesterday morning, they saying their money would be returned next month.

The frustrated people demonthey asked the law enforcement agencies to help them realise their

The victims also announced to form a human chain at Muktangan on January 1 to press their demand

police could not arrest anyone in this connection and no-one filed any case.

would lose the right to vote in the

future Escap working group meet-

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers

of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)

Mir Nasir Hossain said the govern-

ment should rethink about joining the

Asian Highway, as negative decision

in this regard will deprive the country

The transportation of goods by

But the route through Myanmar

The government should rethink

would be much better for Bangladesh

the matter carefully so that the situa-

tion does not repeat like the cases of

submarine cables network or

Bimstec where Bangladesh signed

the agreement much later, outgoing

president of Metropolitan Chamber of

Commerce and Industry (MCCI)

the agreement first so the govern-

ment can try to bring necessary

amendments to the road map.

He also spoke in favour of signing

The MCCI president, however,

said the route through Myanmar

would be beneficial for the country, as

making Chinese goods available at

would connect China by road

Kutubuddin Ahmed said.

much cheaper price.

than the other route, he added.

President of apex chamber body

ings, he added.

bhaban attended by Archbishop Michael Rozario, the clergy of different churches, ambassadors and diplomats from foreign mis-

Asian highway

FROM PAGE 1 accepted, Communications Minister

Nazmul Huda categorically said. Earlier, a cabinet meeting also took the position against joining the giant road network.

The four-party alliance government will not join the network during this term as it thinks the highway with the existing route will turn to be a transit to India, highly placed sources in the government said

of huge economic benefit from the of the major commitments to the voters during the campaign of the last election that brought the alliance to road is much cheaper than by ship power and joining the highway and giving transit to India may have a and such a road network would negative effect in the upcoming increase the connectivity and movegeneral elections, said a cabinet ment of our export and import goods," he observed.

Not giving transit to India was one

minister requesting anonymity. Several experts, however, are of the view that ioining the highway does not mean giving transit to any

Foreign investors will hesitate to invest in Bangladesh if it does not have road connections with the neighbours, they said.

According to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap)

Convention on the highway, transport of goods and people wil require separate agreements after establishing the network.

If a country has reservations about allowing goods of any particular country through its territory, it has every right not to sign agreement on transport of goods with that country, said former Escap director Di

Rahmatullah. He earlier told The Daily Star that the government should join the network first and then submit the proposal for bringing amendment to the road map. Otherwise, the country

At every chance, Rumsfeld

Most of the victims started deposit-

That day four officials present at

The officials said the same thing to

But, when the depositors came to

strated in the area and brought out a protest procession. A group of them ater went to Muktangan parading the city roads and held a rally, from where

As of 9:00 last night the Demra

Dialogue FROM PAGE 1

But the schedules for holding talks with other political parties and groups are yet to be fixed, officials at

the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) The last meeting was held on

December 19 with NGOs and the Ulemas (Islamic scholars).

The dialogue that began on December 12 amid boycott by the opposition alliance and proopposition professional groups has got a low space in the prime minister's timetable as she was occupied with other business.

Out of 27 political parties and 15 professional bodies invited to the talks. Khaleda Zia has had talks with seven organisations so far.

The officials at the PMO dispatched invitation letters to some 43 organisations on December 6 and 7

The Awami League (AL) led 14party opposition alliance and proopposition professional bodies had rejected outright the invitations.

Khaleda met Krishak Sramik Janata League and Bangladesh Medical Association on December 12, HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party and Council for National Agenda on December 13, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists on December 14 and Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh and the Ulemas on December 19.

Gas sector

FROM PAGE 1

okay 3rd round

The cabinet is likely to endorse a policy at its regular meeting today

on the third round bidding for the

offshore gas exploration.

Petrobangla, the state-run oil,

gas and minerals corporation, has

drafted the policy, which will be placed at the cabinet meet today.

ministry will first initiate a survey to

determine the hydrocarbon poten-

tials.
Official sources said the ministry

will seek expression of interests

(EOIs) from international expert

firms to conduct seismic survey in

the 1.06 lakh square kilometre area

planned survey will be to have a

concrete picture of the hydrocarbon

potentials in the country's deep sea

up to 200 nautical miles into the Bay,

energy ministry will invite interna-

tional oil companies (IOCs) to take

part in the bidding in the second

The sources said the government in the meantime will try to

remove the High Court stay on

signing any production-sharing contracts (PSCs) for awarding any

block to IOCs. A High Court bench

substantial gas discovery in off-shore gas fields of some neighbour-

ng South Asian countries like India

and Myanmar has prompted the

government to move for the third

Earlier, soon after taking charge, energy ministry adviser Mahmudur

Rahman had disclosed the govern-

ment plan to invite the third round

charge of the energy ministry, approved the draft policy last month.

exchanged heated words with his

grandmother over complains about him from the locals. An angry Gulzar

the village have been complaining

about Gulzar's unlawful activities

including toll collection and agitating

by diving before a speeding bus or

Dhaka-Monohardi highway around

Both the bodies are now in

Narsingdi Sadar Hospital morque.

Xmas celebrated

the Christians also set a glittering

star on every housetop, symbolising the mythical star that had guided

three wise magi from the east to the

Son of God, took birth as a man and

sacrificed his life for the salvation of

sessions of special Christmas

prayers on December 24 night and

vesterday morning. Christmas

carols, hymns, and other musical

and entertainment shows were also

staged before and after the prayer

at hotels and homes with Christmas

cakes dominating the courses to

share the happiness with relatives.

Minister Khaleda Zia and

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina

greeted the Christians and wished

sions, and leading community

The president and his wife

a reception at Banga-

President lajuddin Ahmed, Prime

friends and neighbours.

hem well on the occasion.

hosted

The Christians arranged feasts

The Christians believe Jesus,

The churches held several

infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

He committed suicide yesterday

locals to his family for a long time.

Sources said the inhabitant of

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, in-

They said the recent success in

issued the stav order in 2001.

On completion of the survey, the

The main objective of the

in the Bay of Bengal.

quarter of the next year

hev added.

round bidding.

bidding by mid-2006.

Man takes

killed her with a machete.

FROM PAGE 16

FROM PAGE 1

the mankind.

Once approved, the energy

bidding today

However, the government earlier this month appointed Mosharraf as joint secretary of the education ministry, Petrobangla chairman.

SR Osmani was previously leading one of the government's negotiating teams with Tata He was also one of the two members of the technical commit-

tee to negotiate the tri-nation gas

pipeline proposal. Incidentally, the government in recent months also terminated the contract of the other technical member of this committee, Salek Sufi of Gas Transmission Company

"Because of frequent changes and overwhelming responsibilities, a stagnation prevails in the affairs of Titas, RPGCL and Bapex," said an official of Petrobangla.

By his designation since 1990-91, the energy secretary heads three boards of Petrobangla affiliates -- the boards of Titas Gas, Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd and Bapex.

Accordingly, they get multiple cars from these companies, which are supposed to be headed by Petrobangla.

"Such additional responsibilities of the secretaries had always created administrative weaknesses and conflicts," says a high official of one of the Petrobangla affiliates. asking not to be named. For instance, an official of Titas

could enjoy immunity from any punishment if they maintain a good relationship with the ministry, instead of Petrobangla. The administrative weaknesses

intensified since the prime minister took over the charge of the energy minister in 1998 during the Awami League regime and started worsening after the BNP came to power. As the prime minister cannot give due attention to the gas sector

given the responsibilities. The state ministers of the two consecutive governments have not demonstrated any leadership and were found to be interfering with decisions that should have been taken by Petrobangla or its affiliates.

bodies, state ministers are generally

For instance, when The Daily Star ran specific reports on the corruption of a millionaire meter reader of Titas Gas company, or massive bungling in Titas Gas company's pipeline project, the state ministers had protected the culprits pinpointed by the reports. "As the national coordination

body, Petrobangla used to work independently in most cases until

1996-97. From then on, it became very weak with the state ministers or presently with the adviser taking or imposing decisions," said another high official.

The Bapex was forced to accent the faulty joint venture agreement between Bapex and Niko, although its parent body Petrobangla resisted Again, to cripple Petrobangla by

taking most of its powers directly to the energy ministry, ousted state minister AKM Mosharraf Hossain in 2003 wanted to make the ministry's hydrocarbon unit a parallel to Petrobangla. Created in 1998 as a donor-

funded one-year project as a technical arm of the energy ministry, the small Hydrocarbon Unit was intended to be given power like Production Sharing Contract (PSC) negotiations and approval of PSCs. Although it did not happen, the pressure to weaken Petrobangla continues still today.

Consequently, the government did not arrange new recruitments in Petrobangla since 1999, leading to a shortfall of about 65 percent of its manpower.

Sources said the government under donors' pressure appointed managing directors and general managers for finances and operations from private sector for Titas, RPGCL and the Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL) on contract with high salaries as part of turning them into functionally autonomous companies.

However, when the appointments of the general managers were made, they were designated as directors at the intervention of ousted state minister AKM Mosharraf Hossain.

This created severe conflicts with the regular general managers in the three organisations who refused to accept their 'designated' seniority. Consequently, the regular general managers feel demoralised, the sources said.

At the same time, the purpose of appointing managers on contract is not being served. While their performances should be evaluated regularly, they are not evaluated.

"In fact nobody maintains any Annual Confidential Report (ACR) on them, while regular managers get promoted on the basis of their ACRs." quips a source.

Dhaka trying

Although George W Bush along with First Lady Laura Bush will mainly visit India in February or early March next vear, diplomatic sources said Bush might also visit Bangladesh and Pakistan aiming at consolidating an enhanced dialogue with the South Asian leaders.

The PMO source said higher authorities of the foreign ministry and Washington mission are in close contact with the senior officials of the US State Department and there is a positive indication from the US side.

Bangladesh Ambassador in Washington Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury also met Bush in White House recently.

"We are hopeful that President Bush will come to Dhaka as Bangladesh is a valued partner of the United States in the war on terror and the United States engages the Bangladesh government on a range of important issues," the source

Asked about the possibility of President Bush's visit to Dhaka, a high official of the foreign ministry said, "Nothing is unlikely. We have received indication from the US officials that President Bush may visit Bangladesh."

Requesting anonymity, he said

the US administration has made a fundamental judgment that the future of South Asia as a whole is vital to the future of the United States and that Bangladesh is vital for US strategy in the region.

The foreign ministry official said the US now has very active and productive relationships with every country in South Asia and both Bangladesh and the US presently enjoy excellent relationship. "We already have strong rela

tionship and both the countries have made clear intention to moving to the next level," he added.

Former US president Bill Clinton visited Bangladesh in February 2000 as part of his South Asia tour.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 16

The couple, residents of Simulpara in Siddhiganj thana in Narayangan of Bangladesh, were produced before the court yesterday and placed on a seven-day remand. The police claimed one foreign-

made revolver was recovered from a bag of Suman. They couple entered into India 'illegally' on

Elephants wane

On the other hand, poaching, confrontation with humans, accidents and illness killed 43 elephants in southeastern hill areas of Bandarban and northern hill areas of Mymensingh during the last decade, experts said at

Nearly 200 people were killed and about 500 injured in elephant attacks. they said at the seminar jointly organised by Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). According to the animal specialists

large-scale "jum" cultivation, construction of roads are also the reasons behind this falling number of wild If the situation is not controlled

immediately, bio-diversity in the region will be hampered seriously, said wildlife experts at the seminar held early this month. Elephants in Bangladesh are critically endangered because of poaching and lack of effective mea-

sures for the conservation and monitoring of the large mammal, they said. Two international bodies working on wild animals told the seminar that the elephant population in Bangladesh is now 250, which was 450 as per the

animal census conducted 25 years They informed that about 55,000-60,000 elephants in 13 Asian coun-

tries have become endangered due to

destruction of their habitats, human

settlement, expansion of agriculture,

scarcity of food, and human-elephant According to local sources, ele-

have even left their homes for safety,

Amir Hossain Majumder, chairman of Faisiakhali Union Parishad under Lama upazila, said, "I approached the Prime Minister's Office for compensation to the victims and taking necessary steps regarding the matter. But the victims received only 20kg rice as compensation from the government while the district administration gave them Tk 1,000 each."

He said people now want interference of the government high officials.

The mostly affected areas under Lama upazila are Saper Para, Tirer Dheba, Goyal Mara, Fakir Hola, Hargaja, Kubuk Para Jhiri, Gila Toli Lalmar Para, Bogai Jhiri, Duchari, Kalarjhiri, Kochukhola, and Himchhari.

The locals alleged that as the administration or the Forest Department is not taking steps for their safety, people of some villages are forming groups to kill these wild ele-

Violence

FROM PAGE 1

shot Aftab at point blank range when he was waiting for a rickshaw around 20 yards off his house at Mirpur Block-E at about 10:45am.

"Two motorcyclists stopped their bike behind Aftab and shot twice in his head and left arm minutes after he came out of his house with a youth," said a butcher, Mahbub. Aftab's family members said the vouth who was accompanying

Aftab had come to his house at about 9:00am and had breakfast with him. They however could not identify the youth. Mahbub said the motorcyclists in their 20s fled the scene firing a blank shot and leaving Aftab in a

chase the criminals. Locals and family members rushed Aftab to DMCH where doctors operated on his wounds. 'He is now out of danger," said a hospital source in the afternoon.

As a rumour spread that Aftab

has been killed a few hundred

pool of blood. None dared to

Mirpur residents burst into protests. The shopkeepers took to the street putting the shutters The protesters turned violent and damaged at least 12 vehicles passing Mirpur Section-1 round-

some wayside shops. Police rushed to the scene and clubbed the demonstrators prompting them to pelt brickbats on the law enforcers. The clash between the locals and the police continued for half an hour.

about. They also pelted stones at

Additional police force and Rapid Action Battalion then rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control Officer-in-Charge of Mirpur

Police Station last night said they

could neither arrest anyone, nor

have any clue to the incident. Local businessmen said criminals killed four businessmen and injured 15 others in Mirpur over extortion in the last two years.

Defence policy FROM PAGE 16

information, home affairs, law justice and parliamentary affairs, sources said The AFD in its report said the

council is considering different aspects including the constitution, foreign policy, international war policies, threat analysis, existing structure and the capacities of the armed forces The council after preparing the

draft policy will submit it to the cabinet for approval. The cabinet will decide the fate of the draft. "We will discuss the progress in preparing the defence policy at

today's meeting," Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of the parliamentary committee on defence ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday. He said the process to formulate a defence policy has begun

long after the country's independence. "We hope the process will be completed soon. Talking to The Daily Star vesterday, Awami League lawmaker and

committee member ASHK Sadeque said the defence policy should be prepared immediately so that the armed forces can go ahead with the policy.

Shibir man

FROM PAGE 1

Rafigul Alam Ripon was held from the Shalgaria area in Pabna, and three iihadi books and three CDs from his house were seized, a Rab press release said yesterday.

The art of bomb manufacturing and explosions, and heroism of Kashmir warriors were detailed in the CDs. Son of Lutfar Rahman, Ripon is a

student of the Management depart-

ment at Edward College and a well-

known Shibir worker in his locality, locals said. Meanwhile, the banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Muiahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Friday threatened to blow up the Music and Dramatic Department of Rajshahi

University, reports our RU corre-

"We will blow up the department as well as teachers and students who are not maintaining Islamic laws." a hand-written letter.

admission test in future, terming art and culture anti-Islamic Panic gripped students of the department soon after the letter was found, prompting the RU authorities

to deploy a large contingent of police in front of the department. **CTG JMB CHIEF REMANDED AGAIN**

Chittagong divisional chief Mohammad (Aman Ullah) remanded again yesterday, this time for 10 days, our staff correspondent from Chittagong adds.

Four JMB operatives including its

On completion of a 10-day remand in Dhaka, Aman along with other JMB men-- Naimuzzaman (Zafar/Sohag), Rafiqul Islam (Javed/Roman) and Manirul Islam-was produced before the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate in Chittagong with a fresh remand prayer in a case for possessing explosives.

The JMB operatives were then taken to Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Chittagong headquarters at Patenga for interrogation, sources said.

No sign to end crisis

Fertiliser Association (BFA) went on an indefinite strike stoppoing fertiliser supply from December 19 in protest against the non-release of long overdue subsidy fund of Tk 60 crore, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told newsmen that his ministry would release the fund if the bills were found genuine.

Finance Secretary Siddiqur Rahman Chowdhury recently told The Daily Star that release of the long overdue subsidy bills was under his ministry's consideration but declined to explain why the release was delayed.

As 3,000 fertiliser dealers across the country are running the risk of fast depleting stocks, the agriculture ministry and BFA found finance's excuse of looking into the genuineness of the subsidy bills as "very disturbing" since further delay in subsidy fund release would prolong the strike resulting in the reduction in boro, potato and other winter crops production.

Stocks of non-urea chemical fertiliser -- triple super phosphate (TSP), murate of potash (MoP) and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) -at dealer-level are fast depleting.

"Dealers will run dry within five days as their stocks are not being replenished due to the strike. Unless government gives us the overdue subsidy fund immediately, we'll be forced to release fresh stocks of fertiliser at market prices (without providing 25 percent rebate)," BFA Chairman Kofiluddin Ahmed told The Daily Star yester-

Against the backdrop of the strike at a time when the farmers apply 80 percent of their yearly fertiliser requirement to their boro, potato and other winter crops, BFA and the agriculture ministry last week sat in a meeting that ended inconclusively while the latter blamed the finance ministry for not releasing the long overdue subsi-

Criminals

njured

FROM PAGE 16 Meherpur, but no one was reported

The incident took place when a Rab team raided the den of a local gang leader, known as "Haus" and accused in at least 30 cases including five for murders and 20 for abductions, at Ghorpara under Gangni upazila at about 6:30pm. Sensing the presence of the

crime-busters, Haus, who is believed to have been staying in the den along with around 10 accomplices, opened fire on the Rab team. As the Rab members returned

shots, the gang hurled four bombs at the Rab men. Two of the bombs exploded--one in front of the Rab vehicle and another on the roof of the vehicle, Rab sources said. The second bomb tore apart the roof of the Rab vehicle.

The criminals fled the scene while the Rab retreated in the face of bomb Later, a joint team of police, Cobra

to hunt down the criminals

Pro-Tiger MP

attacks that international mediators

members of parliament in consultation with them," the government said in a statement, which also accused the Tigers of being behind the murder. Tamil MP Joseph Parara-

witness said.

A local police official said there could have been more than one gunmen and there was an exchange of fire with the guards of the VIP.

suffered gunshot injuries, police said. Eight other people were also wounded, including a Catholic nun. and were admitted to the main hospital

Tiger rebels lobbed grenades at two army checkpoints Sunday and wounded eight soldiers, a local military official said. The bloodletting came hours after

escalation of violence that has claimed the lives of more than 60 people this "Sri Lanka faces a crucial choice

percent subsidy on imported fertilisers including TSP, MoP and DAP in the last fiscal year. Under the new arrangement, fertiliser importers started selling their imported stock at a 25 percent rebate with refund

the 3,000 dealers across the country can afford to keep more than 50 tonnes of non-urea fertiliser in stock demand in this boro season.

liser, leading to the farmers' losses Market sources fear that due to non-realisation of the subsidies importers would stockpile nearly

A rise by 25 percent in fertiliser prices would mean that the farmers would have to pay Tk 850 for a 50-ka bag of MoP instead of Tk 595 that they pay now, for DAP they would have to pay Tk 1250 instead of Tk 841 and for TSP Tk 940 instead of

Earlier, Rab-6 arrested Nantu at the Khulna University on Friday and handed him over to Rab-8 in Barisal

him to West Nalua village of Kalaskati union at around 5:00am to recover illegal arms and nab his accomplices. According to Rab officials, when

resulting in a gunfight.

while his accomplices fled. A sergeant and a constable were

Police, Rab and local sources said Nantu was a top-terror of the

Abul Hossain Khan, BNP leader and lawmaker of the area, declared

fear could signal a return to war. The government and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) blamed each other for the killing at St. Mary's church in

President Mahinda Rajapakse's government condemned the assassination and said stepped-up security was being offered to other minority legislators following the point-blank

jasingham, 71, had just received Holy Communion and was returning to his

are afraid to talk

Pararajasingham's wife Sugunam

in Batticaloa.

Sri Lanka's international backers expressed "deep concern" over the

Tiger rebels "The Sri Lankan people clearly want peace -- it would be a tragic step backwards if their desire was not

guarantee from the government. The importers received Tk 171

crore of the allocated Tk 271 crore rebate. The rest remains unpaid

since last June. BFA Chairman Kofiluddin Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that approval for a chunk amounting Tk 60 crore has been lying with the finance ministry for months while agriculture ministry is scrutinising the bills for Tk 20 crore more and the deputy commissioners are vet to

four lakh tonnes of imported TSP, MoP and DAP in the warehouses

FROM PAGE 16

on Saturday.

Nantu was killed on the spot when he got caught in the shootout,

also injured in the gunfight. One gun, one pipe gun, three rounds of bullets and three sharp weapons were retrieved from the

cases including three for murder. He was in police custody for 18 months and was released on bail last April.

Batticaloa, 303km east of Colombo, before a packed Christmas congrega-

shooting. "The president has offered to provide additional security to (Tamil)

pew when he was shot in the chest, a

In the island's north suspected

today between mounting violence and reinvigorating peace," the quartet known as the Co-Chairs said in a statement Saturday after meeting with

saw a faction led by a regional Tiger commander. V. Muralitharan, better known as Karuna, target pro-Tiger activists in the embattled eastern More than 60,000 people have

approve the remaining Tk 20 crore.

Market sources said, as none of

at a time, their stocks are depleting pretty quickly due to serious The dealers fear that supplystoppage for a few more days wil cause a serious shortage of ferti-

and would start selling those without giving the 25 percent rebate.

1 killed

Following his confessional statement, the Rab-8 members took

they reached the spot Nantu's cohorts opened fire on them in a bid to snatch him away. Rab retaliated

area and was wanted in 13 criminal

and Rab started a combing operation bounty on Nantu a few months ago

Diplomats from the Co-Chairs -the United States, the European Union, Japan and Norway -- said there

troubled truce in force since February The Tigers said the slaving had been "well-planned" and involved a hardline party of Buddhist monks opposed to any concessions to minor-

was an urgent need for the LTTE to

agree to hold talks on salvaging the

"The chauvinistic forces have taken away this patriot who has worked for the Tamil nation's liberation and promotion of human rights," they said in a statement. Sunday's killing is the most high-

profile since Foreign Minister

Lakshman Kadirgamar was gunned

down by a suspected Tiger rebel in

Colombo on August 12.

Tamil rebel attacks.

The assassinations underline a worsening security situation in Sri anka's troubled north and east amid ears of a return to civil war. Five people were killed in clashes on Saturday, a day after 18 others,

including 15 sailors, died in suspected

Pararajasingham, a key figure in the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) party, entered parliament in 1990 replacing Sam Thambimuttu, who was killed by suspected Tiger rebels. Last year the TNA aligned itself with

the LTTE. With 22 seats in the national

parliament, the party is virtually a proxy of the guerrillas. A split in the LTTE in March 2004

died in sectarian violence since 1972.

4 hurt FROM PAGE 1

Panic gripped the trade fair visitors

exploded the 'cocktail.'

after the explosion at 8:15pm.

Officer-in-Charge of Tejgaon Police Station Kamrul Islam told The Daily Star that snatchers might have

phant attacks caused the death of 35 "There was panic after the shots addressed to the department chairwere fired in front of a congregation of men in Lama upazila alone in the last man Prof Matin Talukder, warned. hundreds." the witness who declined three years. People are now afraid of Found at his office, the letter to be named said by telephone. "Peoasked the chairman to refrain from the wild animal while some people ple generally know who did it but they