REUTERS, Kerbala, Iraq

Iraqi officials said they found the skeletal remains of 31 people in what they described as a mass grave in the Shia holy city of Kerbala vesterday.

A senior official at the laboratory to which the bodies were taken said the people appeared to have died during the suppression of a Shia uprising against Saddam Hussein after the 1991 Gulf War.

"There are 31 bodies. We're still testing but it appears they are victims of the events of 1991," the official told Reuters.

There had been confusion over the scale of the find at a building site for a sewage project in the city centre, with police initially saying there were 150 bodies; police spokesman Rahman Mishawi later revised that to "dozens" of sets of

appeared to be human bones.

With Saddam on trial for crimes against humanity, the Shia-led government is keen to remind Iraqis their suffering under his Sunni-

Some minority Sunni Arab leaders have accused police and other government officials of exaggeratpolitical advantage.

have been reported since Saddam's fall in April 2003, many in southern Shia areas of the country and in

Human rights activists estimate that hundreds of thousands of people disappeared during

"I was convinced there was a

In the charge sheet, Jalandoni

conspiracy among the accused,"

the city's chief prosecutor,

Prudencio Jalandoni. told reporters.

said evidence suggested the two

cleared soldiers were not in the van

at the time of the alleged rape.

four US soldiers with rape

Philippine foreign affairs depart-Marines to local authorities

which has been holding the soldiers made no mention of custody but said the United States would continue to cooperate with the Philippines on the case under the two countries' Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

seeing that justice is served, and looks forward to a fair and impartia process that can provide for a just outcome," the statement said. Beyond small protests, the case

has caused little public outcry or anti-American sentiment in the Philippines, the only former US colony in Asia and a major security ally to Washington in the region.

"We are happy the girl is going to get some kind of justice," said Katrina Legarda, a lawyer for the complainant.

In affidavits, five of the Marines had disputed allegations that the woman was gang-raped in a van at a former US Navy base at Subic Bay, suggesting there was consensual sex

The sixth soldier, who had also taken part in two-week military exercises with Philippine troops in October, did not submit an affidavit.

The Filipino van driver, initially considered a witness, was charged as an accomplice, according to prosecution documents filed with a court in Olongapo City, northwest of

A Reuters reporter at the scene saw one sack filled with what

dominated administration.

ng accounts of atrocities and of using Saddam's trial for sectarian Some 300 possible mass graves

Kurdish areas of the north.

Philippines charges

REUTERS, Olongapo City, Philippines

Philippine prosecutors charged four US Marines yesterday with raping a 22-year-old Filipino woman in early November but cleared two other soldiers who had also been accused Washington has not responded

He said that once arrest warrants publicly to an earlier request by the were issued, the four U.S. Marines and the Filipino driver would be ment to transfer custody of the placed in one detention facility, subject to the provisions of the VFA. A statement by the US embassy, ONE-YEAR LIMIT

Recommending no bail be set for the accused, Jalandoni said he was "confident the case will be resolved before the end of the one-year period" stipulated in the VFA for the handling of criminal charges against "The US remains committed to The court was expected to select

a judge on January 3 to hear the case but no trial date has been set.

The woman who filed the complaint and the six soldiers -- all from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit stationed in Okinawa, Japan -- did not attend three hearings held since te November.

Relations between Manila and Washington deteriorated in the 1990s when Philippine senators ended a treaty allowing U.S. forces to keep naval and air bases that had been used as staging points during the Vietnam War and the first Gulf War.

The bonds were repaired in 1999, when a more friendly Philippine Senate agreed to the VFA, which permits U.S. troops to join military exercises and train local units that are battling communist and Muslim insurgencies.

Some ministers

also started an investigation which is still running.

A magistrate court vesterday sent Lutfar on a five-dav remand after the police produced him before the court seeking 10 days' remand.

close to Bangla Bhai and helped the JMJB in their activities against the Sarbahara outlaws.

Bangla Bhai emerged with more than 20 outsiders, Lutfar told the police, adding that the JMJB helped the Bagmara dwellers build a selfdefence against the outlaws.

Lutfar denied knowing the whereabouts of Bangla Bhai, saving

part in several JMJB operations against the Sarbaharas after the then officer-in-charge Shamsul Islam formed committees with the

JMJB men and villagers to resist the outlaws. However, the JMJB is the same group that fought with police in Joypurhat in August 2003 under the name of JMB and started its activi-

ties openly in Rajshahi region during March-April of 2004.

BSF abducts

entered into the Bangladesh part of the Ichhamati river at Komorpur and kidnapped the three fishermen and the boy with their boat and fishing nets and took them to India.

In another incident, BSF patrol team of Daharkanda camp entered into Bangladesh territory through Hijaldi border and kidnapped Golam Rasul near the Zero Point New Hijaldi area, where he went to work in a field of crops.

release the Bangladeshi nationals. Contacted, Major Asad, secondin-command of BDR Satkhira confirmed the incidents and said they are trying to get them released.

in Sylhet gunfight **UNB**, Sylhet

15 injured

At least 15 people were injured in a gunfight between two rival groups at Tiargaon in Sylhet's Jagannathpur

upazila yesterday. Witnesses said the clash ensued between the groups over the construction of a road. About 50 bullets were exchanged during the halfhour gunfight which started around

Of the injured, five bullet-hit people were admitted to the upazila health complex while the rests to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital. Two of them are in critical condition, the hospital

Kuwait sentences al Qaeda-linked militants to death

REUTERS. Kuwait

A Kuwaiti court yesterday sentenced to death six suspected militants linked to al Qaeda for bloody attacks in the country.

The six were among 37 Islamists on trial as members of the "Peninsula Lions" group believed to be linked to Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

They include 25 Kuwaitis, seven stateless Arabs, two Jordanians, a Saudi, an Australian and a Somali, A Reuters reporter who was at

the court said none of the defendants were present when the verdict was announced. Other suspects received jail

terms of between four months to 15 years, and one received a life term.

Seven were acquitted including Islamist cleric Sheikh Hamed al-Ali. lawver Osama al-Munawer who represents Islamists as well as the wife of Amer al-Enezi -- one of al Qaeda's top leaders in Kuwait who died in custody in February.

"I thank God. I've believed in my innocence all along," Munawer told Reuters by phone. "The death sentence was very tough as it was never proven that they took up arms to fight against anyone. I hope they will get a fair trial on appeal.'

A judicial source said 10 of the 37 suspects remain at large. Two senior militants who are on the run, Khaled al-Dossari and

Mohsen al-Fadli, each received a 10-year jail term in absentia

Court sends

Rashid, along with his lawyers appeared before the Speedy Trial

After hearing both the sides, Judge Shahed Noor Uddin ordered to send him to the Dhaka Central Earlier on November 28, the

ribunal sentenced Qaivum to death, along with Jubo Dal leader Rafiqul Islam Kajal and eight others, for killing the businessman and his

The gang of criminals led by Kajal abducted Shamsul Haque, 52, owner of a hosiery market in Old Dhaka, his son Russel Sheikh, 29 and driver Moazzem Hossain, 37, on March 26 last year and killed them in a bid to grab Shamsul's market and Tk 5 lakh.

The gang chopped the victims' bodies into 149 pieces and dumped those at different places of Dhanmondi and Gazipur to destroy

BSP, NOAB

FROM PAGE 1

would add Tk 6,000 more to the price for each tonne. Already the price of newsprint is increasing on the international market, the statement added.

"Whereas the import duty on newsprint for the newspaper industry in other Saarc countries is 2.5 to S percent, in Bangladesh it is 25 nercent," the statement said adding that ultimately it takes Tk 63.000 per tonne to import newsprint including VAT, surcharge, advance income

tax and PSI. Although the government has formed Sixth Wage Board and announced 40 percent interim dearness allowance from July 2005. the present situation is not favourable for the newspaper industry due to this excessive price of newsprint.

Terming the situation as hindrance to freedom of the press, the statement urged the government to remove the import duty on news-

Primary school

FROM PAGE 16 paraded some city streets, held a orief rally on the street beside Muktangon and then returned to the Shaheed Minar.

At the rally, Secretary General of the association Akkas Ali Sheikh said. "We have been agitating since 1992 to realise our demand. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, while she was the leader of the opposition, had assured us of nationalising our jobs f her party (BNP) went to power. But she is not doing this.

He also said, "It is now a matter of our very survival and we will not leave the Shaheed Minar until our demand is met.' The agitating teachers said they

are staying at the Shaheed Minar from Monday night.

Meanwhile, Bahadur Rahman

Badsha, one of the teachers, was injured in a road accident near Muktangon. He was hospitalised with leg injuries.

Charge sheet given

FROM PAGE 1 the six operatives of the banned Islamist militant outfit were released on bail. They have been absconding since then, except Sentu, who was re-arrested in November

Investigating into the case, Dhamrai police later found the activities of the accusees actually were of the nature of sedition. With approval from the home ministry, SI Zehad Hossain of the police station filed the sedition case against the six arrestees and their accomplice Pintu

N'GANJARRESTS Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday busted two JMB dens at Fatullah in Narayanganj and arrested four operatives of the outlawed terrorist outfit with 10kg ammonium nitrate, an explosive substance, and 342 books

Tipped off, a team of Rab-10 first raided a West Masdair house in Fatullah at around 2:15am and arrested Rafiqul Islam alias Shoaib, 20. The team also recovered 10kg ammonium nitrate, 290 copies of a book titled 'Berajale Al Jihad' and some sharp weapons from his room. Major Jahangir Hossain of Rab-10 said some 1,000 small bombs

seized ammonium nitrate. Shoaib, who hails from Raipura in Narsingdi, said he is a student of a Kuwait-funded madrasa at Joydevpur in Gazipur and was sent by his JMB superiors to Narayangan about two and a half months ago.

could be manufactured with the

"Following the lead given by Shoaib, we raided a house at Old Deovoque in the area in the noon and arrested Ziaur Rahman alias Tanveer and Ziaul Islam alias Obaida," Rab-10 Director Lt Col Manikur Rahman told Both Tanveer and Obaida hail

from Tangail. Tanveer admitted to being the JMB Narayanganj district coordinator and regulating the August 17 bomb blasts in the district as part of the countrywide orchestrated terror strikes. The Rab seized a cellphone set,

52 more books on jihad and Tk 8,620 in cash, which the arrestees said was part of Tk 15,000 detained JMB military commander Ataur Rahman Sunny had given them earlier as expenses for three months. The Rab-10 director said the three arrestees are JMB Ehsars -- people

who are ready to sacrifice their lives

for Allah -- and are suspected to be

members of its suicide squad.

Abdul Aziz from Pabna and Habib from Rajshahi also took part in the August 17 bomb strikes in Narayanganj, the Ehsars said, adding they had changed their resi-

dence thrice in the last four months. Another source said the Rab also arrested a JMB 'Sathi' (active supporter) named Abul Kashem Noor Nabi at Old Deovogue.

As of last night, the arrestees

were being grilled in the custody of

Journey

claimed that at an inter-ministerial meeting earlier this month Haab had given the estimate of 45,000 would be pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

Accordingly, they arranged flights for 39,000 while the rest were to be flown by different foreign airlines, he added.

On the other hand, Haab Secretary Jinnur Rahman Chowdhury Dipu said, "We said that Biman had to arrange flights for at least 45,000 pilgrims while the rest could fly by other airlines."

Had Biman chartered another wide-bodied craft as per its initial plan, there would not be any crisis in the first place, Haab leaders said.

Biman could hurriedly manage to charter two aircraft including a 576seat capacity wide-bodied one, Biman sources said, adding that it failed to charter another widebodied craft, even after signing contract with Thai Orient Airlines as the Boeing 747 got stranded at Jakarta after developing technical

Even if Biman arranges more craft now, it would not be able to operate additional flights to Saudi Arabia, as it has no more slot permission, sources said, adding that the only option left for Biman now is to pursue the higher authorities for arranging at least 10 flights by widebodied craft of Saudi Arabian Airlines. Haab leaders were scheduled to

meet State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir last night for seeking government intervention in resolving

Opposition out

in the country and a halt to bomb blasts as they have not turned up for the dialogue She said when the country was

advancing towards self-reliance on all fronts, a deep-rooted conspiracy was going on not only against her, the ruling BNP and the alliance but also against the country, people and future generation. All these are being done to halt

the country's advancement and weaken Bangladesh to make it dependent on others, she added Khaleda said a conspiracy was on using the name of Islam. "Innocent people, police were being killed

as well as threats of attack given to educational institutions. The prime minister said this conspiracy would never be allowed to get through. "Bombers will not succeed --our movement is against

bombings and terrorism. She blasted the opposition for carrying out false campaign abroad against communal harmony and terming Bangladesh a dysfunctional

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Jute and Textiles Minister Shajahan Siraj, Education Minister Dr Osman Farruk, PM's Political secretary Harris Chowdhury, State Minister for Water Resources Goutam Chakrabarty, State Minister for Power Igbal Hassan Mahmood, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed, lawmakers and local leaders also addressed the meeting.

over Dhaleswari river and the construction work of Tangail-Aricha regional highway at Nalsandha in The 697-meter bridge will cost over Tk 65 crore while the construc-

Earlier, the prime minister laid

the foundation stones of a bridge

tion of over 52-kilometer regional highway will involve Tk 86.43 crore. She also inaugurated a rural

electric power substation and the newly built academic building of Nagarpur Jadunath Pilot High

Cabinet's review

exploration move of the government," the advisor told the press yesterday at his office. Supplying natural gas as per the

country's demand will be a critical problem in the near future if the government fails to take prompt action regarding fresh exploration. Earlier on November 19, the orime minister approved a policy for

the country's exclusive economic zone in the Bay of Bengal Rahman favoured offshore exploration immediately as the state owned company Bapex is not capable of undertaking offshore exploration or arranging the high

third round oil and gas exploration in

volume of investment required for such jobs. The ministry proposed carrying out a survey in the Bay up to a depth of 200 nautical miles, to identify

natural resources in the deep-sea. Mahmudur Rahman said the government may consider direct bidding for seismic survey excluding requirement of in-depth specification of the companies. But he expressed his skepticism over such process saying that this may discourage renowned companies to participate in the bidding.

Targeting higher economic growth, the ministry earlier planned to raise its gas production from 1,530 million cubic feet per day (mmcfd) currently to 1,700 mmcfd by the end of this year to meet the growing demand from the industry and transport sectors and domestic consumers. Encouraged by gas discoveries

in the Bay of Bengal basin by India and Myanmar, Bangladesh is also planning to offer offshore blocks in the next round of bids. Bangladesh has no survey data on its deep-sea territory and the

potential of a vast area in the South Bay remains untapped. The surveyor would spend some 9 to 10 million dollars on its own to collect this data. It will then sell the

data to interested oil companies in

the third round bid. The government

will also have the data without any

Experts have estimated Bangladesh's gas reserves to be about 30 trillion cubic feet (TCF), half of them proven reserves, and coal reserves equivalent to 70 TCF of gas.

The energy ministry has planned to conduct seismic surveys in the 106,500-square kilometre area in the Bay of Bengal through open

Mahmudur Rahman ruled out the possibility of increase in gas price soon despite donors' pressure on the government to readjust the price by January.

The ministry has taken vigorous steps to eliminate systems loss in gas sector in order to bring down the overall and accumulated loss of the government, he added.

Delhi cops

FROM PAGE 16 and a Bangladesh-based Harkat-ul-Jihad (HuJi) member, was also a coconspirator in the blast at the STF office in Hyderabad on October 12 Singh said.

He said the Delhi police had specific information that the HuJi was planning to target leading politicians and sensitive locations in The three, who were trained at a

Baluchistan terror camp in Pakistan, revealed that they had been planning to target some prominent politicians in Andhra Pradesh, software parks in Hyderabad and Bangalore and markets and railway stations in north India. They were trained in triggering blasts using clock timers and remote controls. "Interrogation revealed that the

ISI has been operating terrorist camps in Baluchistan and ferrying Indians and Bangladeshis there to train them in handling sophisticated weapons and IEDs for subversive activities against India," he said. (PTI/THE STATESMAN)

Punish Islamist

FROM PAGE 1

of pushing the countrymen into a confrontation by delivering provocative speeches.

The meeting discussed the overall current political situation of the country, AL General Secretary and Coordinator of the 14-party Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star after the meeting. It demanded tough punishment

to the people responsible for the August 21 grenade attack on the AL rally. August 17 serial blasts across the country and other bomb attacks, killing AL leaders including Shah AMS Kibria, Ahsanullah Master and others, Jalil said. Criticising and protesting the prime minister's threat of sedition

charges against Sheikh Hasina, the

opposition leaders held the alliance

government responsible for any

untoward incident following the

speeches of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Matiur Rahman Nizami. The meeting condemned yesterday's attack on AL Organising Secretary Akhteruzzaman at Kaliganj in Gazipur and the death threat to AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta from the banned

Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). The opposition leaders said the BNP men's attack on the 14-party demonstration against the price hike proves that they are against the

Islamist militant outfit Jama'atul

countrymen. The meeting decided to hold a press conference tomorrow at the

Jatiya Press Club It also discussed overall preparation for the Dhaka march on January 22 and grand rallies in other districts including Chittagong, Sylhet and

DCC

movement and Wari Club for their praiseworthy contribution in their respective fields.

The awardees received a gold medal, Tk 50,000 cash and an honorary certificate. The awards for literature and

culture, health service, social welfare and sports categories were given yesterday. The DCC gave the awards for four categories even though it had promised awards in nine categories earlier.

The categories will increase in

future including one for journalists for city affairs reporting, said DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka while speaking at the award giving ceremony. LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuivan attended the ceremony as the chief quest and distributed the awards. Kazi Rafigul Alam, president and chief executive of Dhaka Ahsania

deputy commissioner of Dhaka district and president of Wari Club, received the awards Lauding the DCC for introducing the award Bhuiyan hoped the neu-

Mission, film star Flias Kanchan,

founder president of Nirapad Sarak

Chai movement and M Abdul Bari,

trality maintained in selecting the awardees will prevail in future. Kanchan said on average 14 people are killed daily in road accidents in Bangladesh and 25-35 people are injured causing loss of Tk 4500 crore yearly which affects

our gross domestic product (GDP). Replying to Elias Kanchan's appeal for land to establish an orthopaedic hospital for accident victims the minister said, "I'll talk to the authority concerned in this

regard as it's a good initiative." Journalist Nurjahan said this award recognises her struggles and efforts to become successful while upholding ideals of Begum Rokeya her father journalist Nasiruddin and

14-party lays

husband Rokonuzzaman Khan.

police obstruction.

The 14-party observed the programme in Sirajganj despite

The opposition combine held a rally at the Bazar Station Chattar in Sadar upazila where AL leader KM Hossain Ali Hasan, Abdur Rahman, Daniul Haque Dani, JSD leader Dr Zahirul Hague Raza and NAP leader Hedayet Ullah spoke.

Similar programmes were held in Raiganj, Tarash, Ullapara, Shahjadpur, Chowhali, Belkuchi, Kamarkhand and Kazipur upazila headquarters. In Nilphamari, the 14-party

commissioner's office and brought out a procession. District AL President Jonab Ali, Poura Chairman Dewan Kamal Ahmed, advocate Momtazul Hague Prof Nur Mohammad Khan of the Workers Party and Sydur Rahman

leaders and activists took part in

demonstration in front of the deputy

of NAP spoke at the 14-party rally. The opposition combine laid siege to Naogaon Sadar upazila office and submitted a memorandum to the upazila nirbahi officer after holding a rally. Fazle Rabbi Baku, Abdul Malek, Nirmal Krishna Saha and Bin Ali Pintu addressed the rally.

In Khulna, the 14-party alliance submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner after a rally chaired by Sheikh Yunus Ali Inu. Begum Monnujan Sufian of AL

Mollah Jalaluddin, Hafizur Rahman of the Workers Party. Haider Gazi Salauddin Runu of Gono Forum Rafiqul Haque Khokan of JSD and Fazlur Rahman of NAP spoke at the

17 mobile courts

magistrate Nazmul Ahsan Majumder, fined two vermicelli factories -- Swan Shemai and Golden Shemai -- for producing the food in unhygienic environment.

The court found the employees making vermicelli with rotten flour and drving it in the sun. Besides, the manufactured item was kept in a dusty place. The court fined the owner of Swan

Shemai factory Tk 50,000, said the magistrate adding that the same factory had been fined Tk 20,000 earlier. "If the penalty is increased the rate of adulteration may come down," the magistrate said. The court later fined Golden

Shemai Tk 50.000. The owner and the employees had fled from the factory before the arrival of the mobile Another mobile court led by magistrate Md Rokan Ud Doulah raided four restaurants in Kotwali

area and a confectionary shop in

New Market area. It collected Tk

90,000 as fine for selling adulterated

food and maintaining unhygienic environment. The magistrate told reporters that the locals complained to him about the sale of unhygienic foods that prompted him to raid the restaurants. Two of the restaurants are 'B'Baria Hotel' and 'Taiyeba Hotel', while the

with the NSI opinion, saying smug-

glers and terrorists do not necessar-

ly need mobile phone coverage in

the border areas. On the other hand.

the residents of these remote places

need to be connected in order to

Rangamati, Bandarban and

Khagrachhari, but the largest vol-

ume of arms and explosives are

being recovered in these hill dis-

tricts," said an expert who does not

GrameenPhone, but all the mobile

and fixed phone operators will face

the same trouble in expanding their

networks if such extra-regulatory

interference prevails, cautioned an

industry insider requesting anonym-

the GP managing director were available for comment as both are

Neither the BTRC chairman nor

It is not an isolated issue of the

There is no cellular coverage in

NSI objects

bridge the digital divide.

want to be named.

out of the country.

FROM PAGE 16

AFD chief

FROM PAGE 1 troops will be deployed to ensure free and fair polls.

For appointment to the post, government policymakers and sources in the army are talking of four majors general -- Quarter Master General in the army headquarters Abu Roshde Rokonuddawla, GOC of Ninth Division Masud Udddin Chowdhury BDR chief Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, and DĞFI chiet Sadique Hasan Rumi, sources said.

But it is not unlikely that anyone

other two do not have any sign-

rants Tk 10,000 each and arrested

four employees of the restaurants as

Confectionery at Gausul Azam Super

Market Tk 50,000 for selling unhy-

gienic water in plastic containers. The

court also arrested the owner of the

shop Abdur Rahim for failing to pay

Another court conducted its raid in

albagh area and collected Tk 1.1

lakh as fine from a plastic goods

factory and a vermicelli-producing

Another court in Demra sen-

enced four persons, including the

owners of two biscuit factories, to jail

for seven to 15 days for producing adulterated biscuits. The convicts

had committed the same offence

earlier, the magistrate told reporters.

Another court at Sabujbagh fined two biscuit factories Tk 70,000.

two restaurants -- Hotel Salimar and

Hotel Farmaate -- Tk 23,000 each for

selling adulterated food. The same

Parlour Tk 22,000 for illegal activities

fined Dreamland Massage

In Tejgaon, another court fined

they failed to pay the fine.

The magistrate fined the restau-

The magistrate later fined Shahi

other than the four may get the post said a senior army officer. When the caretaker government takes over responsibilities to conduct the general elections, the president holds the defence portfo-

io according to the Constitution.

"During this period, the principal staff officer has to play a significant role in coordinating the forces. The AFD boss will chalk out the plan of troops deployment in consultation with the president," a former army

Govt mulls stopping

number of irregularities including some private fertiliser importers misappropriation of subsidy funds, a finance ministry source said. The issue also came up for discussion in the finance minister's

cials of Bangladesh Bank, nationalised commercial banks, and National Board of Revenue. The government introduced a 25 percent subsidy for imported fertilisers including TSP, MoP and DAP in

December 8 meeting with the offi-

the last fiscal year so that the farmers get them at a reasonable price. It was alleged in the purchase committee meeting that a section of mporters are involved in over invoicing to get extra benefit in the form of subsidy. Besides, many are

importing huge quantities to make more profit in subsidy. A consensus was reached in the meeting that the government, which is already importing urea fertiliser. will import the non-urea chemical

fertilisers too. The finance minister told the purchase committee that he would speak to the concerned ministries about the issue and take a decision,

At the December 8 meeting, the

bank officials pointed out that over

invoicing and excess import of

fertilisers add to the ongoing dollar

tions.

said a source.

FROM PAGE 16 thana unit leaders about the district

in their areas. The leader of the opposition in parliament will also give directions to the grassroots level AL level leaders to end intra-party feuds to rejuvenate all the district and thana units, and gear up for achieving victory in the coming national elec-

government movement, the sources said. anonymity however told The Daily Star the AL chief herself would form the new committees of 15 organisa-

Hasina and the other two will submit that soon.

elections.

the district and thana units, and the AL chief has now taken a move to solve the problems to ensure victory n the elections," the aide said

After the meeting, the finance ministry directed the central bank to look into the issue. Currently, the ministry itself is examining the

unpaid invoices of the importers. Saifur Rahman coming out of the ECNEC meeting on Monday told the reporters, "Some people are trying to have the funds (for fertiliser subsidy) released quickly. We have to check first whether the farmers are getting the benefits of fertiliser

Today's meeting is expected to discuss mainly the present situation in fertiliser import, its prices and ways to distribute the subsidy. The Bangladesh Bank officials among others will be present at the meet-

Japan

FROM PAGE 1 When contacted, Morshed Khan told UNB Japan is "the strongest development partner of Bangladesh

since the country's independence in Welcoming the aid, he appreciated Japanese contribution to Bangladesh's development, partic-

ularly in the infrastructure sector.

AL forms all but

unit leaders' position and popularity

functionaries locally at the final stage of the opposition's anti-A close aide to Hasina preferring

Moreover, she will ask them not

to cooperate with government

tional districts after the Fid. He mentioned that seven organising secretaries of the party were assigned to sort out the problems inside each district and thana unit and suggest solutions. Five of them have submitted their reports to

The seven leaders were also asked to report on the number of interested candidates for the next elections and their acceptability among members of the public compared to potential candidates from the BNP-Jamaat led ruling alliance. Their reports have been treated as confidential and handed over to the party chief. The move was part of party

efforts to ensure victory in the next "We have got all information on

The leader of the opposition has so far arranged four studies on the position of possible AL candidates for the next election. Former army officials, bureaucrats and journalists conducted the studies.

ies, and she has given green signal to almost 100 party leaders to start work in their respective areas to win victory in the coming election. "We are also in contact with a section of the ruling BNP lawmakers and other leaders about their joining

the AL-led grand alliance. But we

are not disclosing their names in the

interest of the party, " the aide said

On December 25, Hasina

received the last report of the stud-

declining to give details. The AL leadership is also thinking of nominating them for contesting the polls, he claimed without substantiating it.

The aide, also a policy maker of the AL, said the party president will contest the polls at least from three constituencies. Meanwhile, AL sources said the party will not hold any special coun-

cil in the wake of repeated bomb blasts in the country. "Party policymakers are considering extending the tenure of the existing central committee in a meeting of its central working committee shortly, said a senior AL leader. Asked about conflicts within the party, AL General Secretary Abdul

Jalil said it is not unusual in such a big party. "But, we are united to launch a vigorous movement to force the BNP-Jamaat ruling coalition to step down." he said, adding that the party high command is working to resolve the problem of internal feuds.

The investigators said Lutfar primarily confessed that he was

he has not seen Bangla Bhai since the JMJB march in Rajshahi on May 23, 2004, threatening journalists and people. He also denied his association with the JMB but admitted to taking

BDR has sent protest letters to the BSF authorities asking them to

Raishahi and Atrai in Naogaon to address people "in light of the holy Qur'an and the Hadith" and elicit their support for the JMJB. different names during the anti-

outlaw operations.

she added.

50 garment Hospital (DMCH) yesterday. "On hearing the explosion-like sound, some of our workers started shouting in alarm and all the workers on the other floors and ours

made a desperate rush for the exit,"

As the panicked workers gath-

of the stair and the collapsible gate collapsed. jostling down the stairs, many were crushed underfoot and wounded seriously," said Mosharraf Hasan Khan, a senior employee of the

and Farmaate area. claimed that there was no sound, no fire and the gate was not closed.

Imtiaz told The Daily Star. The factory shut after the incident. Officials of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and

Exporters Association (BGMEA) visited the site yesterday and said there will be an investigation into the

Previously well known as a Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Lutfar said he attended several JMJB meetings

the villages of Bagmara in

He also said Rahman's relatives Abdul Awal and Ataur Rahman Sunny were known to him under

Lutfar told the investigators that

he hates the current JMB activities

of bombing and killing people.

ered on the third floor, they found the main gate locked. Soon under the weight of the crowd, both the railings "When they [the workers] came

critically injured Shafia Begum, 30 and Zayeda, 17, were admitted to the DMCH while two others to Holy Family Hospital. The other injured took first aid at clinics in Tejkunipara Officials of the factory, however,

Of the injured, 26 including

fell down under pressure of the crowd," Senior Merchandiser Nafis

'The gate was left wide open. It