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Decision on
Hasina,
Khaleda
after talks

Says Hossain Zillur

UNB, Dhaka

Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday said decision on the release of former prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia might be taken after discussions at the government-sponsored dialogue.

"We're laying preparatory groundwork for making the government-political party dialogue a success," he told reporters after

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

1,000MW load shedding makes life miserable

SHARIER KHAN

With no practical move to improve gas supplies to power plants, the load-shedding situation continues to worsen as the dry scorching heat drives people to use more electricity at homes and offices.

The official power demand yesterday was 4,500 megawatts (MW) against a power generation of around 3,500MW. Around 800MW power could not be generated due to short supply of gas to many powerplants.

Power Development Board

(PDB) sources said while the official power demand was just 4,500MW, the unofficial demand was hovering around 5,900MW. A top official of the power ministry, however, told The Daily Star yesterday that the ministry is planning to hold a high-level meeting with the chief adviser about improving gas supplies for power generation.

"We are presently doing our homework regarding the gas and power situation. We will soon hold a top-level meeting so that effective decisions are made," he said.

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Motia waits in OMS queue for rice, returns empty-handed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) Presidium Member and former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury waited for hours in vain to buy rice from an open market sale (OMS) outlet in the city's South Basabo.

She told The Daily Star that she first went to the OMS outlet at Balur Math in Siddheswari early in the morning, but there she was told "no rice will be sold today (yesterday)".

She then called a number of her

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury waits for rice in front of an Open Market Sale outlet at Kadamtala intersection in the city's Basabo area yesterday.

BDR, BSF deal to combat cross-border crimes

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India and Bangladesh yesterday signed an agreement to make joint efforts to tackle cross-border crimes like arms smuggling and trafficking of arms and children by sharing timely and actionable information.

"The agreement will help to end any suspicion and distrust prevailing on ground level," Bangladeshi Rifles (BDR) Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed told reporters after signing the agreement with the DG of the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) AK Mitra.

The BDR and BSF wrapped up their biennial five-day conference in New Delhi agreeing to jointly deal with trafficking of women and children, smuggling of arms and counterfeit currency through sharing information by sector commanders.

Mitra said the agreement would help both BSF and BDR to expedite decisions.

He said the sector commanders would take pro-active steps to resolve the problems of local population in border areas.

Ahmed said BDR was commit

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NEPAL ELECTION Maoists score strongly in early poll results

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's ex-Maoist rebels were emerging yesterday as the surprise single biggest victors in early results for landmark elections to rebuild the Himalayan nation after a bloody civil war.

The polls were held last Thursday to elect a 601-seat assembly which is slated to abolish the centuries-old monarchy and rewrite the constitution.

"The Maoists have won or are

leading in a total of 82 seats," said election commission spokesman Laxman Bhattarai.

Full results of the impoverished Himalayan nation's polls -- a dual first-past-the-post and proportional representation system -- will not be known for at least a week.

But "what we can be fairly certain about is that the Maoists have a strong chance of emerging as the single largest party," said Kathmandu political analyst

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Heartiest Congratulations to Mr. Iqbal Ahmed OBE

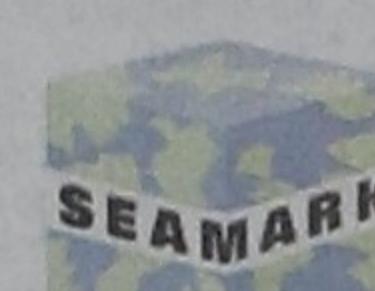
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