

No party to sign

FROM PAGE 1
told these during a meeting with the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders of 80's at his Nam flat.

Delwar also alleged that a conspiracy is going on to split BNP and urged the party leaders and workers to remain alert against any such plot.

"They [government] are putting pressure on the political parties to sign the national charter, but no party will sign it," he said.

BNP chairperson's presence is a must to make the ongoing dialogue fruitful, Delwar observed, adding that the government can bring the two top leaders to the talks if they are sincere about making it successful.

The government is trying to hold an election without Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina. But there will be no elections in the country without their participation. Even the people will not accept an election without the two leaders," he said adding that the government is filing cases against the politicians to bar them from the polls.

Referring to the recent High Court verdict regarding the EC's delay in holding polls, the BNP leader said the government has violated the constitution by not holding the election on time.

Delwar also alleged that the government is doing many things, which are beyond their jurisdiction.

Expressing doubt whether a free and fair election could occur under the present EC, he said the commission has made itself controversial with proposals such as increasing parliamentary seats and cancellation of an article of the constitution.

"People know they [EC] are implementing others' agenda," Delwar said, adding that the EC wants to hold an election in name only to change constitution through forming a 'rubber stamp' parliament.

The BNP leader categorically said that the political leaders themselves would bring changes in their parties' constitution, if necessary.

City gets

FROM PAGE 16
At present, they have to use Bijoy Sarani that remains clogged with traffic during rush hours.

Speaking at a press conference at Tejgaon airport yesterday, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal said the chief adviser will inaugurate the construction work on May 31.

Designed to be 2.6 kilometres long and 18.5 metres wide, the road would be built by this year-end, he added.

With help from engineers' corps of the army, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) will implement the project budgeted at Tk 24.92 crore.

According to plans, the road will eventually connect to the Chittagong highway through Tejgaon-Hatirjheel-Rampura.

Under the project, the road going past Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre would be repaired while that in front of the CAO would be widened.

A boundary wall would be raised along the runway of old airport, the adviser said.

LGRD Secretary Sheikh Khurshid Alam, Chief Engineer of the army's engineers' corps Major General Ismail Faruque and DCC Chief Executive Officer Md Alauddin were present at the press briefing. Later, they inspected the project site.

Crime rate

FROM PAGE 16
Khilgaon Police Station, yesterday said the police have arrested another alleged robber, Salahuddin, who was injured during the mob beating. Salahuddin is now undergoing treatment at Orthopaedics Hospital in the city.

In a separate drive on Friday evening at Kalyanpur in the city, Mirpur police arrested two people -- Rahman and Shahjahan, for demanding toll from a housewife. One of the criminals posed as a dreading criminal Shahadat. Police seized three toy guns, a machete and a list of affluent individuals from their possession.

Hillary denies talks of VP 'deal' with Obama

AP, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Sen Hillary Rodham Clinton said her campaign has had no discussions with Barack Obama's aides about her possibly becoming his vice presidential running mate.

Clinton called such reports "flatly untrue," in an interview today with the Sioux Falls Argus Leader editorial board, adding that she is not planning any such discussions.

Asked if her campaign had any discussions with the Obama campaign about her possibly bowing out in exchange for the vice president slot, Hillary Clinton said, "It is flatly untrue and it is not anything I'm entertaining. It is nothing I have planned and it is nothing I am prepared to engage in. I am still vigorously campaigning."

The Obama campaign also dismissed reports that there were talks going on between the two campaigns about putting Clinton on the ticket.

Obama has an almost 200-delegate lead over Hillary Clinton and is just 56 delegates short of the number needed to clinch the Democratic Party's nomination, making Clinton's goal of catching him more difficult by the day. The primaries end June 3.

Hillary Clinton spent the day campaigning in South Dakota, which holds one of two June 3 primaries. At stake are 15 delegates. Recent reports suggested she may be discussing ways to end her campaign by being offered the vice presidential slot underneath Obama, but she rejected that and said she suspected the talk was coming from Obama's aides.

and only an elected parliament would take necessary steps to bring amendment to the constitution of the country.

Party standing committee member Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddique, joint secretary general Nazrul Islam Khan, acting office secretary Rizvi Ahmed among others, were present at the meeting.

Local govt

FROM PAGE 1
The laws also stipulate that the central government will have to consult with the LGC for establishing new city corporations or municipalities, and for re-demarcating the jurisdictions of the existing ones.

Without prior consultation with the LGC, the central government may not remove any mayor or councillor of city corporations or municipalities even on grounds of negligence in duty or moral turpitude, the new laws say.

Sources in the LGRD ministry said the same provisions might also be incorporated in the fresh laws being prepared for union, upazila and zila parishads.

FORMATION OF LGC
The new law on formation of LGC stipulates that persons having experience in public administration, particularly in the local government system, public funds, and accounts, will be appointed as chairmen and members of the commission.

The president will appoint for a three-year term the chairman and two members of the commission from a panel of nominees forwarded by a selection committee.

The commission will be independent in exercising its power. Any member of the commission shall not be removed from the office in manners and on grounds other than those followed to remove a Supreme Court judge, the law says.

The LGC may exercise the power of a court to summon anyone before it to give statements, and may also ask for records and documents held by any individual or institution.

Battle to stem global warming slowing

Warns UN climate chief

AP, Kobe, Japan

The world is losing momentum in the battle against global warming, the U.N. climate chief warned on Saturday, urging environmental ministers from wealthy nations to revive the effort by setting clear targets for reducing greenhouse gases.

The ministers gathered in the western Japanese city of Kobe for a three-day meeting as evidence mounted that rising world temperatures have been taking a toll on the earth at a faster rate than previously forecast.

The officials from the Group of Eight countries, joined by representatives from other countries including China and other organizations, were to lay the foundations for the upcoming G8 summit in northern Japan in July.

U.N. climate chief Yvo de Boer told the Associated Press on the sidelines that he was concerned about stalling momentum behind international talks to forge a global warming pact by December 2009 to succeed the Kyoto Protocol. Its first phase ends in 2012. "Much of the enthusiasm and ambition that we saw in Bali with the launch of negotiations doesn't seem to be present," he said, referring to a meeting on the Indonesian resort island in December, when some 190 countries decided on a timetable for talks on the new climate pact.

De Boer cited a recently announced U.S. climate plan that would allow an increase in emissions, Canada's indication that it will not meet its obligations under the Kyoto agreement, and European industry's skepticism about the EU goal of cutting emissions by 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

To rejuvenate the talks, G8 countries the United States, Japan, Russia, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Canada need to decide on midterm targets for reducing carbon emissions by 2020, make a clearer commitment to helping poorer nations deal with climate change, and form a dialogue with top developing countries such as China to run parallel with the U.N.-led talks, he said.

"Certainly my expectation is that...the G8 leaders will now really take things to the next level, and I think need to take it to the next level, with December 2009 being just around the corner," de Boer said.

Tremor jolts country

UNB, Dhaka

A tremor, measuring 3.2 on the Richter scale, jolted the country yesterday afternoon.

The epicentre of the tremor was felt at 15 hours 41 minutes 53 seconds (BST) was about 480-km north-northwest of Dhaka Seismic Observatory, according to the Meteorological Department.

Nazrul

FROM PAGE 16
Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed at a function at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital.

Dr M Abdul Quayyum will deliver a commemorative speech on Nazrul at the inaugural function.

On this day in 1899, Nazrul was born at Churulia in Burdwan district of West Bengal. Through his poems, Nazrul had inspired people to fight against injustice and repression during the colonial rule.

His songs and poems were also a major source of inspiration for the freedom fighters during the Liberation War in 1971.

BTV and Bangladesh Betar will broadcast special programmes on Nazrul's works including his plays, poetry and songs marking the national poet's birthday.

Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman will place wreaths at the mazar of the great poet on the Dhaka University campus at 6:45am.

A cultural function on Nazrul's creative works will be held at the Shilpakala Academy in the evening. Besides, a book fair and an exhibition will be held at the Central Public Library from May 25 to 31.

Bangla Academy will hold a programme at its seminar room on May 27 with Prof Mustafa Nurul Islam in the chair. Prof Begum Akhter Kalam will present the keynote paper.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed gave separate messages, paying tribute to the national poet.

Nazrul had always remained vocal against injustice and oppression, Iajuddin said, adding that people's expectations are reflected in his writings.

Fakhruddin Ahmed said Nazrul always admired humanity and love and revolted against imperialism, communalism, superstitions and social injustice.

13 militants

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Mainuddin's house.

The arrestees are Liton Mia, regional leader of the outfit, Mozammel, Rabinoor, Ayub Ali, Hazrat Ali, Hossain Ali, Mahbubur Rahman, Abdul Khaleque, Hafizur Rahman, Raju Mia, Angur Ali, Kawsar Ali and Mainuddin.

All the 13 arrestees confessed to the police that they are activists of Allah'r Dal led by Matin Mehdi.

Matin Mehdi was arrested in 2006 from Kurigram and sentenced to death and rigorous imprisonment in several cases filed against him in different districts including Gaibandha, Jhenidha and Sirajganj. Police said the followers of Allah'r Dal under regional leader Liton Mia's leadership assembled in the house of Mainuddin for a routine weekly meeting.

Alarmed by the activists' frequent suspicious activities under the guise of discussing the teachings of Islam, the locals informed the police of the possible militant gathering at Moyennuddin's house yesterday morning.

During the raid the police from Liton Mia's possession seized donation receipts of the banned organisation and various other documents corroborating militant activities.

Home for security

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The ministry noted that due to lack of quality education, madrasa graduates do not get adequate employment opportunities. This leaves them vulnerable to radicalisation. So, the government should facilitate employment opportunities for madrasa graduates.

The proposal suggested introduction of an accountability system for non-government organisations (NGOs) under which their financing and auditing system will become transparent.

The ministry identified protection of democratic principles as a critical issue in Bangladesh's counter-terrorism efforts.

To reduce the possibility of attacks in highly populated areas and on critical infrastructures, it is necessary to adopt multi-faceted plans to maximise security. This could be done by forming a Joint Surveillance Team comprising personnel from different law enforcement agencies, it said.

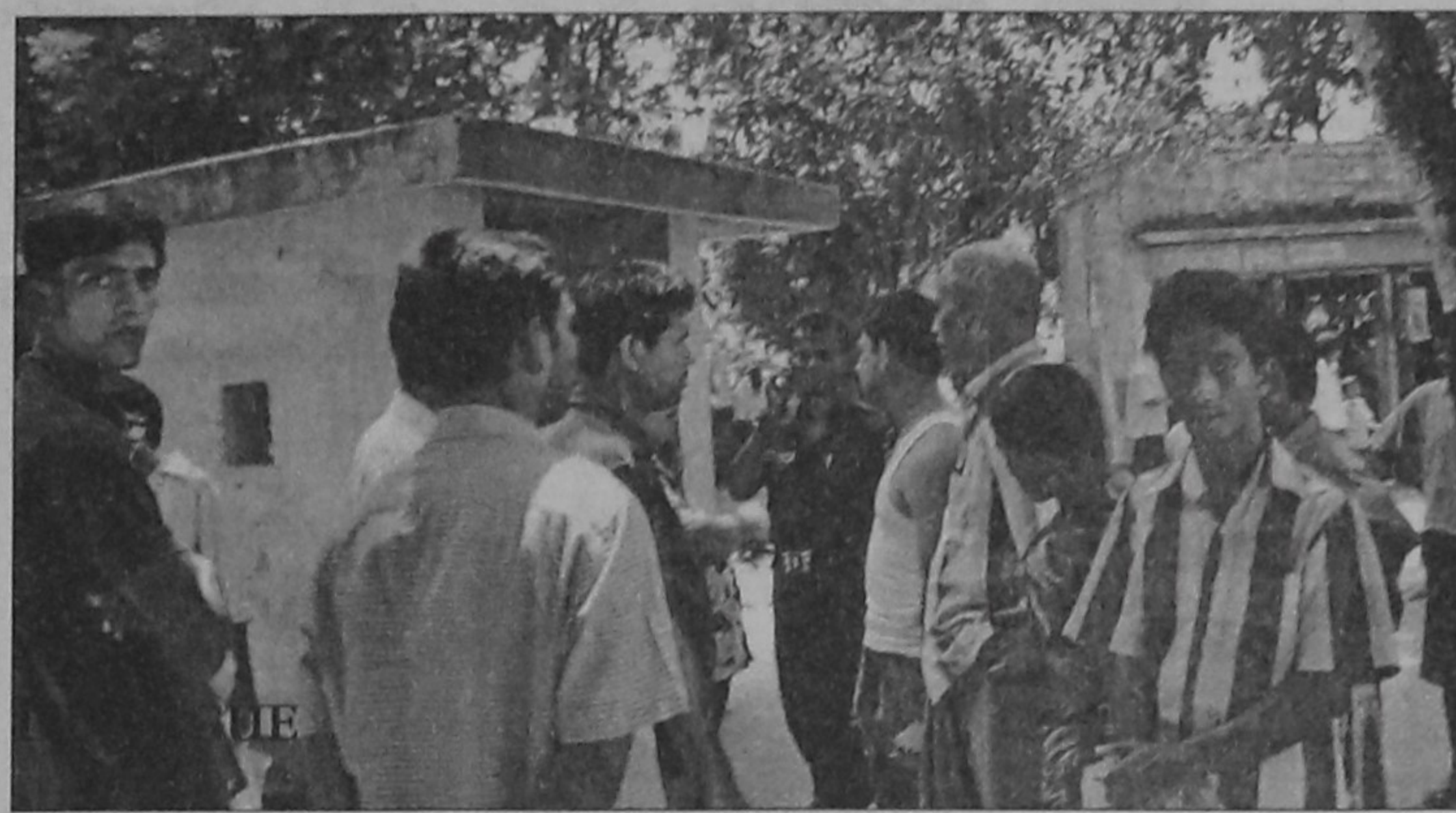
"Cross-border cooperation on an inter-state level with India and Myanmar should be promoted without further delay. This can be done by signing MoUs and extradition treaties with these countries."

Measures to improve vigil on borders should also include modernisation of immigration procedures and visa information system.

In preparing for consequences, the ministry says, "An effective, integrated response to terrorism requires incident management planning, enhanced interoperability and coordination, based on and supported by rapid and effective decision-making. A committee or group empowered to take rapid action should be formed to coordinate the response."

It adds that a four-tier alert system can be prescribed to understand a prevailing terrorist situation. These are -- low, medium, high and extreme.

The home ministry says, "Bangladesh has been relatively lucky on two counts, initially due to no effect syndrome and lack of fallout effect from terrorist attacks in the western world, and subsequently being still in the second generation technology level in terrorism environment in the country."



The Daily Star correspondent Mirza Shakil was beaten up for taking this picture of visitors being harassed by jail guards at Tangail District Jail.

Govt in unofficial

FROM PAGE 1
yesterday told The Daily Star that the administration still has time to bring the three parties to the table through negotiations while holding talks with 14 other parties in the next few weeks.

A number of these officials called leaders of these three parties over telephone and sent emissaries to them to find ways to break the deadlock.

The AL decision is expected to come after the central leadership meets its grassroots leaders tomorrow to decide whether to take part in the polls in the absence of party President Sheikh Hasina.

The BNP and Jamaat are also due to hold crucial party meetings this week to decide on whether to join the dialogue without their party chiefs.

Meanwhile, the Jatiyatabadi Samaitantrik Dal (JSD-Inu), which is due to sit with the government today, released a statement yesterday, expressing doubts over the success of the dialogue as the three parties are reluctant to participate in it without their leaders.

"The reluctance of big parties like the BNP and Awami League to take part in the dialogue and in the elections will jeopardise the credibility of parliamentary elections to be held in December," said the JSD release.

The acting heads of the AL, BNP and Jamaat reiterated over the past two days that they would not join the dialogue fearing it would be ineffective and meaningless.

AL acting President Zillur Rahman said the AL would take to the streets "in due time" if Hasina is not released unconditionally.

The BNP and Jamaat have also revived activity of their four-party alliance after the arrest of Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami in a bid to strengthen their political clout in government negotiations.

Meanwhile, the likelihood of BNP's joining the talks was boosted late last week as its pro-Khaleda faction led by Khandakar Delwar Hossain started to believe, after the arrest of pro-Saifur faction leader Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, that the government has now accepted it as the legitimate BNP party sources said.

Delwar said the dialogues would be largely meaningless without the participation of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

"Khaleda Zia must be there at the dialogue to make it meaningful in the interests of a free and fair election. She has to be freed. The government has to prove its willingness to make the dialogue successful," by releasing her," Delwar told reporters yesterday.

Last Thursday's talks with Workers Party of Bangladesh and

Bikalpadhara Bangladesh have also reassured the BNP and AL as the government said political parties alone would form a national charter.

However, both Workers Party and Bikalpadhara accused Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed of not taking the dialogue "seriously enough" as he left only an hour into the two-hour-long meetings.

Workers Party chief Rashid Khan Menon had threatened to walk out while Bikalpadhara chief and former president Badruddoza Chowdhury left with Fakhruddin.

The caretaker government will sit with the Communist Party of Bangladesh and the Liberal Democratic Party tomorrow.

Over the next month, the government will sit with Jatiya Party, Gono Forum, Samyabadi Dal, Krishak Sramik Janata League, Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Unity for Political Reforms, Islami Shashantantra Andolon, Khelafat Andolon (Hafejihiujur), Progressive Democratic Party, and Khelafat Majlish of Shaikhul Hadith.

6 villagers

FROM PAGE 16
Parishad Chairman Amirul Islam Bannu, 55, Rokeya Khatun, 25, Arzoo Khatun, 22, Siblu, 30, Gahar Ali, 45, and Masum, 25.

Rab arrested them following the incident and handed them over to Mirpur police Friday night. At least 45 people were injured, one with bullet during the clash between the Rab and the villagers, when the law enforcers went to rescue an abducted man at the village.

The villagers also damaged a microbus carrying the Rab members.

A case has been filed with Mirpur Police Station against the six people for obstructing the law enforcers in their course of duty.

4 killed

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Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound bus from Aricha skidded off the road and fell into a ditch at around 11:15am. Some injured passengers said the bus met with the accident as its driver lost control over the steering.

Resma died on the spot, Rima and Monju Rani at Manikganj Sadar Hospital and Shamim on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Of the injured, 23 were admitted to Manikganj Sadar Hospital while the rest given first aid. Police recovered the bodies and sent them to the hospital for post-mortem examinations.

CA warns against

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and Forest Raja Debashish Roy chaired the function. Environment and Forest Secretary AHM Rezaul Kabir and Chief Conservator of Forest AKM Shamsuddin also spoke at the programme.

Advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser, people involved in social forestry, tree lovers, environmental activists and distinguished personalities were present at the function.

The CA in his address said the government has taken up a programme "Greenery Bangladesh" to check adverse impact of climate change and for socioeconomic development of the country.

Under the programme, some 80-100 million saplings of fruit-bearing and medicinal trees would be planted across the country during the current year, he said.

The CA said nearly 180 million saplings are available at the nurseries run by the government, NGOs and private owners for sale this year.

He hoped that the 'Greenery Bangladesh' programme would be successful through active and united participation of people.

The CA urged all to join the tree plantation campaign by planting at least three saplings each -- of timber, fruit bearing and medicinal trees. "Everybody irrespective of party and opinion will have to work together to make the campaign a success," he said.

He termed this year's theme of tree planting campaign appropriate and timely considering back-to-back floods and the devastating

cyclone Sidr. He said the government is giving emphasis on facing "natural disaster in a natural way."

He hoped that all concerned would come forward to build up a wall of trees in the coastal belt as a strong deterrent to disaster. He suggested planting such trees in the coastal areas in consultation with the experts.

Mentioning the usefulness of trees, Fakhruddin said the importance of trees has increased significantly amid worldwide challenge of rising temperature, climate change and environmental degradation.

Referring to various researches, he said eight hectares of forestland is being destroyed every minute in the world. Trees and forests are gradually diminishing in Bangladesh due to unplanned industrialisation, urbanisation, construction of roads and so on, he told the function.

He said it is essential to have forest on 25 percent of total landmass in a country to maintain environmental balance and fulfilling the demands of forest resources.

The CA said the government is implementing various programmes to increase the size of forest to 20 percent of the total landmass by 2015. At present, total area under forest in the country is only about 2.52 million hectares.

He urged all to turn the tree plantation campaign into a meaningful social movement.

Later, the CA planted a polish sapling on the premises of the conference centre.

Bangladesh most peaceful in region

Says study

AGENCIES, Dhaka

Bangladesh stands first among the states in the region in the ranking of peaceful nations in 2008, according to a study conducted by the Global Peace Index, an independent think tank.

Bangladesh is ahead of India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Iceland tops the survey of 140 states. Bangladesh is placed 86th, India 107th, Sri Lanka 125th and Pakistan 127th.

The United States is put in 97th place while Russia in 131st place.

Global Peace Index, which is drawn up by the Institute for Economics and Peace, an independent study group, together with the UK-based Economist Intelligence Unit, conducted the survey.

It surveyed each nation against 24 "peacefulness" criteria, including a nation's relations with its neighbours, arms sales and foreign troop developments.

It also took into account data on a nation's crime rate, its prison, population and the potential for terrorism within its borders.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury expressed satisfaction over the study.

In a statement yesterday, he said, "This only proves what we have been saying for sometime. Today, Bangladesh is an oasis of calm in an otherwise turbulent region. We are at peace with all our neighbours."

"Internationally, we're playing a constructive role as a top UN peacekeeper. At home, political and social violence has declined. We have had a bumper harvest. Growth, though not phenomenal, is steady. All these have the signs of a new emerging Asian Tiger, this time a Royal Bengal," Iftekhar said.

He added, "I'm glad the world is beginning to notice this. Bangladesh is no longer a basket case."

4 fuel stations

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The refuelling-stations affected are CM Service Petrol Pump, Toshba Petrol Pump, Arum Petrol Pump and Swadhin Bangla Petrol Pump.

The restaurants and shops lined are Hotel Jalkhabar, Hotel Jalkhabar Mistanna, Contilient Restaurant and Nandan Restaurant.

Rab officials said the drive in Mohakhali continued from 10:00am to 3:00pm.

Nepali PM

FROM PAGE 16
and install a communist republic, but have since embraced democracy.

The party emerged as the largest single winner in the elections to the assembly whose first task will be to abolish the monarchy and draft the impoverished country's new constitution.

The Maoist official gave no time frame for Koirala to step down and the Maoist-led government to take power.

Meanwhile, just four days before a Maoists' deadline, Nepal's King Gyanendra has reportedly vacated his Narayanhi palace in Kathmandu.

The King had been asked by Maoist chief Prachanda to move out by 27 May. King Gyanendra has moved to the Nagarjun Palace on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

But Palace sources are maintaining he has gone on a routine vacation, and will be back on Monday. The 240-year-old monarchy in Nepal is expected to be abolished soon after the first meeting of the constituent assembly on the May 28. The Maoists and other political parties are already in consultation to arrange a graceful exit for the King.

Maoist Chairman Prachanda has already declared that The Narayanhi Palace will be converted into a museum after the King vacates.

Saarc network

FROM PAGE 16
Pakistan and Nepal and endangered plants are also facing the threat of extinction due to the growing market of herbal medicines.

They agreed to form a group of experts drawn from South Asian countries to tackle illegal trade of wildlife.

The declaration mandated the group with drawing up a detailed programme for implementing the South Asia Regional Strategic Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade, approved by Saarc countries at a meeting in Kathmandu earlier this year.

The meeting, however, noted that "legal harvesting and trade in wildlife is an important and sustainable source of livelihood and income to many in rural communities."

Environment ministers of India, Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Maldives and environment secretaries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan touched on issues like climate change, solid waste management and sustainable transport in the meeting.

Representatives of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Maldives had discussions under the South Asian Seas (SAS) Programme and made long-term plans for protection and conservation of mangrove forests and coral reefs, essential to guard against devastating effects of cyclones and tsunamis.

The SAS decided to launch a campaign against dumping of solid wastes on beaches and undertake projects to study the impact of climate change, particularly the rise in sea level on human habitation and land.

The South Asian countries decided to strengthen their capacity for chemical management, waste management and work together for a report on the state of environment in the region.

"The King left the palace on Thursday for Nagarjun on a weekend vacation and it is a normal phenomena," said a senior palace official. "The King will return on Sunday or Monday to the palace," palace officials said.

He said Narayanhi royal palace is not totally vacated as Queen Mother Ratna Rajya Laxmi, octogenarian mother of King Gyanendra is still in the palace.

"In the past also the King used to visit the hill station from time to time but this time it got unnecessary media attention," the official stressed.

Maoist chief Prachanda has ordered the king to vacate the palace before the crucial meeting of the assembly as the political parties were determined to pass a motion in the 601-member House to abolish the monarchy and declare Nepal a republic.

Nepal Maoists have been demanding the abolition of the monarchy since they ended their decade-long civil war after inking a peace deal in November 2006 with the government that took over from the king.

Pakistan

FROM PAGE 16
strengthen the parliament.

He said the government would open talks with Musharraf, the former army chief, on the package and would also discuss it with all political parties.

"We intend to walk him away, rather than impeach him away," Zardari said when asked if his government wanted to remove the former military strongman who became a civilian head of the government last year.

Zardari said the proposed bill, which would require a two-third majority in the parliament for approval, will be presented to the parliament as soon as possible.

Zardari, widower of slain former premier Benazir Bhutto, said dozens of judges deposed by Musharraf last year would be restored via a mechanism provided in the package.

The dispute over reinstatement of the judges had caused strains on the coalition government which was