Obama expects Hillary knockout next week

AFP, Washington

White House hopeful Barack Obama believes he is on the brink of elim-Democratic fight as their exhausting primary season heads to a climax next week:

Party leaders including House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate majority leader Harry Reid said Thursday the race would be wrapped up soon -- and dropped every hint that Obama would emerge as the

But ahead of Sunday's primary in Puerto Rico, and the final contests in Montana and South Dakota on Tuesday, Clinton's campaign was adamant she remained the better bet to take on Republican John McCain.

"Obviously, it's not over until we get to the convention or until Senator Clinton makes the decision that she's now prepared to support a unified ticket," former Clinton," McAuliffe said. Senate majority leader Tom

Daschle told MSNBC television. But Daschle, a national cochair of Obama's campaign, said "I do believe that sometime over

inating Hillary Clinton from the the course of the next week we're going to be in a very good position to claim at least that we've got the majority of the delegates." After nearly six months of coast-to-coast campaigning,

Obama is in striking distance of amassing enough Democratic delegates to earn the right to battle McCain in November's presidential election. But Clinton's campaign chair-

man Terry McAuliffe insisted that the New York senator remained a far stronger candidate than Obama to recapture the White House for the Democrats. "Hillary Clinton is the one who

can do it. She's got more popular votes. She's got more votes out of the primaries. More people have come out to support Hillary

Eight killed in Yemen mosque shooting

AFP, Sanaa

Eight people were killed when a gunman described as mentally unbalanced opened fire inside a mosque in a village north of the Yemeni capital during Friday prayers, an official told AFP.

"A man opened fire on worshippers in a mosque in the village of north of Sanaa)," killing eight people and wounding nine others, the

killed in the attack -- the second in a month on a mosque in Yemen -- and 12 wounded, 10 seriously.

"The person behind the shooting was arrested and has been taken for questioning," said the official on condition of anonymity. He attacks in recent months targeting declined to identify the suspect but the US and Italian embassies and a said he "is believed to be mentally unbalanced."

On May 2, 18 people, mostly soldiers, were killed when a boobytrapped motorcycle exploded at the entrance to a mosque in an attack blamed on Shia rebels who have been waging a four-year uprising against the government.

That attack was in the northwestern town of Saada in the province where most of the clashes between the Zaidi rebels and government forces have taken place.

In a separate incident, assailants on Friday targeted an oil pipeline in damage, witnesses said.

The attack, which was not immediately claimed by any group, tar-

geted the pipeline linking a refinery and an oil terminal in the southern city of Aden, the witnesses said.

al-Qaeda has been blamed for a series of attacks across Yemen, the ancestral homeland of its leader Osama bin Laden.

Friday's violence came just a day after the authorities announced they had broken up an al-Qaeda cell Kahal (60 kilometres or 40 miles in the capital Sanaa and arrested 11

Yemen, one of the poorest countries on the planet, has battled An earlier toll said five people were suspected al-Qaeda militants at Washington's behest since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

al-Qaeda's wing in Yemen, which calls itself Jund Al-Yemen Brigades, has carried out a series of residential complex which is home to US oil workers.

In one of the deadliest attacks against foreigners in recent years, eight Spanish tourists were killed and six wounded when a suicidebomber rammed his explosivesladen car into a convoy at an ancient temple in July last year in the northeastern region of Marib.

The authorities have been battling since 2004 to put down the uprising by Shia Zaidi rebels and clashes have erupted despite efforts to organise peace talks.

Thousands of people have been southern Yemen with two rockets killed since the on-off rebellion which exploded without causing first broke out in 2004, with most of the fighting taking place in the mountains of Saada province near the border with Saudi Arabia.

No need for chocolate

"The government and the people

are like parents and children," the paper said. "We, all the people, were pleased with the efforts of the The paper said that granting

free access for aid workers in the delta means donors "are to be given permission to inspect all the houses thoroughly at will." Myanmar needs 11 billion

dollars to recover from the storm. but donors have pledged just 150 million dollars so far, it said.

"Myanmar people are capable enough of rising from such natural disasters even if they are not provided with international assis-

tance," the newspaper said. fish for dishes by just fishing in the fields and ditches," the paper said. "In the early monsoon, large edible

trogs are abundant." The people (of the Irrawaddy delta) can survive with self-reliant efforts even if they are not given chocolate bars from (the) interna-

tional community," it added. No aid agencies are known to have provided chocolate bars to victims of Cyclone Nargis, which struck the impoverished country four weeks ago

The UN's World Food Programme gives rice, beans and high-energy biscuits designed to provide nutrition to people without regular food supplies.

The United Nations estimates that about one million people in the delta are still without emergency aid.

The military regime drew international outrage for three weeks of delays in allowing foreign aid workers access to the delta region, although the United Nations said Thursday that all of its staff had

now been granted visas. The official newspaper also took a swipe at a world monetary organisation for refusing to give aid apparently a reference to the World Bank, which has said no loans could be given because Myanmar has not been repaying its

It also criticised countries for maintaining sanctions on the regime despite the cyclone devas-

Do such countries really have humanitarian spirit?" the paper

It was apparently referring to the United States, which renewed sanctions on the regime two weeks for an hour.

after the storm, accusing the mili-

democracy movement.

The United States has insisted the sanctions will not affect humanitarian aid, which US military planes have helped deliver into the country.

tary junta of suppressing the pro-

Death anniversary

FROM PAGE 16

slain president at 8:00am and offered prayer. The chiefs of the three services were present.

Later, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui placed wreath at the grave.

BNP and its front organisations placed wreaths at the grave and "Myanmar people can easily get offered special prayer. Khandaker Delwar faction of BNP visited the grave at about 10:00am, while Maj (retd) Hafiz faction at 3:00pm.

Khandaker Delwar was accompanied by senior leaders RA Gani, Brig Gen (retd) ASM Hannan Shah, Nazrul Islam Khan, Selima Rahman MA Mannan and several former BNP lawmakers.

Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal and other front organisations of BNP gathered outside the makeshift jail in parliament building complex where Khaleda Zia has been detained since September 3 last year in connection with corruption cases. They sent bouquets to Khaleda Zia through the jail officials.

Talking to journalists Maj (retd) Hafiz said, "We're disheartened as the pro-Delwar group didn't askus to come here with them even though we had waited for their call."

Expressing his optimism about the party's unity, he said, "The unity efforts are being hampered for some individuals. We're still waiting for unity in an honourable manner."

According to our staff correspondent, Zubaida Khan Rahman, wife of Tarique Rahman, and Sharmila Rahman, wife of Arafat Rahman Koko, yesterday met their mother-inlaw former prime minister Khaleda Zia at sub-jail in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

Earlier, they also met their husbands, Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko, at Dhaka Central Jail

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star that Zubaida Khan Rahman and Sharmila Rahman met Khaleda Zia at sub-jail at 4:30pm and stayed there curb and say forget about all that," he said, as the Clinton campaign invited her traveling press corps to sign up for unspecified events all through next

Ahead of the final three primaries, the Democratic Party's rules and bylaws committee will meet Saturday to adjudicate on whether delegates from Florida and Michigan should be reinstated after a scheduling row.

While no outcome is likely to seriously dent Obama's delegate lead, Clinton does need her victories in the two states to be counted to buttress her case that she leads in the national popular vote after 51 valid contests.

Pelosi, the nation's top elected Democrat who is to preside over the party's August convention, said she would "step in" if there is no resolution by late June about Florida and Michigan.

"Because we cannot take this | those," said a BR director. fight to the convention. It must be over before then," Pelosi told the San Francisco Chronicle's editorial board. "I believe it will be over in two weeks."

Reid said he had spoken with both Pelosi and Democratic National Committee chairman ·Howard Dean in a bid to bring closure well before the Denver convention.

"We all are going to urge our folks next week to make a decision very quickly," Reid told KGO radio in San Francisco.

According to the Obama campaign, he needs just 43 more delegates to reach the current winning line of 2,026.

Vegetable prices

FROM PAGE 16 8 and 16 per kg in the retail market Previously, they were sold for Tk 10-20 perkg

The price of potato remained stable at Tk 12-14 per kg while tomato price rose by Tk2 per kg in the retail market.

Prices of leafy vegetables including puishak, and datashak reduced in the kitchen markets. Vegetable wholesalers at Karwan Bazar said adequate supply of vege-

tables resulted in the fall of their Meantime, prices of rice remained stable in both retail and wholesale markets in the last week

The wholesale price of different rice varieties was between Tk 1,060 and 1,410 a maund yesterday while the retail price was between Tk 32 and 42 perkg.

The price of soya bean oil and palm oil also remained stable. Soya bean oil was sold at Tk 108-112 perkg while palm oil was sold at Tk 100-105 per kg in the retail market in the last

Pulses were sold for Tk 80-90 per kg yesterday while the price of sugar was between Tk34 and 37 perkg.

Prices of egg and both the battery and free-range chicken remained stable while fish prices witnessed a slight hike in both wholesale and retail markets in the last week.

Barapukuria

FROM PAGE 1

Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, M Shamsul Islam and Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain at the Dhaka Central Jail gate in connection with the case.

Jamaat Secretary General and former social welfare minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed was interrogated Thursday.

ACC sources said the investigation into the case is at the final stages and submission of the charge sheet now depends on

higher authorities concerned. "The CMC was awarded the coalmine deal without a retender causing a loss of about Tk 158 crore to the national exchequer," said IO Monirul, adding, "The CMC, the third lowest bidder, was awarded the deal instead

of the second lowest bidder." The lowest bidder which had won the coal production and management deal did not get the work as it increased its bid after winning the deal.

The ACC filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station against detained former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, 10 former ministers of her cabinet and five others on charge of awarding the Barapukuria coalmine deal to the highest

bidder instead of the lowest. The other accused are former finance minister M Saifur Rahman, former telecommunications minister Aminul Haque, former energy secretary Nazrul Islam, former Petrobangla chairman and incumbent BSCIC Chairman SR Osmani, former Petrobangla director Moinul Ahsan, former managing director of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Sirajul Islam and Hossaf Group Chairman Moazzem Hossain.

Following a plea of the IO, the additional chief metropolitan magistrate passed an order May 14 allowing him to question | tions and observations made by Khaleda at the makeshift jail on | the advisers and the special assisthe Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises. The ACC quizzed Khaleda on May 24.

Train travel now risky

occurred.

same upazila.

April 16 when a Dhaka-bound inter

city train rammed a passenger bus

on a level crossing in Kalihati,

Tangail. The signal lamps there

remain on 24 hours a day making it

difficult for bus drivers to know when

a train is coming, and both gatemen

were asleep when the accident

a passenger bus skidded off the road

and fell on the railway line crossing

Jamuna Bridge Approach Road in the

Moreover, eight people were

Three days later, 18 were killed as

FROM PAGE 1

important sections of the railway network including Dhaka-Parbatipur, Dhaka-Sylhet and Rajshahi-Khulna lines are in good condition.

Trains shake dangerously at many places on Mymensingh-Bahadurabadghat route due to nonexistence of slippers and stones in between the rails, said a locomaster (train driver), who has been serving in the BR for 35 years. "It forces us to reduce train speed to 30-km an

Another senior locomaster said due to the same problem, trains have to run at low speed, below 45 km an hour, from Chinkiastana in Feni to Barkundu in Sitakundu on Dhaka-Chittagong route.

Mymensingh-Kishoreganj, Gouripur-Mohonganj, Shyamganj-Jaliajanjai, Sylhet-Chhatakbazar, Chittagong-Dohazari, Fateyabad-Najirhat, Dinajpur-Panchgarh, Lalmonirhat-Burimari and Teesta-Ramnabazar branch lines are in very "bad condition", they said.

"After we put bricks on Dhaka-Narayanganj track following stealing of stones, thieves also took away Though concrete slippers have

replaced wooden ones in many sections of the railway lines, stealing of clips has again made plying of trains on those risky. Though the government allocates

lines, it seems to have no concern for branchlines, BR officials said. "Fearing derailment, trains have to reduce speed to a great extent for passenger safety," the former DG of

some funds for maintenance of main

BR said, adding that almost the entire railway network needs rehabilita-Most of the railway tracks were built during the British rule when train was considered the safest trans-

port. Since 1971, the BR has built only 103 km new tracks. Locomasters and BR officials also blamed unauthorised railroad crossings and other structures along the lines built on railway land for most of the accidents.

According to BR statistics, there are 2,189 level crossings in the country, 675 of which are unauthorised and many are unmanned. The former DG also echoed

locomasters' complaints about

branches of trees obstructing their view of signals on some routes like Dhaka-Mymensingh, alleging the authorities appear unconcerned about the problem. A locomaster said, "We have to slow down at several points includ-

ing Mosharrafganj, Bawshi, Tarakandi, Jamalpur court and Dewanganj Bazar on Mymensingh-Dewanganj section." He also alleged that many signal lights do not work and cannot be seen from distance, creating serious problems.

Many of the mileposts along rail tracks are also missing, he added.

Of the 454 railway stations, many are in decrepit condition, requiring urgent rebuilding and added man-

The BR regularly operates 258 passenger trains and 54 freight trains. It carried 45.8 million people in 2006-2007, about eight percent of the passengers of all modes of transport during the period.

Seventeen people were killed on

Delwar

not acceptable. So please co-operate with the Election Commission for holding an election as soon as possi-

last fifteen years.

interimgovernment.

killed when a passenger train hit another at Ashuganj station in Brahmanbaria in the early hours of May 14. BR officials said both drivers of the Upaban Express and the stationmaster at Ashuganj were responsible for the accident. On Tuesday, 10 people were injured as two compartments of a leadership." Chapainawabganj-bound passen-

ger train derailed near Rahanpur station due to faulty track. A day later, four bogies of a · Bhairab-bound passenger train derailed injuring 25 people at Gochihata station in Kishoreganj due to dilapidated condition of the

Twelve passengers of Chittagongbound train Turna Nishitha Express any 'game of dialogues' with its were injured as a bogey derailed at a chairperson Khaleda Zia in detenstation in Feni in the early hours of tion. "We will free all detained politiyesterday.

UNB says local sources blamed failure of the signal system and related problems for the mishap.

Despite the frequency of accidents, effective steps are yet to be taken to address the problem "We cannot go for necessary repair and maintenance of rail tracks

and train engines due to lack of fund," a top BR official said, adding that funds allocated run out by the middle of a year. Another senior BR official said,

"What we badly need is fund for repair and maintenance of tracks Admitting that track condition is

very bad at many places, Communications Secretary Dr Mahbubur Rahman said, "I don't know why Railway did not get necessary attention over the years." He brushed aside allegations of

lack of funds for maintenance, say ing, "They (BR) cannot spend the funds they get for maintenance." He also said the ministry has initiated steps for recruitment of manpower,

FROM PAGE 1 unit BNP with Ilyas Ali, a corrup tion suspect on Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) list, as its con-

Ilyas, a former lawmaker who is charged with corruption and criminal offences, has been on the run since the imposition of the state of emergency on January 11 last year.

The BNP's central command suspended the activities of Sylhet BNP on July 27 in 2005 following bitter rivalry between former finance minister Saifur Rahman

Pro-Saifur leaders said they would announce fresh programmes if the central committee did not mothball the new committee anytime soon.

Ilyas followers in their meeting alleged that the other faction did many things against party interests since the president declared the state of emergency early last year.

Advisers have little time

FROM PAGE 1 Agriculture and Water Resources Adviser CS Karim, however, has been making regular trips outside

the capital. The interim government also decided to hold meetings of the council of advisers outside the capital, hoping to go closer to the common folks, and to inspire local administrations in development

efforts. Although two such meetings took place in February and March this year, the schedule for the third is yet to be fixed.

The first-ever cabinet meeting outside Dhaka was held in Rangpur on February 2 followed by another one in Barisal on March 6. Such meetings were supposed to be held in other divisions too.

In the first meeting, the government approved 14-point programme, including resolving Monga, increasing employment, expand business for the rapid socioeconomic development of the country's poverty-stricken

other districts of the country gradually. "There are some regional issues that need to be dealt with regionally, otherwise these problems will remain unaddressed." But currently the advisers are hardly visiting the regions, ham-

such meetings would be held in

The CA then told reporters that

pering implementation of the government programmes. The case of the Barisal region is also similar, where the chief adviser (CA) announced a set of development plans for southern districts to recover from the damage and losses caused by cyclonic storm Sidr that had struck the region on November 15 last year.

He was hopeful about improving the overall economic condition of the region by implementing the plans taken on the basis of suggestants to the CA.

lar basis, so they could gather first hand experience about the actual problems local people are facing, both in terms of economy and governance, and could come up with realistic suggestions. Sources in different ministries

said the overburdened advisers are

not even being able to carry out their official duties properly. Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser Syed Fahim Munaim, however, told The Daily Star recently that five of the advisers are busy with the dialogues now, but

the others are visiting places outside the capital. "They are visiting rural areas whenever they get time," he said.

Memorabilia

FROM PAGE 16 sources said the memorabilia include 19 monograms of Dihikashipur Pargana zaminder, a large brass dish, metal glasses, measuring chain, and a bell. Most of the monograms bear Bangla and English inscriptions and punch

marks on them. The sources said rust has eaten away the originality and beauty of almost all the metal relics because of lack of maintenance.

A senior official of the Archaeology Department said, "All the recovered objects will be displayed at the Rabindranath Kacharibari Museum soon." Local sources said many such

antiquities were lost or misplaced

from the kacharibari just after the

Liberation War. Earlier, a number of Tagore memorabilia including a wall clock, mirrors and a cot were recovered from the houses of locals in Atrai upazila of Naogaon and have been put on display at Potishar Kacharibari, the only kacharibari Rabindranath Tagore looked after himself.

Archaeology Department officials said they do not have the required fund to turn the historical place into a museum so that the It was expected that the advisers invaluable objects used by Tagore would go outside Dhaka on a regucould be preserved better.

FROM PAGE 1

ble giving up the immoral policy."

BNP Standing Committee Member Tanveer Ahmed Siddique said those who are 'in the government and behind it' are currently the direct beneficiaries of the politics of

"If you have patriotism then hold the election within 90 days to save the country, as there is no alternative to democracy," he put out a call to the

Stressing on strengthening BNP, he said, "Wheneverwe went to power earlier, the affairs of the party was put on the back burner, even the party's last council was held many years ago. This time around we will make the party modern and updated, and a council will be held to bring out new

Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah, an adviser to the detained BNP chairperson, said, "After the assassination of Ziaur Rahman the erstwhile brave ministers and lawmakers left their houses, the same thing is happening now, only this time it is happening after the arrest of Khaleda Zia." He said BNP will not participate in

cians by turning our grief into strength," he said. Pro-Khaleda Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan said a conspiracy is on to destroy the body politic by keeping Khaleda Zia in jail. "No dialogue or election will be allowed to be held in the country while Khaleda Zia is in jail," he said.

Abdul Mannan, Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Sohrab Uddin and Rizvi Ahmed also spoke among others.

Dr Kamal

FROM PAGE 1

caretaker government and political parties, Dr Kamal said the people want the dialogues to be successful and no one has the right to obstruct realisation of the public will.

M Hamid, a director of theatres and television programmes, said "The level playing field that we were talking about has been made unsettled once again only to keep some people out of the election. The matter of rejecting anyone should be left for the public to decide through their

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud

Ahmed urged political parties to be

flexible about participating in the dialogues for the sake of democracy. If the dialogues fail it will harm only the people and the political parties, nothing will happen to the government as it is only a caretaker one, he About the cases filed against detained former premiers Sheikh

Hasina and Khaleda Zia, he said, "The cases against Hasina and Khaleda will not stand if they have public support, so the political parties should participate in the dialogues. They may launch movements for their leaders' release but at the same time they should participateinthetalks."

Bangladesh we have now is not the one we wanted to have through the liberation war, that Bangladesh was hijacked from us." He suggested reinstating the

Dr Syed Anwar Hossain said, "The

original constitution framed in 1972 'with some minor corrections in it'. SSA President Ajoy Ray presided over the meeting while its General Secretary Advocate Tobarok Hossain moderated the session also addressed by Dr Hamida Hossain,

and Hayat Mamud, among others.

No Tendulkar

FROM PAGE 1 Sachin Tendulkar, who opted out of both tournaments to recover from a groin injury in time for the Test and one-day tour of Sri Lanka from mid-

Ojha comes in for Harbhajan Singh, the off-spinner who was banned for five one-dayers after being found guilty of slapping national teammate Shanthakumaran Sreesanth during a domestic match last month.

The selectors once again ignored veterans Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid as they continued to look ahead to the next World Cup in 2011. Ganguly and Dravid, both aged 35, are two of the seven batsmen in

10,000 one-dayruns. Left-hand batsman Suresh Raina, 21, who last played a onedayer in January 2007, pipped reserve wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthick for the last batting slot.

Seamer Rudra Pratap Singh

returns to the squad after missing

the world to have scored more than

India's one-day engagement in Australia in March when Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men defeated the hosts 2-0 in the tri-series finals. The tri-series in Bangladesh, also featuring Pakistan, will be played in Dhaka from June 8-14 with each

side playing the other once in the

league before the final. Pakistan will host the six-nation Asia Cup from June 24-July 6. The other teams are Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong. SQUAD Mahendra Singh Dhoni (capt),

Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Robin Uthappa, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Suresh Raina, Irfan Pathan, Yusuf Pathan, Piyush Chawla, Pragyan Ojha, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, Rudra Pratap Singh, Ishant Sharma, Praveen Kumar.

Bangladeshi on death row

FROM PAGE 16 expressed regrets to Manama for the killing of the Bahraini national and urged it to lift the ban. Bangladesh mission in Manama said Dhaka would examine criminal records, if any, and conduct psychological tests of Bangladeshis planning to come to this country.

All Headline News reported that during interrogation Mizan admitted killing the Bahraini woman following a row over the quality of food he cooked. The case, pending with court for

two years, was put on the 'fast track' after reports that King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa gave permission to General Public Prosecutor Dr Ali Al Buanin on Thursday to carry out the sentence.

Human rights activist Nabeel Rajab of the now defunct Bahrain Centre for Human Rights said, "This decision comes when the attitude of the country (Bahrain) is anti-Bangladeshi.

Referring to Bahrain's decision to stop issuing new visas for Bangladeshis, he said, "This is a frightening decision at the wrong time. Was the Bangladeshi given fair trial and had access to a lawyer? Were the proceedings monitored by their embassy? There are several ques tions but no answers at this critical

juncture." Bahraini newspaper Gulf Daily News yesterday quoted Bangladesh embassy Charge d'affaires Saiful Islam as saying it can be easily found out if they (Bangladeshis planning to come to this country) have any criminal records or not. "If required, the system could also be extended to include Bangladeshis already working in Bahrain... If it is found that they have criminal records, we can send them home," he said.

The offer to introduce new checks on overseas workers is included in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on labour reforms the Bangladesh mission expects to sign

with Bahrain shortly. Officials at the embassy met Bahrain government's representatives on May 8 to discuss the Mou. They are yet to have a response from

Singapore

FROM PAGE 16 Bangladesh and the fourteenth

largest export destination. "The balance of trade is right now in Singapore's favour, but there is a great scope ... for our manufacturers such as pharmaceuticals which can help redress it. Also today we have nearly US\$ 1 billion of investments

from Singapore." "The Singapore foreign minister has noted the fact that Bangladesh is the most peaceful country of South Asia", Iftekhar added.

The adviser and his

Singaporean counterpart underscored the need for strengthening bilateral political and security relations and agreed to hold a meeting in Dhaka at an early date. "Singapore is a great model for rapid economic development, one that is appropriate for Bangladesh to follow. Bangladeshis have great

intellectual potentials and the

many other common elements

between the two countries are encouraging signs", Iftekhar said. He called on Singapore to be interested in dredging Bangladeshi

rivers and ports. Upon his arrival in Singapore earlier in the day, the foreign adviser called on Singapore Minister of Defence Teo Chee They discussed bilateral and

and means to expand cooperation

between Bangladesh and

Singapore in these areas.

the Bahraini authorities.

Saiful said the ban would tear many Bangladeshi families apart, as in many cases visas of children and their parents were not processed at a time, the Bahraini daily reported.

He also said many others, who sold their possessions and also took loans to collect Bahraini dinar 1, 500 to come to this country, are worried they would not be able even to earn that amount before their visas expire

within two years. "Some earn only 40 dinars a month, and spend 20 dinars on food, 5 on phone calls, 5 on transport and send 10 dinars to their family members in Bangladesh," Saiful was quoted as saying.

Bamboo poles

FROM PAGE 16 Locals said four standard poles were installed in the area about six months ago but those still remain unused. They said although they had requested the PDB authorities several times to remove the bamboo poles that pose risks to the local residents, the PDB is yet to

The PDB had provided them electricity metres several years ago and they have been paying bills

regularly, they added. "I had informed the PDB authorities of the matter and also wrote to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources. But any step is yet to be taken to settle the issue," said RCC ward no-4 Commissioner Sajjad Hossain.

When contacted, Rajshahi PDB Chief Engineer Arjad Hossain admitted that supplying electricity using bamboo poles is a clear violation of existing rules. Replying to a query, he said the

bamboo poles used for supplying

electricity would be removed

during implementation of the Ten Town Development Project.

Power sector FROM PAGE 16 created tremendous problems in

the power sector. In his presentation, Prof Ijaz Hossain of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said, "Considering the coal reserves of Bangladesh, the country has better energy security compared to India and USA. So, there is nothing to worry about."

He said Bangladesh does not

need to export coal, rather it needs

strategies on how more investments could be made for power generation in line with power demands. Rural Electrification Board Director BD Rahmatullah said massive usage of energy saving bulbs and electronic ballasts would save a few hundred megawatts of

for power saving should be launched to mitigate the present power crisis, he added. Petrobangla Chairman Jalal Ahmed said gas crisis is intensifying troubles in power generation

electricity. Campaign programmes

and therefore diversifying the sources of energy is required. Abdul Gafran of Grameen Shakti suggested putting a spotlight on renewable sources of energy, especially in the rural areas where people cannot afford gas. A wind-mapping of the country should be carried out to pave the way for investors to come here and

invest in wind power, he said. Lt Gen Zahir, Lt Col Moin Uddin and former chairman of Power Development Board Quamrul Islam Siddiqui also spoke at the programme chaired by BILIA regional security issues and ways Director Ambassador Wali-ur Rahman. Representatives of development partners and businesses

were also present.

All eyes on palace

FROM PAGE 16 dispatched from the government asking Gyanendra Shah to vacate

been formed to prepare the details

of the property inside the palace. All the property will be transferred to national property," he added. A constitutional assembly, dominated by former rebel Maoists, voted late Wednesday to abolish Gyanendra's 240-year-old Shah dynasty -- capping a peace

process that ended a decade-long Some 13,000 people were killed in the insurgency launched by the Maoists in 1996 to install a communist republic in the world's only

Hindu kingdom. The royal palace in Kathmandu is set to be turned into a museum. An estimated 1,500 soldiers

guard the king, but Nepal's army --

seen as a bastion of royalists -- said

they will comply with the decision. For now, the palace and its surrounding roads are heavily guarded by riot police. Demonstrations have been banned, but revellers celebrating Nepal's new republican status skirmished with police Thursday on the road leading to the complex.

weeks with rumours over the king's plans, with each and every departure from the palace in recent days - including a weekend trip to his sister's house for tea -- watched with bated breath.

Gyanendra, considered by Nepaljustly deserve."

loyalists to be a reincarnation of a Hindu god, ascended to the throne in 2001 after most of the royal family were slain by a drugged, drunk, lovelorn and suicidal

But the new king failed to win

the support of the public, many of

whom believed conspiracy theories linking him to the killings. His unpopularity deepened when he sacked the government and embarked on a period of autocratic rule in early 2005. Mass protests led to a landmark peace agreement in 2006 that led to the king being increasingly sidelined.

Many ordinary Nepalese are

delighted to see the back of the

dour, unpopular king as well as his son and would-be heir, Paras -who is widely loathed for his reported playboy lifestyle in one of the world's poorest countries. International reaction to the monarchy's demise has focused on calls for Nepal's government to end

tainous, landlocked country out of poverty. While the United States is not yet prepared to strike the Maoists from its terrorist blacklists, Washington has reversed its previous policy of not talking with the group's leaders.

months of political in-fighting and

concentrate on lifting the moun-

Nepal has been brimming for Britain, Nepal's former colonial ruler, sent its congratulations after the assembly's first session.

Foreign Office Minister Mark summer home and a drive to his Malloch Brown called it "another step toward the democratic and stable future that the people of

the palace," Information Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara told AFP. "A high-level committee has prince.