FROM PAGE 1

chief election commissioner is repeatedly saying that there is no restriction in holding the local government polls now. But there is no provision in the Constitution of holding these elections during the interim rule."

The speaker made the observations while speaking as the chief guest at a discussion on "Constitution, Rule of Law and Democracy" organised by Islamic Lawyers' Council at the Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium.

He said the High Court (HC) has power to grant bail to women, juveniles, the infirm and the sick in spite of whatever there is in the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

"There cannot be any law which can restrict the High Court to grant bail to the people. The High Court has inherent powers to grant bail to people. The Supreme Court has to look into these matters. If any accused is seriously ill, he or she must be permitted to go abroad for treatment, if necessary. The Supreme Court cannot sit idle in

state power had claimed he was a professional soldier and would return to barrack after curbing corruption and terrorism, Sircar said. But eventually Ershad himself had to languish in jail for five years for committing corruption, he

"I request those running the country to discharge their duties in accordance with the law. The government cannot halt the parliamentary elections in the name of removing corruption and terrorism. Corruption and terrorism can be uprooted after formation of an elected government through general elections."

Those whose deposit money was confiscated in past national polls are talking about a government of national consensus, but the people have no confidence on them, he added. The speaker went on to say that

1/11 or the state of emergency is not beyond the Constitution. "There are many things beyond

emergency which should be considered. The Constitution has given me an extra bonanza that I will continue as the speaker of parliament until someone succeeds me after next elections. There is no other way of removing me from my office. So I must say something within the Constitution and law." He also said democracy was

established in the country through a series of historical difficulties and tufers Had to run the country in accordance with law to protect it.

Former chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain, who presided over the meeting, said the SC and HC judges must discharge the judicial functions with honesty and integrity.

ACC fails

received any report on money laundering charges against the businessman.

Talking to The Daily Star, another ACC official said there are several reports against former minister Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu alone.

Immediately after the anticorruption drive began in February last year, Dulu withdrew Tk 1.57 crore from his account with Babubazar branch of Social Investment Bank Ltd (SIBL) and deposited it in an account of Mohammad Quddus with the same branch.

The investigators found out that it is in fact the BNP leader who owns the account in the name of Quddus. The same month, he withdrew Tk

77 lakh from his account with Moulvibazar branch of SIBL and paid it into an account in the name of Mohammad Mominuddin with the same branch. Again, the investigators con-

cluded that Dulu is the one who opened the account in the name of Mominuddin. Sources said the investigators

gathered evidence about his involvement in some more incidents of money laundering. They proposed filing several cases

against him under the anti-money laundering act, but nothing happened to that end. An ACC official said the anti-graft

body had no jurisdiction to initiate legal steps on money laundering charges until the middle of last year when the offence was included in the

schedule of the ACC Act-2004. The government introduced anti- corruption-and terrorism-free money laundering law in 2002, and Bangladesh, ensuring free and fair at that time, the now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) was responsible for taking legal steps

regarding the crime. But the ACC stopped doing anything about money laundering when the offence was left out of its sched-

ulein 2004. Between 2002 and 2004, Bac filed 35 cases for money laundering, but as of now there has been little progress in that regard.

repealed the anti-money laundering act of 2002 and the president promulgated a new ordinance this year to preventillegal transfer of money.

ACC officials said so far they have won one money laundering case and that was against Rajib Siraj, son of ex-BNP minister Shajahan Siraj.

They have filed cases also against formet Awami League (AL) lawmaker AHM Mostafa Kamal alias Lotus Kamal and owner of Uttara Group Giridhari Lal Modi.

"When I was a judge, I have done my duties with honesty and integrity and I never thought to please or displease anybody. When I was the chief justice, my senior lawyer advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed once appeared in my court with a petition. But seeing that there was no legal point in that petition, I rejected it," he said.

He added the Constitution, rule of law and democracy are mutually related to each other and if one is violated, others are damaged too.

"Judge means justice and law means moral laws. The judges have to practise laws and at the same time have to consider the circumstances during dispensation of justice," he added.

Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia observed that if EC can hold local polls without a final voter list, it should also hold the national

"The EC wanted to create a reformed BNP in the name of doctrine of necessity, but their purpose was not fulfilled. There is no provision in the Constitution of HM Ershad after taking over doctrine of necessity. The EC has violated its oath. They will be tried in the court of the people," he

Barrister Abdur Razzak said the Constitution, rule of law and democracy are facing challenges and crisis at this moment.

"The caretaker government can't perform functions beyond its routine work, but it's doing many things. This government is taking policymaking decisions. The politicians have to play statesman-like role to face the crisis," he said.

Islamic Lawyers' Council President advocate Nawab Ali, advocate Nazrul Islam, Dr Kazi Akhter Hamid, advocate Jasimuddin Sarker, advocate Giasuddin Mithu and advocate Fariduddin Khan addressed the meeting.

Acid burnt

Rokeya's throat, lungs and stomach were badly infected due to acid burn. The incident occurred late at

night on May 12 when Rokeya came out of her house and was attacked by seven persons led by neighbour Abdur Rashid, saidher brother Ruhul Two persons held her hands

firmly while another one poured acid into her mouth with the help of others. They also threw acid on her face and left her. ota Rushusivasaide do calsa resouvede this

sister and rushed her to Bhola Hospital. The ASF later brought her to its Banani centre for better treat-

A case was filed with the Lalmohon Police Station against Abdur Rashid and six other persons including his wife, son, daughter and daughter-in-law.

Ruhul told The Daily Star that his family has had a dispute over land with Abdur Rashid for about two years. Rokeya filed a case on January 17 this year against Rashid and six of his family members regarding the land dispute.

Rashid and his family continuously pressurised Rokeya to withdraw the case but she did not. Rokeya was the only earning

member in the family with two sons and a daughter as her husband is mentally challenged. She ran the family by giving tuition to students of the village, Ruhul said. Officer-in-Charge of Lalmohon

Police Station Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star over phone that they have submitted the charge sheet against the seven accused on July 6 but could not yet arrest any of them as they have been absconding since filing of the case overland dispute.

Honest people FROM PAGE 1

future," he said about the vision of a new Bangladesh, as campaigned during the 50-day-long crosscountry mission.

The CA requested people to apply their judgment and knowledge in casting their vote, which he said is the highest right of a citizen.

'Esho Bangladesh Gori' road show was formally inaugurated by Agriculture Adviser CS Karim at this same venue on May 30 though the caravan embarked upon the journey from Panchagarh on June 1.

The road show focused on the issues like food security, changing food habit, establishing honest and competent leadership, building election, and improvement of socioeconomic condition through adopting information communication technology and flourishing tourism.

The road show travelled over 4,500- km across 55 districts. Some 5 lakh people of 25 districts have actively participated in the road

districts to celebrate the road show, jointly organised by the agriculture ministry, food and disaster manage-The present government ment ministry, home ministry, post and telecommunications ministry, civil aviation and tourism ministry, Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission and Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission.

Chaired by Agriculture Adviser CS Karim, the function was also addressed by Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen U Ahmed.

Advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser, schoolboys and girls present

FROM PAGE 1

although he was scheduled to appear 34 times. Koko was supposed to appear before the court 17 times but he appeared six times, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor and AL leader ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury was supposed to appear 14 times but he appeared nine times, and former AL state minister Prof Rafiqul Islam was supposed to appear 36 times but he did 26 times.

According to jail sources, there are around 70 VIP prisoners including Khaleda, former ministers, lawmakers, business tycoons and their spouses who are staying in jail on charges of amassing illegal wealth, graft and corruption. Of them, at least 16 are now receiving treatment at different hospitals.

Shamim Iskander

FROM PAGE 1 on May 5 for concealing information about wealth worth Tk 20.47 lakh in the wealth statement they

submitted to the ACC. Shamim's wife Kaniz Fatema won bail from the High Court in the

Shamim's lawyers meanwhile appealed to the court to award him "division" while in jail custody. The magistrate asked the jail authorities to take proper steps in this regard.

Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1 BSF took away the bodies and did

not return till filing of this report in the evening. Reports say both sides have

reinforced their deployment, creating panic among people of the bordering villages. Our Chapainawabganj corre-

spondent reported that the situation at Raghunathpur village under Shibganj upazila where the BDR jawans were gunned down is still tense. Mainul Islam, a teacher at

Hasanpur primary school of Kackchapara in Raghunathpur area, said panicked villagers were passing sleepless nights. Major Syed Abu Hasan, opera-

tion officer of 39 Rifles Battalion said, "The situation in the border area is still tense." BDR personnel were patrolling

the area, and advised people to stay Meanwhile, the Indian national

arrested by BDR from the spot after Friday's killings, was handed over to Shibgani police. dentified as Tazemul, son of Afzal Mia of Chalakpara village

under Baishnabnagar thana of

Malda district, the arrestee was sent to jail yesterday. Earlier, Shibganj police had produced him before court. On Friday, a group of BSF guards from Neemtita camp under Murshidabad district entered

Bangladesh crossing the Padma on a speedboat and entered Raghunathpur village in Chapainawabganj. The intruders opened fire as a

BDR patrol team challenged them, leaving Habilder Abdul Hannan Sarker and Lance Navek Krishnopodo Saha killed on the

In the face of counter attack by BDR, the BSF men fled the area. A BSF man was reportedly killed in the shootout.

5 killed

FROM PAGE 1 during heavy rain early in the morning

They also alleged that some locals took away their valuables and money on the pretext of rescuing them.

Of the dead, four were identified as Alamgir Hossain, 38, Muktar Hossain, 35, Akher Ali, 40, and Dr M A Matin, 55, a doctor of Lalmonirhat Hospital. The identity of the other deceased could not be known immediately.

The injured were taken to different hospitals in Sirajganj and Dhaka. Police recovered the bodies and

sent those to Sirajganj Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed in this connec-

Tamim

FROM PAGE 1

fund to expedite its operation. "Even we've accepted the price that Bapex offered for its new gas field."

Urging the country's political parties to reach a consensus on the energy issue, he said, "We should go for multiple approaches in resolving the country's power and energy crises."

"We're going to hand over power to an elected political government. So, they should take A total of 27 fairs were held in 25 | experts to deal with the matters," he added.

Taking a swipe at critics, the CA's special assistant said they should come up with their alternative solution to the crisis instead of doing criticism. Organised by Energy and Power

the seminar was addressed, among others, by Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) Chairman Ghulam Rahman, former PDB chairman Quamrul Islam Siddique, Planning Commission member AMM Nasir Uddin, and and distinguished personalities were | Power Cell Director General Abdul Jalil.

magazine at CIRDAP auditorium,

9 VIP prisoners | AL vows to resist polls

FROM PAGE 1 hunger strikers in AL chief Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi of the capital. At the end of the token strike that went on from 11:00am to 4:00pm, Zillur offered fruit juice to his fellow strikers for breaking the fast of protest.

The demands that sparked the five-hour long hunger strike include demands for making Hasina's release permanent, holding of the parliamentary election before upazila polls, immediate curbing of soaring prices of essentials, and introduction of a countrywide rationing system. Zillur alleged that the plan to

hold upazila polls ahead of the parliamentary election is 'a part of a conspiracy'. He asked the government to take immediate initiatives to curb the soaring prices of essentials, saying the country is passing through a latent famine, with many people passing their days in starva-

The AL leader also demanded that the government makes Hasina's release permanent.

In some districts AL leaders FROMPAGE 16 demanded that the military backed caretaker government gives up state power immediately 'for failing to control price hikes of daily essentials'.

AL central leaders and the party's advisory council members went on the strike in Hasina's political office while its city unit and front organisations gathered in its central office on Bangabandhu

Addressing the hunger strikers, AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu threatened to launch

Student held FROM PAGE 16

Rab team led by him raided the house of Pinku's aunt at Dakkhin Pikepara at Mirpur at around 11:30am. They recovered three foreign

pistols and a revolver and six magazines of pistol and 60 rounds of bullet from Pinku's possession and arrested him. Pinku said two of his friends who are accomplices of notorious

criminals Bikash and Prokash had kept the firearms and ammunition with him. Rab sources said the law enforcers came to know about Pinku after he showed the illegal firearms to

local kids in exchange for money. He told the Rab members that his friends would take the firearms from him before conducting operations and return those to him afterwards. Pinku said his friends also rented out the firearms to

"We are interrogating Pinku to find out the identity of the gang members and also the type of operations they had conducted," Lt Mohiuddin added.

Indian HC FROM PAGE 16

"At a flag meeting between local BSF and BDR commanders on July

18, 2008 it was decided to refer the matter to higher authorities after detailed investigations, the results of which would be shared between the two sides. "Cross border crimes like cattle smuggling are a menace

for both countries that occasionally cause firing incidents, mostly in the night. These illegal activities and firing incidents, which sometimes lead to regret table loss of lives on both sides along the border, need to be tackled through joint efforts and mechanisms. In this regard, the border forces of both the countries, BSF and BDR, have worked hard to improve their coordination and their current levels of cooperation are the best in many

Food security FROM PAGE 16

for technical and vocational institutions and requested expediting the WB's initiative to provide assistance for higher education, according to ERD Secretary Aminul Islam Bhuiyan who was present at the

On climate change, the chief adviser stressed strengthening regional cooperation for jointly facing the adversities stemming from climate change due to global warming.

The WB vice-president said bilateral support of the bank "for maintaining macro-economic balance will continue".

Koko

FROM PAGE 1 was later exempted from court appearances in the case on medical grounds.

He was released from the prison cell at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University hospital some leaders from Barisal, Khulna Thursday after the government paroled him for eight weeks on medical grounds. Earlier, a medical board recomand divisional leaders already met mended his overseas treatment.

He added, "We are deeply shocked at the assault on a fellow freedom lighter. If the government does not arrest the perpetrators and bring them to book immediately, a chaotic situation might arise in the country." Major Gen (retd) CR Dutta said. "We won't tolerate any insult to the

freedom fighters. You (govern-

the 1971's war criminals."

ment) will be held responsible if

people wage another war for trial of

Arrest culprits

tougher movements to press home

their demands. Another Presidium Member

Tofail Ahmed alleged that the caretaker government has totally failed to fulfil public demands, adding that an unelected government cannot solve the problems of the people. Motia Chowdhury, another

presidium member, said the government is actually not interested in lifting the emergency, as it wants to stay in power. Party leaders Syeda Sajeda

Chowdhury, Mukul Bose, Abdul Mannan, Asaduzzaman Noor, and Col (retd) Faruk Khan also took part in the hunger strike among others. The strike was also observed in

Rajshahi, Pabna, Barisal

Thakurgoan, Dinajpur, and Sylhet, according to our local correspon-Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of AL, observed the token strike on Dhaka

Build graft-free

University campus.

"It proves that people want a corruption-free Bangladesh. They want to get rid of terrorism and they want honest and dignified leadership," Gen. Moeen said.

He said people of Bangladesh have fought in the past and they know how to move forward against adverse situation.

The road show will be completely successful when its theme of building the nation will be materialised, Gen Moeen observed.

Delwar

that it [government] has arrested Shamim to put pressure on Khaleda Zia.'

If there is any specific allegation against Shamim, he could have been arrested from anywhere. But he was arrested right outside the party chairperson's residence after he had visited his ailing nephew Koko, Delwar said.

Renewing the demand for Khaleda's immediate and unconditional release as well as her elder son Tarique Rahman's release for treatment abroad, Delwar said, "Cases filed against Khaleda Zia are absolutely without any merit. Nevertheless, if the government wants to continue the cases, it can do so after releasing her..."

Responding to a question, the BNP secretary general said it is impossible to hold any election without the participation of BNP. "BNP is an election-oriented party and we are ready to partici-

pate in a free and fair election with

all political parties," he said adding that the BNP is willing to participate in dialogue with the govern ment, but the government has to release the party chairperson first. BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, former lawmakers Nurul Kabir Shaheen and Sohrab Uddin, central leaders

Sultana were present among oth-Commenting on the upcoming city corporation and municipality elections, Delwar said the BNP-led four-party alliance's stance on the

Habib-un-Nabi Sohel and Shirin

matter was still unchanged. Meanwhile, leaders of BNP and its front organisations from Rangamati and Chapainawabganj districts paid separate visits to the secretary general at his residence.

Delwar during the meetings urged all to remain united and work together for a stronger BNP. The BNP secretary general later formally called off the symbolic hunger strike of former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders

who staged the programme at his

residence to demand release of

Khaleda and Tarique. BNP waits

FROM PAGE 16

signed up to contest the city corporation and municipality polls scheduled for on August 4. At least seven of these BNP leaders are running for mayoral posts in four city corporations.

A few former lawmakers close to

the party secretary general how-

ever hinted that the party would not make any formal decision against the mayoral candidates These candidates have a good chance of winning in the mayoral race, they said. Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Standing Committee, on Tuesday

said there is a good chance that BNP candidates in the local government elections would defeat the Awami League candidates. Party insiders however said and Sylhet are mounting pressure on the party's central leadership to go tough on the defiant leaders for the RCC had the burden of Tk 30 running in the polls. Many district

decision regarding the rebel candidates. The local leaders requested the high command either to withdraw all candidates from the local elections or endorse a single candidate for a post to ensure victory, added the insiders.

the secretary general for his final

Meanwhile on Wednesday, Khulna City acting Mayor Moniruzzaman Moni at a press conference in Khulna claimed that he is participating in the polls with full support of his party and lead-

Samudra Gupta

FROM PAGE 16

Abdul Mannan, is survived by his wife and two daughters. His body is expected to be flown back to Bangladesh tomorrow.

The poet was born on June 23 in 1946 at Hashil village in Sirajganj. Gupta, whose real name was Abdul Mannan took the pen name of Samudra Gupta in the 60s and is now widely known by his pen name.

Through his writings, Gupta created a strong voice against communalism and fundamentalism, and created his own following.

During his long writing career, Gupta who was a journalist by profession -- penned 13 poetry books, one fiction and a poetry book with another writer. He also translated a number of other writers' works and edited several books while a large number of his short stories and articles were published.

His poems have been translated into different languages including English, Chinese, French, Hindi, Nepali, Sinhalese, Japanese, Urdu and Norwegian.

Gupta's famous works include Rode Jholshano Mukh, Swapnamongol Kabyo, Ekhono Utthan Achhey, Chokhey Chokh Rekhey, Ekaki Roudrer Dike, Shekorer Shokey etc.

The noted poet was honoured with different awards including the Humayun Kabir Award and Jessore Literature Award. He was also awarded the Poet Vishnu Dey Award and Language Day Honour by the government of Tripura state of India. Gupta took part in mass upsurge

in 1969 and was also a freedom

fighter. In his professional life Gupta

worked in different dailies and weeklies of the country. He was also a and east. general secretary of National Poetry Council. Primary and Mass Education mantle the de facto separate state Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury the guerrillas maintain in the

poet," she said in a statement. Bangladesh Abritti Shamannay Parishad dedicated its regular recitation programme titled 'Eito Jibon Eito Madhuri' last evening at the Liberation War Museum to the poet.

"The nation has lost a renowned

expressed deep shock at his death.

Gupta's fervent writing against communalism, fundamentalism and imperialism would remain alive for all the progressive people in the country, leaders of Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi said in a statement, adding that his poems would continue to inspire the democratic movements in the country. Among others, the National

Poetry Council, Bangabandhu Lekhak Parishad, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Biborton Sangskritik Kendra, Unmesh Sahitya-Sangskriti Sangshad, Gono Sangskriti Front, Jatiya Gono Front, Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri, Workers Party of Bangladesh (WPB), Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi, Bangladesh Writers' Club, Durneety Protirodh Andolon, World Poetry Center, Bangladesh and Dhaka University Film Society expressed deep shock at the poet's death.

The death of Samudra Gupta has created an irreparable vacuum in the realm of poetry of the country, differentorganisations said.

Mayor aspirants

Rahman, Jatiya Party's Durul Huda, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal's Ruhul Kuddus Tunu, and independent mayoral candidates Abdul Matin Khan, Abdul Khaleque and Siddikur Rahman replied to questions of the people

present. Speaking on the occasion, Prof Muzaffar said the country's constitution and ideologies of the Liberation War entrusted people with the country's power.

"But people are losing this hold on power due to terrorism, militancy and corruption... A nonelected government has now assumed power due to the failures of political parties," he said. Calling upon the people to elect

honest and competent candidates, he said an elected government is needed to help democracy survive. The mayor candidates were given a chance to speak briefly on why they joined the mayoral race

and what they want to do if they are

elected Masudul Haque Dulu refrained from making any promises in the meeting even though almost all candidates pledged for different development work including bringing natural gas supply to Rajshahi by 2010.

"The local government is part of Siddique, a member of BNP | the central government. I only can do what the central government allows me to do... this is why I am not making any promises but I assure you that I have love for the people of this city and I would do my best to come to their aid," Dulu Rejaunnabi Dudu said he became RCC acting mayor when

> crore of unpaid loans. "In the last 14 months, I repaid Tk 13 crore of loans. The corporation's annual expenditure is Tk 18 crore against the income of Tk 14 crore. I elected, I can do better," he said. Khairuzzaman Liton said he would not let political goons con-

and he will build a training centre for people seeking jobs overseas. Mosaddek Hossain identified unemployment and drug as major problems of the city and said he plans to free the city from drugs and create employment opportu-

nities for young people.

trol affairs of the city corporation

19 Tamil Tigers killed

FROM PAGE 16 The rebels, led by 53-year-old Velupillai Prabhakaran, still maintain a few fixed-wing aircraft, a formidable sea force and a band of suicide bombers known for daring attacks against security, economic and political tar-

In April 2006, General Fonseka three more were killed in Jaffna, himself narrowly escaped assassination bid, when a woman suicide bomber targeted him inside the high-security army headquarters complex.

Fonseka said morale in government ranks was high and manpower was not a problem, with 3,000 new recruits joining each month and pushing total strength to 162,000.

But he did caution that economic hardships were inevitable for ordinary people -- with inflation pushing nearly 29 percent -as the government was fighting a brutal terroristorganisation.

"The Sinhala nation (majority

Sinhalese community) has to sacrifice if you want to protect the country and survive," the commander said. majority that is a dangerous situation and it is a problem. That

ruled by the Sinhalese community which is the majority representing 74 percent of the popula-The LTTE have been fighting to carve out a homeland for minor-

is unrealistic. This country will be

ity Tamils in the island's north Since July last year, security forces have been trying to dis-

north of the country. Fonseka said progress had been deliberately slow. "The tail-enders of a cricket shootout and was shot dead.

team do not perform the same

way, like the middle order batsmen and the opening batsmen In fresh fighting Sri Lankan government forces killed 19 Tamil suffered a minor injury in the

of the island nation's civil war,

the military said Saturday. Military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said Friday's worst fighting took place in northern Vavuniya district, where nine rebels were killed.

Seven insurgents were killed along the Welioya front, while

No government soldiers were killed in the fighting but a few were wounded, Nanayakkara

Thirty Tamil Tiger rebels and four soldiers were killed in two days of gunbattles in Sri Lanka, the defence ministry said Friday. Ground battles took place on

Wednesday and Thursday across the tropical island's war-torn northern region, the ministry said in a statement. Rebel spokesman Rasiah Ilanthirayan could not be immediately reached for comment, and it was not possible to verify

the military's claims because

journalists are banned from the Tamil Tiger rebels have been "If a minority is ruling the fighting since 1983 to create an independent homeland for the country's ethnic minority Tamils, who have faced marginalization by successive governments controlled by majority ethnic

> Sinhalese. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the violence.

Criminal

FROM PAGE 16

opened fire on the Rab team when they got there and the ensuing gunfight lasted for about half and The press release said that

Mokshu tried to flee during the

The Rab team and police discov-

ered his body after the criminals fled the scene. They also recovered firearms from the scene. Rab constable Monir Alam

remain committed to getting a

full halt to Iranian enrichment.

Still, Burns' decision to attend the

Geneva talks shows that

Washington may accept "freeze-

for-freeze" something less than

full suspension, at least as a first

"Freeze-for-freeze" envisions

Iran declines

Tiger rebels along the front lines incident, the press release added.

FROM PAGE 16

represented by the Swiss Embassy in Tehrana some blad Iran and the United States broke off diplomatic relations after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and hostage crisis at the US Embassy in Tehran. Official contacts between the two countries

are extremely rare. Imani said Tehran had not yet received a proposal from the US on opening a representation but would "study it positively" if it

presence of Burns although the Americans had previously said they would not sit with the Iranians on nuclear issues unless Tehran was ready to stop all enrichment activity. "He (is just) a member of the

delegation" of the six countries

engaging Iran on the nuclear

But Imani downplayed the

issue, he said. Imani also denied that the "freeze-for-freeze" formula a stop to Iranian enrichment growth in exchange for no new UN sanctions was formally on the agenda of the Geneva talks, saying the two sides were meeting to discuss common points of their diverging plans to ease

nuclear tensions. The US and its five partners will not be on the table.

only at its present level, and the US and its allies would stop pushing for new UN sanctions. stop all enrichment temporarily.

tials" an apparent reference to suspending uranium enrichment

Nepal assembly

FROM PAGE 16 votes necessary, Nepal Television reported, after a secret ballot in the

backed by the Maoists although he is not a member of their party, won

282 votes, the channel said. Both men are ethnic Mahadhesis who hail from the troubled lowland area bordering India known as the Terai, where demands for an autonomous federal state have seen frequent deadly clashes.

decades ago for throwing small bombs at parliament and the palace as part of an anti-royal protest, was earlier pegged as the favourite by political analysts. The country has been stuck in

assembly, which will write a new constitution for Nepal, sacked unpopular king Gyanendra and abolished the 240-year-old Hindu monarchy in a landmark meeting on May 28. Interim prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala has since resigned,

his resignation, the elderly centrist has lingered on as a weak caretaker.

a six-week commitment from both sides. Preliminary talks meant to lead to formal nuclear negotiations would start, Iran could continue enrichment but

If this results in the start of formal talks, the Iranians would Those talks, in turn, are meant to secure Tehran's commitment for an indefinite ban on enrichment.

On the eve of the meeting,

French Foreign Minister Bernard

Kouchner said the talks them-

selves give hope "that there can

be a peaceful solution" to the standoff over Tehran's nuclear programme. But he also told reporters he expects no quick changes from Iran, which has said "the essen-

short of a majority to take the largely ceremonial presidency, the channel reported. Die-hard republican Ramraja Prasad Singh, the candidate

Singh, who was arrested two although the assembly did approve

political limbo ever since the

but with no one in power to accept The three main parties, who are Samay.

The new president will take over some of the ceremonial duties previously performed by ousted king Gyanendra. In the past seven weeks, as

arguing continued over the sym-

bolic post, Nepal has been largely

vote would take place.

It was not yet clear when a new

ungoverned. The Nepali fiscal year ended on July 15 without a new budget, a supplementary spending bill.

The country has lurched from

headed by a prime minister, most

likely Maoist leader Prachanda --

whose group is still classed as a

"terrorist" organisation by the

strike to strike, over fuel prices, wages and working conditions. But once a president is in place, that will pave the way for the formation of a government

United States. "The president will accept the resignation of the (interim) prime minister and then the Maoists can form a government," explained Yubaraj Ghimire, editor of the Nepali-language news weekly

also leading a two-year-old peace process that saw the Maoist rebels lay down their arms after a decadecountry's constitutional assembly. long struggle, had hoped to select a The leading candidate, Ram president by consensus. Baran Yadav, was just four votes But political infighting led to a falling out and to Saturday's elec-