CA holds talks

The CA also held bilateral meetings with President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Prime Minister of Nepal Girija Prasad Koirala.

He said Bangladesh attaches great importance to its relation with Sri Lanka based on common culture and heritage.

The CA said operation of air services between Dhaka and Colombo in private sector will further expand trade relations and people-to-people contact.

He also emphasised quick ratification of Shipping Agreement between the two countries to expand business and economic

During the meeting, national election in Bangladesh and issues related to mutual interests also

Mahinda also thanked Bangladesh for imparting training to members of Sri Lankan armed forces at National Defence College.

The CA apprised the Lankan president of his government various reforms activities towards election and successful completion of voter list with photographs and national ID card of 80 million voters in less than a year.

He thanked the Sri Lankan president for excellent arrangement for hosting the 15th Saarc summit beginning today.

TALKS WITH GAYOOM During bilateral meeting with Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom at Cinnamon Grand Hotel in the afternoon, the CA stressed the need for Saarc plan of action to address the issue of climate change, as south Asian countries are acutely vulnerable to the effects of the menace.

They discussed the worst impacts of climate change on Bangladesh and the Maldives and stressed that the world community should come forward to address the problem.

We are the first victim of climate change," the Maldives presi-

dent said, adding that his government is trying to build up awareness linking climate change, human rights and environment. The CA said Bangladesh is now

vocal against climate change. In the meeting, the Maldives sought Bangladesh's support in

becoming UN Security Council member in 2019 and member of ECOSOC in the year

2011. KOIRALA

At the bilateral meeting with Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, The CA said Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, the poorest countries under the Saarc, should work together to get rid of

He also apprised the Nepalese leader of his government's reforms measures and steps towards holding the general election in

December this year. The Nepalese prime minister apprised the CA of his country's latest political situation regarding formation of the new government.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim briefed newsmen about the meetings.

Earlier, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed was accorded a red carpet reception as he arrived at Bandarnaike International Airport (BIA) at Katunayake.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake and his wife received the CA and his wife at the airport. Two tiny tots presented bouquets to the chief adviser and

A contingent of Sri Lankan army gave a guard of honour to the chief adviser. The airport ceremonies over, he flew into the Sri Lankan capital by a helicopter.

Thereafter, the CA drove in a ceremonial motorcade to Cinnamon Grand Hotel where he will stay during the summit meet of the heads of government or state of the South Asian countries that begins here today.

Reconciliation move

organisation to do well in the

upcoming national election. "Now that Bhuiyan and his group are ready to cancel all the decisions

they have taken since the chairperson's arrest, I think the secretary general will give his consent to having them back into the fold," a pro-Khaleda leader told The Daily Star vesterday, wishing not to be

Mannan Bhuiyan, who emerged as a pro-reform stalwart after the changeover of January 11 last year. came out on bail Wednesday. Talking to newsmen after release, he said there is no alternative to uniting the party to succeed in election.

Like him, BNP standing committee member M Shamsul Islam and Vice-president MK Anwar were also released last week on ad interim bail from the High Court.

Party sources said most of the senior leaders favour acting immeand have a united BNP. Even Khaleda Zia on several occasions has sent messages asking the party leaders to forge unity.

But Delwar remains opposed to tee. sitting with Bhuiyan and the leaders who once initiated a campaign for intra-party reforms.

A number of BNP leaders hinted that the LGRD minister might be appointed a standing committee member on withdrawal of expulsion ordered by the chairperson just the pro-reform group.

before her arrest last year.

If the move succeeds, it might also see Ashraf Hossain, another expelled leader who is now behind bars, reinstated in the party on release.

Delwar however remains adamant not to let the expulsion orders against the three be withdrawn before the release of party chairperson, said sources close to him. He is also pursuing a strategy to

weaken the dissident leaders' base in their constituencies, they added.

He has already brought changes in the Sylhet BNP committees. mostly-meaning-exclusion of those loval to Saifur Rahman, former finance minister who was made acting chairman by the standing committee on October 29 last year.

A new committee has been formed in Shibpur upazila of Narsinghdi, the constituency of Mannan Bhuiyan.

Lately, Delwar at a meeting with BNP leaders from Lalmohan upazila diately to resolve the differences of Bhola suggested that they avoid Major (retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, former lawmaker from the area and also acting secretary general appointed by the standing commit-

> Besides, dictated by the secretary general, some district and upazila BNP committees including those in Sunamganj, Barisal (north), Rajbari and Sarsha upazila of Jessore have exempted several former lawmakers from duties for their role in favour of

Vanishing forests

the revenue target, opts for short British for its wood value, do not destruction of forests.

serve no better use than of firewood," Dr Reza Khan explained adding, "However, such short rotation felling helps quick earning for the forest department, but leads to increased soil erosion as soon as hills are cleared. This (short rotation) is viable commercially but not

biologically." Interestingly, the same forest department practices another kind of logging -- selective felling -- that allows extraction of mature trees only, leaving other trees untouched. This also leaves the wildlife mostly untouched. The Sundarban is one place where selective logging is in practice. But the department, for reasons unknown, applies the clear felling method in the hills.

And worse still, once it clears a forest, it introduces alien species

such as acacia and eucalyptus "These varieties are bad for the ecology as they support no wildlife. Nothing else grows under or beside acacia and eucalyptus. As a result, you don't have a tier of forest that can support different species of

animals and birds," said Dr Khan. "If money is what actually matters to the forest department, then rice cultivation should have been the most preferred option," Dr Khan quipped. "But that would be

as disastrous as clear felling." Long rotation crop practice such as the one done in Bhanugachh and Lawachhera forests allows more animals and plants to grow for creating a 'tier system' in forests. While the forest has tall trees creating a canopy and supporting some specific kinds of wildlife, smaller trees grow underneath to support other kinds of animals and birds. And the bushes that grow at the ground level make perfect habitat for yet some other

rotation leading to widespread help the ecology for the same reasons as acacia and eucalyptus "But trees don't mature at do not. Dr Khan suggests that at twenty years and they basically least 25 percent of any new plantation must have fruit trees such as figs of all species, Lakooch, Jamun, Neem, Debdaru, Shimul Chapalish, Gamari, Jackfruit, and

Khoka suggests

number of wards, the adviser suggested that the DCC should allow private companies in more DCC wards to manage garbage.

"The DCC has to strengthen its monitoring [of road digging] so that the utility agencies complete their work timely and the DCC can do its road repair work according to sched-

Former administrator of Dhaka municipality Lt Col (retd) Hesam Uddin Ahmed said the DCC is still facing the same problems he dealt with 34 years ago including financial problems and lack of proper road

increasing the number of roads, building underground rail network

and more flyovers. Former administrator of Dhaka municipality Maj Gen (retd) Mahmudul Hasan said the number of residents in Dhaka in 1947 was

only3lakh, nowit is over 1.20 crore. City dwellers have to be aware of keeping the capital clean; it is not possible for the DCC to do it on its

own, he said. Secretary of Local Government Division Sheikh Khurshid Alam and Chief Executive Officer of DCC Md Alauddin spoke at the meeting

among others. A cultural programme followed the meeting where teachers and students of music schools run by the DCC took part.

The DCC also brought out a colourful procession yesterday morning from Nagar Bhaban. The procession marched different city streets. The DCC mayor, councillors and officials and employees of DCC Even teaks, introduced by the took part in the procession.

Kuwait

FROM PAGE 16 Kuwait also freed 300 as their involvement in the demonstrations was not proved. They assured us that they would not deport any workers who were not involved in the strikes," he said.

On exactly how many workers will be sent back, he said the Kuwaiti government has not informed them of the figure. "We asked the Kuwaiti authorities not to make any further arrests," he said.

The Bangladesh Embassy also asked Kuwait not to take any decision affecting other Bangladeshis in the Gulf nation, the labour counsellor said.

He said the issues that ignited the protests have largely been solved in most cases but some workers of a few companies are demanding written commitment on the part of their employers.

On Kuwait's decision not to renew residency permits for Bangladeshi workers on menial jobs, he said the embassy has not been informed of any such deci-

Meantime, various organisations on migrants' rights yesterday condemned the continued deportation, saying the move is a complete violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

"We call on the UN Human Rights Council to intervene to protect the rights of migrant workers in Kuwait," said an IMA Research Foundation statement. The unjust detention and

deportation of migrant workers only add to the continued abuses they have been through, it said. Probashi Manab Kalyan Foundation (PMKF) demanded compensation to the deported

workers and called for diplomatic

efforts to stop further expulsion.

BDR fair price

FROM PAGE 16

and chickpea (chhola) on first 12-14 days in Ramadan last year due to disruption in supply.

Chief Procurement Officer Lt Col. Enayet told the news agency that they have already procured all Ramadan items, including date (khejur), chickpea (chhola), pulses, spices and soya bean oil, except rice as the food ministry imposed restriction on it.

Boucher

FROM PAGE 1

about the successful completion of voter list and national ID card of over 80 million people in 11

He repeated that general election would be held in December.

On food security, the head of the caretaker government said his government is doing its best at home to this end while efforts are on to procure wheat from international market.

He sought cooperation from the | Commission. United States to ensure food secu-

Appreciating Bangladesh's farmer's contribution, he said the farmers are the "biggest entrepre-

The CA said his government has given top priority to the agriculture sector and allocated the highest amount in the current budget. Regarding terrorism and coun-

ter-terrorism, the CA said Bangladesh is maintaining its tough stand against terrorism. Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim, who was

present at the meeting, briefed newsmen about the meeting. Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, foreign secretary Bangladesh high commissioner to Sri Lanka and US Ambassador to Sri Lanka were also present at the

Engr Mosharraf

wealth statement. On July 28 this year, the High Court (HC) granted him ad-interim bail for two

Sub-Inspector and second officer of Joydevpur Police Station Nazmul Islam Khan told The Daily Star that the former minister was arrested again under section 16/2 of the EPR and that the AL leader is accused in five separate cases.

Gulshan police arrested the HRC Group chief around 2:30pm from in front of Dhaka Central Jail gate shortly after he was released

Mir Rezaul Alam, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Zone, told The Daily Star that the police He said it is time to think about arrested him in a separate case but burning on me," Parul told The could not specify the case instantly.

Cantonment police, meanwhile, said although Sayeed Hossain was arrested by Gulshan police, he was taken under their custody for safety.

Earlier, the joint forces arrested Sayeed on July 18 under section 16/2 of the EPR for smuggling money out of the country and enjoying properties bought in other people's names. They later handed him over to Gulshan police.

Former BNP lawmaker Moazzem Hossain Alal, also general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, was released yesterday morning after an HC bench granted him bail last week. Police first arrested Moazzem

on February 8 under the EPR and twice later on April 23 at the Rangpur jail gate and on July 13 at the Dhaka Central Jail gate when he came out of the jails on HC bail.

RIA: Massive plan

FROM PAGE 16 provide the information sought.

Earlier, the Ministry of Information brought amendments to the Right to Information Ordinance 2008 following directives from the cabinet. The cabinet okayed the draft on June 18 with a few changes in wording, rewriting a few clauses, and merging some

"The government is very keen to establish citizens' right to information before handing over power to an elected government in December," said the information secretary, adding that everything is moving forward fast since the government is very serious about

Once the act is promulgated, there will be widespread publicity of it in the media explaining the provisions and the procedure for applying for information, said a government official concerned. "At first all the units will be made aware of the importance of the act," the official added.

Government officers will be provided with copies of the act. There will also be training sessions for the officers, particularly for those who will be engaged in the process of disseminating informa-"Success of it depends on how

to it," said a law ministry official, adding that proper implementation of the act will be necessary to ensure free flow of information. "The more you will disseminate information among citizens, the

the units and the officials respond

more successful the initiative will be," he added. The three-member proposed Information Commission, with a five-year tenure, will be the supreme authority for implementing RIA, the members of which will

be appointed on contractual basis. The president of the country will appoint the commissioners from a list of names to be proposed by a five-member nominating body to be headed by a judge of the Appellate Division of Supreme Court. One of the commissioners will be a woman.

"The commission will have enormous power for implement ing the act," said Jamil Osman adding that anybody found to be showing negligence in providing information will be dealt with iron Anyone found guilty of refusing

to provide information or giving wrong information can be fined Tk 5,000, besides departmental actions against the guilty. An applicant may also go to the heads of government offices con-

cerned for information. If not

satisfied, the person will also have ity. the right to go to the proposed high-powered Information Government officers found guilty of non-cooperation will be handed out punishments ranging from official rebuke to expulsion from job under the Disciplinary

Appeal Rule 1985," said the information secretary. He however said the Information Commission will refer such matters to ministries concerned for investigation and for meting out punishments to guilty officers. Sources said some information

seekers however will face some difficulties in getting some information. A citizen who is a resident of a rural area will have easy access to local information, but for information about any other place or central units the person might have river.

to travel to district or divisional

headquarters, or to the capital.

"It might be a bit troublesome for them," said a senior information ministry official. He said there will also be provisions barring disclosure of information regarding some specific matters involving the country's security and sover-

"People will not be able to seek information about the National Security Intelligence (NSI), Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), Special Branch (SB), the intelligence cell working under the National Board of Revenue (NBR), and about the international treaties signed with foreign countries by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" the information ministry official said.

"There will also be a bar on disclosing information that might harm an individual, and on information about public examinations that is supposed to be classified, he informed The Daily Star.

A fee will be required, which might also discourage citizens from seeking information, said the official seeking anonymity while adding that the poor will be exempted from paying the fee, although determining 'poor' will be a problem.

The military backed caretaker government took the initiative to formulate the law with an aim to empower the people as well as to ensure transparency and accountability in governance, as part of its institutional reforms.

Earlier, the Ministry of Information prepared a draft, according to which the government and other institutions using public funds will have to provide the people with information they

A total of 68 countries so far promulgated such acts allowing their citizens to learn about the activities of their governments, enhancing transparency and accountability in many of those countries.

Erosion

The deputy commissioner, super intendent of police and WDB officials visited the spot and brought the situation under control by assuring the demonstrators of necessary measures in this regard.

When contacted, a senior official of the WDB said they could not understand the main reason of erosion earlier. But now they have confirmed that formation of these has changed the course of the river near the town and upstream of the bridge, he added, seeking anonym

He admitted that had the shoals been removed by dredging the river in the dry season, the massive erosion now could have been averted. But it is very difficult to go for dredging now due to strong

Nizamul Haque Bhuiyan, WDB executive engineer, also admitted that shoals are obstructing river flow near the Jamuna bridge, causing massive erosion in the area. Besides, unplanned lifting of sand and earth at some points in the river has contributed to this.

He however said they are working hard to protect the vulnerable

Local people said dumping of sand bags is just an eyewash, and they have demanded immediate dredging of main channel of the

local Deodighi bazaar. Hobi was

the chief of labourers of the bazaar

for several years until March this

"Chan and Dhala demanded Tk

1 lakh toll from labourers loyal to

me. I collected Tk 50,000 from the

labourers and gave it to them. But

they later forced some labourers

to pay Tk 1,000 each," Hobi said

adding that the two also asked the

labourers to pay 10 percent of

and Chan and Dhala were arrested

and had to stay two months in jail

before obtaining bail, Hobi

claimed adding that they threat-

ened of dire consequences a few

days before hurling acid on his

criminal case against Hobi, police

Chan and Dhala also filed a

Kamrul Islam, officer-in-

He later filed an extortion case

their income to them.

wife and granddaughter.

recover," the OC said.

sources said.

Parul pays for no fault establishing supremacy at the

FROM PAGE 16 Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Doctors operated on both her eyes Wednesday, Parul, lying on her hospital bed, told The Daily

Star yesterday. Parul's husband Hobi Talukder of Gechua of Shakhipur in Tangail claimed that his rivals hurled acid on them assuming that he was sleeping in the bed.

"I was away from home... our granddaughter was sharing the bed with my wife that night," Hobi told The Daily Star.

The perpetrators attacked around 2:00am when the two were sleeping in Hobi's mud hut. "Something liquid fell on me suddenly and it felt like it was Daily Star while describing the horror she experienced. She heard her granddaughter cry at the same

The acid burnt Parul's face, shoulders, arms and chest while Happy got burnt in her head and back. "I jumped off the bed and ran

out for help," she said. She claimed she saw three people-Chan Mia, Dhala Mia and Raisuddin--running away. Parul and Happy were rushed to DMCH the same day. Happy

was taken back to Tangail after

treatment. "I can hardly see now," Parul said lying in the DMCH Burn unit. Blaming his rival for the attack, her husband filed a case against

Chan, Dhala and Raisuddin with

Shakhipur Police Station.

charge (OC) of Shakhipur Police Station, told The Daily Star that they would take necessary steps after getting Parul's statement. The police are yet to arrest anyone in this connection. "We are waiting for her to

ings to send Faruq Talukder, one of their two sons, to Dubai nine months ago. They have already spent Tk 1 lakh for her treatment so far and had to borrow Tk 60,000 from locals.

The family sold all their belong-

"No one has come up with any

kind of help," said Harun Talukder,

adherents not to participate in electhe other son, describing the tion activities including casting difficulties in which they are treating Parul. Samanta Lal said it would take The enmity brewed between at least one month more before Hobi and the local criminals over Parul can leave the hospital.

Fire in Indian train kills 32

PTI, AP, Hyderabad

At least 32 passengers were charred to death and many others injured when a fire broke out in a moving train in Warangal district of Andhra Pradeshearly yesterday.

Local police official VC Sajjanar said the train caught fire early Friday roughly 208km north of Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh. The fire erupted in S-9 coach of

the Secunderabad- Kakinada Gouthami Express at 0115 hours near Kesamudram station in the district, about 250km from Hyderabad, South Central Railway spokesman P Krishnaiah said. Warangal district Superintendent of Police V C Sajjanar said 15 bodies

bogies and many more could be trapped inside. Sajjanar said the fire appears to have been caused by a short circuit in the train's wiring. He said passengers pulled the chain to stop the train as soon as the fire broke out and pas-

have been found in the charred

sengers jumped out of the car. The mishap occurred between Tallapusalapalli and Mehboobabad stations when the passengers were fast asleep.

MONGLA PORT

Berth Operating System starts amid protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Berth Operating System (BOS) a Mongla Port was introduced yes terday amid protest as it marks the end of Mongla Dock Workers Management Board.

Under the new system, stevedore agents or companies will appoint dock workers directly since Dock Workers' Management Board has been abolished. The Dock Workers' Management Board, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Shipping, failed to achieve expectations allegedly due to corruption, regionalism, frequent workers' strikes, violence at port lack of security and politicisation of the port administration. Security was tightened at vul

nerable points and on jetties at Mongla Port yesterday fearing untoward incidents as workers who worked under Dock Workers' Management Board continued their sporadic protest at the port. They demanded payment of their due wages and retirement and

The jobless workers and their family members formed a human chain around 6:00am near the gang booking office. The law enforce ment agencies dispersed them around 6:15am.

FROM PAGE 1 a leader of Jubo League, AL's youth wing, while he was hosting a feast at his house allegedly to woo voters.

The same day in Barisal, the

police arrested owner of a photocopy shop after a mayoral candidate lodged a complaint with Kotwali Police Station against him for distrib uting leaflets containing falsehood. In another incident, the police recovered photocopies of a news

item run by a Bangla daily reporting about BNP Secretary Genera Khandaker Delwar backing Kamal in theraceforthe BCC mayor's post. SYLHET Campaigns for the August 4 polls

have grown quite intense here even though many BNP and Jamaat leaders stay aloof, reports our Sylhet correspondent. Despite two mayoral candidates with allegiance to it, JP has extended support to the now detained incumbent Sylhet City Corporation mayor

Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, who is also the chief of city AL. Mayoral runners MA Haque, AFM Kamal, Babrul Hossain Babul, Abdul Mukit Khan and Syed Muhibur Rahman are canvassing at full throt tlewhile Kamran's campaign is being

run by his family and party men. Political leaders have also been soliciting votes for candidates. Along with the district and city unit leaders, Central AL leaders Suranjit Sengupta and AMA Muhith joined a number of rallies to drum up support for

Kamran. RAJSHAHI The election fever has gripped Rajshahi City Corporation with candidates campaigning vigorously, reports our Rajshahi correspondent.

observers, the mayoral race will be confined to three candidates--AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, Rejaunnabi Dudu and Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul. KHULNA Following the High Court orders

allowing candidates to use political

affiliations, the mayoral candidates

have been marshalling party ranks to

strengthen their campaigns, reports

According to local political

our Khulna correspondent. Talukder Abdul Khaleque from 14-party combine and Moniruzzaman Moni of BNP, also acting KCC mayor, appear to be the frontrunners.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a Khulna Jamaat leader said his party high-ups had directed the workers and supporters to vote for the BNP-backed candidate but not to be involved in the election eering. Earlier, in line with the four-party decision to boycott the local body

election, Jamaat directed their

Meanwhile, Khulna Metropolitan Police has banned carrying licensed arms in the city with effect from August 2 midnight

Saarc Summit

FROM PAGE 1

The South Asian leaders will sign a Saarc Development Fund (SDF) charter with authorised capital of SDR one billion dollars and launch the South Asian Regional Standards Organisation (SARSO), headquarters of which will be established in Dhaka.

The summit leaders will sign the Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters to effectively deal with terrorists and criminals hiding in other Saarc countries.

At the inaugural session, the summit leaders will also focus on removal of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers to reduce trade imbalances in some member states and increase Intra-Saarc trade.

They will also instruct the Saarc ministerial council comprising the commerce ministers of the member nations to start negotiation on trade in services under the umbrella agreement of Safta.

The summit will stressed the need for making Saarc Food Bank operational immediately, increase food production and for collective efforts to produce alternative sources of energy, so vital for overall development in the region.

"The recent price hike of food globally has reminded us of urgent need to address the situation comprehensively. The food crisis has affected the poorest segment of the society. Food security will constitute an important area of our collective endeavours," Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhruy told UNB ahead of the summit.

He said that Saarc Food Bank need to be made operational immediately to give a human face to the organisation's work. "We need another Green Revolution based on technology and innovative techniques." Apart from food, fuel and

trade issues, critical issue of climate change, water resources, transport, social issues, terrorism, women empowerment and cooperation in science and technology will dominate the

DMP to install FROM PAGE 16 Sources said a control room has

already been set up at Abdul Gani Road near the Bangladesh Secretariat for monitoring of the CCTVs and digital boards. DMP Commissioner Naim Ahmed said tender has already

been invited for necessary equip-

ment. "We're hopeful that e-

policing will start by November,'

he said, adding that the system will first be activated at city police "The C3S system would make traffic monitoring and crime controls easier. It would also help to take decisions instantly," he told

The Daily Star. Deputy commissioner (DC) Masudur Rahman Bhuiyan, who went abroad to learn C3S and epolicing, said, "The C3S would allow us to detect criminals from captured footages."

Rahul Gandhi

FROM PAGE 1 Rahul, son of Congress President Sonia Gandhi and former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi who had been assassinated in 1991, left the airport in a motorcade amid

tight security. Rapid Action Battalion, armed police, and intelligence agencies deployed a security blanket in the whole area to ensure security for the prominent member of Nehru-Gandhi family, the most prominent

political family in India. Talking to reporters at ZIA, Prof Yunus quoted Rahul as terming the

visit a 'learning trip'. "I was introduced to Rahul by his mother Congress President Sonia Gandhi at a function last year... He then expressed his interest in visiting Bangladesh," said Muhammad Yunus.

The 38-year-old member of Indian parliament representing Amethi constituency of Uttar Pradesh will learn first hand about different programmes of Brac including micro-finance, women's empowerment, community health, education, and legal and human rights protection in Gazipur today.

Rahul Gandhi will visit Grameen Bank programmes in Shingair of Manikganj on Sunday. The Congress general secretary will also visit Grameen Bank's head office in Mirpur of the capital on

A notice of Bangladesh Press

Information Department said

bank officials. Rahul Gandhi will leave Dhaka on Tuesday morning. In March 2004, Rahul

Monday and hold a meeting with

announced his entry into politics and won a landslide victory in Lok Sabha elections the same year, contesting from his father's former constituency of Amethi. The Nehru-Gandhi family has

been involved in various

microcredit projects in Amethi and

Rae Bareilly parliamentary constit-

groups in Amethi.

uencies of Rahul and his mother

selling at Tk 611 yesterday. Coarse-rice prices came down by Tk 30-40 per maund (37.32 kg) on the wholesale marker in the last

also dropped by Tk 20 in the last three days. The price fall, however, did not impact on the retail market as of

sharp fall on the retail market in the port city in the last one week. Wholesalers said the prices would have come down more had

Palm oil prices dropped by Tk 6-

Sonia respectively. His sister Priyanka Gandhi too has been Retail price of soya bean remained stable at Tk 116 in the same period.

At the inaugural session today, Saarc chairmanship will be handed over to Sri Lanka from India. Eight Saar leaders will

then make their country state-On the second day, Saarc leaders will go for retreat when they will seize the opportunity to discuss more on burning issues

summit talks.

that hit the region hard. The 15th summit will conclude through the issuance of the Colombo Declaration and

statement on food security. Meanwhile, capital Colombo has been tastefully decorated, with portraits of eight Saarc leaders and flags of the member

Thousands of army, commandos and special police equipped with automatic weapons spread over the entire city. Sandbag bunkers have been set up in close proximity. People's movement has been heavily restricted.

UK minister

FROM PAGE 1

emergency. Facing a volley of questions from the reporters, she said, "The government is very keen to lift the state of emergency. But they also need to

people. I think that's a very reasonable balance." Everything however would depend on the interim administration's decisions in light of the ground realities, she noted.

provide safety and security to the

Blears, who earlier wrapped up her two-day visit, said, "It is important to press the government to lift the emergency, but I would not say that a free and fair election is simply ruled out because you have got a state of emergency." She said both the chief adviser

and the adviser for home affairs have

assured her that the national election

would be held by the year-end. "I believe it's a genuine commitment towards transition to a democratic government." A member of parliament (MP) from Labour, she observed that there have to be an atmosphere appropri-

ate for all to campaign and cast their

She said her country encourages

law and their human rights are

votes fearlessly.

all sides here to engage constructively in the process of transition to democracy this year. On human rights, she said it is very important that people are treated in accordance with the rule of

Our correspondent from Sylhetadds: The British minister expressed hope for a stable democracy in Bangladesh in near future. She was addressing a gathering of

Bangladeshi expatriates in the UK

and local elites at the Sylhet Circuit

House yesterday morning. She said, "The Bangladeshi community in the UK has long been playing a laudable role in the British society. We are proud of their contribution in economy, industries and

These people, she added, are also making great contributions to making Bangladesh a prosperous coun-British High Commissioner in

Dhaka Stephan Evans and other high

various other sectors."

officials accompanied Blears in her visit to Sylhet. AL may change

polls. It is the people, not the invisible forces, who are to give their verdict in the election," AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star. He urged all 'visible and invisible' forces not to interfere in the polls, and let the people cast their votes

independently. He said the Election Commission (EC) has assured them of looking into the matter. Sources said the AL might go tough on holding of upazila poll in October if it finds proofs of 'invisible interference', and formally brought the matter to the notice of the EC on Wednesday. HM Ershad- led Jatiya

Party (JP) might also follow the AL

senior leaders would closely monitor

the elections in the four cities---

Four AL teams comprised of

Barisal, Khulna, Rajshahi and Sylhet--- and submit a comprehensive report later. The report would be made public through a press conference soon afterwards.

Edible oil

decision.

on the kitchen markets during this period. Karwan Bazar retailer Abdul Hannan said a 5-litre jerrycan of Rupchanda soya bean oil was

three days. Irri variety was selling at Tk 1170-1180 a maund yesterday, a drop from Tk 1210 three days back. The price of mid-quality BR-28 rice fell by Tk 40 per maund, now selling at Tk 1290. A maund of Parija

Our Chittagong correspondent reports: prices of palm oil marked a

not some importers increased the prices by Tk200-300 per maund.

8 per litre at retail outlets in the last one week.

promoting women's self-help