Hold talks

FROM PAGE 1 He was addressing the 13th

national conference of Bangladesh Manabadhikai Bastabayan Sangstha, a rights body, on the Supreme Court premises.

Public opinion should be mobilised for a dialogue between the two leaders, barrister Rafiq said.

"We all want a free and fair election. But it would not be acceptable to the people if the government holds the election while staying in power. So, the two top leaders must find out a system to hold an acceptable election. "The election will be

acceptable if held under a government formed through discussion between the two major parties," he added. Former BNP leader

Nazmul Huda in his keynote paper said the two top leaders must come to the discussion table. Otherwise, there would be no way to resolve the present political crisis. He said power of the

prime minister might be shifted to the Election Commission after dissolving the current parliament so that the EC can hold a free and fair election.

"The Election Commission has to be reconstituted through a consensus among the two leaders within seven days and election has to be held within 90 days of dissolving parliament," he proposed. Supreme Court Bar

Association President Zainul Abedin said there is no alternative to holding a dialogue between the government and the opposition. It is possible to avoid confrontation if the caretaker system is restored, he added.

Nayeemul Islam Khan, editor of daily Amader Orthoneeti, proposed a sitin at the Central Shahid Minar demanding a dialogue between the two top leaders.

Asaf-ud-Daula, president of Manabadhikar, presided over the conference, which was addressed by Sigma Huda, secretary general of the organisation, among others.

Quake hits

FROM PAGE 20

Sylhet, Comilla, Gazipur and Brahmanbaria around 10:55pm, said officials of meteorological department.

No casualty was reported till filing of this report at 1:00am today.

The epicentre of the quake was in Monibao of Myanmar, some 430km southeast of Dhaka.

The officials, however, could not give details.

Nepali army ordered to ditch cars to cut pollution

BBC ONLINE

Nepal's senior army officers have been ordered to ditch their cars at least once a week when coming to office - to reduce air pollution and traffic jams.

From now on, every Friday they must walk, cycle or use public transport to go to work in the capital Kathmandu.

Army chief Gen Rana set an example by riding a mountain bike from his official residence to the

office. The capital lies in a bowl-shaped valley and suffers from high levels of

dust pollution. The army move was welcomed by environmentalists, who also urged the

government and NGOs to follow the suit. Gen Rana asked all army officers - from lieutenants to generals - based within

Kathmandu vallev to refrain from using private vehicles on Fridays. He said the move would

also help promote healthy lifestyle.

A known cycleenthusiast himself, Gen Rana on Friday donned cycling gear and pedalled about 3km (two miles) from his residence to the army HQ, passing through dusty and busy roads.

The army chief - who looked quite comfortable was joined by a number of senior army officers along the way.

Referendum

FROM PAGE 20

But the opposition says the document is divisive and has accused Morsi of pushing through a text that favours his Islamist allies while ignoring the rights of Christians, who make up about 10 percent of the population, as well as women.

In another development, Egyptian Vice President Mahmud Mekki announced his resignation yesterday, reports AFP. In a statement obtained

by AFP, Mekki said he was stepping down because "political work does not suit my professional character as a judge." He said he had initially

submitted his resignation on November 7, but delayed it until now because of a series of events, including the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and a decision by President Mohamed Morsi last month to bolster his own powers. As polling opened yester-

day, a coalition of Egyptian rights groups reported a number of irregularities. They said some polling

stations had opened late, that Islamists urging a "yes" vote had illegally campaigned at some stations, and reported some voter registration irregularities, including the listing of one dead person. The first round of voting

last week resulted in a 57 percent vote in favour of the constitution, according to unofficial figures. Analysts expect another

'yes" yesterday because the vote covers rural and other areas seen as having more Islamist sympathisers. Islamists may also be able to count on many Egyptians who are simply exhausted by two years of upheaval.

If the basic law is passed, a parliamentary election will be held in about two months.

After the first round of voting, the opposition said a litany of alleged abuses meant the first stage of the referendum should be re-But the committee over-

seeing the two-stage vote said their investigations showed no major irregularities in voting on December 15, which covered about half of Egypt's 51 million voters. There was no indication

on Saturday that the alleged abuses were any worse than those claimed during the first round. "I'm voting 'no' because

Egypt can't be ruled by one faction," said Karim Nahas, 35, a stockbroker, heading to a polling station in Giza, a province included in this round of voting which covers parts of greater Cairo. At another polling sta-

tion, voters said they were more interested in ending Egypt's long period of political instability than in the Islamist aspects of the char-

Polling stations opened at 8:00am and close at 7:00pm though voting could be extended as it was last week. Queues formed at some polling stations around the country. Unofficial tallies are likely

to emerge within hours of the close, but the referendum committee may not declare an official result for the two rounds until Monday, after hearing appeals.

Even if the charter is approved, the opposition say it is a recipe for trouble since it has not received broad consensus backing from the population. They say the result may go in Morsi's favour but it will not be the result of a fair

Traffic goes

Traffic sergeants who were on duty in Farmgate said the unbearable traffic congestion in the area was caused by the mass rally of the ruling alliance in front of the Baitul Mukarram mosque.

Other areas also witnessed severe traffic jam as the party leaders and activists before and after the rally marched through them in processions.

Hundreds of leaders and activists of the Awami League and its associate bodies from different parts of the capital brought out processions with banners, festoon and placards to join the rally. And as the rally ended, they again paraded through Noor Hossain Square, Paltan intersection, the Jatiya Press Club and Matsya Bhaban up to Suhrawardy Udyan.

Commuters who shuttle between long distances suffered most as vehicular movement was suspended on roads leading to the rally venue, Paltan.

Police diverted traffic from Paltan, Gulistan, Bijoy Nagar, Zero Point [in front of GPO] and Dainik Bangla. That increased traffic pressure on the roads in their adjacent areas, resulting in

long tailbacks. Vehicles could not move on both sides of these roads during the rally and processions that continued for

more than three hours. The situation did not come back to normal even after the post-rally procession dispersed. Hundreds of people were seen waiting at Shahbagh, Banglamotor and Farmgate intersections for transports in the evening.

Many of them blamed the rally and processions for their sufferings and said such type of political programmes should have taken place outside the capital where traffic movement is less.

"I don't understand why the government is so foolish that its own party was causing sufferings to people in the name of holding rally and procession," said Rafiq, a CNG driver, who remained stuck at Shahbagh intersection for over 45 minutes.

Home-goers found the situation more painful after their long hours at offices

and work. "For not getting any were present.

transport, I came to Farmgate on foot from Gulistan. But the situation is same here -- I have been waiting for around 45 minutes at Farmgate," Reza Chowdhury, an employee of a private company, said. He was to go to Mahakhali.

Ataur, a businessman waiting at Khamarbari intersection, said most of the passenger buses kept their doors closed as those were already overloaded.

"When I tried to get into a Mirpur-bound bus forcibly the helper almost pushed me back, saying the bus was a sitting service," said Khijir Hayat, a service holder, at Khamarbari.

Traffic congestion at Banglamotor intersection was so bad that motorcyclist Milton could not find that little space he required to escape jam.

"Usually other days could manage to slide through little spaces between vehicles. But today the situation is horrific vehicles have not even left that little spaces vacant, Milton, who works in a pipe line manufacturing company, said with utter frustration.

2 deals penned FROM PAGE 1

Yingluck Shinawatra at the Prime Minister's Office here. The MoU on "Establish ment of Bilatera

Consultations" has been inked for strengthening the friendly relations between the two countries and resolving any obstacle, or misunderstanding which might arise, officials said.

The deal on agricultural cooperation is aimed at expanding cooperation in the areas of agriculture for proper utilisation of potentials and preparing joint programmes in this regard.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand Surapong Tovichakchikul signed the MoU on Establishment of Bilateral Consultations.

The MoU on agricultural cooperation was penned by Agriculture Secretary Monzur Hossain and Permanent Secretary on Agriculture of Thailand Chavalit Chookajorn.

The two prime ministers

10 hurt

FROM PAGE 20

The fire originated from an electric short circuit at Sagar Garments in Uttara around 8:25am, fire officials said.

However, factory authorities managed to douse the flames before two firefighting units reached the factory. According to locals, at least

five workers were injured

when trying to rush out of the factory located on the 8th floor of the building. Meanwhile, another fire broke out at New Age Apparels Ltd around 8:00am. Locals said around five workers sustained minor injuries in

building. Factory workers extinguished the fire by themselves, Ali Ahmed Khan, deputy director of Industrial Police told The Daily Star.

The fire started near the

an attempt to vacate the

sewing machines and destroyed around 15 T-shirts, though the cause of its origin has not been determined yet, police said. Factory authorities said

that the workers did not start to operate the machines at the time of the incident. They claimed it to be a case of sabotage though they have

not been able to accuse

anybody yet, Ali Ahmed said. The factory resumed its operations in the afternoon, he said.

Change lies FROM PAGE 1

"The country's politics could not have gone so bad if they [Hasina and Khaleda] showed respect for each other." Tariqul was addressing a

discussion organised by Rajshahi University Nationalist Ex-Students Union at the Jatiya Press Club. The BNP leader also urged

the government to fulfil their demand for restoring the caretaker government system to strengthen democracy, ensure independence of the country and save it from chaos. "We as well as the nation

will accept the results if you win the next election by holding it under a non-party neutral government," said the former minister.

He said the premier and her ministers were claiming themselves as popular. "So why are you afraid of going to the election under a neutral administration?" he said.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

As even BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] plateau, other countries, from Bangladesh to Mexico, are coming up fast and could overtake the west by 2050, he said.

"They are big. They have young and growing populations. They have invested in infrastructure and education. And they are growing at the sort of rates that make them the envy of the recessionhobbled west."

"...when growth rates for 2013 are chalked up, these are the countries that will domi-

nate the top 20," Elliot said. While some emerging countries, such as Vietnam, have been hit hard by falling western demand for their exports since the financial crisis of 2007-08, others have been sustaining strong growth rates, he wrote.

"Bangladesh and the Philippines have been helped by remittances sent home from expatriates working overseas. Mexico and Indonesia have generated strong domestic demand from their large populations.

John Hawksworth, chief economist PricewaterhouseCoopers, said, "There are countries beyond the BRICS that have quite strong long-term growth potential."

Saudi factory fire kills six workers

AFP, Riyadh

A fire broke out in a factory in eastern Saudi Arabia yesterday killing six workers, a spokesman for the Jubail industrial zone said, updating an earlier death toll of five. Civil defence teams even-

tually put out the blaze which began during routine maintenance work at an industrial waste processing plant, Abdel Rahman Abdel Kader told the official SPA news agency.

Connectivity under focus

FROM PAGE 1

with discussing and making recommendations on specific areas of cooperation with a major focus on connectivity, according to a joint statement signed yesterday on the occasion of the Thai premier's visit to Bangladesh. The two sides recognised

that the region is being increasingly used by criminals for arms, drug and human trafficking. The two leaders expressed concern about the serious challenge posed by the threats of terrorism and condemned it in all its forms and manifestations. They noted with satisfac-

tion that bilateral trade between the two countries has increased by over 65 percent in the last year (FY 2009-10 to FY 2010-11) and has crossed the \$1 billion mark. The Thai side welcomed a

proposal for extending the Memorandum of Understanding for three more years until 2016, under which Bangladesh agrees to purchase up to one million tonnes of Thai parboiled rice a year as and when required. Hasina and Shinawatra

agreed that there is potential to set up either fully owned or joint venture industries in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh prime

minister invited the Thai private sector to invest in infrastructure development, food processing and power generation sectors. Besides, the two sides

agreed to explore the possibilities of cooperation between their respective oil and gas companies in Exploration and Production (E&P) opportunities in Bangladesh. Both sides agreed to

each other's products and services. They also agreed to make efforts to reduce their trade imbalance between. The Thai Prime Minister welcomed Bangladesh's

facilitate increased trade of

two countries. plan to hold a Single Country Fair in Thailand next year.

million to 10 million times a

record holder - Justin

Bieber's music video Baby

Globalised Gangnam

It overtook the previous

One industry watcher said

the fact so many people

continued to post their own

versions of Gangnam Style

had played a huge part in the

reckons the one song will have

generated something like \$8m

[£5m] by the end of the year

from money that comes

directly from YouTube through

advertising plus download

sales, its uses in adverts and TV

programmes," Chris Cooke,

business editor of the CMU

music news site, told the BBC.

"It shows that YouTube

which is a free-to-use as a

promotional platform for the

music labels - can lead to

coastal districts had to drop

anchor mid-river and wait for

the visibility to improve. The

vessels reached their destina-

tions several hours late as they

were anchored the entire

night near Munshighat, said

Badiuzzaman Badal, senior

vice-president of

Bangladesh Inland

Waterways [passenger carri-

Many flights were delayed

due to poor visibility along

with a number of inter-city

Meteorologist SM

Mahmudul Haque of

Bangladesh Meteorological

Department told The Daily

Star that a mild cold spell had

started to sweep over several

north-western districts,

including Rajshahi, Jessore,

Ishwardi and Chuadanga,

Faridpur, Barisal, Rajbari and

its adjacent areas today, he

said, adding, "It will continue

Director Romesh Chandra

Ghosh of Shyamoli

Paribahan, a bus service

Meanwhile, Managing

The spell may expand to

since Friday night.

until Monday."

ers'] Association.

trains.

Fog, cold continue

substantial income.

FROM PAGE 20

"I've seen a statistic which

FROM PAGE 20

day on average.

on November 24.

clip's success.

and strengthen cooperation in health services and related areas, such as investment in hospitals in Bangladesh and medical tourism in Thailand. Hasina invited the Thai business leaders to develop and set up industrial estates

agreed to establish a Joint

Working Group to enhance

in the Special Economic Zones in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh side noted with appreciation the decision of the Thai side to recruit workers from Bangladesh to work in its

fisheries sector.

The two premiers underscored the need for having a bilateral institutional arrangement for effective regulation of the recruitment and employment process. It was agreed that

Thailand would provide technical assistance to conduct an in-depth study for the development of the tourism sector in Bangladesh. Thailand would actively consider investment opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industry in Bangladesh, specifically to develop ecofriendly and Buddhist circuit tourism.

They agreed to revitalise the existing Thai-Bangladesh Joint Trade Committee as a mechanism to enhance bilateral trade and investment. It was also agreed that the

next meeting of the committee will be convened in the first quarter of 2013. The Thai prime minister shared the view that Ranong Port of Thailand with

expanded capacity could be

a new gateway to accommo-

date trade expansion

between Bangladesh and Thailand. Hasina and Shinawatra agreed to deepen cultural ties through cultural exchanges in building a greater understanding between the people of the

The two sides expressed satisfaction at the ongoing Both the leaders also technical cooperation

Gangnam Style "Should every artist be "The first time I saw it was trying to think of a funny video that will go viral and be mimicked? I don't know whether it's a template that can be copied, but it certainly shows how quickly an eye-

matic channels.

thanks to social networks and YouTube." Sir Martin Sorrell - chief executive of advertising giant WPP - paid tribute to the achievement by making a link to do any of this." between Psy and one of the west's most influential econ-

"Another great example of Theodore Levitt's 'globalisation' and the power of K-pop," he told the BBC.

catching clip can spread

Scott Mills, the BBC Radio DJ who championed the song on his show, said he was amazed by the phenomenon that the song had become.

"The thing that interests you in the video is the fact that you don't understand the lyrics.

provider, said they had to

reduce the number of buses

plying intercity routes due to

Sardar Shahdat Ali of

Bangladesh Railway said

trains from Dhaka to northern

and southern districts at night

were being delayed for three

for two to three hours yester-

day morning due to the heavy

fog, said an official of

Shahjalal International

Airport, which now stays

8:00am for resurfacing the

spondent reports: Ferry ser-

vices on Mawa-Kawrakandi

route resumed around

10:00am yesterday after a

seven-hour disruption due to

SM Ashikuzzaman, assis-

tant general manager of

Bangladesh Inland Water

Transport Corporation, said

five ferries carrying more than

1,000 passengers got stranded

The ferry service came to a

the fog.

mid-river.

Our Munshiganj corre-

closed between 11:00pm and ity.

Many flights were delayed

Divisional Rail Manager

the heavy fog.

to seven hours.

on The Ellen DeGeneres Show in America and I just thought it was a bit of fun, but I didn't expect it to be as big as "Psy came into my Radio 1

show and The Guinness World Records presented him with a plaque for the most 'liked' YouTube video of al time and the amazing thing is he is just a guy, he hasn't tried D C Han, a South Korean

hair stylist who worked in Gangnam before starting a business in London, added that he was proud to see the song become such a massive

"I was amazed" he told the BBC.

"K-Pop is getting stronger and stronger, everywhere in Asia they are listening to it - China, Hong Kong, Taiwan. Maybe even in Japan but they might not admit it.'

on both banks of the river, he

Our Manikganj correspon-

dent reports: Ferry services on

Transport Corporation, said

from Friday midnight.

said.

programmes and the level of defense cooperation between the two countries.

The prime ministers

welcomed the ongoing

cooperation under various

regional bodies and

expressed their resolve to

further enhance their part-

nership and cooperation in

the context of Bimstec, ARF

the formation of the Asean

Community by 2015 as an

important step towards

greater integration and

prosperity in Southeast Asia.

would give favourable con-

sideration to Bangladesh

joining the East-West

Economic Corridor (EWEC)

The two leaders acknowl-

an early completion of the

negotiations on the

Agreement on Trade in

carefully consider each

the Council of

Administration (CA) for 2013

Shinawatra invited Sheikh

Hasina to visit Thailand at a

mutually convenient time.

Prime Minister Yingluck

The two leaders would

Goods.

(UNHRC).

-2016.

Cooperation (MGC).

The Thai side said they

The leaders supported

and ACD.

Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury yesterday hinted that the government might raise fuel prices any time to cut down on losses "We have limitations in

regard to budgetary spending on subsidies. We have to keep the subsidies within limit for our own sake," he told reporters on the sidelines of a seminar on renewable energy in the capital. If the subsidy to petro-

and Mekong-Ganga edged the important role of Bimstec in strengthening prime minister. closer ties in South and He said the government is South-East Asia. They reiterated their firm commitment

to promote closer engagement for mutual benefits of the Bimstec member coun-The premiers highlighted the prices of diesel, petrol, the importance of the octane, kerosene and fur-Bimstec FTA and urged for

> In the current fiscal year, the government plans to spend Tk 3,200 crore on subsidy in the energy sector. Power prices are also

other's candidatures for likely to be increased soon. non-permanent positions in the UN Security Council and the membership of the UN Human Rights Council The leaders thanked each other for supporting their respective candidatures to the Postal Operations Council (POC) of the

> The adviser said some power distributors face

They have applied to the Hasina accepted the commission to raise the invitation. It was agreed that tariffs at retail level, he said. the dates of the trip would be

sumers.

The power division organised the seminar on 'Identification of areas of cooperation in renewable energy between Bangladesh

President

FROM PAGE 1

cancelled his trip today. Contacted, AR Chisty, country manager of Biman's UK and Ireland office, said, "The honourable president was supposed to fly to Dhaka on BG-

booked the flight."

"But the flight has been

this effect.' He said the passengers have been urged to report

email that reads, "I am a

"How can you cancel a

the Paturia-Daulatdia route were suspended for 10 hours news. Ashraf Ullah Khan, manager (commerce) o as a passenger sent an Bangladesh Inland Water

three ferries carrying at least 60 vehicles were forced to anchor mid-river at around midnight due to poor visibil-During that time, six other ferries, with vehicles and passengers loaded, did not

mid-river, he said. Around 2,000 vehicles were in a queue overnight to cross the river, he added.

leave the pontoon fearing

they too would get stranded

Yesterday's lowest temperature was recorded at 9.2 degrees Celsius at Ishwardi of Pabna while the highest was 26.5 degrees Celsius at Kutubdia of Cox's Bazar, according to the Met Office in Dhaka.

Adviser for fuel price hike STAFF CORRESPONDENT

for selling fuel at subsidised rates.

leum fuel continues, it would not be possible for the government to allocate funds for other important sectors such as education and human development, said the energy adviser to the

incurring a loss of Tk 18 on sale of diesel per litre. "So, fuel prices have to be raised for the sake of price adjust-The government hiked

December last year.

nace oil the last time in

Some distribution companies have already submitted proposals to Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission to raise the tariff at retail level, saying they are making losses despite the fact that the regulator hiked the tariff four times in the last one Universal Postal Union and

> losses because they have miscalculated the tariffs before the last power price hike in September.

In September this year, finalised through diplothe commission increased the retail power tariff by 15 percent to Tk 5.75 per unit amid opposition from con-

> On the Phulbari coal mine project, the adviser said the government has not yet given permission to Asia Energy or GCM Resources to mine or extract coal from there, reports UNB.

and India."

006 flight at 17:45 [London

"Another 340 homebound passengers have

delayed for 24 hours due to aircraft constraint," he told The Daily Star over the telephone, adding that they have informed all the passengers about the delay. "Even we have aired advercomplete halt around 3:00am tisements on a local TV to and long tailbacks were seen

to the airport Monday.

Top Biman officials in Dhaka also confirmed the The Daily Star came to know about the reschedule

passenger flying from London to Sylhet this Sunday, December 23. The president is flying with us. The government of Bangladesh decided to cancel our flight because the president decided not to go

on Sunday."

flight just for one person while people like me booked our tickets for this holiday seven months ago? This is a disgrace for our country," said the passenger from his/her iPhone without disclosing identity.

President Zillur Rahman left Dhaka for London last week on a nine-day visit for a medical check-up.