Inflation rate 8yr high

mainly by a devastating flooding.

Since then, until October 2005, the highest inflation rate was marked

In line with a recent trend of

higher inflation in rural areas, the

point-to-point rate of inflation soared from 6.62 percent in June

2005 to as high as 8.70 percent in

November. In contrast, the rate in

urban areas was 6.14 percent in June, from which it had consistently slid to stand at 4.96 percent

In November, the inflation rate

in food items was 8.58 percent,

soaring from October's 7.42 per-

cent. On the other hand, the rate in

non-food items ebbed slightly from 7.12 percent in October to

Bangladesh Institute of

Development Studies (BIDS)

Research Director Zaid Bakht said the trend of inflation rate hike hits

the poor more severely, as "they

have little ability to adjust with the

increased prices of essentials. It's

very difficult for them to expand

their income to match the higher

commodity prices. The higher inflation rate in food items also

affects them more as they are the

Bakht said the increased gov-

ernment borrowing from the banking sector is one of the reasons

for the persistent upward flight of

inflation. "The government has no control over public expenditure

that compels it to borrow more

money from the banking sector," he remarked, adding, "Deprecia-

7.03 percent in November.

in November.

at 7.93 percent in August 2005.

Gas supplies fall sharply in Europe

AP, Vienna, Austria

Gas supplies to much of Europe fell sharply yesterday in the fallout of Moscow's pricing dispute with Ukraine while several nations urged energy-hungry industries to switch to oil and rationing began in

Serbia was worst affected, with its gas deliveries cut in half. But other nations also reported susbtantial losses of between 18 and 40 percent. Apart from Serbia, gas was flowing normally to homes and businesses thanks to stored

Despite the dispute, gas prices rose only marginally on Monday on world markets

Still, with the 25-nation European Union counting on Russia for a quarter of its natural gas needs mostly through Ukraine concern rose that a prolonged standoff could spell severe prob-

The German government urged Russia and Ukraine to compromise quickly in order to resolve their dispute over natural gas deliveries.

Russia took over the rotating presidency of the Group of Eight most wealthy nations on Sunday, with President Vladimir Putin looking to convert his country's energy wealth into political influ-

East European countries many with a record of decades of energy dependency on Moscow established during a half century of domination by the former Soviet were the most hurt

Hungary reported gas supplies down by 40 percent after Russia's OAO Gazprom cut deliveries to neighboring Ukraine, which acts as transit country for most of Russia's gas consignment to Europe. Russian gas amounts to about 80 percent of Hungary's needs.

MOL, the country's national wholesaler, said households would not be immediately threatened but joined providers in other nations in urging major industrial consumers to switch to backup oil systems. And MOL official Sandor Kantor said his company was cutting deliveries southward to Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Serbia said it was receiving 50 percent less gas than normal.

WB

maintaining a stable macro economy in Bangladesh, saying, "When you have election year, problems in politics, law and order and secu-

Saifur said, "We are projecting a growth rate of about 7 percent despite having some obstacles ... Macroeconomy here is very stable and we are continuing the reform programmes.'

On the rise of militants. minister said militancy has been contained after stern action by the government, and people are now feeling relieved.

Aleksandar Kosadinovic, deputy director of Srbija Gas, the main distributor, said hospitals, schools and other vital consumers were

company Gazprom.

Wozniak said gas deliveries at the Polish-Ukrainian border had risen to about 65 percent of the daily norm, from a low of 50 percent on

Apparently referring to fears of a complete collapse in deliveries from Russia, Economy Minister Pitor Wozniak said the country had

Russia were down by 25 percent said officials, but unseasonably warm weather eased immediate concerns.

conglomerate said that natural gas imports from Russia via Ukraine were down by a third over usual levels. Slovak state oil company official Alexander Nemudrov told Russia's Gazprom-owned NTV television on Monday that it was receiving just 60 percent of the gas it needs to export further West.

2 JMB men

FROM PAGE 16

Sheikh Arif Uddin, 30 -- before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka at 2:30pm

two are directly involved in the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts and they were caught while carrying a bomb on Saturday. Moreover, the two had the intention to blast the bomb on the December 31 night in the capital. They need to be quizzed to find out the whereabouts of the mastermind of the plot and their accom-

The two told the court they were falsely implicated in the case. They did not know each other. Arif, a student of class nine, said his uncle Sad Uddin Mahmud Kislu is a private secretary (PS) to the home

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar granted seven days remand for each.

The petition also says the commission, to discharge its functions properly and effectively under Article 94 of the Representation of the People Order 1972, may make rules through gazette notification for carrying out the purpose of the commission as laid down in the 1972 order.

its subsequent amendments for the purpose of recruiting the commission's officers and staff is a direct interference in and manipulation of the functions of the commission, which is directly in conflict with Article 118(4) of the Constitution and is ultra vires to Article 94 of the 1972 order, it says.

Order specially vests the rule making power on the commission in relation to its composition and functions, any exercise of executive power to frame unsolicited rules for the commission is ultra vires and same being unconstitutional as it violates Article 118(4) of the Constitution as it tends to usurp the control and function of the EC by making it a helpless institution,

The 1979 Rules paves the way for manipulation by the executive authority on the commission as the entire control of appointment is taken away from the commission and vested in the president and the Public Service Commission, it

The petition says by virtue of the 1979 Rules all the officers and staff of the EC Secretariat are recruited, controlled and guided by the executive authority as it is apparent when the EC secretary gazette notifications by an order of the president and not the commis-

...Hence not only the 1979 Rules and its exercise destroy the independence of the commission as enshrined in Article 118(4) but also create the scope for election engineering through manipulation on the commission's work and hence 1979 Rules is unconstitutional and any exercise of power by virtue of such rules is ultra vires

Secretariat, on the alleged plea of 1979 Rules, appointed 300 upazila/thana election officers as per the recommendation of the

being given priority. Moldova has not received

Russian gas supplies for two days, said President Vladimir Voronin saying that prices had inexplicably doubled, making it too expensive for the former Soviet republic to renew a contract with Russian

Polish Economy Minister Piotr

stocks of "seven or eight days.

40pc of voters

Mainuddin alias Uday, 21, and amid tight security.

Sub-inspector (SI) Abdullahel Baqui the investigation officer (IO) of the case sought for a 10-day remand for interrogation.

The forwarding report placed before the court by the IO said the plices, the report added.

The members of Rab-2 arrested madrasa student Uday on Saturday while he was getting into a taxicab at Moghbazar around 2:00pm with the bomb. Following leads from Uday, Rab members arrested Arif at Eastern Plaza at Hatirpool.

Public Service Commission

through a letter dated June 7 last

After hearing the petition filed

laterally decided to make a fresh

voter list although the two other

commissioners were of the opinion

preparing a fresh voter list is the

decision of the Election

commission. As per the law, all the

"So, we cannot say here that

to update the list.

Why EC Secretariat

year, treating the posts and offices as government office "which is beyond the scope of the Constitution and the law. The "arbitrary appointment" of upazila election officers in contravention of constitutional obligation is likely to have grave impact on the electoral process, it added. Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali moved for the

government and advocate Khondker Mahbubuddin Ahmed for the Election Commission while advocate Enayetur Rahim and Barrister Maniruzzaman Asad assisted Barrister Amir-Ul Islam. WRIT ON VOTER LIST The same High Court bench also ...When Article 94 of the 1972

heard the writ petition challenging the preparation of fresh voter list under a "unilateral decision" of CEC Justice MA Aziz. by Asaduzzaman Noor and Rahmat Ali, the court asked EC authorities to submit today the files regarding the voter lists of 1990, 1995 and 2000. Moving for the petitioners, Dr Kamal Hossain said the CEC uni-

EC members or majority of the members will have to take any decision [of the commission]," he But Khondker Mahbubuddin submitted that three EC members had recommended for making a fresh voter list in a meeting on August 7, 2005. "There is no restriction in making fresh voter list as per

the EC rules. Fresh voter lists were prepared earlier," he said. Barrister Amir-Ul Islam later told the press that the CEC and the Secretariat have been making the fresh voter list by the election officers who are the members of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir.

He apprehended that the voter The petition also says the EC list might be manipulated and the members of minority communities kept out of the list in the areas where Awami League has more

Rab, police mistakenly trade shots

BDNEWS, Natore

A triangular gunfight occurred among the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), police and criminals when opened fire mistakenly on Rab members engaged in a shoot-out with the criminals early yester-

However, none was injured during the fight.

The incident took place at around 3:00am when armed miscreants, with a view to committing robbery, put barricade on the Bamihal-Singra road near Dakatgari village and attacked a vehicle carrying the Rab members who were returning to Natore from the Bamihal police camp. The elite force retaliated resulting in a gun-

According to locals, both sides exchanged at least 10 rounds of bullets creating panic among the

During this gunfight, a patrol team of police coming from oppo-site direction opened fire on the Rab members mistaking them for criminals. The Rab also returned fire triggering a triangular gunfight.

However, a couple of minutes later the law enforcers realised their 'friendly fire' and chased the goons. But taking the opportunity of fighting between the police and Rab, the armed hoodlums managed to flee the scene.

After the killing of three Ansar members on December 28, a contingent of Rab was deployed at Bamihal camp to combat the outlaws and avert further attack.

No plan yet to make

But recently, the government has dismissed the possibility of bringing about any reforms in the elechas no plans for reforms.

In the last two days, enumerators enlisted about 40 percent of the would submit some reform proposals. But he has not discussed anything about his intended move for reforms at any of EC meetings, nor with the other two election commissioners though more than

list in Gouranadi, the upazila adja-cent to the CEC's village home in Locals caught a BNP activist Kawsar Hossain in the act of collectrejected outright the idea of bring-ing reforms in the electoral system, ing information about the prospec sources at the EC said.

"We don't know anything about the CEC's reform proposals, as he never discussed the issue with us," formed a vigilance committee in the

Activists of ruling BNP and its iat with financial autonomy, it would not be possible for it in student wing kept circling around future to conduct elections freely

The proposals also include introduction of electronic voting machines and electronic voter roll army deployment in the city corporation and municipality polls, and introduction of electoral enquiry committees for the local government polls.

Syed who oversaw the last parliamentary election and a large number elections to local government bodies and vacant parliamentary constituencies in his tenure, has acknowledged that he did not always get all-out cooperation from the secretariat and the government in conducting polls in last five years.

A day after assuming office, CEC MA Aziz on May 24 said he too favours an independent EC secre-

"I don't know how far the government controls or influences the Election Commission secretariat," he said, replying to a query on reported influence of the govern-ment on the EC secretariat. "But I believe it should be independent,

About reforms, Aziz said reforms are a must to make the rules up-to-date. "Reform is an ongoing process. There are no bindings that rules cannot be

ately send a set of reform proposals to the government. Those would include, among others, an independent secretariat and an increase in the election expendi-

3,000 doctors

Professor MA Hadi, the founder-president of the Saarc Medical Association, handed over the charter of the association to the

The PM informed the function that formulating a new Health Policy is at the final stages. The initiative was taken to amend the previously formulated

Health Policy to protect public interest and professional interest

Health Minister Dr Khandokar Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister Mizanur Rahman Sinha, BMA president Prof MA Hadi and its secretary general Dr AZM Zahid Hossain as well as on behalf of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) Medical Association Dr Sanjiv Malik, president of the Indian Medical Association, Dr Naifa Affet, representative of physicians of the Maldives, Dr Kiran Prasad Shrestha, general secretary of Nepal Medical Association, Dr Umar Ayub Khan, president of Pakistan Medical Association, Dr Maximumus Fernandopulle, senior council member of Sri Lanka Medical

Association, and Dr Guru Prasad Dhakal, representative of physicians of Bhutan, among others, also addressed the inaugu

ral function Three late physicians were adjudged posthumously for BMA gold medal-2005 for their outstanding performances in different disciplines of medicine. The award-recipients are Shaheed Dr Mohammad Fazle Rabbi for his contribution in medical education and health service, Dr Md Faridul Huda for his contribution in the Liberation War and Prof Sultan Ahmed Chowdhury for his contri-

Boy gives up FROM PAGE 1

evening, his parents took him to a local pharmacy where a doctor declared him dead at about

10:30pm. Police yesterday arrested the landlady as the child's father Faruq Hossain filed a case with Adabar Police Station on Sunday night. Police said they produced

Rahima before the court and sent the body to Dhaka Medical College

and Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Actimposed in 1927. The traditional festival took a new dimension and was renamed after the Garo people braced Christianity and Christian missionaries started arranging same types of

programmes Each programme costs a lot as it 2 JHALAKATI JUDGES

Murder case sent to fast trial court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A case lodged in connection with the killing of the two judges at Jhalakati by the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) suicide bomber has been transferred to the Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal (STT) at Barisal yesterday.

Acknowledging the fact, Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) of Barisal STT Advocate Majibur Rahman Nantu said the transferred case was he recent price hike in sugar. lodged under sections 3,4,5 of Explosive Substances Act by Sultan Ahmed Khan, driver of the He said the several domestic microbus carrying the judges on November 14, 2005.

Sohrab Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Jhalakati Sadar Police Station and investigation officer (IO) of the case, filed the chargesheet at Jhalakati Sadar Bakht's comments agree with what Bangladesh Bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed told The Daily Upazila magistrate court on November 30, 2005 accusing six. Star last Tuesday. He said, apart

They were: Ishtiak Hassan Mamun alias Mamun Ali alias star last luestay. He said, apart from the tight monetary policy, there are other reasons for the inflation flare-up, "which are beyond our jurisdiction and we Shihab, arrested injured suicide bomber of JMB under treatment at Barisal Medical College Hospital, Sultan Khan, arrested accomplice of Mamun under custody at Jhalakati, Abdul Awal alias Arafat and Ataur

Trial of this case would start at this tribunal tomorrow, the SPP

Another case lodged under the Homicide Act in the same incident is still under investigation.

Flash floods

police said yesterday.

Local police commissioner Teduh people had sought refuge at govern-

"Of 31 bodies, only 16 had been brought to hospital. The rest are still in the flooded areas because of transport problems," he said.

Television footage showed scores of people, some carrying babies in sarongs or leading oxen by hand, fleeing along muddy roads on foot, bicycle and motorcycle.

continuing to scour the flooded area for more victims, Tedjo said. More than 100 houses in Kemiri village in the district were swept away

Heavy rains have inundated the area since Saturday.

The state-run Antara news agency

"Many victims have not been found. Many of them may have been buried in the mud," local police chief Soejatmiarto was quoted as saying.

Severe flooding, much of it blamed on rampant deforestation and the development of natural water catchments areas, is not unusual during Indonesia's rainy season.

North Sumatra, destroying more than 450 buildings. The tragedy was blamed largely on illegal logging.

duced in 2003 to encourage the health-service providers in putting However, Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (Haab), federating

Joynagachha villages in Modhupur in Tangail are taking part in the festival. With the rhythm of musical instruments Dama, Ghram, Adury and Nagara, the indigenous people welcomed their famous deities

They also welcomed other guests, Grik A, offering prayers through traditional war dance.

Different types of food including

pumpkin, Ampeng, Thaja, Tharuri, three types of potato, Mi, Jum rice, and Gonashi, bean, will be offered to Middi , bamboo-made idol of god, through Jolana, a special dance, tonight.

dances to be performed throughout The programmes will continue

until Wednesday noon and conclude by the sacrifice of the musical instru-HAJJ CAMP ments. Meanwhile, a few hundred non-The concluding session of the festival, which is usually conducted ballottee pilgrims at the Hajj Camp in Ashkona in Uttara are still passing

times in uncertainty and anxiety as most of them do not know when their plane tickets will be confirmed.

> Many of them, including women, have been passing their days miserably along with some relatives on the camp's ground floor. They are exposed to shivering cold, mosquitoes and acute toilet crisis. The Haab president said around

for air tickets.

Nepal rebels abandon

which we extended has come to an end," the rebel leader Prachanda, or the Fierce One, said in a state-

"We want to make it clear our future actions will be targeted against the autocratic regime. We are compelled to go offensive not only for the sake of peace and democracy but for the sake of self-defence." King Gyanendra, who seized

power 11 months ago, and the army declined to match the truce called initially for three months in early September and extended by a month in December. It ended at midnight.

The Royal Nepalese Army was ambivalent about the announce-

"The army's position has not changed. Whether there is a ceasefire or not, we are acting on the government's mandate. The army will continue to do its duty," a senior army official said on condition of anonymity.

The United States embassy in Nepal said the end of the ceasefire was an unwelcome development.

"We think that it is very unhelpful and we are deeply concerned, "a spokeswoman said. The United States, India and Britain cut lethal military supplies to Nepal after the roval takeover.

More than 12,000 people have died in the so-called "people's war" waged by the Maoists since 1996 to establish a communist republic.

The end of the ceasefire will result in increased unrest and violence in the months ahead, said political scientist and retired politics professor Lok Raj Baral. "It will be back to square one,"

Baral said." Strikes, conflicts and disturbances will start again. The government will face more confrontations, with the opposition alliance and the rebels. In November the Maoists

formed a loose alliance with seven

political parties, saying they would jointly press for democracy. The parties earlier Monday had called for an extension of the ceasefire as did UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the

The rebel leader said he "respected and understood" the calls continue the ceasefire but an extension was not an option. "The Royal Nepalese Army has

European Union last week.

compelled us to end the ceasefire. It was not only impossible, but also suicidal for us to extend it further, Prachanda said. The end of the ceasefire will not signal an end to the alliance with the parties, according to the acting president of the Nepali Congress

(Democratic) party. "The end of the ceasefire will not have any effect in the understanding between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists, though we still continue to reiterate our earlier commitment to peaceful and non-violent agitation," Gopal

Man Shresthra told AFP. The parties and the Maoists have said they will boycott municipal elections called by the king on February 8. Under the king's "roadmap to democracy," the municipal elec-tions in February will be followed by national elections sometime before April 2007.

Opposition politicians have branded the roadmap a white-wash, and continue to call for a

return to multi-party democracy. The rebels and the opposition parties want to hold constituent assembly elections that would frame a new constitution and define the future role of the monarchy.

In 1990 Nepal established a constitutional monarchy that led to parliamentary rule for more than a decade before Gyanendra

Purchase

FROM PAGE 1

The cabinet committee on purchase has also approved the land development proposal under Uttara Ideal Residential Town project at a cost of Tk75 crore.

Earlier the committee declined to approve the land development project because of higher tender prices. The rejected tender proposals set Tk 247-Tk 250 for filling up per cubic metre while in the re-tender that was accepted yesterday the prices came down to Tk 157 -Tk 203 per cubic metre.

Under the project, 6,640 plots will be prepared and 40,000 flats built.

CPB, JP

that a JP procession celebrating the party's 20th anniversary led by Ershad and Rowshan Ershad tried to march towards the Baitul Mukarram and came face-to-face with a CPB rallyin front of the CPB office.

The CPB leaders and the on-duty policemen asked the JP leaders to change their route but they did not pay heed to it. At one point, the JP activists started to hurl chairs and strike the CPB activists with sticks that left several members of the CPB central committee, including CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan,

injured. Anumber of JP central committee members, including a female mem-

ber, also received minor injuries during the incident. The JP activists set fire to at least a dozen vehicles, several book shops, a mobile phone shop and a rickshaw around Paltan Crossing and Bijoy Nagar during the sporadic bursts of violence between 4:30pm and 6:30pm. They also damaged furniture and other things of Mukti Bhaban worth about Tk 50 lakh, the

first information report (FIR) alleged. The case filed by JP alleged that Manzurul Ahsan Khan and Shah Alam hit Ershad and Rowshan Ershad with iron rod and stick in an attempt to kill them. CPB president further directed his men to beat up

other JP activists, it added. One person was killed in a road accident during a clash between the JP (Ershad) and the CPB at Paltan on Sunday, leaving at least 25 activists of both the parties injured.

Cabinet body

FROM PAGE 1

Rahman told newsmen, "We have reviewed the report of the independent review panel, which was not proper. The purchase committee has rejected the report. The company that got the deal will do it for Tk 86 crore less than the nearest bidder. Why should we pay more?"

Some government officials and nower industry insiders said the cabinet committee's decision proved the PPR 2003 is 'ineffective'. This was the first review panel decision under the PPR and probably this will also be the last one, they added.

"No aggrieved bidder will ever want to file a review case by depositing Tk five lakh to the government under the PPR to see that it has no effect," one official pointed out. Another official wondered how the cabinet committee has

approved such a grossly flawed

deal. "This will one day lead to an anti-corruption case against each of the officials and businessmen involved in the power project." Designed to resist corruption in public procurement, the PPR was set to become a law last year but it was stopped at the cabinet level as all its members except Saifur Rahman resisted it. The cabinet members fear that once the PPR

turns into a law, they will not be

able to raise their 'election funds'

in the name of development projects, sources said. A number of bureaucrats involved in shady infrastructure procurement are also against the PPR, officially arguing that this regulation prioritises transparency

over procurement. Back in November, the World Bank, which was hammering on the PPR and its enactment as a law, had said it wanted to see the government abide by the first ever decision of the review panel for the

sake of transparency **GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING** OF HARBIN

Harbin's flawed bid had no technical offer although it had made a price offer of \$41 million, which the PDB termed the lowest bid.

The review panel under the Central Procurement Technical Unit of the Implementation Monitoring Êvaluation Department (IMED) found the PDB's acceptance of such a bid 50 percent of the 2,000 pilgrims at the highly irregular as the price offer camp are passing days in uncertainty was made against a "phantom technical offer and did not deserve any evaluation.

> Official sources said that during the October review of the

Chandpur tender, the threemember IMED panel headed by former law secretary Mohammad Asaduzzaman received informal calls from Harbin's business lobby. They were later put under pressure to refrain from announcing the

Amid such a situation, the panel in its verdict said, "With the given option to choose between the rules and regulations and apparent financial benefit shown in arithmetic that may be derived by accepting an irregular tender, the PPR Review panel has no hesitation in upholding the law of the land and classify the HPE offer... as

In its second deal for the 90 MW Fenchuganj plant, Harbin got exceptional treatment from the cabinet purchase committee that gave it around Tk 50 crore or 10

percent advance down payment

for implementing the project. The

Harbin is the lone exception in this regard. The business lobby behind Harbin admitted to The Daily Star they spent huge money after a section of officials, including those in the PDB and the power ministry, and also some policymakers and

native centre of power' of the government. The lobby also claimed that officials, and not policymakers, generally create all the hitches in a tender process. "As officials keep on changing posts, you pay a policymaker because he is there for

Both the Chandpur and Fenchuganj tender processes generated complaints about the PDB's bias for Harbin but no action was taken. State Minister for Power Iqbal

Hasan Mahmud at a roundtable on October 31 last had attributed the review panel's complaint about Chandpur project to the PDB's minor negligence'. At the same forum, Secretary for

Power MM Nasiruddin had asked whether it was justified to 'sacrifice' procurement in the 'name of

The Election Commission (Officers and Staff) Rules, 1979 and

the petition reads.

and without any lawful basis."

Romania's deliveries from

In Austria, the OMV energy

FROM PAGE 16 The CEC and officials at the Election Commission (EC) secretariat yesterday remained tight-lipped as usual about the ongoing weeklong process of collecting information on the voters, which began on January

ospective voters against the plan for completing at least 50 percent of the task on the first day, officials at the EC secretariat claimed. Our correspondent from Barisal reports: Enumerators reportedly did not consider the names of the opposition supporters to be on the

tive voters at Lakheraj Kosba in Gouranadi. But Kawsar denied the allegation and said he came to the area to assist his sister recruited as an enumerator for this area. Barisal unit of AL vesterday

city corporation area to monitor the paration of the voter roll. Our Chittagong Correspondent adds: Uninvited voluntary service of the ruling party activists disrupted the information collection in many places of the port city.

the field-level information collectors during the last two days of enumeration. Visits to some of the areas revealed that persons loyal to the ruling party lawmakers from Chittagong 8 and 9 constituencies were working as the supervisors of

the enumeration staff while the

ones appointed by the EC

In Dampara Bagmanirium area

appointed kept aloof.

[city corporation ward No 15], Ranjana Sen, headmistress of a local primary school, was seen collecting information at around 1:00pm while local JCD President Rezaul Karim Manik and some others were supervising the process. When asked, Manik said he was

supervising the task on the instruc-

tions of a local lawmaker of the

ruling alliance. Some JCD activists

loval to a former state minister were also present there. At Enayet Bazar at around 11:30am, JČD activist Nezam Uddin was seen dictating to schoolteacher Nepali Das how to go about her job as an EC-appointed enumerator. "I am only helping her do the job

properly," he told The Daily Star.

edly going on under supervision of local ward BNP Vice-President Abdul Motaleb and his son Didarul While visiting the area at around

2:30pm yesterday, no enumerator was found to be in the field.

Abdul Motaleb said the commis-

Information collection in

Agrabad Pathantuli area is report-

sion's staff would come at 3:00pm as from that time onwards he and his men would be able to accompany "We are overseeing the listing job to make sure none of our men is left out of the list," he told The Daily "We have already prepared a list of voters in the locality on our

own and submitted it to Khosru

ent in neighbouring Daiyapara area

However, things seemed differ-

Bhai [local MP]", he added.

where Ketan Saha, a schoolteacher, was carrying out without any inter ference the task he was assigned by Despite repeated attempts, the persons appointed by the EC to supervise the task in these areas

with the above alleged anomalies

could not be available for comment.

schools engaged in the enlisting

Meanwhile, some heads of the

process said collecting information alongside taking care of their schools have become very difficult for them. Headmistress Ranjana Sen of Bagmaniram School said, "We are usually busy at the beginning of the academic year and now with the enumeration assignment on I can

hardly make time for my school.'

the skyrocketing inflation." Until mid-December in FY06, the government's bank borrowing was Tk 4,368 crore, of which around Tk 3,500 crore came from the Bangladesh Bank. On the other

tion of taka is another reason for

hand, taka lost about 9 percent of its value against US dollar over the last one year. Besides, Bakth said, there is no open-way competitive system for mport, which has given rise to the negemony of a particular section of businessmen on import and also creates opportunity for them to manipulate the prices of imported goods. For instance, he mentioned

fuel price hikes last year have had some incremental adverse effects like inflated irrigation and transport costs that ultimately pushed up the prices of food and other

have informed the commerce ministry about these issues." The production of rice has been good, the governor said, and other consumer products have also been imported adequately. "But, for some reasons, these are not coming to the market. Perhaps they are being hoarded," he observed.

main consumers.

Moudud Ahmed last month made it clear again that the government The incumbent CEC MA Aziz has refused to pursue the reform proposals placed by his predecessor and declared that he himself

seven months have gone since the announcement. It has rather become uncertain whether he will send any reform proposal to the government at all, when the government has already

Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Alitold The Daily Star. MA Sved submitted the sixpoint reform proposal on May 21, his last workday as the CEC. Before placing the proposals to the president, he told journalists, "If the Election Commission is not wed an independent secretar

the CEC continued.

amended," he said. Later he said he would immedi-

bution in treatment and organisation. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia distributed the awards to their widows and children.

The BMA gold medal was intro-

their best efforts in service. Welcoming FROM PAGE 16

Shushmi, Tatara, Bagba and Goera. who turned up from different places. The nightlong programme includes

On the second day of the festival, the tribal people will visit their neighbouring houses and take local drink, Michik Roa/ Panthi Roa Aksharu, pumpkin, Gomenda, sweet

Ajia, Ray-Ray, and Sherjing are the names of traditional songs and the festival.

by a priest, is known as *Bisiri*. Though the festival had earlier been held regularly at every Mandi home, it was stopped gradually after the government officially stopped *Habahuchhaa* and *Jum* cultivation in 1956 under the East Pakistan Tennasi

requires several expensive things. When not an inch of land is left for Jum cultivation, it is impossible to continue all the rites and rituals, said the Mandi families in a helpless tone.

Rahman Sunny, two top-ranked arrested leaders of JMB, JMB chief Shaekh Abdur Rahman and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) chief Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla

Tedjo said 31 people had been found dead in Jember district, about 800km east of the capital, while around 700 ment buildings and schools.

Over 300 police officers, assisted by rescue workers and soldiers, were

those belonging to plantation workers nearby were also submerged, he

said hundreds of houses in four villages in Jember had been swent away by the floods after the Kaliputih river burst its banks.

More than 200 people were killed in 2003 when flash floods tore through Bahorok, a popular riverside resort in

Hajj flight FROM PAGE 1

flights and the chartered plane will be able to carry a little over 1,650 pilgrims. "Even after confirmation of the five slots, 700 to 800 intending pil-grime will miss the Hajj," Haab grims will miss the Hajj," Haab President Abdus Shakur told The Daily Star last night.

He said concerned officials are

trying hard under last moment pressure to send all the pilgrims to

Saudi Arabia. "Why such pressure

was not created two months ago?" he

body of 363 hajj agencies, on Sunday

expressed its fear that the five DC-10

questioned. Some 51,000 intending pilgrims have obtained Saudi visas. The government must send all of them by January 4 as the Saudi government seals off the special hajj ROME FLIGHT CANCELLED

Biman authorities cancelled the DC-

10 flight BG-0851 scheduled to fly to

Rome in the morning and diverted it

to Jeddah. The new flight, BG-055, was scheduled to take off at 9:20 last The sudden cancellation of the flight caused sufferings to the passengers. Biman sources said the authorities may arrange another flight BG-001 for Rome today.

Many intending pilgrims with a few hundred relatives are languishing at the camp.

as they could not confirm bookings Hajj Officer Abi Abdullah yesterday said they are asking the non-ballottee pilgrims not to panic.

Harbin bid invalid.

informal and void. The PDB had previously awarded two bids to this inexperienced company. Harbin's first venture-- 80 MW Tongi power plant --is technically flawed and it has not operated well in the last nine months.

government had restricted such down payments from 2003, and influential politicians at the 'alter-

a certain term," said one of the top lobbyists.