# Unfit launches

Department, 210 out of 312 launches plying different river routes in Dhaka region are unfit. The survey revealed that the structures of these vessels do not comply with the approved stan-

Every day about 250 to 300 launches including a large number of unfit ones depart the terminal with passengers beyond their capacities

An inquiry committee recently examined 123 launches and found 25 of them unfit and 22 almost unfit (C

The unfit launches are MV Salauddin 1, MV Israt, MV Darbar, MV Siddik Khan, MV Sattar Khan 1, MV Mahanagari, MV Maharaj, MV Matlab 1, MV Green Water Express 2, MV Jalokprovat 1, MV Running Sun, MV Shining Sun, MV Queen of Madhapara, MV Prince of Daierpara, MV Beauty of Baligaon, MV Basudia, ML Sikdar, MV Pintu, MV Machhranga, MV Tuhin 2 and 4, MV Ranadut, MV Mitali 4, MV Jalikpot, MVRaj Hangsha 5 and MV Miraj 2.

MV Siddik Khan, MV Pintu and MV Israt are out of order while the rest of the unfit launches were either already renainted or being renainted to be pressed into service in the name of 'special services'.

"Accidents may occur at any time if the weather becomes rough during a journey," said Kamrul Islam, manager of a launch named Sreenagar that operates on Dhaka-Bhola route.

Shipping Department Director General AKM Shafiqullah said three teams of officials from Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), the shipping department and the shipping ministry are working to investigate the allegations and a number of cases have already been filed against the companies putting unfit vessels on the water.

Workers at the terminal said unfit launches are being operated unabatedly due to a lack of implementation of effective punitive measures in this regard.

Many launches having faulty

designs had got registrations, route permits and fitness certificates by managing' a section of officials of the Ship Surveyor and Registrar's Office, they said.

"According to existing inland navigation rules the BIWTA approves the design of the launches. The shipping department is responsible for checking whether the launches are built as per the designs prior to issuance of route permits, said Dr Reaz Hasan Khandakar, chairman of the BIWTA.

Referring to the findings of the investigations into launch accidents, BIWTA officials said most of the mishaps had occurred because of overloading and operation of unfit launches.

The work of the probe body formed by the director general of the nipping department is going at a snail's pace encouraging a section of launch owners to operate their unfit water craft taking advantage of the lack of monitoring, sources said.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain said all-out measures have been taken to avert any accident while the magistrates, law enforcers and ministry officials are actively overseeing launch operations both at the terminals and on the river routes.

Official records showed that a total of 61 water transport accidents took place over the past five years leaving 1, 758 people dead. But unofficial sources said the death toll from the accidents during the period is much higher.

If action had been taken earlier, unfit launches carrying passengers beyond their capacity could not ply the waters ahead of the last Eid-ul-Fitr, many passengers said.

According to official sources, the Ship Surveyor and Registrar's Office, after thorough investigation, had prepared a list of 100 unfit launches and sent the list to the DG of the nipping department on October 3.

Eight thousand small and big ssenger launches are now plying different river routes across the

# Tigers blow up

In Colombo, President Mahinda Rajapakse was in talks with military commanders to discuss deteriorating security in the embattled regions, senior administration officials told

"There will be no knee-jerk reaction," a senior aide said.

But Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera, visiting Washington, told reporters, "There will come a point when the public could be provoked into action and the government may not be able to

The attack came after US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice voiced "concern over the recent upsurge in violence in northern and eastern Sri Lanka" in talks with Samaraweera in Washington

Washington plans to dispatch a senior official to the tropical Indian Ocean island soon to discuss the conflict, the State Department said

The attack raised to 115 the number of people killed since December in the latest upsurge in violence linked to the conflict between the majority Sinhalese and minority

Tamils that has claimed more than 60,000 lives since 1972. Saturday's attack was the first sinking of a high-powered naval gunboat since the truce and came 16 days after three sailors aboard a smaller naval patrol craft died in a sea

battle with rebels off the northwestern coast. Following that incident, the Tigers accused the navy of attacking

them first and maintained they acted in self-defence. However, Scandinavian truce monitors said the rebels had violated the ceasefire.

Along with peacebroker Norway,

Colombo and the Tamil Tigers who were declared a foreign terrorist organisation by the US in October

Citing the latest attack, Samaraweera appealed for international pressure on the Tamil Tigers to bring them back to the negotiating

table to end the drawn-out conflict. "They are a brutal terror machine but having said that, we must bring them (the rebels) into the mainout," Samaraweera said in Washington. stream and terrorism must be wiped

In 1995, the Tigers infiltrated the tightly-guarded naval facilities in Trincomalee and blasted two craft anchored to signal a new wave of

fighting. Tensions have been running high in the region since the killings of five

students, allegedly by government forces, Monday. Scandinavian truce monitors said

stop to avert a slide back to civil war. If the trend of violence is allowed to continue, war may not be far truce monitoring chief

Hagrup Haukland said. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has voiced concern over a flare-up of violence in Sri Lanka, and hopes Colombo and Tamil Tiger rebels will resume talks

Washington plans to dispatch a senior official to the troubled tropical Indian Ocean island soon to discuss the conflict, the department said

Rice "expressed concern over the recent upsurge in violence in north-ern and eastern Sri Lanka" during talks with visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera on Thursday, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told report-

VIP status will be extended for an

The government, however,

The VIP taxpayers will enjoy

certain privileges that include entry pass of the Bangladesh

Secretariat and invitation to state

functions and civic receptions.

They will get priority in air, rail, bus

and river transport reservations for

any business trip and their foreign

business partners and buvers will

be given priority in hotel reserva-

get priority in cabin reservations in

Family member of the VIPs will

holds the right to cancel any of the

additional two years.

VIP cards at any time.

### **UN** mission

and instability, nearly two years after President Jean-Bertrand

The peacekeepers have so far had little success in improving the security situation in the country, where elections have been post-

expires in mid-February, also includes supporting the political

On Friday, the UN Security

The election has faced repeated delays because of spikes in violence, delays in distributing 3.5 million voter identification cards and problems with polling sta-

Voting had originally been scheduled for November, then moved to December, and then delayed a third time until 8

electoral council postponed the election again, without setting a

FROM PAGE 16 Dhaka-based syndicates are controlling the entire network in different parts of the country, the

Mamun confessed to circulat

He named one Munir of Dhaka as his mentor in the business, and Jaher and Humayun as his close associates.

the other syndicates and all the criminals involved in the illegal trade," Meazi said.

# Debapriya hits

Finance Minister M Saifur

Asked to comment on the fore-cast, Debapriya asked, "When the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics cannot do the revised estimation within six months, how does the finance minister make such fore-

It is not possible for one to forecast such growth, without having a magic lamp, he quipped. "We fear this sort of speeches may leave negative impact on the GDP estima-

Revising the provisional GDP to a significant extent has now become a trend in Bangladesh's national income accounting. The latest instance of the trend was the large (0.75 percent of the GDP) upward revision in GDP growth rate estimate of FY04 which renewed the discus-

Accounts of Bangladesh, he said. Debapriya recalled that after the change of government in 2001, provisional estimate of GDP growth rate was downward (0.77 percent of GDP) from 6.04 percent to 5.27

"These days a lot of discussion is going on the GDP growth. But the way our GDP growth is structured,

The finance minister came down heavily on the economists at the board meeting of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies last

Responding to the criticism, Debapriya said, "When someone's confidence erodes, they start making personal attacks instead of concen

aged to get money from the World Bank and IMF by fulfilling their conditions, but in the process he has lost to them his independence in making policy, Debapriya observed.

Therefore, it will not be possible for him to take the right steps

### has happened," Ron Krumer told

### Sharon FROM PAGE 16

public hospitals.

Medical sources said the scan took 25 minutes and Sharon had been returned to the intensive care unit as the results were assessed.

As Israelis, no strangers to times of crisis, prayed for Sharon on the lewish Sabbath, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice cleared her diary by cancelling a trip to

Indonesia and Australia. Sharon was declared "critical but stable" on Friday night after three hours of surgery which managed to stem new haemorrhaging in his brain, his third operation

since being rushed to hospital. Just days ago, Sharon, who has een premier since early 2001, and his new centrist Kadima party had seemed a shoo-in for a general election set for March 28 but all previous calculations are now

Aristide was ousted

The mission's mandate, which

Council urged the country's interim government to hold an

But last week Haiti's provisional

## Tk 3cr fake notes

stees revealed.

ing fake notes worth Tk 12 lakh alone in the markets of Chittagong in the last 20 days.

"We are now trying to unearth

executive director of civil society think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said at a press briefing yester-

The briefing on the country's current economic situation was held

Rahman recently said the GDP growth in the current fiscal would go beyond 7 percent. yond7 percent.

sions about empirical basis, estima-tion methodology and process transparency of the National Income

the poor get little benefit from the higher GDP growth, and that's the area we should concentrate on," he pointed out.

ON CRITICISM AGAINST THE ECONOMISTS

trating on the real issue. The finance minister now seems more inclined to make personal criticism than talk about the real topics."

He added, "Who is a good economist and who a good accountant should not be judged by people of other professions.

"He appreciates when we praise, but when we don't he would grow angry and castigate us. Such distaste-ful criticism is not expected from a seasoned politician like him," he

The finance minister has man-

towards getting over the prevailing economic conditions, he said.

### Ershad's JP

FROM PAGE 16 candidate after refusal of IP nomi nation, has been made convenor of

the convention preparatory committee while Shafiul Alam Prodhan is its chief coordinator. "Ershad failed to take a political stand even at a very crucial moment for the nation. So we had

no option but to leave him," Shafiul Alam Prodhan said at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday. "Ershad does not have the ability and capacity to come out of the vicious cycle. Besides, by nominating an incompetent candidate

proved his subservience to BNP

and Jamaat. Prof Rehana Prodhan who esigned from the JP earlier, Anisur Rahman, and Kabirul Islam Kanchan were also present at the

Dinajpur by-election, he

# Commissioners

who were appointed registration

mission came to know about the court's directives, it should put off the process of information collection until it receives the certified copy of the orders.'

As the EC secretariat keeps mum about the issue, some 2, 16, 722 enumerators who began the work on January 1 remain confused about the fate of their task and remuneration.

A district election officer on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star that the enumerators have repeatedly been asking them about what might happen to their job. Some district election officers said

as of Friday the enumerators have completed collecting information of up to 85 percent of intending voters. Many fear those who could not be on the list in the first seven days may

be excluded from the roll as the super

visors are unlikely to visit their resi-

dences for scrutiny. But the EC secretariat yesterday claimed that the information collection has been going on smoothly and will continue till the end of the month.

"At the same time, the scrutiny of information by the supervisors and assistant registration officers will also continue," a press release from the

### secretariat read SECRETARIAT BEOYND EC'S CONTROL? In the wake of the HC directives, many

observed that the secretariat is in fact carrying out the directives of the CEC, not those of the EC, whereas the law suggests that any decision of the EC will have to be taken by all or the majority of the election commission-

From the beginning of the activities preparatory to the voter-listing job, which began in last August, the secretariat led by Secretary SM Zakaria has been acting on orders of

Many allege the CEC seems to have fallen under sway of the secretary and the latter is apparently trying to control the EC taking advantage of the rift between the CEC and two election commissioners over the

As CEC MA Aziz has not convened a meeting since August 5, no measure has been there to ensure the account ability of the secretariat in its work.

M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali on August 5 meeting opined that the existing voter list should be revised. The EC was supposed to sit the next day to decide on the voter list, but the CEC did not call a meeting, instead he forwarded to the other commissioners a file seeking their opinion.

The two election commissioners in the file had expressed in favour of preparing a roll in accordance with the Electoral Roll Ordinance 1982 that suggests revising the existing roll.

But the CEC did not take into account their opinion and decided unilaterally to have a fresh roll.

### Following the decision, the EC secretariat completed all preparations

including recruitment for a new roll,

ignoring the objections of the two

officers for the ongoing job. Former judge of the appellate division of the Supreme Court Justice told The Daily Star Ghulam on last Thursday, "No matter how the com-

Referring to the HC observations where it was expected that the EC members, including the CEC, will take decisions through meetings and discussions, not by exchanging notes, experts said the secretariat should have carried out the EC's decision, not

any commissioner's directives. "The secretariat is for the Election Commission. It will carry out the directives of the commission meaning a collective body comprised of the CEC and the other election commissioners," former CEC Abu Hena told The Daily Staryesterday.

Mohammad Ali said, "As the secretariat is controlled by the government, we don't know whether it will implement our directives.

cess must be stopped at first. Only then will we be able to decide the next procedure in preparing a voter list in line with the High Court's judge-He said they will request the CEC to call a meeting of the EC. "We will

He observed, "The ongoing pro-

proceed considering the changed situation if he does not convene the meeting immediately. The secretariat's role in recruiting the manpower for preparing the fresh

voter list too was somewhat dubious, said sources in the commission. Given the increasing number of voters, the EC secretariat was supposed to recruit more manpower

than that recruited in 2000. It recruited a total of 3, 41, 947 manpower to prepare the voter list in 2000 and made a list of 7.48 crore voters at the cost of Tk 95.81 crore. But this time, it has recruited 2, 78, 759 manpower despite assessment that the number of voters has increased by

Although the secretariat has recruited less manpower, it has proposed a budget of Tk 146 crore.

# Snapping cold

would remain unchanged till The lowest temperature in the country yesterday was 10.1 degrees Celsius at Chuadanga. The sun was not sighted there both yesterday

and the day before, they said. A UNB report quoting agriculture department sources said they recorded local temperature at 8 degrees Celsius in Thakurgaon yesterday.

The cod bite has multiplied

sufferings of thousands of people in the northern region, mainly the poor, who do not have warm District relief officer of Rangpur Noor Mohammed said 2,000 blan-

kets have been distributed among the poor and another 2,000 will be tributed soon. The sufferers however said this is

far from the requirement. District administation sources said the ministry concerned is yet to respond to their request for adequate warm clothes for the poor.

# 7 more Bangladeshis

died in the hotel collapse will be buried by today at Saraiya graveyard

In reply to a question, Khan said the victims were all non-ballottee pilgrims.

Victim Munajul, son of Md Mozammel Haq and Mamataj Huq, who are also in Makkah to perform the Hajj, was a guide of a section of pilgrims, says a press release issued by his brother GM Murtuza yesterday. Earlier on Friday, the Bangladesh

mission in Saudi Arabia confirmed

the death of Mohammad Shafiq, 36, a salesman at a shop in the collapsed building, of Cox<sup>†</sup>s Bazar, reports **BDNEWS** 

SURVIVORS RECOUNT HORROR Survivors of the collapse of a hostel in the holy city of Makkah recounted Friday the horror of the latest tragedy to strike the hajj as the death toll rose

to 76, reports AFP. "I heard one big noise," said Algerian pilgrim Tayeb Mizasha, 70, as he lay in bed in Makkah's King Faisal hospital with broken ribs and a bruised face. "At first I thought it was

an earthquake." He said he was staying at the Luluat Al-Kheir hostel with 16 other Algerians who had come from France. "I don't know where my wife is," said Mizasha.

Interior ministry spokesman General Mansur al-Turki said the death toll had reached 76 with another 62 people wounded and that recovery operations had now been completed. Saudi authorities have so far

 $the pilgrims \, staying \, in \, the \, hostel \, came$ from India, Libya, Pakistan or the United Arab Emirates. A Bangladeshi porter working at an adjacent hotel said he has lost six of

his compatriots.

refused to provide the nationalities of

the victims. But survivors said some of

Jordan said five of its nationals were missing, while officials in France said seven Algerians living in France were among those who died. In another hospital ward in Makkah, a Yemeni who worked in a

clothing store on the ground floor of

the building said four of his Yemeni

co-workers lost their lives.

"I just found myself across the street from the building and I looked up and it was a pile of rubble," said Ali Qasimal-Rimi, 35. "I do not know if I fled or someone pulled me out.

The English-language Arab News on Friday said Saudi authorities

confirmed three of the dead were

Emiratis.

A group of pilgrims from Egypt said they were caught in a stampede on the crowded street in the Ghazzah neighbourhood where the accident happened some 200 meters (vards) north of the Grand Mosque, the most

sacred site in Makkah. "We were walking back from noon prayers and suddenly debris started falling down on us," said Rajab al-

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims usually flock to the vast mosque o perform the five-times-a-day

"We ran for our lives and two of my friends were taken down by the crowd," added Sayed Mohammed Ali, 68, who suffered some concussions said he managed to get up but Mohammed Suleiman,

said a distraught Sulieman as he lay in bed with a broken shoulder surrounded by his weeping wife and friends. The tragedy came despite a massive deployment of security and civil defence personnel in a bid to prevent

"I was trampled on by the crowd,"

pedes and structural failures that have marred previous pilgrimages. Stampedes killed 251 pilgrims in 2003 and 1,426 in 1990. In previous years, camp fires have also sparked nfernos in pilgrim. The kingdom has also been battling deadly unrest blamed on al-Qaeda sympathisers

any repetitions of the deadly stam-

## 14-party

FROM PAGE 16

70, was not so lucky.

The combine at a meeting at the AL's Dhanmondi office said the CEC's violation of the HC order proved his evil motive behind going for the fresh voter list.

The meeting chaired by Gono

formally submitted a \$2.5 billion Forum General Secretary investment proposal for setting up Saifuddin Ahmed Manik decideď a 1,000MW power station, a steel to stage demonstrations across the country, including the capital, on January 19 demanding immediate halt to preparing the voter list and resignation of the CEC. Leaders of the 14-party said the upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) recruited on political consider-

The combine decided to hold grand rallies in Chittagong and Sylhet on January 30 and 31 and called for making them a success.

tion of the UNOs.

ations are making the voter list,

enlisting only BNP-Jamaat loyal-

ists. They also demanded resigna-

## Hajj pilgrims

angry pilgrims laid a siege to the police station for hours and staged demonstration, demanding exemplary punishment to the owners of the travel agencies concerned and return of their money.

Some of them alleged that police took an attempt to release the cheats without realisation of their money. Police, however, denied the allegation.

According to sources, the pilgrims paid the required money through the travel agent, Sweet Travels. But the 49 pilgrims could not fly as they were not given air tickets by Kazi Air International, which received money from Sweet Talking to the newsmen at

money to Kazi Air International. But, it did not provide them air tickets. Kazi Mafizur Rahman, owner of Kazi Air International, said, "We

provided tickets against the money

Motijheel Police Station, Osman

Goni, owner of Sweet Travels,

said, "We have paid the required

we got from Sweet Travels. On Friday, the angry pilgrims also staged a demonstration at Zia International Airport (ZIA) when they came to know that they would not be able to perform the holy

## Babar urges

FROM PAGE 16

them?

Institution auditorium in the city. "Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai are supposed to know well that Islam is the religion of peace. Then why do they want to label the country and the religion as terrorist by carrying out such bomb attacks?" Babar asked adding, "who are behind

He also said when the country had just started to experience an overall development and sound law and order situation, JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh) started to carry out the bomb attacks.

Urging the opposition leaders

not to give any opportunity to the

militants through controversial

comments, the minister asked them to become strongly united behind the government against the militants. Bangladesh Mosque Council Chairman Abul Kalam Azad noted that without any

patronisation, it can not be possi-

ble for the militants to build such

big network across the country. "If the 14 opposition parties can unite under a single hanner. then why not the Islamic ones?' Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Maulana Obaidul Haque said.

each mosque of the country to monitor the militant activities in Hafiz Society President Prof Ayub Ali presided over the discussion, which was also addressed by Ashraful Haque,

Ariful Islam, Shafiqul Islam and

## Ahsan Habib.

Govt, Tata FROM PAGE 16 to extend the tax holiday facility in power sector to 15 years to Tata if they agree to put their power unit

in independent power production (IPP) format. In response to Bangladesh's proposal for six years tax holiday facility for steel and fertiliser units, the Tata Group proposed to have the option to choose any suitable time as those six years out of 20

years of their entire industrial venture. India allows investors to choose

such suitable time, they said. The two sides also discussed the ways of importing capital machinery and raw materials, exports, and tax deduction from employees' earnings.

Board of Investment (BoI)

Executive Chairman Mahmudur

Rahman welcomed the Indian team at the BoI conference room where the negotiation was held. The National Board of Revenue member (Customs) ATM Sarwar

led the Bangladesh team while Tata

Son's Executive Director Arun Gandhiled the Indian team. The Bangladesh team will sit with the Negotiation Committee head and Communications Secretary Shafiqul Islam today to discuss the development of the first

The Tata team will talk with the officials of Petrobangla and energy ministry in January 22 to finalise the gas and coal price issues. Tata Group on April 20 this year

day negotiation.

mill with an annual production capacity of 4,20,000 tonnes and a fertiliser unit with one million tonne capacity. The government and the Tata Group on May 9 last year agreed to kick off formal negotiations on May 25 and wind it up by August 31 to clear the way for signing the invest-

ment contract before November

After the expiry of Tata's dateline, the industrial giant agreed to review it further.

# Uncertainty hangs

constraint" would not allow them to bid. Taisei was the contractor for Chittagong Airport.

Hyundai, the contractor for Jamuna Bridge, and China's largest contractor, China State Construction Company, have also expressed unwillingness to participate in the bid.

Both the Japanese firms complained that though the tender documents and contract seem to have been prepared as per the standard of the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (Fidic), in reality the amendments and conditions of contract contradicted the Fidic. The Kuwait Fund demands the project be implemented as per the Fidic which offers the world standard of conditions for large con-

In addition to inadequate time frame, the bidders were given incomplete information for prepa-

ration of design According to officials of the R&HD, it was not able to complete the boring of the riverbed and obtain geo-technical data until late in December last. These data were provided to the bidders after Christmas -- two weeks before the bid closing. "It is not wise to push through a design in such a short time when so much investment and engineering integrity were at stake," noted one official.

Both the project officers of the R&HD and the consultants had argued for longer bid preparation period but they were rebuked and warned of severe consequences if they entertained extension of the bid deadline. They are now apparently mum.

There are also allegations that some powerful quarters have now got involved in the project and are promoting two Chinese contractors who are going to provide "supporting" bid for each other and would eventually share the work. They have in turn agreed to make generous contribution to the

"election fund". According to sources, these contractors were given the draft tender documents two to three months before the official issuance of the RFP to all bidders and thus had extra time for bid preparation.

R&HD officials familiar with the Kuwait Fund say it is highly unlikely that the Fund will stand for such irregularity, and that the project will eventually be retendered if the R&HD does not rectify its position immediately. Under the Kuwait Fund, there were four other bridge projects for which tender was floated by the R&HD last year, and contract for only one project could be awarded. If sufficient bid preparation time was not allowed and the Fidic anomalies not corrected, this project would be among the "nonprojects", no matter what the

politicians desire. Fisheries Minister Abdullah Al Noman, who was elected to parliament from Chittagong, recently declared at a public meeting there that if construction of the Karnaphuli bridge did not start soon, he would not run for parlia-

Mirpur, Karwan Bazar and different places in Old Dhaka alleged that criminals have recently intensified

A number of traders from Old

"Top criminal in Old Dhaka,

Dhaka's Mitford, Babu Bazar, Nalgola, Imamganj and Islampur areas alleged that they have to pay

tolls to the local criminals on a regula

Pichchi Kamal, and his associates

often demand tolls which we do not

dare to refuse fearing harsh conse-

The situation in Mirpur is more

 $\hbox{``You\,will\,find\,hardly\,any\,business-} \\$ 

man in Mirpur who has not received

phone calls from the extortionists

demanding toll ahead of Eid," a leader

of a market in Mirpur said seeking

vulnerable. A business leader said

within two days of Aftab's killing,

criminals demanded toll from over

100 traders.

Imamganj requesting anonymity.

their demands of tolls.

ment membership this time.

# Muggings, extortions

Earlier on December 20, unknown criminals gunned down JCD leader Saidur Rahman over a conflict centring a quota allocated for a special ICD committee for admission to the Government Titumir College.

Besides, around 200 incidents of mugging are taking place in the city everyday on an average. However, 90 the police station, police sources said. Many people, particularly shop-pers, fall victims to mugging everyday. People living in posh areas like Gulshan and Baridhara are also not

A number of residents in Gulshan

and Baridhara recently told The Daily Star over telephone that several gangs often mug people on the Kemal Ataturk Avenue and near different shopping malls in the area. "On an idle Friday afternoon, some gangsters stopped the car of one of my colleagues accompanied by her father--a former adviser to the caretaker government--and mother, on the Kemal Ataturk Avenue and

snatched gold ornaments and mobile phones," said an NGO official residing He also proposed to form Majlish-e-Shura (committee) in A group of criminals snatched credit cards from some female university students in the same area and forced them to disclose the security numbers of the cards at gunpoint. The muggers withdrew Tk 20,000 from a

> mugged near the Almas Plaza at Gulshan-1 as I hurriedly managed to get into my car after shopping on a Friday evening," said another resident

booth, said another Gulshan resident.

"I narrowly escaped being

## None of the victims, however, filed

As a result of a drastic shortfall in foreign financing, domestic sources contributed to 90.6 percent of the overall deficit financing, while the

site with a domestic and foreign financing ratio of (-) 23:123 percent, CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattachariya emphasised a pragmatic transitional package for collecting foreign funds, without which the caretaker government will find itself in a helpless position. Coming to power the

During the comparable period of FY05, the scenario was totally oppo-

press briefing. The CPD report that analysed the economic condition of the last six months describes the fiscal deficit situation as "...a very interesting as well as a worrying story." It cautioned that such imbalance may further

tion, he told the report-launching

also going to rise significantly. "So, the government should not take any steps that spoil the development possibilities in the midterm," he suggested. The report suggests a six-channel approach to tackle the situation. They are faster disbursement of the

A good number of businessmen at the Karwan Bazar kitchen market said the demand for toll has significantly nals, we also have to pay tolls to the police on the eve of Eid," said a trader

while many others echoed him.

They are also worried about Saidul, a notorious criminal of Tejgaon, as the toll-taker was recently The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner said, "The killers are being arrested." Teams have been formed at every police

station while 60 teams of the Detective Branch are working to check such criminal activities, he added. On the top criminals' returning to

the capital, the DMP commissioner

said they have no specific report.

# A number of businessmen in Dip in aid

any complaint with the police to avoid "further complications".

rest 9.4 percent came as foreign financing during the July-October period of FY06.

the report says. caretaker government should find a reasonably strong economic situa-

flare up the inflationary pressure. Debapriya said since 2006 is the election year, public expenditure is

profect aid: collecting \$350-500 million from the international financial institutions for budgetary support; putting together energy-special foreign aid packages for targeted use; improving the forex reserve by inducing the friendly Middle Eastern countries to keep a couple of billion dollars with the Bangladesh Bank at a reasonable interest rate; the government may borrow foreign currencies from foreign banks provided that is spent justifiably; and the govern-ment may liberalise the foreign exchange regulations to attract foreign remittances, provided it is compatible with the Anti-Money

The CPD report says total budget

deficit during the July-October period of FY06 stood at 3.1 percent of GDP, compared to 2.3 percent during the corresponding period of According to the CPD report, during the July-October of FY06, deficit in the overall balance stood at

\$123 million as against a surplus of

\$490 million during the same period

of FY05. Therefore, the overall bal-

ance of payment situation has dete-

riorated significantly during the early

months of FY06

However, the report says the weakness of both fiscal balance and balance of payment during the early months of FY06 still persists. The common thread of concern for both the balances remains less than programmed inflow of foreign aid. Among the outcome variables,

other major concern for the remainder part of the current fiscal year, the CPD observes. "The key to the current problematic macroeconomic situation is held by the level and nature of the net foreign financing Bangladesh would

relatively high inflation rate is the

receive in the next 3-4 months.' The report suggests that the government needs to revise its budgetary and PRSP targets at the earliest to evolve a pragmatic package. "The policy autonomy enjoyed by the government remains heavily constrained as the economy is pre-designed to function under adjustment loan of the international financial institutions. Nonetheless, this package has to lav a stable and secure foundation for the transitional government which is expected to take charge in the early part of FY07, the report said.

Thereportwas prepared by a CPD team led by Debapriya Bhattachariya. Prof Mustafizur Rahman, Úttam Kumar Dev, Fahmida Khatun and Khandakar Golam Moazzem are the other members of the team.

# Washington is also pushing for a resumption of peace talks between 60 highest tax-payers

Chowdhury, Hosne Ara Hossain, Laila Hossain, M Ekramul Karim, Ful Mohammad, Mohammad Ekram, Asaduzzaman, Anjan

Akhter Hossain Ltd, Akij Bidi Factory Ltd, DHL Operation BD Amsterdam, Mark Logistic Bangladesh Ltd, Coats Bangladesh Ltd, Amu Tea Co Ltd, Al Amin Construction Co Ltd, Majumder Traders Ltd, Bombay Sweets & Co Ltd and Jomac Ltd.

The public limited companies

given VIP status are Uttara Bank Ltd, Pubali Bank Ltd, Prime Bank

Ltd, Eastern Bank Ltd, South East Bank Ltd, Mercantile Bank Ltd, BASIC Bank Ltd, Dhaka Bank Ltd,

National Bank Ltd, Square

Pharmaceutical Ltd, Social Investment Bank Ltd, Exim Bank

# last month the violence needed to

## to reinforce their fragile truce, the State Department said.

Mian Bharasha, Md Fazlul Salam, Sanjib Shashir Mehta, Dr MM Amzad Hossain, Mohammad Yusuf, Rubaiyat Farzana Hossain, Khwaja Tajmahal, MA Haider Hossain, Khandakar Ohiduzzaman, Iqbal Haider

Chowdhury, Tapan Chowdhury, Samuel S Chowdhury and Sanjit

Kumar Saha. The private limited companies that have been selected by the NBR are Standard Chartered Bank Ltd, GrameenPhone Ltd, American Life Insurance Company Ltd, Credit Express Bank Ltd, British American Tobacco (BD) Ltd, Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, Berger Paints Bangladesh Ltd, BASF Bangladesh Ltd, Drug International Ltd, Mir

Ltd, Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd, Bata Shoe Co Ltd and One Bank Ltd. The VIP cards to be issued by the NBR will remain valid for one year. However, if any of the VIPs increase their tax payments by 15 percent or more in the next fiscal year, their