The Baily Star

NEWS

Ershad freed

FROM PAGE 1 Islam, both now leading a JP fac-

tion. The BNP also offered the JP faction to join its alliance, sources said.

The court said, "It further appears that though accused HM Ershad is not FIR named, the supplementary charge sheet submitted long after 12 years from the date of the first charge sheet, has implicated accused HM Ershad as one of the accused though there are no such materials against him. At the same time, it appears that the alleged charge against him is aroundless.

"Thus the discharge petition filed by accused HM Ershad is allowed and accordingly he is discharged," Special Judge Malik Abdullah Al-Amin said in his order of one case.

The court discharged Ershad in the other case also observing that no materials were found for framing charges against him.

Terming the cases "false" and "fabricated", a cheerful Ershad in his instant reaction told reporters, "I am getting justice. Justice will prevail and I will be acquitted in all the cases if the trials are conducted neutrally."

Ershad ruled the country for nine years before being overthrown in a mass movement in December 1990

Following the court order, JP leaders and activists burst out in joy on the court premises.

Manju, chairman of a JP faction and an accused in one of the cases, was present at the court. He said he also should have been discharged from the case since Ershad was discharged. "However, the court will decide its next course of action," he told reporters

The counsel of Manju claimed that the same court discharged former post and telecommunica-1996 tions minister Kazi Firoz Rashid in another case observing that a minister does not have sole jurisdiction to run his ministry in a presidential form of government

The case alleged that the then president Ershad awarded the contract to Scimitar misusing power. 'So, my client who was a mere minister at that time should also be discharged from the case," the counsel told reporters.

Special Public Prosecutor (PP) of the two graft cases Fazlur Rahman Khan said he will decide whether to file an appeal against the court order after receiving the certified copy of the order.

The PP, a member of the BNP lawyers' platform Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, has not yet decided anything about filing an appeal against Ershad's acquittal in the graft case for withdrawing income tax money.

"I have gone through the copy of the judgment and now I am waiting for the certified copy of the verdict,' he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, analysing the present political situation, many political oservers said Ershad's acquittal and discharge from graft cases is paving the way for his joining the four-party alliance as the ruling BNP has started to meet Ershad's condition for withdrawal of the cases against him.

proved that BNP's desperate move to bring Ershad in its electoral lawvers said. Sammilito Ainjibi Samonnoy alliance ahead of the next parlia-

cess, they said. On Jamaat's objection against Ershad's inclusion in the coalition, they said Jamaat will lose importance in the alliance once the JP is included

7.25 per cent of total votes in the October 2001 election while Jamaat bagged only 4.28 per cent with support of the BNP

The cases stuck for a long time have gained speed for disposal soon after the BNP initiated the moves for strengthening its electoral alliance by bringing Ershad, who could not contest the 2001 parliamentary election for conviction in a graft case. OTHER CASES AGAINST ERSHAD

na lower court verdicts

Sessions Judge's Court on August 27 will deliver its verdict in a case against Ershad concerning allotment of plots to 49 persons during his presidency. Hearing on a case for smuggling

gold will also be held at this court the same day. Ershad, who had been in jail for

ing it to form the government in

THE TWO CASES

The caretaker government led by other on January 16, 1992.

The cases remained stuck for a long time until the present BNP-led alliance government initiated moves to press charges in the cases. Directed by the government, the investigation officers (IO) of both the cases pressed charges in 2003. The first case filed with the

Tejgaon Police Station alleged that the then president Ershad and exchequer.

Ershad and Manju on May 2, 2003. and a businessman in collusion with

FROM PAGE 1 superseding three senior judges of the High Court Division, the SCBA

senior judges.

In

Justice Joynul

criticised the appointment of Justice

Joynul Abedin superseding three

signed by President lajuddin Ahmed

personnel would be deployed along

with the regular law enforcement

agencies members during the

started preparations for holding the

next general elections scheduled for

election commissioners asking

them to send reports on the status of

the establishments that were used

as polling stations in the last parlia-

mentary elections," the secretary

stations will have to be set up as the

number of voters has increased in

commissioners to identify the estab-

lishments acceptable to all for use

done as part of the preparation for

conducting the next parliamentary

the election laws and policy on

election observers, meeting with the

political parties, preparing budget

The checklist included reforms in

as polling stations." he added

"We also directed the deputy

The secretariat has prepared a

He said the secretariat has

"We have sent letters to deputy

elections. he said.

January next year.

the last five years.

elections.

and India.

for the next polls

said.

the appointment that was

Parishad vesterday noon held a mentary election is achieving suchuman-chain on the premises of SC Bar building protesting the confirmation of two HC judges without the recommendation of the chief justice. The speakers in the programme

The JP-Ershad alone bagged

after consultation with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Justice M Joynul Abedin superseded senior judges Syed Amirul Islam, MD Hassan Ameen and AK Badrul Huq. Earlier, Justice Sved Amirul Islam was superseded four times.

Law and order FROM PAGE 1 the reporters in his office. Like the previous elections, army

Of the cases filed against the deposed president, the verdict in one case is ready for delivery while 11 cases are under trial, two are under investigation and two are pending with the High Court follow-

The First Additional Metropolitan

five years during the tenure of the previous BNP government, was released on bail in cases one after another on political understanding with the Awami League for support-

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed filed one of the graft cases against Ershad on February 19, 1991, while the then BNP government filed the

Indo-Bangla team FROM PAGE 1 About the longstanding issues that frequently cause unpleasant situation along the border between the

two close door neighbours, the Indian home secretary said: "Desire should be there to take a few steps forward in resolving the issues." He, however, said some steps

Manju awarded a contract to the Scimitar Oils for drilling and exploring the outstanding problems. The Joint Boundary Working Group will ing 1,650 square kilometres of area be visiting the enclaves and lands in in Haripur oil field in 1987 causing a adverse possession in Bangladesh huge loss of \$79,000 to the public

The IO pressed charges against The other case alleged that Ershad, former education minister Shahidul, two high officials of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation

friend. Terrorists have no nationality. Duggal also made a courtesy call on State Minister for Home Affairs

arms and explosives, and providing

consular access to detainees. Both

countries also exchanged lists of top

Shibir's death threat

the eminent litterateur 'Nastik and

unwelcome on the campus and

ated apparently after two local pro-

Jamaat newspapers, daily Natun

Probhat and Naya Diganta, ran

reports on the speech Prof Hasan

gave at the August 21 seminar and

they distributed copies of the news-

papers among the students during

Prof Hasan said his speeches were

"Fabrication of my speeches and

consecutive agitation by Shibir are

clear indications of a dangerous

cultural organisations including

Progressive Teachers Society

Bangladesh Chhatra League

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front,

Chhatra Union, RU Drama

Association, Sammilito Sangskritik

Jote, Anushilon Drama Group,

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote and

Udichi strongly condemned the

general secretaries of Rucsu

(Raishahi University Central

Students Union) in a joint statement

scenario in the national politics.

Munnah, Zahangir Kabir Rana, and

Shamsul Haque Tuku.

Six former vice presidents and

threat by Shibir.

among other Shibir activists.

concocted by the newspapers.

Speaking with The Daily Star,

The Shibir activists were infuri-

have already been taken for resolv-

On terrorism, he said both the

countries should have the resolve to

iointly as "terrorism is nobody's

Trafficked abroad

FROM PAGE 1 with emotion, the father and daughter

hugged each other. I am the happiest man in the world now. My heart was in flames for so many years and it is now over," Matiur said at the NGO office on Wednesday.

Equally moved, Rina said, "It is really strange and great. Visiting my country and finding out my parents has been a dream for me since I came to learn that I was from Bangladesh."

Matiur. Rina and her husband Danish went to Hotline office before the couple left the country yesterday.

Rina told The Daily Star. "I do not know the background of my migration to the Netherlands. I also do not know when and how my foster parents in that country adopted me as their daughter. I got all love and affection from them. The love and affection that my father here in Bangladesh has for me is also above anything else."

She went on, "I would like to visit my father here whenever possible and look after his wellbeing.'

At one stage, such a reunion between the father and daughter had almost become impossible as there was no response even after Rina and Danish held a press conference in early August in Faridpur, seeking the address of her father.

Following a report in a Dhaka daily, Matiur, now an employee of Birdem Hospital in the city, rushed to the daily's office that sent him to Rosaline D Costa of Hotline. D Costa then contacted Rina to make the reunion

Besides, a number of new polling possible at her office. Matiur, who hails from Faridpur, was a rickshawpuller in Old Dhaka before independence. In 1972, he got a government-allotted room in Tongi. He along with his first wife Hasina daughters Nilu and Laily and a son lived there. Later, he got separated checklist of tasks that need to be from Hasina and married Halima, who gave birth to Rina in 1979.

Recalling the past, Matiur said some local employees of the Netherlands-based organisation Tere Des Homes had lured him into keeping his daughters in the Homes for proper care and education. And he could also visit them frequently. "They also took my signature on some stamps, saying that it was a contract for educating my children."

Following the lucrative offer, poor Matiur sent Nilu and Laily to the Home in Tongi, which virtually was a shelter for children of the women dishonoured by the occupation forces during the Liberation War.

A few months later, Matiur went to see his daughters but did not find them there. He said, "I heard that my daugh-

No medal

FROM PAGE 1

control terrorism with all mite and Meanwhile, the athletics competition began at the Sugathadasa Stadium in front of a full house and the first gold medal went to India's S Shanthi who won the women's

FROM PAGE 20 times, said Hasina, who is also the AL president. ters were sold." All his efforts to find Addressing the prime minister, she

Hasina

attacks.

said, "You are successful in your

development roadmap as you have

made development for your family by

looting public property worth thou-

sands of crore taka by hiking up price

criminals, the government is patronis-

ing them, Hasina said, adding that the

government is also patronising the

killers of Bangabandhu and those who

wanted to kill her (Hasina) by grenade

BNP-Jamaat government has politi-

cised the medical profession and

appointed party activists as doctors

overthrowing the meritorious ones and

for this the people are deprived of

18,000 projects of constructing com-

munity clinics, which were taken

to remain alert so that the BNP-

Jamaat alliance cannot steal votes in

The government cancelled all the

The AL president urged the people

SCP President Prof AFM Ruhul

Haque chaired the discussion while

barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, Dr

Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, SCP

General Secretary Iqbal Arsenal,

Yafes Osman, Dr Ataur Rahman, Dr

Abul Kashem, Dr Nurul Islam, Dr Abul

Kalam, Dr Sheikh Baharul Alam, Dr

Ehteshamul Haque. Dr Ali Azgar

Morol, Dr Tabibur Rahman Sheikh and

Dr Mohsin-UI-Chowdhury also spoke

4 customs men

As the four officials walked past the

main gate, the police constables on

duty there challenged them. Failing to

get that they were in fact entering IGP's

house, the officials locked in an alter-

cation with the policemen, added the

they had made a mistake, our officials

apologised to the IGP's wife who by

that time came down to the first floor

corridor." said a customs official

seeking anonymity. After checking their identity cards,

the IGP's wife asked them to give an

undertaking when Uttara police

reached the scene and arrested them,

regret for the incident. Still police filed a

case against the four for creating

obstacles to state activities and trying

officials were paraded before a private

TV channel camera at the Uttara

Police Station. At that time, ropes were

tied around their waists. The TV

channel telecast the footage through-

NBR sources said the incident has

"Our officer-in-charge released

them upon a bond from a top customs

official that the accused will be present

at court during hearing of the case,"

said a duty officer of the police station.

Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed were not

National University Vice-

"Fazil and Kamil of Alia madrasa

education will have to follow the

syllabi, textbooks and conditions for

teachers' appointment set by the

National University. Fazil will be a

three-year course like the gradua-

The National University will

approve madrasas that will abide by

tion degree (pass)," he said.

the conditions, he added.

present at yesterday's meeting.

Fazil, Kamil

FROM PAGE 1

caused a huge resentment among

customs officials and employees

out the day yesterday.

to break into the house of the IGP.

"Later when they understood that

FROM PAGE 20

customs sources.

he said

IGP

proper medical treatment.

during the AL tenure. she said.

the upcoming elections.

The former prime minister said the

Instead of taking action against the

of essentials through a syndicate.'

them out failed and his complaints against Home staff went ignored. Later, some goons kidnapped Matiur and took him to Dhanmondi in the capital but he managed to escape.

He then filed a case against the Home staff for masterminding his abduction but his first wife Hasina sided with the abductors. "Hasina asked me to leave the place, saying that otherwise the Home staff would endanger his life. Halima and I then left the area, keeping Rina with Hasina," Matiur said.

It was sometime in 1980 when Matiur went to Tongi to see Hasina and Rina but found none of them. Locals told him that Hasina, in connivance with Tere Des Homes officials, sold Rina. Matiur said like a mad he then

started moving here and there to trace his daughters and lost contact also with his second wife Halima. "I did not know what had happened with the case I filed, but I just wanted to see my daughters. I went to offices of many NGOs and newspapers seeking their help.'

He went on, "Allah has finally heard my prayers."

Matiur bought a saree for Rina and a lungi and fotua for his son-in-law, Danish. Wearing the local dress, they posed for a photo session with him on the premises of Hotline office. The feeling is strange, marvellous.

It is above everything," Rina said. Matiur said he has come to know

that his eldest daughter Nilu is also in the Netherlands Rina said she would try to find out

her sister." Life is really more cinematic than cinema." she added PM inaugurates

FROM PAGE 20 Sadharan Bima Managing Director Humayun Kabir briefed the prime minister about the project.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated the 448-bed United Hospital Limited at Gulshan-2 in the citv

This is one of the biggest hospitals in private sector in the country, jointly built by the United Group of Bangladesh and KPJ Health Care Berhad of Malavsia.

The prime minister went round the different sections of the hospitals

Information Minister M Shamsul Islam, Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mizanur Rahman Sinha and State Minister for Shipping Kamrul Islam were present.

Lakmali (women's javelin throw) and Wayne Pepin (long jump). Bangladesh long jumper Al Amin

across the country. was fifth with a best leap of 7.14m. Meanwhile, the four officials were India dominated the Games released upon a bond from a top table with a haul of 80 gold, 43 silver customs official vesterday

Nat'l minimum wage

organisations, where it was men-

tioned that the minimum national

wage would be implemented within

four months, but it is yet to be exe-

Unnayan Onneshan, while present-

ing the research paper on 'Living

Wage for Working People: Reality

chairman of BILS, presided over the

roundtable where Dhaka University

professors Iqbal Ahmed and

Nasreen Khandakar, labour leaders

Shirin Akhter, Dr Wajedul Islam

Khan, BILS Secretary General

Nazrul Islam Khan, SUPRO

Executive Director Rezaul Karim

Chowdhury, Nari Uddog Kendra

Executive Director Mashuda

Khatun Shefali and many others

the UN nuclear watchdog -- not the

Security Council -- at the centre of the

Middle East, Sun Bigan, said Beijing

sought a "peaceful settlement rather

than resorting to force or threaten-

mishes. Discussion about demarca-

enclaves and territories in adverse

possession, smuggling of drugs and

narcotics and trafficking of women

and children are among other

the Bangladesh delegation will

emphasise implementation of Land

Border Agreement of 1974 and two

MoUs on stopping smuggling of

drugs and narcotics and trafficking

of women and children which the

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia signed

Duggal also made a courtesy call

Baba

during her March 20-22 India visit.

During the closed-door meeting

issues on the agenda.

German Chancellor Angela

China's special envoy to the

Ashraf Hossain MP, acting

and What to Do'.

took part.

process

ing sanctions"

"Proposed national minimum

FROM PAGE 1

titled 'National Minimum Wage: Poverty Reduction and Social Justice' at CIRDAP auditorium in the

cuted, lamented Hasan. "It was not possible to declare the national minimum wage sooner wage was declared on July 08, 2001 due to political interruption, bureauwhere minimum wage for small cratic tangle and absence of effifactories was fixed at Tk 1200, ciency in the administration." medium factories at Tk 1250 and Shujauddin, the chief guest at the large industries at Tk 1350," said roundtable, explained. Jakir Hossain, member secretary of

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) organised the roundtable where trade union leaders, representatives from human rights organisations, NGOs, professional groups and research

organisations participated. Zafrul Hasan, member of Minimum Wage Board (MWB) and general secretary of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, said MWB now covers only 70,000 workers of 38 sectors, which is less than 25 per cent of the total workers in the country.

The government signed an agreement on January 8, 2004 with Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop), a platform of workers'

Iran heads

FROM PAGE 20 uranium enrichment programme or face sanctions.

The US State Department said Washington was still consulting with fellow Security Council members after Tehran said it was ready for talks but declined to announce a but they ended up trying to enter house moratorium on enrichment. No 40, which is the residence of the

"We acknowledge that Iran considers its response as a serious offer, and we will review it," spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos said.

short of the conditions set by the Security Council, which require the full and verifiable suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities," he said.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said Tuesday Tehran was ready for "serious talks" but no details were made public of its response to a package of trade, technology and security incentives offered by the five permanent Security Council members plus Germany. tion of 6.5-km border, transfer of

High officials including the NBR The United States and other chairman the same day expressed powers suspect the nuclear programme is a smokescreen for an attempt to produce a bomb. Enrichment can make fuel for Besides, at around 2:30am. the nuclear power stations or be extended to create the core of

atomic weapons However, Iran, the world's fourthlargest oil producer, insists it is purely for peaceful power generation and that it has the right to the technology as a signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

Iran might accept a short-term

suspension, "Nothing has changed,

We will continue our research

activities, but we want understand-

been flexing its military might during

nationwide war games it says are

aimed at demonstrating it can

said it would continue to press for a

political solution and wanted to keep

Dialogue decries

making no effort to look into the

issue of extra-judicial killings since it

is not independent, and it rather

cares for what the government

The parliament also does not

have any accountability, he said,

adding that the ruling class is

becoming more powerful day by day

madrasas, the eminent educationist

said by doing this, the government is

pushing back the education system

Dhaka University Professor CR

Abrar said it is a matter of grave

concern that a section of people

He regretted that Leader of the

Other speakers included

Opposition Sheikh Hasina also

assured that Rab would be contin-

Communist Party of Bangladesh

(CPB) leader Ruhin Hossain Prince,

Advocate Abdus Salam, Advocate

Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury, Abdul

Mannan, Saiful Islam and Zunaid

Saki. SROK Coordinator Enamul

Hague moderated the dialogue.

ued if her party comes to power.

On recognition of Kawmi

and is violating civil rights.

tion of rights is hard to stop.'

think such killings are usual

FROM PAGE 20

instructs.

in the country.

The Islamic republic has also

react accordingly.

ing and dialogue.'

respond to "any threat."

would depend on a freeze.

Philippe Douste-Blazy said.

on State Minister for Home Affairs Government spokesman Lutfozzaman Babar. Gholamhossein Elham said Tehran expressed his hope that the home waiting for a logical and iust reaction from the major powers (but) we are ready to face any situation.

Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the issue by telephone Wednesday while Bush and US Secretary of State "The response, however, falls Condoleezza Rice spoke by telephone with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who was expected to

travel to Tehran next week Home secys FROM PAGE 1

agenda," the Bangladesh home secretary told reporters after the Indian delegation met him at his office ahead of the talks He said Bangladesh will clear its position on recent border skir-

The acquittal of Ershad has

BNP discusses

FROM PAGE 1

grassroots leaders pointed out the government's failures to check price spiral of essentials in a number of meetings last year.

"We want to discuss our election strategy and how we can strengthen our party's activities with our fieldlevel leaders," a senior leader of the party told The Daily Star yesterday after a meeting with BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

"Leaders and activists will be allowed to discuss our election manifesto and matters related to it " he said adding that it will be helpful for the election preparations of BNP. Sources said BNP national standing committee would discuss its field-level leaders' opinions later on. They said the standing committee would also discuss and decide after its key ally Jamaat-e-Islami's Majlish-e-Shura has decided on JP's joining the alliance.

Meanwhile, around 450 leaders and activists of BNP will attend the executive committee meeting at Prodhanmontri Bhaban in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will preside over the meeting.

Party sources said following directives of the standing committee meet earlier; leaders have taken initiative to resolve internal feuds in the party. Whip Ashraf Hossain, who did not attend the last few party meetings and criticised party's senior joint secretary general's role in the party, attended the meeting with party secretary general at his official residence on Mintoo Road yesterday.

AL objects FROM PAGE 20 combine, added

Jalil issued the statement following misappropriation of financial aids of Danida, an international aid organisation, by six NGOs that monitored the union parishad elections.

others bought two ships from Lutfozzaman Babar and met Home Pakistan by forging documents, Secretary Safar Rai Hossain. which caused a loss of Tk 2,95,698,000.

on August 27, 2003.

The IO pressed charges against Ershad, Shahidul and three others

The meeting also decided to observe BNP's 28th founding anni-FROM PAGE 1 threat in a rally where they branded

criminals.

burnt his effigy.

the rally

plot".

versary. To observe the founding anniversary on September 1 the party announced a three-day programme which includes placing wreaths at the Mazar of the late president Ziaur Rahman, photograph exhibition, discussion, cultural programme and a mass rally on September 3.

BNP will also organise similar programmes at the division, district and upazila levels. Minister for Housing and Public

Works Mirza Abbas. State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman. State Minister for Forest and Environment Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, Ghoyeswar, Chandra Roy, Mofikul Hasan Tripti, Abdus Salam, Barkatullah Bulu and Moazzem Hossain Alal also attended the joint meeting.

Nepalese

FROM PAGE 20 The exercise was expected to take 15 days but dragged as the parties and Maoists failed to agree on the monarchv's future.

The rebels want an end to the monarchy written into the interim constitution. The Nepali Congress Party, the country's largest, wants the monarchy's future to be decided in planned constitutional assembly elections to a body that will redraft the constitution permanently. Gyawali said the government

was optimistic outstanding issues could be resolved. "The government and the

Maoists will hold talks to settle all the political issues and as the ongoing peace process is heading towards a positive direction, I'm hopeful we'll reach a concrete conclusion soon.' he told AFP.

The rebels whose insurgency has claimed at least 12,500 lives and government have been observing a ceasefire for the last four months.

1500m

Sri Lanka's track darling Susanthika Jayasinghe regained The last home secretary-level her Games 200m crown after 11 talks were held in New Delhi on years but the Olympics bronze October 27-28 last year. The meetmedalist in this event at Sydney ing agreed on coordinated efforts to 2000 failed to break the old record. stop smugaling of drugs, illegal

Susanthika faced very little competition from rest of the pack to win Sri Lanka's first gold in athletics but she failed to break the old Games record, finishing in 22.99s. Bangladesh contestant Nazmunnahar Beauty finished sixth in 25.09s.

In the evening's final event, Rohan Pradeep Kumara of Sri Lanka retained the men's 200m gold enemy of Islam', declared him in 21.14s. Bangladesh sprinter Masdul Karim, who qualified for the finals despite a finger injury, finished seventh in 22,39s

Muhammad Ayub won the pole vault gold for Pakistan breaking his countryman Mohammad Urfiq's Games record in 1989 while the remaining gold medals went to Indian athletes Hamza Chatholi (men's 1500m), Surinder Singh (men's 10,000m), Saroj Sihag (women's shot put), Nadeeka

21 to die for killing

The Shibir rally was convened by FROM PAGE 1

Bablu, Akbar, Ashraf alias Rana. Zulfikar Naveem while Mahbubur Rahman, Mokhlesur Rahman, Abul Abdul Jalil alias Shimul, Farmajul, Alim and Nomani spoke at the rally Ataur Rahman alias Mobarak Rahidul alias Rony, Abul Hossain Different teachers, students and and Shahjahan Ali.

Of them, Rana, Farmajul, Mobarak, Roni and Abul now in custody, were produced before the court during the delivery of the judgement while remaining 16 were given punishment in their absence. Thirteen convicts are of a joint family.

The punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender and they can appeal to the High Court against the judgement within 30 days from the day of receipt of the judgment, the judge said.

also condemned the threat and said Victim's parents Rafiqul Islam Shibir has plans to create commu-Talukder and Jahanara Begum and nal tension following a changed his paternal uncle Advocate Ruhul Amin Talukder Tagar were present The Rucsu leaders that signed in the court during the delivery of the the statement are Fazle Hossain verdict and expressed their satisfac-Badsha, Nurul Islam Thandu, Ruhul tion over the sentences. Kuddus Babu, Ragib Ahsan

Advocate Monzur Alam, who represented the five convicts in custody, told the reporters the victim

and 26 bronze medals, followed by Pakistan (22-25-41). Sri Lanka (20-43-47). Nepal (5-5-18), Bangladesh (1-10-21), Afghanistan (0-2-8), Bhutan (0-0-4).

VAT on mobile FROM PAGE 20

SIM/RUIM cards and new cellphone connections arbitrarily, which is illegal and capricious.

The counsel for NBR contended Chancellor Prof Wakil Ahmed, who that the SIM card is a service, not a was present at the meeting, said commodity. But the petitioner difequal status will be given to Fazil fered saving that the phone calls and Kamil degrees to reduce differand the SMS are services, but not ence between the general and the SIM cards. madrasa education systems.

The court in its order said the NBR did not deny the petitioner's allegation that imposition of the tariff was not in line with the international market price. They [NBR] also could not explain the basis of first setting the tariff at Tk 2,172 and later slashing it by Tk 544

Advocate Md Asaduzzaman, barrister Syed Afzal Hassan Uddin and barrister Anita Rahman moved for the petitioner while barrister Abdur Razzak stood for the NBR and advocate Mahmudul Islam for Sheba Telecom.

FROM PAGE 20 was killed by a group of Purba elections with participation of all, Butenis told the press.

Her government supports 'friendly countries' in the process of holding a free and fair election, she

said. The diplomat expressed concern over the recent fire incident at the former president's house and failure in finding a clue to the incident, said Badruddoza Chowdhury.

"Free and fair election is not possible without reforming the caretaker government system and Election Commission, particularly under the present chief election commissioner and two other commissioners." the BDB chief told the press.

The BDB will not participate in the forthcoming elections without reforms, he added.

BDB Secretary General Major (rtd) Abdul Mannan. Vice-president Maj Gen (Rtd) MA Halim, Joint Secretary General Firoz M Hassan, Mahi B Chowdhury MP and Prof Nurul Amin Bepari were also present at the meeting.

secretary-level meeting would be productive The delegation will visit "If there is no international (nego-Sundarbans today and resume the tiating) partner or a climate favour-

meeting at 11:00am tomorrow to able to fair negotiations, we will finalise agreed summary of the talks. Elham declined to say whether

They will formally reveal outcome of the meeting at a press conference on Sunday

The last home secretary-level talks were held in New Delhi on October 27-28 last year.

Israeli army chief

France insisted future talks FROM PAGE 20 the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

"Our hand is still extended. The During the fighting in Lebanon Iranians know the rules of the game: since mid-July, reservists comfirst a suspension of sensitive plained about confused and contranuclear activities," Foreign Minister dictory orders, food, fuel and water shortages, on top of the slowness to Russia, which is building Iran's launch a major ground assault after first nuclear power plant at Bushehr.

an initial air campaign failed to disable Hezbollah. Israel's top government watchdog, the state comptroller, has

already launched an investigation. An inquiry within the defence ministry has since stalled.

Dozens of reservists and relatives of slain soldiers have demanded that Olmert, Defence Minister Amir Peretz, whose previous military experience was limited to national service, and Halutz resign

Yet Olmert, whose approval ratings have plunged in the three months since he took office, continued to downplay the criticism in public Thursday by promising that billions of shekels would be invested in the war-damaged north.

Referring to extra-judicial kill-Touring the Mediterranean resort ings, justice Golam Rabbani said, of Nahariya, Olmert vowed that the "Unless democratic values and rule "biggest national priority" was of law are established, such violareconstruction.

"Billions will be invested... to turn the north into the paradise it can be," he said visiting a hospital ward damaged by a Hezbollah rocket.

Olmert said hundreds of millions of shekels had been collected by foreign donors and voiced hope that the north was now on the road to recovery.

Aside from running into trouble over the war, the Israeli leadership is navigating stormy waters with a litany of private scandals that forced one cabinet minister to resign and threatens the career of President Moshe Katsav.

Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) men. But the family members filed the case against the local AL leaders and activists, as there was a political feud between the two parties. The deputy minister influenced the judgement. His clients were

victimised, even though it was a false, fabricated and concocted case. He will appeal to the higher court against the verdict, the lawyer added.

Following the incident, victim's father filed a murder case with Naldanga Police Station against 16 people on the same day. The investigation officer (IO) pressed charges against 21 people, including five AL leaders and activists even though their names were not included in the

FIR (first information report). Later, the case was transferred to the Rajshahi Speedy Trial Tribunal for quick disposal but the case was again shifted to the Dhaka Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 following a criminal appeal to the HC.

LGRD and Cooperation Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan presided over the meeting attended by Cabinet Committee members Education Minister Osman Farruk and Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami,

US envoy