The Pally Star

### India fears attack Dr Kamal FROM PAGE 20 focus on six areas including misappropriation of state wealth through misuse on nuclear plant

### **REUTERS.** New Delhi

Terrorist threats to India's nuclear plants have increased after a landmark civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States, the home minister said on Wednesday.

Security at India's nuclear facilities has been stepped up over the last year after officials said they had information that the sites were on the hit-list of militants.

Several high-profile attacks on other targets across the country, blamed on Pakistan-based militant groups fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir, have also led to increased vigil at government facilities.

But Home Minister Shivraj Patil's comments were the first to link the vulnerability of the nuclear plants to the civilian nuclear pact with Washington, which is in the final stages of approval by the US Congress.

"Our critical infrastructure faces a serious threat from terrorists," Patil told a conference of state police chiefs.

"In view of the recent Indo-US agreement on civil nuclear energy cooperation, our atomic power plants have become highly vulnerable." he said.

Patil did not elaborate but a home ministry official said security agencies feared the nuclear plants

India has 15 nuclear power

gorised as civilian facilities would be allowed to access fuel and equipment from the United States under the deal which overturns a three-

decade ban on nuclear trade.

Patil said installations in the oil

to lower their guard," he said.

Irked advisers

### FROM PAGE 1

### case once again infuriated his advisers.

The advisers were further irritated by the follow-up actions of lajuddin after he had formed an advisers' committee to talk a way out of the crisis arising out of Aziz's steadfastness to cling on to his post. For three days, the advisers held whirlwind meetings with all the major political parties and prepared their report. Although the situation called for immediate actions, the chief adviser, for reasons beyond anyone's guess, scheduled to hear the report four days later while the political crisis intensified. Surprised and disappointed, the advisers forced lajuddin to advance the meeting by two days, which ultimately payed the way for the CEC's stepping aside. But the actions of the chief adviser left the advisers

with a heavy mind. The advisers, frustrated with such actions of the chief adviser. met separately on November 6 at a state questhouse to discuss what they could do to improve the situation. However, their action was again equated with 'conspiracy' by the 4-party alliance. This past week, they had been almost regularly

could be targeted by Islamist militants opposed to American policies and US presence in South Asia.

plants in operation, with an installed generating capacity of 3,310 megawatts (MW). Seven more plants with a capacity of 3,420 MW are under construction and scheduled for completion by 2009 Fourteen of the 22 plants cate-

The deal was approved by the US Senate last week and needs approval jointly by the House of Representatives and the Senate, besides the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group and the International Atomic Energy Agency

and natural gas sector, defence, communications and the IT sector were also vulnerable, adding "the enemy" was always looking for new targets. "The challenge of terrorism must

be faced resolutely and the police and security agencies cannot afford

of important ministries in the chief adviser's hand has also led to a drag-down of the key activities needed before an election. In the past, although the chief adviser held a large portfolio, he delegated tasks

to his advisers. "Right now, two vital advisory committees -- administrative affairs and law and order -- are headed by lajuddin," elaborated an adviser. "In the last caretaker government, although the two ministries -- establishment and home -- were under the chief adviser, the committees were headed by two advisers."

As a result of such over concentration of tasks, the law and order committee could not hold any meeting since its formation three days ago. The administrative committee held a few meetings for transfers of officials, but these actions qualify as tinkering at the edges. Adviser Akbar Ali Khan recently vented his frustration by saying that the trans-

fers have not been meaningful for elections. As things stand today, one very senior adviser said to express his

frustration: "As advisers, we feel like

doormats.'

FROM PAGE 20

large caricatures of the CEC.

held similar programmes.

splashed each other with coloured

water, and they went after their

leaders as well and had many of

was held at the Bijoy Mancha of

Dhaka city unit 14-party in the

afternoon. Leaders and activists of

all the parties that have been dem-

onstrating for EC reconstitution over

the last few months took part in the

In the first half of the day, the

Thousands of demonstrators

number of participants was less

than yesterday. But it grew fast and

surpassed the previous ones with

streamed into the Bijoy Mancha

area in vibrant victory processions.

They carried large portraits of

Bangabandhu and Sheikh Hasina,

banners of their parties and plac-

to join the victory rally.

the sun dipping below the skyline.

function.

The largest of the programmes

them soaked in bright colours.

of power, corruption in various tenders, allocation of money against false projects, purchase of government land and launching of television channels with black money.

President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Barrister Amir UI Islam, Vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council Rokanuddin Mahmud, General Secretary of Bangladesh Economic Association Abul Barakat and Badiul Alam Mojumder of civil society body Sujan also spoke on the occasion.

Amir UI Islam hailed formation of the commission as a timely step. Such a commission was formed earlier for investigating corruption by former president H M Ershad, and a number of cases were framed against him on the basis of its findings, he recalled.

Rokanuddin noted that the influence of black money and musclemen are the main barriers to holding a peaceful election.

He said identity of black money holders should be made public before the next election so that none can dare to misuse state power in future. The newly formed commission's probe would set an example for the Anti-

Corruption Commission, he thought. He alleged the president has curtailed the powers of the advisory council by keeping so many ministries under him. lajuddin is using state power by-passing the council, he added

Abul Barakat said massive corruption, misappropriation of public money, resources and lands in the 34 years since independence have crippling effects on the country. In the last five vears, corruption, terrorism and communalism have been institutionalised, he observed.

Government-backed trade syndicates have grabbed around Tk 2.86 lakh crore in the last five years through price hike, he alleged.

Badiul Alam called for probing corruption not only in the last five years but also during the tenure of previous governments

### Defamation case FROM PAGE 20

tary of AL Brahmanbaria unit, filed the case with First Class Magistrate's Court.

After hearing, the court ordered judicial inquiry into the case and asked the magistrate concerned to submit a report by December 31.

In his complaint, Mamun Sarker mentioned that Tarique Zia in his remarks against the AL chief at Hawa Bhaban on November 14 said. "Had Sheikh Hasina bought the suit for me and been my gambling partner?"

He said Tarique Zia has tarnished the image of Sheikh Hasina through his "indecent remarks" About 50 lawyers stood for the by the port operators. case while a group of lawyers, led by

former MP Advocate Harun-al-

### Acting CEC

NEWS

election in time.

next election.

such a meeting.

FROM PAGE 20

ments' tenure.

In reply to a question, he said, "I

He sought cooperation from al

In past, the EC used to hold

don't see any obstacle to holding the

and said all measures will be taken

meetings with caretaker govern-

ment and political parties before

in conducting the election. But some

advisers to it are now speaking in

such a way as if they will conduct the

Pre-poll admin

assess the situation. If they find any

and divisional levels, the secretary

said the government has withdrawn

six divisional commissioners. 34

deputy commissioners and more than

a hundred upazila nirbahi officers -

which is the highest ever withdrawal

immediate past BNP-led alliance

government, the secretary said the

the secretary told reporters.

election," Justice Mahfuz said.

to ensure free and fair polls.

FROM PAGE 1

about the number of political parties and dialogue with them before announcement of the schedule for the next general election.

"It is not my cup of tea who will accept me or not as acting CEC. I will keep on doing my duties for holding a free and fair election." he said responding to a query whether the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party combine will accept him.

On July 26 last year, during the dialogue between the Election Commission (EC) and political parties on preparation of voter list. CEC MA Aziz made a remark on the AL league that triggered severe criticism. " How many seats do they [AL] have in parliament?" Aziz asked while replying to a question on the outcome of the dialogue without participation of the AL. Justice Mahfuz, who will lead the

EC to conduct the next election scheduled for January, rejected outright any possibility of dialogue with political parties seeking their views on the polls schedule.

The acting CEC said election schedule will be announced this month, meaning next week. "We have all preparations for holding the

### Ctg mayor FROM PAGE 20

financial loss, he further said.

"The company charges Tk 470 for handling per container while earlier the same job was done only at Tk five." the mayor said adding that on behalf of the commoners. he had asked for the termination of the agreement.

Meanwhile, although the Chittagong Port resumed operations yesterday after suspension of the blockade programme by the 14-party, the gantry cranes did not operate due to the controversy over the agreement.

According to sources, a total of 350 TEUs containers have been released yesterday from the port yard while the cargo handling at the general yard resumed with gang-bookings (booking dockers for a job) for the night shift. The operation in the general yard

starts in full swing this morning, but resumption of operation at vital container vard remained suspended.

"The port is saying nothing about resumption of container vard operations," a shipping agent told The Daily Star last night, adding that two large ships have been anchored at the terminal for several days and another seven ships in the outer anchorage.

The government installed four sophisticated gantry cranes in January this year spending Tk 150 crore. At first, the port operators were to operate the cranes, but later the private company was awarded the job for increasing the speed of crane handling.

About the problem of officers on Saif Powertec Ltd started operation special duty he said the ministry will in August this year and handled 25-30 bear the 'burden' for a long time as containers per hour instead of 10-12 officers were previously promoted to more posts than the vacant ones

### SC Bar FROM PAGE 20

a result, the president himself has

been creating crisis one after another," it said. The meting urged the president to appoint two more election commissioners through discussion among all parties concerned instead of deciding the appoint-

ments on individual capacity. The meeting also demanded withdrawal of upazila election officers, appointed earlier on political consideration, and replace them by fresh non-

AFP. Mumbai

president in a decade.

his South Asian tour.

trade basket.

better.

economies.

to war in 1962.

aiant.

Asia will dominate the next century if

China and India can strengthen their

trade and business links, China's

President Hu Jintao said yesterday at

the end of a visit to the fellow Asian

heading to Pakistan on the final leg of

for greater economic ties, saying: "We

must add 'mass' and 'items' to the

During his speech, Hu, accompa-

nied by a nearly 120-member busi-

ness delegation, also called for more

energy co-operation, saying "it will

help us bid for third country contracts

Earlier in the visit, the world's two

most populous nations agreed to

double trade to 40 billion dollars by

2010 and speed efforts to settle a long-

festering border row that brought them

"mutual trust" and "chart a new

long been clouded by the legacy of the

brief but bloody border war and

Beijing's economic and military sup-

who allegedly used to bribe Tk 5 lakh

monthly to former state minister for

expatriates' welfare and overseas

employment Major (Retd) Quamrul

Islam and Wahid-uz Zaman when they

the charges against him in the report

were absolutely malicious and aimed

were in their respective offices.

at tarnishing his image

course" for strategic relations.

Rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1

Hu declared Wednesday in New

"We need to move towards a free-

announcing polls schedule. And this partisan officers. Chaired by SCBA President Barrister MAmir-UI Islam, the meeting time also the EC had planned to hold a meeting with the interim government but the acting CEC was addressed, among others, by Dr Kamal Hossain, Abdul Baset Majumder, Ozair Farooq, Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, Mahbubey vesterday rejected any possibility of "We will conduct the election, the Alam, Khandaker Mahbub Hossain caretaker government will not. The Abdul Mannan Khan, AM Amin Uddin caretaker government is constitu-M Enayetur Rahim, Mahbub Ali tionally obliged to cooperate with us Bashir Ahmed and AHM Shamsuddin

Ahmed Manik. Meanwhile, the BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Ainjubi Forum (JAF) hailed the Wednesday's address to the nation by President/ Chief Adviser lajuddin Ahmed.

Terming the president's speech a quideline for resolving the political deadlock over the reforms of the Election Commission, the forum demanded immediate announcement of the election schedule

loophole or leakage in the administration and suggest more reshuffle, that Adviser criticises will be executed as per their guideline,' FROM PAGE 20

He reiterated the government's efforts to make the hajj more com-About the allegation that the ministry only changes the officers from one fortable for the pilgrims. Adviser M Azizul Islam also place to another at the upazila, district

spoke at the programme. This year 2,551 ballottee pilgrims will perform hajj under direct government supervision while 48.014 non-ballottee pilgrims are expected to perform hajj under the supervi-sion of different hajj agencies. The Biman Bangladesh Airlines will carry around 29,000 pilgrims

compared to other caretaker governwhile Saudia Airlines will carry Asked about the officers posted at 12,000. different sensitive places including the The first hajj flight will leave for Election Commission secretariat, Saudi Arabia on November 26 at Cabinet Division and the Ministry of 9:00am with ballottee pilorims Establishment since the period of the

Aziz

FROM PAGE 20 Jamaat leader said Justice KM Hasan had declined to assume the office of the caretaker government chief because of tremendous pressure from the 14-party.

"The continuity of democracy will be seriously hampered if the constitution is violated and institutions are made subject to debate," he added.

Welcoming the president's address to the nation and thanking Justice Aziz for taking the leave, Nizami expressed hope that all political parties, including AL, will now turn back to the election.

Jamaat-e-Islami does not subscribe to the idea of wholesale cancellation of appointments or transfers of the public servants. he said and alleged that [contractual] appointments that did not bear any links to politics are also being cancelled

The immediate past industries minister said the 14-party's allegation of 1.30 crore fake voters in the voter list is without foundation. They are creating unnecessar

# India, China can dominate next century, says Hu

DHAKA FRIDAY NOVEMBER 24, 2006

port for Pakistan, India's long-time

New Delhi claims a large chunk of Chinese-administered territory in disputed Kashmir while Beijing lays stake to Indian-administered Arunachal Pradesh.

Hu called his talks Tuesday with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in the Indian capital "fruitful".

trade agreement and boost bilateral "China does not seek any selfish trade further, particular along the gains in South Asia and is ready to play borders," said Hu, whose four-day visit a constructive role in promoting peace to India was the first by a Chinese and development in the subcontinent, Hu said, as he welcomed improved "If India and China take the necesrelations between India and Pakistan sary steps to strengthen trade and which have fought three wars since business, the 21st century will be independence in 1947. Asia's," he told business and govern-

The Chinese president was dogment leaders from both nations in ged throughout his visit by Tibetan India's financial hub Mumbai before protesters demonstrating against what they called China's illegal occupation of Tibet. Dozens were arrested. India's Commerce and Industries One Tibetan man in his late 20s set Minister Kamal Nath echoed Hu's call

himself ablaze outside Hu's hotel Thursday but police quickly doused the flames, witnesses said. China reiterated its claim to Tibet

Thursday following the protests organised by the Tibetan Youth Congress in which hundreds of demonstrators took part. "The Tibet autonomous region has

been an integral part of China since India and China have increasingly ancient times and Tibetan affairs are been competitors as they scramble the internal affairs of China." foreign globally for energy and mineral ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said resources to feed their fast-growing in Beijing.

Partial victory

FROM PAGE 20 The city unit of 14-party set up the Delhi he had visited India to enhance Mancha on two trucks in the afternoon, and speeches, cheers and musical performances continued there Ties between India and China have midniaht.

General Secretary of city Awami League Mofazzal Hossain Chowdrury Maya chaired the victory rally and leaders of the combine spoke thanking people for participating in the move ment.

Echoing the 14-party central leaders' views, speakers termed Aziz's going on 90-day leave a partial victory their movement. They waited for instructions from the central leaders who were then holding a meeting to fix the next course of action.

From the meeting, the central leaders came to the Mancha, and Wahid, who was the DG of BMET from April 25, 2004 to October 23, coordinator of the combine Abdul Jalil 2006 and is now serving as the execuannounced the next course. Until he arrived, JSD President tive director of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority, in his rejoinder said

Hasanul Huq Inu, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, AL Presidium members Suraniit Sengupta and Tofail Ahmed addressed the gathering. They criticised President and Chief

He said during his more than 28vear career as a civil servant. he had Adviser (CA) to the caretaker governnever been charged with conduct. "My ment lajuddin Ahmed for 'not acting strict compliance with rules and reguneutrally lations, my unbending character and my inherent obedience to conscience had been the root cause of my belated

The leaders blamed the CA for 'concealing truth' in his address to the tion on V hav night Tofail urged the president to take decisions through discussions with the advisers to the CG, and not to appoint new election commissioners on his

"If anyone complains to me about any officer's inefficiency or moral character we must take action against him. But if someone talks generally the ministry cannot take action," he said. About the promotion and posting Solaiman Chowdury said the Superior Selection Board (SSB) held meeting during the last two days and will con-

allegations should be specific.

tinue it for a few more days to bring all the officials under assessment. "We want to assess every officer personally so that no one is excluded from the promotion process. The SSB are seriously examining whether anyone has been deprived," he said.

Chowdhury said there are problems in the annual confidential report and necessary documents of many officers for which it takes long time to complete the board meeting.

meeting separately during lunch.

Home Secretary Jahurul Hoque wrote to the district administrations across the country on the decision of the government to deploy army to maintain law and order. The Chief Adviser kept this decision taken in the afternoon hidden from the advisers. The same evening, laiuddin had a more than two and a half hours meeting the advisers, but he never mentioned about the army deployment decision. Only at the end of the meeting, he called in the home secretary to brief the council on the law and order situation on the backdrop of the ongoing blockade.

The home secretary just cursorily mentioned at the end of his briefing that the stalemate at the Chittagong Port may necessitate deployment of the army, a proposition that was vehemently opposed by all advisers. Only after the meeting did the advisers come to know from journalists that orders had already been sent for army deployment.

The advisers now allege that lajuddin is running the show with no written records of decisions made in council's meetings, which are also rare to take place.

"We don't have any written minutes of the meetings, which is a dangerous matter." an adviser said. "Therefore, we often find that decisions made at the meetings are often reversed or even denied.

More to add to the advisers' feeling of 'redundancy' is the way the chief adviser keeps them away from meetings with political leaders and foreign diplomats and from running the affairs of the important ministries.

"In the past, the chief advisers kept one or two of the advisers with him whenever meeting with political leaders or diplomats," pointed out one adviser. "This helped them feel the political air. But this time, we are left groping in the dark.

The overwhelming concentration

### lajuddin asks FROM PAGE 20

over the charge of the chief advisor to the caretaker government and extended support of the Canadian government to him.

The envoy also lauded the steps that have been taken to resolve the political impasse over the electoral issues.

President's Adviser Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury, military secretary to the president and other high officials were present

Rashid, for the BNP joint secretary general.

#### BNP men Blockaders rejoice FROM PAGE 1

cameraman Majnu Hossain, witnesses said. Cameraman of Rtv At Zero Point, the Bijov Mancha Sajedur Rahman also came under (victory stage) of Awami attack from them. Mentionable, the Swechchhasebak League, AL owner of the channel is BNP leader volunteers wing, was draped in Mosaddek Ali Falu.

The BNP men also attempted to Jatiya Mohila Jote, Jatiya vandalise a microbus of the ATN Samajtantrik Dal, Gono Forum, Bangla, parked on the party office Workers Party of Bangladesh, premises. Sramik Malik Oikya Jote and Liberal Some top city BNP leaders pro-Democratic Party, Islami Oikya voked the activists to assault the

Jote, Zaker Party and Jatiya Party journalists, sources alleged. BNP leaders, however, regretted In a newer trend, the activists

the unexpected incident that occurred between the journalists and 'a few people in front of the BNP office.' Terming it a separate and depress

ing incident, BNP in a press release claimed that the party had no relation with it. "As soon as the party leaders were apprised of the incident, they rushed to the spot and apologised, the press release reads.

People concerned have been already directed to investigate into the incident and asked to bring the culprits to book if they were from BNP or any of its' affiliates, it adds

### Bhuiyan slates FROM PAGE 20

current blockade programme The BNP secretary general urged the chief adviser to the caretaker government to take a tough stance against the 14-party alli-

inside their homes and held their

alliance, the BNP secretary general

said people would always stay

on with its present political

programmes until the 14-party

BNP leaders Moudud Ahmed

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain

Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Mirza

alliance end their programmes.

He said the four-party would go

beside four-party alliance.

addressed the rally

They were jigging to the drumance's blockade. beats and shouting slogans as they Bhuiyan also urged his party vere marching down the city streets activists to prepare for the upcoming general elections and make BNP After the rally, the parties com-Chairperson Khaleda Zia the prime minister again.

victory rally.

bined brought out a victory procession that went to parade different thoroughfares. Before the rally began, artistes of

Bangladesh Chalachchitra (films) League rendered some popular songs written to glorify Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and some to make fun of the CEC

At some podiums, the cultural function continued till 8:00pm. Meantime, hawkers did a brisk

trade in peanuts, cucumbers, green coconuts, papayas, pineapples and snacks.

Earlier in the morning, a group of unruly demonstrators threw stones at buses near Sayedabad Bus Terminal, damaging the windshields.

Otherwise, no major untoward incident was reported.

Hasina sees

### FROM PAGE 1

10:00am to 2:00pm on November 27 and 28 respectively to press home their 11-point demand and said their movements for a free and fair election will continue.

Those who fear people are conspiring against a free and fair election, Hasina said, adding that the next election is to protest all grenade and bomb attacks and killings of people including political leaders and establish rule of law in the country.

The fresh programmes came at a meeting of the 14-party held at Sheikh Hasina's Sudha Sadan residence after CEC MA Aziz went on a three months' leave on Wednesday night that eased the political deadlock centring the CEC.

In the new political event, the 14party leaders also talked to other ike-minded political parties including the HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party, Liberal Democratic Party and different Islamic political parties before chalking out fresh programmes.

The 14-party had enforced the third phase of their non-stop countrywide blockade from November 20 to press home the popular demands for reconstitution in the EC after removal of 'controversial' CEC MA Aziz and three other election commissioners, neutralisation of the administration and correction of voter list.

Addressing the press briefing, Hasina thanked people of all walks of life for making the blockade programme a success and urged the people to make the sit-in demonstrations complete success.

The AL chief said although she He said, "The 14-party alliance (Khaleda) expressed her firm deterlocked the people of the country mination that the election would be held under Justice KM Hasan as the chief adviser to the caretaker gov-"They [14-party] locked people ernment and Justice MA Aziz as the inside because they fear people," Bhuiyan observed. Terming the CEC, people's movement foiled the plans four-party alliance the people's

She termed Aziz's going on leave as 'victory of the people's movement'.

Saying that the existing EC has lost its credibility and trust at home as well as abroad, Hasina demanded immediate reconstitution of the EC with 'noncontroversial and acceptable' persons to bring back confidence of

Abbas and Jamaat-e-Islami After MA Aziz's going on leave, a Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid also person has been given the charge of acting CEC from whose residence

troubles in this regard, whereas the Election Commission rules say that there is always a provision of correcting the list.' arms had been recovered during the

Nizami claimed that there were 1.81 crore more names in the voter list prepared during the tenure of the AL government. The increase in the number of voters was 32 percent then when it is only 23 percent now, he noted

It is not the job of the caretaker government to resolve the political crises, he said adding that it is quite irrational to press it [interim government] for resolution of the disputes that could not be settled even through a series of dialogues between the secretaries general of

the two major political parties. Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid Assistant Secretaries General Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Kader Molla and Publicity Secretary Tasnim Alam were present at the conference.

### Shujan

FROM PAGE 20

adviser (CA), who is also the president. Dr Kamal said that the CA has no right of exercising power without the consent of other advisers. Some vested quarters are directing him from behind the scene, he alleged. Shujan Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar observed that democracy of the country is at stake, which will not bring any good result. The citizens of the country should come forward to voice for holding a free and fair election, he said and urged the political parties to act according to democratic behaviour, which is

While asking for accountability of the EC. film director Kazi Havat also demanded enactment of a law that bars the smugglers from contesting

Dr Hamida Hossain, acting executive director of Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK), SM Shahjahan, adviser to former caretaker government, Dr Mehedi Huda, Shujan central committee member, Ajoy Roy, president of Sammilita Samajik Andolon, Mohidul Haque Khan, general secretary of BAPA and Brig Gen (retd) Shakhawat Hossain, defence expert also spoke on the occasion among others

promotion as secretary to the govern ment.'

Wahid said he never faced even a show cause notice by the higher own authorities for any kind of misconduct.

Through further investigation, we have found that our sources could not substantiate the information they had given us earlier. We now have reasons

to believe that they could be wrong. We, therefore, extend our apology to former DG of BMET Wahid-uz-Zaman, former state minister Maior (Retd) Quamrul Islam and BMET Director (Immigration) Manzur Rahman and regret any damage done to their reputation.

## Car bombings

FROM PAGE 1 raided a scientific research institute of that Iraq's sectarian conflict killed at the ministry of higher education and least 3,709 people in October -- the kidnapped around 150 people.

About 80 people, many of them 2003 US-led invasion. employees of the ministry, are believed still to be hostages. Sadr City, the impoverished district the Baghdad health ministry and of followers loyal to radical Shia cleric morques, compared with a previous high of 3,590 in July, which the United Mogtada al-Sadr. was also the site of an early morning incident involving US troops

"US troops fired on a minibus The report blamed the militias for carrying workers and killed a number of them in Al-Falah street at 6 am," the bloodshed "Hundreds of bodies continued to Imam Abdel Zahra al-Suwaidi from the appear in different areas of Baghdad

Sadr movement told AFP. handcuffed, blindfolded and bearing "I condemn this shooting that signs of torture and execution-style targeted the workers and accuse US killing," the report said. forces of repeating such acts which leave many victims every day, perpetrators wear militia attire and Suwaidi said even police or army uniforms.'

A medic at the Sadr City hospital said four people were killed and eight wounded, including two women. An Iraqi security source also

"infiltrated or act in collusion with confirmed the incident militias, while police and military "US forces fired on the minibus as security operations continued to be the vehicle was seen on the streets based on massive sweeps", the report before the dusk-to-dawn curfew was said. lifted," the source said.

It came a week before a meeting But the US military said that Iraqi between US President George W. forces fired on the vehicle during a raid Bush and Iragi Prime Minister Nuri alto detain the leader of a kidnapping Maliki in Jordan on November 29. cell.

The US military said Thursday that "A vehicle displaying hostile intent three more soldiers were killed in Iraq, was identified as an immediate threat bringing its losses since the invasion to to Iragi forces. Iragi forces fired on the vehicle to neutralise the threat," the 2,866, according to Pentagon figures. military said without mentioning Police also recovered eight bodies near the central city of Diwaniyah,

civilian casualties. The security source said the workers were headed to a market in the Jamila neighborhood near Sadr City at the time.

Harvey arrived in Baghdad on A daily curfew is imposed on Baghdad from 9:00 pm to 6:00 am Thursday to visit troops on the Thanksgiving holiday, a military (1800 GMT to 0300 GMT). US forces have regularly raided

spokeswoman told AFP. "He is here. He is visiting our Sadr City to hunt for leaders of kidnapping cells who the military alleges are soldiers today," Lieutenant Colonel militiamen loyal to Sadr. Josslyn Aberle said.

The leaders asked the Election Commission not to announce election schedule until publication of the voter

Later, a cultural function was held there with artistes rendering parody on BNP leaders, the CEC and others

A similar stage was erected at Zero Point by Awami Swechchhasebok League. Many people were present there to enjoy the musical performances.

On Wednesday a UN report said

highest monthly death toll since the

The figures, from data provided by

Nations called "unprecedented" at the

"Many witnesses reported that

The UN mission regularly received

reports that security forces were either

while in the restive city of Baquba 12

US Secretary of the Army Francis

people were reported killed.

Operation Clean Heart, the AL president said. She reiterated the demands for publication of updated voter list

through cancelling 1.40 crore fake voters and including all eligible people with their photographs as per the Supreme Court directives. It is possible to correct the voter

list within two weeks by involving required number of officials, she said.

Referring to the constitution. Hasina said draft of an accurate voter list and its publication are to be made before declaration of election schedule

Election schedules would have to be declared after the CG creates a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election, the AL chief said. Schedules had been declared 35

days after the CG took oath in 2001 election, she added. President and ChiefAdviser (CA)

lajuddin Ahmed has failed to perform his function neutrally, Hasina said, adding that he should step down from the post of CA and appoint an non-partisan person as the CA as per the constitution for a free and fair election. Urging the CA to refrain from any

conspiracy to rig the elections, the AL chief demanded that the CA work with the advisers and take combined decisions for a free and fair election.

The AL president blamed the CA for public suffering, saying that he took the strategy of killing time for which 67 people had to give their lives

Although three weeks have passed, the CA did not take any initiatives to create a congenia atmosphere for a free and fair election. Hasina said, adding that the president in his speech on Wednesday night played hide and

seek game with the people. Senior 14-party leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta Obaidul Quader, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed Aktheruzzaman. Abdur Rahman Bimal Biswas and Dilip Barua were present at the briefing.

Criticising the role of the chief the precondition for a free election.

in the election.

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