Carter's Mideast book

A new book by Jimmy Carter in which he compares Israel's treatment of Palestinians to South Africa's Apartheid system has sparked a bitter debate over the former US president's reputation

Jewish groups have "Palestine: Peace Not the perception of Israel's legiti-

Carter, 82, has been dogged by protests during a promotional tour and Ken Stein, a long-time advisor on Middle East issues who was also the first executive director at the Carter Center in Atlanta, resigned over the book's

Stein cited a passage from the book that said it was imperative for Arabs and Palestinians to "make it clear that they will end the suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism when international laws and the ultimate goals of the Roadmap for peace are accepted by Israel.'

killing Jews is legitimate? Did I misread this? I don't think so. If he wrote it, he is endorsing violence, which is not the original

But Douglas Brinkley, who published a biography of Carter focusing on his post-presidential years, said the book could enhance Carter's reputation in the Middle East and beyond among those who see him as an

reputation globally. It makes him seem somebody who doesn't just speak an American government line but who is an international peacemaker and a candid analyst," Brinkley told Reuters.

"The damage he has done is in the U.S. and Israel and in those

countries his reputation has

taken a hit." he said. In the book, Carter, who wor the Nobel peace prize in 2002 for conflict resolution, traces the history of the Middle East from the 19th century to the present through the Camp David Accords in 1978, a year into his presidency.

"Anyone that goes there can't deny that a system of apartheid is going on," Carter said in a speech in Atlanta after the book was published in November.

He said he was "completely at ease" with the book, and that its title was deliberately provocative. WEDGE ISSUE

Carter's assertion that U.S. debate on the Middle East has been stifled by a pro-Jewish lobby is aimed at causing people within America's evangelical community to question support for Israel, according to Michael Jacobs, managing editor of the Atlanta Jewish Times.

He said the assertion would likely backfire.

"It's damaged the way he is seen in the Jewish community of Atlanta and ... a large portion of the evangelical Christian community. But people who aren't friends of Israel see this as an example of him being courageous," Jacobs told Reuters.

Carter is a native of Georgia, where he served as governor before launching his bid for the White House, and is widely seen as the state's leading citizen.

Judy Marx, executive director the Atlanta chapter of the American Jewish Committee, said the book would undermine Carter's reputation for conflict resolution "because he is not offering balanced opinions and being an honest broker."

But she said the controversy had in the short term opened doors for dialogue with African American, Latino and other groups in Atlanta who had invited her group to address them over

Doubts deepen

these parties.

The United Nations, European Union and foreign diplomats have also urged the caretaker government to create a level playing field

if the Election Commission (EC) fails to conduct the election within 90 days from dissolution of the

met Appellate Division Judge Justice Tafazzul Islam on December 4 and discussed if there is any option to defer the polls, sources

"The Election Commission can send the matter to the government if it feels that it does not have adequate preparation for holding the

election beyond the constitutionally stipulated 90 days after seeking time from the Supreme Court, EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar, on the other hand, said yesterday, "If the president wants, he can."

thinks fit, report its opinion thereon to the president."

Sarkar said, "If the election cannot be held within 90 days, the president will determine what to do-whether he will refer the matter to the Supreme Court or declare an

Talking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, another adviser said they should immediately discuss if the EC is really prepared to hold the election as per the current schedule. "If the Election

Commission is not prepared, we will have to find a solution," he said.

Meanwhile, a number of advisers yesterday made efforts to hold a meeting of the advisory council to discuss the latest prevailing political situation ahead of the 14-party alliance's grand rally. But President and Chief Adviser laiuddin Ahmed

Potato farmers

FROM PAGE 16 Munshiganj district who cultivates potatoes on a three-acre plot said.

Notwithstanding a scarcity in

seeds, potato production has increased in the Munshiganj district "Potatoes are normally cultivated on 30,530 hectares of land in the Munshinganj district, however this year at least another 1,000 acres of land came under potato cultivation," said Jatindra Chandra Modak, deputy director of Munshigani district department of agriculture extension. Government officials in the department of agriculture extension told journalists that all the low lands in the districts came under potato cultivation this year As a result, hardly any low arable land remains after this year's sowing season. Jatindra observed.

Munshigani produces around 40 per cent of the Bangaldesh's total potato production and the average potato yield in the district is well over double the national average per hectare. The average potato production in the district is 27.70 metric tons per hectare against national average of 11-12 tons, they said. More than 50 per cent of arable land in the district goes under potato cultivation, agriculture extension sources said.

There are also concerns that farmers are overusing fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides to maximize production. Government officials claim that farmers cultivat-Government ing potatoes on a commercial basis are paying little heed to suggestions for a reduction in chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The DAE deputy director said that they have promoted a widespread information programme among farmers, advocating a reduction in the use of fertilizers to ensure maintaining soil quality. This year 2,000 farmers were given special training about the danger in using chemical fertilizer in potato

The main advantages of the district in potato farming is low land, heavy silting during monsoon and suitable weather condition, Modak

larique FROM PAGE 16

workers of BNP and its front organisations of Gabtoli unit of Bogra district thronged Hawa Bhaban in the morning and chanted slogans in favour of Tarique's nomination for Gabtoli constituency.

They met Tarique and demanded his candidature for the constituency. Khaleda called the party activists to her Hawa Bhaban office to listen to them during lunch break of interview of BNP nomination-seekers from five districts of Dhaka Division. She was apparently convinced by their request.

The BNP chairperson then called Tarique and told him that he would have to contest the election from Bogra-7 constituency, as the locals

The party activists burst into joy

Later, the party's standing committee members congratulated

Tarique for his candidature.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1

BNP Office Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan conveyed Khaleda's call as he briefed newsmen on the interview of BNP nomination seekers yesterday. A total of 174 aspirants for 23

parliamentary constituencies of Kishoreganj, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Gazipur and Narsingdi districts appeared for interview at BNP chairperson's Hawa Bhaban office at Banani.

BNP Parliamentary Board conducted the interview with Khaleda

lajuddin FROM PAGE 1

Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury during a meeting at Rangahhahan

Choudhury informed the president that London wanted to see an election participated by all political parties in Bangladesh.

A Bangabhaban spokesman told UNB that the British envoy informed the president that they [diplomats] already urged parties involved in movements to take part in the election

shunning the path of street violence. The British High Commissioner said, "It's not our concern which party comes to power, but we expect the election to be participated by all."

Referring to the signing of the general understanding between the European Union (EU) and other countries, including Sri Lanka, Choudhury suggested signing of a similar agreement on monitoring the polls by the EU. The envoy also informed the

president the ÉU signed a memorandum of understanding with the Election Commission regarding the attendances of the European poll observers recently.

The president termed Dhaka-London ties as unique and appreciated the British assistances for the development of Bangladesh, the spokesman said. Earlier, outgoing Afghan

Ambassador to Bangladesh Akmal Ghani made a farewell call on President lajuddin Ahmed. During the meeting, the president recalled the historic and traditional ties between Dhaka and Kabul.

lajuddin also recalled his meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the funeral of Saudi King Fahad Bin Abdul Aziz.

He expected Afghanistan, a new Saarc member, would play an important role for development of the region. The ambassador recalled with

appreciation the role of late president Ziaur Rahman regarding the Saarc

Bangladeshi

Police sources said the Pakistani intelligence forces picked up Mubarak while coming out of a mosque in Jalalabad, Afghanistan as he was asking for directions to Karachi.

The Pakistan police took him to Karachi and detained him there for two weeks before handing him over to the US special agents. The US special agents then flew him to the Guantanamo prison, said police

Abul Hashem told the reporters that he went to the Airport Police to receive his son after he came to know of his son's return on TV.

"After becoming a Hafez from a madrasa at Lalmatia in Dhaka, he (Mobarak) went to a madrasa in Karachi (Pakistan) at the end of 1998 to obtain the Mufti degree," Hashem "Mubarak studied there for two

at a madrasa before he went miss ing," he continued. Mubarak's uncle Giasuddin was also in Karachi during his study there, said Hashem. "All of a sudden, my brother (Giasuddin) one day

informed me over phone that

years and afterwards began teaching

Giasuddin returned to Bangladesh in 2002 after failing to find Mubarak, he added.

Mubarak went missing."

Hashem said all his six sons and

two daughters are educated in

He found out about his missing son's whereabouts from Red Crescent in 2004. "The Red Crescent first informed me that my son is being detained at Guantanamo, but I did not believe them," he told the report-

But later, almost all detective agencies in the country started inquiring about Mubarak, which made the father believe the authenticity of the Red Crescent's informa-

"Following the lead, I applied through the Red Crescent in June this year for my son's release, Hashem said. Red Crescent made his son's

return possible by assisting Hashem submit the documents required by the home and foreign ministry.

Polls expenditure

FROM PAGE 1 He said the Ministry of Finance will extend any cooperation in this regard, if required.

Replying to another question on political unrest over the coming elections, he said the advisers were communicating with the political parties and expected that the government would be able to inform about a positive development within

Butenis observes

American Studies (BAAS) organised the seminar in cooperation with the American Centre in Dhaka. Held at the Cirdap auditorium in the capital, it was chaired by BAAS President Dr AKM Nurun Nabi.

She lauded the major political parties for what she said was flexibility on issues they once insisted had no room for compromise.

Describing all parties' participa tion in the election as crucial, she said. "The people of Bangladesh deserve to have choices that reflect the diversity of opinion, philosophy, and even style that exists in this country's politics."

Issues relating to the election are fundamentally political and thus require political solutions, she observed. The responsibility rests primarily

on the political parties to do away with the remaining obstacles to full participation in a fair election, she added. Mentioning public concern over

the voter roll, she said it is crucial that the Election Commission continue to address the issue.

She said the US will keep urging flexibility and dialogue on all sides.

She said it is vitally important that the political parties stop trying to manipulate the caretaker government and that the caretaker government actively resist such interference, "whether the pressure comes from the streets or from behind the

"The essence of caretaker government is impartiality. Whether it is the army, the state-run media, or the police, the credibility of the caretaker government depends on its acting in a visibly neutral and effective manner." said Butenis.

Referring to the sufferings that the people had to experience due to the caretaker government's not acting neutrally, she said, "We hope that is behind us now.'

Reiterating US stance against hartals and nation-wide blockades. she called on all parties to pursue their political objectives through democratic practices, not on the

"Students, business people, and ordinary people have all suffered because the political parties of this great country could not agree on the basic rules of the game," she added.

"I am an optimist by nature and my observations reflect that optimism but my outlook on life is often severely challenged by your politics." she said.

The US ambassador underlined the importance of "creating political parties that are genuinely democratic in practice and outlook, parties that focus on issues and national interest instead of personalities and perceptions of face, and parties that make decisions transparently and are accountable to their supporters and the people at large, not just as election time but between elections as well"

She said the political parties now should commit themselves to work together in the next parliament, whether as the treasury bench or the loval opposition, to advance the country's economic, political, and social interests.

On growing controversy over the nterim government system, she said, "The caretaker government remains the constitutionally provided mechanism for preparing Bangladesh for elections."

"Any extra-constitutional arrangement imposed on the people of Bangladesh, such as military intervention, would not address the basic weaknesses afflicting the current political process, would likely lead to great turmoil and disappointment, and should be stoutly resisted," Butenis said.

"The caretaker government

country in the past and served the nation best when the chief adviser worked closely with his advisers to try to broker a compromise electoral package," she noted.

Terming resignation of the four CG advisers a great disappointment, she said they were sincere, capable, patriotic people and their contribution will be sorely missed.

She, however, hoped that the CA and his new team will redouble their efforts to create a positive electoral framework. Saying that both the major politi-

cal parties have accused her of supporting the other, she said, "We do not favour or oppose any party or group. In fact, we are confident that we can work effectively with the government regardless of which party wins the election.

"It's no secret that the United States Government takes a great interest in your upcoming election. And the reason is simple. Just about every issue that we care about that involves Bangladesh hinges on a successful election,"

She said US interest is focused on the electoral process, to be sure that it meets international standards of fair play and is consistent with Bangladesh's laws and constitution.

She observed that election means one in which all parties participate, whose outcome is broadly accepted as legitimate and accurate, where violence and intimidation did not keep people from voting or expressing their opinions, where minorities were not singled out for persecution, and where the playing field was more or less even.

The upcoming election will be the most observed one in Bangladesh's history with hundreds of foreign monitors blanketing the country besides tens of thousands of

Bangladeshi ones. Replying to a query, Butenis said this is an unusual situation with the president and the CA being the same person, which makes things difficult, UNB adds.

Vested quarter FROM PAGE 1

There were no evidence, which could prove the lawyers' involvement in the incident, the committee said at a press conference at the bar office in the capital.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) on December 4 formed an eight-member probe committee to investigate the November 30 vandalism on the

Supreme Court premises That day, following the chief ustice's stay order on the proceedings of three writ petitions including the one challenging the legality of the president's taking over as chief

adviser, lawyers got furious. Shortly afterwards, the SC premises including the court of the chief justice (CJ) was vandalised.

The committee report termed the incident 'mysterious' and said it was not clear who, when and how entered into the CJ's closed court and ransacked his office and there are evidences that the CJ's court was locked when the vandalism took place.

Making an oblique reference to the BNP-led four-party alliance, the report said, "The anarchy on the Supreme Court premises was a part of their blue-print.' The committee recorded statements of 120 eyewitnesses includ-

ing lawyers, clerks and SC employ-

Uddin, among other committee

members, were present at the press

ees, convener of the committee and former SCBA president barrister Shafique Ahmed said. Former SCBA presidents Abdul Baset Majumder, Ozair Farooq, Abdur Rashid, father of another Mahbubey Alam and Yusuf Hosain Humayun and secretary AM Amin

50 vessels

Baghabari ghat from Chittagong and Narayangani six days ago but failed to reach there as the water levels at Nakalia. Maihkhani and Koitola in the Jamuna river came down to 4/6 feet from 9/10 feet port authorities said.

The Padma, one of the country's main rivers, has split into many narrow streams with the emergence of innumerous sandbars due to scanty water flow down the Ganges.

Rivers such as Baronai, Fakirni and Atrai as well as canals are also fast drying up

The fertilisers, fuel and clinkers are now being unloaded from the stranded vessels and carried to Baghabari by boat. "It is pushing up the transport cost abnormally," said one port official.

Taking the advantage of disruption in supply, some dishonest fuel dealers have increased prices of fuels in the northern region.

Chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Mridul Kanti Ghosh visited the area on Friday and directed the officials concerned to carry out dredging on an urgent

UAE to spend

The UAF now plans to use robots to race camels rather than chil-

In September, a civil lawsuit was filed in a US court in Florida alleging the ruler of Dubai, a member of the UAE federation, and his brother enslaved some 30,000 children over the past three decades for use as camel jockeys.

The suit named Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum and his brother, Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-Maktoum as well as others.

They were charged with "the alleged abduction and human trafficking of thousands of young bovs" from places like Bangladesh, Sudan and southern Asia, according to a US law firm.

Nizami blames

He said the eminent citizens in many meetings said the election time could be deferred if the situation demanded. "There is no scope to defer the election beyond the tenure of the caretaker government according to the constitution and it would be harmful for the nation if the elections were not held in due time.' Nizami added

He said it would be a suicidal decision not to hold the elections within the stipulated time.

The Awami League will participate in the upcoming elections as they had in all the elections of the past including elections under the regimes of HM Ershad, Ayub Khan and Yahiya Khan, he

Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid and a number of its central leaders also spoke in the meeting.

JP enforces hartal FROM PAGE 16

A huge number of JP activists took position at important points in the town for picketing in favour of the A few pickets damaged two

motorbikes in Lalbagh and Dhap areas in the morning. The JP activists also damaged window glasses of a Parbotipur-

bound train about to leave the

Rangpur Station at about 9:00am. The JP district unit held a rally at the Jahaj Company intersection in the afternoon. JP district unit Secretary Moshiur Rahman Ranga Vice-President Abdur Rouf Manik JP sadar upazila unit President Mostafizur Rahman and Jubo Sanghati President Yeasir Ahmed spoke at the rally.

LALMONIRHAT The JP activists and supporters set fire on a truck at Hatibandha at

Rail communication remained suspended on all routes from 6:00am to 6:00pm as pickets took position on rail lines in four upazilas in the district.

motorbikes near Alorupa cinema hall and two more at Saptibari. A huge procession was brought out from the party office at 11:00am

parading the major streets of

The pickets damaged seven

Lalmonirhat town. KURIGRAM The hartal was observed peacefully in the district although life came to a standstill as all commercial centres. government and non-government offices, banks and educational

institutions remained closed during

3 die

the hartal hours.

FROM PAGE 16 primary investigation detected that consumption of toxic liquor might have caused the deaths.

Shubol Paharia has been running his homemade liquor business in the area for a long time, locals

victim Hannan, alleged that at least 15 illegal liquor factories are being operated in the area with connivance of the police.

EC's men yet to visit

the earlier list or have not been registered yet.

A number of prospective voters residing in the city's Panthapath, Maghbazar, Rajabazar, Begunbari, Azimpur, Goran, Khilgaon, Maniknagar, Kazipara and Mirpur-10 areas said no field level EC staff visited their houses.

"No EC staff visited our apartment till today," Mosharraf Hossain, manager of Tulip Tower on Road No 11 (New) in Dhanmondi said yesterday.

Amzad Hossain, security guard of House no 251/L on Road 13/A, and Dipu Chowdhury, security guard of House no 79 on Road No 12/A in Dhanmondi, and Sadeguzzaman Khan, owner of a four-storey residential building in Jigatola also said no EC staff has yet made a visit to those addresses.

Wahiduzzaman, a security guard of Shwarnalata Apartments at 6/1, Block F in Lalmatia said no one came to that address to correct the updated voter list.

During a visit to Basila and

nearby Wazpur in Mohammadpur and Hazaribagh yesterday The Daily Star talked to many residents of the areas, all of whom said no EC staff visited their houses till vesterday. "I have been hearing for the

last 10 to 12 days that people will come to correct the voter list. but no one has come yet," said Rahimon Bibi of Basila who just turned 100 this year. Abdul Mannan of Wazpur, just

on the other side of Buriganga River also said, "No EC staff visited our house or our neigh-Local residents of Syed Nazrul Islam Road in Mohammadpur said most of the prospective voters in

36 houses on the road were not

registered. They alleged that the EC staff came to the houses and went back without registering most of their names. "There are 20 residents in my building who are eligible to be voters and the EC staff registered their names a few months ago. But now we see that only mine and my husband's name are on the updated list," said Rehana

address mentioned on the voter list is incorrect. "I requested the EC staff to list the names of those who were left out although they have been residing in my house for the last four years, but the EC staff left the place without registering their

Siddique adding that she is not

even sure whether she herself will

be able to cast her vote as the

names." Rehana said. Delwar Hossain, a security guard of a six-storey building just opposite Rehana's building, said two EC staff went to the address, but did not go upstairs. He said the EC staff went away after making sure that two voters whose names are on the list are

till residing in the building "There are about 25 prospective voters in the building, but only the names of the landlord and his wife are on the list," Delwar said.

Air pollution

FROM PAGE 16

of deaths in polluted cities by as much as 15 percent every year, the WHO said, calling for lower limits of other pollutants such as ozone and sulphur dioxide.

"Asia's growth in population, urbanization, motorisation and energy consumption remain key challenges in efforts to counter air pollution. For example, lower emissions from vehicles are counterbalanced by a higher volume of vehicles." the ADB said. Another ADB study said emerg-

ng Asia currently has rather low

levels of personal motorized trans-

port, in many cases comprising mainly motorcycles, but these levels are likely to increase drastically as incomes in these countries grow and the urban populations expands. The Manila-based bank cited China, already the world's fourthlargest economy, where the number of cars and sport utility vehicles could rise by as much as 15 times

over the next 30 years to more than 190 million vehicles. In India, the growth could be as

much as 13-fold, it said. Correspondingly, carbon dioxide emissions could be expected to rise by 3.4 times for China and 5.8 times for India over the same period, the ADB study said.

To help address these problems, the Indonesia conference, attended by representatives of 20 Asian countries, issued a call for a review of air quality standards and air pollution indices all over the region to make them more effective and more comparable to each other. The conference summary also

called for a new "roadmap" for improved fuel quality and emission standards for new vehicles as well as more strategies to control emissions from vehicles that are already on the roads. Other recommended measures

included promoting clean, alternative, renewable energy, encouraging the use of mass public transport systems and even promoting urban housing that lowers energy consumption and emissions.

Both Rehana and Delwar said the scenario is the same in other residential buildings on the road.

THE EC EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarker yesterday said people are more interested in including their

names in the voter list than correcting duplications. About the outcome of the process of correcting the updated voter list, the EC secretary said. "We have yet to get the report. I do

rather it might increase." He was talking to reporters in his office following an EC meet-

not see any possibility of a

decrease in the number of voters

About rescheduling the upcoming election the EC secretary said, "The Election Commission will take a decision regarding that tomorrow." CHITTAGONG

Our correspondent from Chittagong reported that many prospective voters including some people of religious minority communities of Nazirbari Lane, Chariapara, Mistripara, and Moulovipara of ward No 24 in the port city said vesterday that they are vet to be registered as voters. Lucky Sen Gupta, a resident of

Mohammad Colony in Nazirbari, told The Daily Star vesterday that she and six other Hindu families in the colony did not see any EC Saleha Begum, owner of the adjoining Saleha Colony, also

made the same allegation saying

twenty of her tenants are yet to be registered as voters. Meanwhile, a local leader of Jatiyatabadi Chattra Dal (JCD) Towhidul Alam Nishat of Kazir Dewry in Kazipara area submitted some 40 photocopies of filled up inclusion forms to EC Staff

Two EC staff who visited the area to check the authenticity of the 40 applications yesterday afternoon said the forms are full of wrong information. They said they found no existence of a Marjina Colony in entire Kazipara, although the name of this colony

appears in some of the forms.

Sadhan Kumar Das on Friday for

including the names in the voter

upazilas of the district are continuously facing the ire of the local people demanding inclusion of their names in the voter list. Our Gaibandha Correspondent reported that field level FC staff

have vet to visit the residents of

Our Patuakhali Correspondent

reported that EC staff in seven

50 percent prospective voters in the district. Local people said the EC staff have not vet visited residents of 70 percent of prospective voters in 14 remote unions along the Brahamaputra basin as the communication system is bad and costly for the staff to visit the

Vegetables traders

FROM PAGE 16

fishes from them. However, the fish wholesalers have agreed to meet all the demands and the fish retailers' strike was withdrawn, said Abdul Karim Babul, general secretary of the association.

The leaders of Karwan Bazar

Kanchamal Arot Bahoshaie Malik Bohumukhi Shamabai Samity threatened to go for legal actions against the on-strike retailers if they prevented other retailers from buying goods from them. "We will take legal actions

proved," said Abdul Latif Mia, president of the Samity. Dismissing the allegations, he said the 61 members of the wholesalers' association are not involved with any of those things. He claimed there have not been any weight or price manipulations inside Karwan Bazar kitchen market in the last 10

against any wholesaler, if the allega-

tions brought against him are

LDP plans

participating in it. During a view exchange meeting with LDP grass roots level leaders at a city hotel, he also laid

FROM PAGE 16

out the party strategy for the upcoming polls. Terming the current situation as 'uncongenial' for holding a neutral election, the LDP president said that the election can take place only after the reconstitution of the election commission, arrest of criminals, seizure of illegal arms and above all after providing equal

(Retd) Oli Ahmed, meanwhile urged the party nomination seekers to form an election functioning committee and a voting centre committee with veteran and young leaders and activists to monitor the casting of votes. He also asked the party men to

election service to all parties.

LDP Executive President Col

conduct intensive campaign against widespread corruption even at the remotest corner of the country LDP Secretary General Maj

(Retd) Abdul Mannan, former speaker Shaikh Razzague Ali and other presidium and central committee members spoke on the

polarises opinion

REUTERS, Atlanta

as a peacemaker. expressed outrage at the book Apartheid," arguing its comparison of Israel to the racist South African regime could undermine

content. In an interview with Reuters.

Stein said: "Does that mean purpose of the Carter Center."

independent voice. "This flap only enhances his

parties do not file their nominations within the deadline on December 21. the polls schedule will either have to be re-fixed once again or the election will be held amid boycott by

for holding a free and fair election with participation of all major political parties. The advisory council at the end of the last month discussed options

eighth parliament on October 27. With the demands for deferring the election mounting, two advisers

election in line with the announced schedule. The matter can be sent to the Supreme Court seeking its opinion," Adviser Shafiqual told The Daily Star yesterday. Asked if it is possible to hold the

According to article 106 of the constitution, "If at any time it appears to the president that question of law has arisen, or likely to arise, which is of such a nature and of such public importance that is expedient to obtain the opinion of the Supreme Court upon it, he may refer the question to the Appellate Division for consideration and the division may, after such hearing as it

emergency.

did not give them time, sources said Shafigual said he re-initiated moves through some senior leaders for a consensus of the chiefs of the

two major alliances led by the BNP and AL on recasting of the EC. "But I have received a bag of mixed reaction over the move to reach a consensus on sending two election commissioners on leave of

He, however, hoped a result-

Talking to reporters at his office

either positive or negative--might

come by today, even before the 14-

Shafiqual said they will convince

Election Commissioners SM

Zakaria and Modabbir Hossain

Chowdhury to go on leave only after

the 14-party alliance agrees to

participate in the election within the

90-day tenure of the caretaker

France to pull

out special

forces from

Afghanistan

France has decided to pull its spe-

cial forces out of Afghanistan after a

NATO-led stabilisation force

extended operations to the whole

country, the French defense minis-

troops, operating under US com-

mand near the Pakistan border, will

be withdrawn at the beginning of

with a visit to Afghanistan by

Defense Minister Michele Alliot-

Marie, who told French radio it was

part of a wider reorganization of

NATO-led International Security

Assistance Force in Afghanistan

which took over command of a war

against the Taliban from US-led

forces in October and has launched

deployed in 2003 to bolster

Operation Enduring Freedom, a

separate US-led campaign against

the Taliban and al-Qaeda launched

in response to the September 11,

2001, attacks on the United States.

ence because ISAF has spread

across the country and so we are

also making a change, which is to

withdraw our special forces from

Jalalabad," Alliot-Marie told France

step up training of the Afghan army,

articularly its special forces.

nistry spokesman said.

eastern city of Jalalabad.

She said France would instead

Some 1,100 French troops will

main in the region of Kabul as part

Ten French troops have been

of the ISAF, the French defense

killed since the conflict in

Afghanistan started in October

2001. The majority belonged to the

special forces unit based in the

'We are reorganising our pres-

France's special forces had been

a series of military offensives.

France is part of a 32,000-strong

The announcement coincides

The contingent of 200 elite

REUTERS, paris

try said yesterday.

foreign troops.

2007, a spokesman said.

absence." Shafigual said.

party alliance's grand rally.