

gracious hosts.

"It [the tour] transcends sports, it is much more than cricket, it is passion," said former cricket star-

The long-awaited tour has provoked a huge amount of excite-

ment and anticipation in both

Thousands of Indians have

As the BB has undertaken a

We'll be benefited in many ways

turned politician Imran Khan.

# Padma bridge to be built at Mawa

#### **STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The long awaited Padma bridge will be constructed at Mawa-Janjira point.

Announcing this yesterday, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said the technical committee of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) recommended the site as the most favourable one for the proposed bridge on the Padma.

Speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session of a workshop on 'Interim Report of the Feasibility Study on Padma Bridge," Huda also said another bridge on the river will be constructed at Paturia-Goalundo point.

In September last year, the JICA study team in its first phase of progress report mentioned Mawa-Janjira and Patura-Goalundo as two prospective sites. Then the team's feasibility study from October last year to February this found the Mawa-Janjira vear point as the best site. Leader of the JICA team M Shibuya said the Mawa-Janjira point has been recommended on the basis of the economic feasibility of the proposed bridge including the costs for social and resettlement issues and effects on the GRDP (gross regional domestic product) growth

The study put the estimated cost of the bridge at US\$ 1,074 million at Mawa-Janjira and \$ 1,260 million at Patura-Goalundo point. The length of the bridge will be 6.2 km at Mawa-Janjira and 6.5 km at Patura-Goalundo, Shibuya said.

The study will continue and another progress report will be prepared in September this year. The report will contain preliminary

### BNP

#### FROM PAGE 1

and their subsequent joining former president AQM Badrudozza Chowdhury's alternative platform.

Mannan and Mahi, also the son of the former president, were elected to the Jativa Sangsad for Dhaka-10 (Ramna-Tejgaon) and Munshiganj-1 (Srinagar) constituencies. They resigned from the party yesterday in protest at what they said was a serious failure of the coalition government.

Bhuiyan, also the LGRD and cooperatives minister, said the BNP is the biggest party in Bangladesh and it has innumerous leaders, workers and followers.

"...It is not possible for a party like the BNP to please or satisfy all its leaders and workers by giving them post or position. There are discontent among many people within the party for not getting anything while there are some others who got something only to lose it later," he observed

The BNP secretary general also said they have no intention to expel the two MPs because they volunteered their resignation.

Highly placed sources in the BNP said they had information that Mannan had long been funding Badruddoza Chowdhury's move to float an alternative stream. The party first tried to persuade Mannan to stay away from the former president but gave up later as Mannan continued to stay in touch with him

design of the bridge at Mawa-Janjira and provisions for approach roads, river training works and toll facilities, he men-

tioned. The team will give its final report in February next year, he said.

The 6.2-km-long Padma Bridge will be the longest in the country and the 4.8-km- long Jamuna bridge the second longest one. Replying to a query, Quamrul Islam Siddigui, executive director

of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB), said the study did not take up the issue of railway on the Padma bridge. But it could be included in the study afterwards.

an indefinite strike on January 1 demanding immediate removal of The communications minister hoped the Japanese government would provide assistance for con-struction of the bridge as in the VC Professor Mustafizur Rahman for what they said was his involvecases of Meghna-Goumti, Pakshey ment with financial irregularities, and Rupsha bridges. nepotism and toeing the Jamaat-e-Japanese Ambassador Islami line in running the university

Matsushiro Horiguchi thought Bangladesh would mobilise funds for the bridge from levies imposed by the government.

The minister then noted the days of levies are over. Now there are several other internal sources for mobilising funds, he said, adding the government is seeking assistance from Japan, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

The JICA organised the workshop. Speakers at the inaugural session included Sahafiqul Islam Khondoker, communications secretary, Takashi Sakamoto, resident representative of JICA and Md Ali Hasan, executive director of amuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority.

Later, technical aspects of the bridge were taken up at the day-longworkshop.

#### India suggests FROM PAGE 1

The Indian foreign secretary made separate visits to the home minister and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar to discuss cross-border crime, gunrunning and drug smuggling, trafficking in women and children and other bilateral issues at their offices at the Scorretariet Secretariat.

Sources said both sides agreed to consider consular access for Indian and Bangladeshi nationals held in each other's prisons. The home minister said an inter-ministerial committee was also working on this issue ssue.

The two men asked him to join them in a robbery at the house of Tejendra Sheel at Shadhanpur Shilpara in Banshkhali, saying they had information that Tk 7 lakh in cash was beingkent in the bouse A home ministry press release said the two countries were cur-rently studying some proposed measures, including joint patrol in border areas, consular access to prisons and signing of an extradi-tion treaty cash was being kept in the house. tion treaty.

Hasan and 13 others -- all from Banshkhali -- raided Sheel's house on the night of November 18, but he said he couldn't identify the person Both the sides agreed to enhance collaboration between their respec-tive police and border forces and to increase vigil with a view to check who gave the order to set it on fire. drug trafficking, arms smuggling and trafficking in women and chilflower shop in front of the police camp in the city's Agrabad dren, the release said.

India also expressed keen inter-est and offered assistance in the ongoing police reforms in Bangladesh, it added.

Mahbub Rashid also gave details of the incident in a confessional state-Home Secretary Omar Farooq, ment made before Magistrate Khalilur Rahman yesterday, sources Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury, Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India Hemayet said. n and Indian Hig oner in Dhaka Veena Sikri were Benapole port present, among others, in the meet-

## Azad's family rules

#### FROM PAGE 12

(CMH)

No end to

in sight

with no end in sight.

removal of the VC.

administration.

today.

FROM PAGE 12

midnight

Ahmed

earlier

STAR REPORT

**IU** impasse

The indefinite teachers' strike at the

Islamic University (IU) pressing for

resignation of the vice-chancellor

has dragged on for two months now

including IU Teachers Association

(Iuta), BNP-backed Zia Parishad,

Awami League-backed Banga-

bandhu Parishad and Shapla

Forum have been demanding the

umbrella of Bidibidhan Sangra-

kkhan Committee (BBSC) -- the

committee to protect rules -- started

Yesterday, the BBSC declared a

series of programmes including

one-hour sit-in at the VC's house on

March 14, one-hour token hunger

strike at Kushtia Public Library

premises on March 16 followed

another one-hour token hunger

with the VC who has convened a

general meeting of the teachers

Chandanaish upazila, he was

shown arrested yesterday after being positively identified by a team

of policemen from Chandanaish Police Station at around Tuesday

Three other accused -- Moktar

Hasan, who had committed

several other robberies in Chandanaish upazila in recent years,

said he was introduced to Mahbub and Moktar at a hotel in the city's

Agrabad just two days before the

Father of two sons, Hasan ran a

Meanwhile, prime accused

Banshkhali incident.

Chhotopole area.

and Abdul Karim -- were arrested

Nasiruddin Tota alias Totai

The BBSC has also refused to sit

strike at Jhenidah on March 17.

Banshkhali

These associations under the

Several teachers' associations

Although Azad's condition has reasonably improved, he is still in so, we'll contact the DUTA," she said over telephone from Combined Military Hospital the intensive care unit (ICU). Doctors said he still needs intensive care and they would soon shift him from the ICU. A CMH bulletin released by

"We thank the Awami League leaders for their concern and proposal for taking my husband abroad, but I think the government bears the responsibility," she said. Inter Services Public Relations said yesterday Azad's condition remained stable and he is out of danger now.

The Daily Star yesterday con-tacted Azad's family following AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil's Tuesday's proposal and the DUTA's ultimatum that it would "He can speak quite precisely now, but is still on liquid food," she added. take the writer abroad at its expense if the government would not do so by March 14.

Asked what they would do after the DUTA ultimatum ends, she replied, "We have not decided yet as we don't know what the government will do.'

"Since the government is sponwe believe it will bear the rest, we're waiting eagerly for its deci-sion before March 14," she said.

But the writer will have to stay at the CMH about 10 more days before shifting to anywhere, a source close to CMH doctors attending Azad said in condition of anonymity. "The time is required for healing his jaws operation and to stem any infection," the source

### Small trader

#### FROM PAGE 12

thrice in the back point blank.

"Asad left his hotel Mayer Doa with the vouths at around 5:15pm and soon a man informed me that he was shot near Kenderio Poultry Farm." Ibrahim Alam, the victim's father-in-law, told newspersons at the DMCH where doctors declared Asad dead.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Mirpur Kamrul Ahsan said Asad. a criminal fugitive, was accused in 29 criminals cases, including a few for murders and was awarded a five-year term jail in a case filed under the Speedy Trial Act, the AC said.

In the other incident, criminals Talking to journalists at the office chopped Mohammad Shahaof the district superintendent of police, Hasan, a former soldier in the buddin, 26, owner of a chemical shop at Alam Market in Jurain in army from 1991 to 2001, confessed to the afternoon. his involvement in the arson and gave an account of the incident.

"Nazim, Alamin and an unknown youth stopped me on the way to my shop and chopped me in my hands and legs indiscriminately," said Shahabuddin.

Shahabuddin declined to say the reason behind the attack. He is receiving treatment at the DMCH.

### US embassy FROM PAGE 12

the vias process in conjunction with the US VISIT programme, which began earlier this year.

The United States introduced the finger-scanning programme in September 2003 at its embassies in Brussels, Guatemala City and San Salvador and at its consulates in Frankfurt and Montreal. By the beginning of 2004, more than 50 visa-issuing posts worldwide were utilising the programme.

The finger images collected at the time of a visa application will be

#### JTV finally gets Cricket tour **BTRC** approval FROM PAGE 1

### **STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) yesterday allocated frequency and permitted Jamuna Television Limited (JTV) to import equipment, a JTV press release said.

This will help JTV air progra mmes both on terrestrial and satel lite bands, it added. JTV said it got the frequency allocation and import permission following a lengthy legal battle with the BTRC and the government.

BTRC officials were not immediately available for confirmation of the JTV statement.

JTV will be the country's third terrestrial television channel after the sate-owned Bangladesh Television (BTV) and now defunct Ekushey Television (ETV).

It might launch transmission possibly by June-July on approval from the BTRC, the press release said

government by next month once again, Jalil said, "More surprises

He pegged the resignations as

protests in the BNP against

downslide in law and order wide

spread corruption, politicization of

the administration, nepotism and

"The situation is so grave that

isolated from the party even in his

On probable en masse resigna-

tion of AL lawmakers from parlia-

government's failure to sun the

"It's a failure of Khaleda Zia's

**BNP** renegades

their vacant constituencies to be

Retired army major Abdul

Mannan, lawmaker for Dhaka-10,

and Mahi B Chowdhury, lawmaker for Munshiganj -1, also said they would vie for the Jatiya Sangsad

seats under the banner of the new

"We'll contest and win the by-

are waiting in the wings.

of his party.

own constituency.

country," Saber said.

leadership too."

FROM PAGE 1

held in 90 days.

### AL sees

Family sources said Mohammad FROM PAGE 1 Shahin Khan, 32, general secretary of Jubo League Savar Pourasava the BNP legislators," Jalil said. unit, was called out of his house at "This is the beginning of an end, 2:30pm by his associates Akkas and the end to the government of Mohammad Ali on the plea of going to the house of one Shawkat Master. Khaleda Zia. Predicting the fall of the present

On the way, they shot Shahin in the head and chest and left the spot. Locals rushed him to a clinic where doctors declared him dead.

Kohinoor said they are now

spending about one hour with Azad everyday and help him walk.

Jubo League

dead at Savar

A Jubo League leader was shot dead

allegedly by his associates at Savar

leader shot

UNB, Savar

vesterday.

Police said Shahin was an accused in a number of murder cases. No-one was arrested in connection with the killing till vesterday evening.

price hike of essentials under the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition rule. The murder might be a sequel to internal conflict, police added.

## Nuruddin quits

FROM PAGE 12 political platform today through holding a public meeting in Muktangon in the city, he said,"It was just a coincidence.

"I have had no connection with any kind of politics over the last two and a half years and I do not intend to engage myself with any partisan politics anymore," Nuruddin Khan said ruling out the possibility of joining any political party. ment, he said," An appropriate decision will be taken at a suitable time."

"It points out the magnitude of failures of the ruling alliance. Imagine the situation when leaders "I wish to engage myself in social activities for the welfare of the people from now on." He said quit party posts and parliament responding to a question about his membership simultaneously citing

plan for post-resignation days. Khan, who failed to win as a Member of Parliament from his hometown in Narsingdi in the last general election, was given charge of two ministries - Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Ministry of Science and Technologyduring the last AL rule.

## MCCI

FROM PAGE 1

with pro-development programme pledges, hartals are being called frequently, the chamber said. "Political culture has been

stream to be formally launched in changing fast throughout the world the capital today. for greater interest of national economy. Even in other South Asian elections to prove that we are in countries, political parties are

### Pakistan promised tight security for the Indian team.

game, and win hearts also," Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee told "We are absolutely delighted the 15-member team. they are coming," said Rameez Raja, chief executive of the Pakistan Cricket Board. "We will be

The tour, which rekindles one of the oldest rivalries in the sport, is the most emotional expression of the new bid for peace between the nuclear-armed neighbours, who went to the brink of war over Kashmir in 2002

"May you be the victors," Vajpayee told the team before presenting them with a bat at his residence.

countries. But that could prove a tough task. India has never won a test bought tickets over the internet to watch the matches and will travel match in Pakistan, having lost five and drawn 15 of their previous to Pakistan. encounters.

Millions are expected to watch New Delhi banned cricket links the matches on television with Pakistan three years ago due to tensions over Kashmir, the trigger of two of the three wars **BB** refutes between the neighbours since independence from colonial rule FROM PAGE 1 in 1947. For instance, Jocelyn Landell-Mills, an international staff of the

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting violence in Kashmir by arming and training Muslim mili-tants fighting New Delhi's rule in the region since 1989. Pakistan IMF, served as BB governor's advisor for three years, Huda said, adding central banks of other IMF member-countries also sourced denies the charge and says it has experts from the fund. done all it could to stop the Islamic guerrillas.

Like most India-Pakistan issues number of reform programmes, it the cricket tour has been the subnow needs more experts with ject of huge debate in India and was nearly called off last month after an international exposure, Huda said. influential section in Vajpayee's government raised new fears over the security of the Indian team. from Shahbuddin, who has a wide international exposure and exper-But Vajpayee intervened to

tise. And, we won't have to spend anything as the IMF will finance his push the series through and services.

### Dhaka hurries to heal FROM PAGE 1

can clarify to Beijing on the discord.

protests are surfacing in the key ruling party," he said, ruling out resignations in the higher echelons "If the tension between the two countries heightens, Dhaka might send a special envoy to Beijing soon On Noor Uddin Khan's standing to reaffirm that Bangladesh greatly values its ties with China and firmly down, Jalil said: "He is not a factor in Awami League's politics. He is believes in one-China policy with Taiwan as its province," a foreign ministry official, asking not to be named, pointed out.

The Chinese embassy recently noted that a Taiwanese trade representative office has been opened in Dhaka and that it is issuing visa Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Chai Xi recently met several senior minis-ters and policymakers and vented out anger of his government.

Beijing also raised questions about the role of the Board of Investment (BoI), which is promot-ing trade with Taiwan by letting it register its trade office in Dhaka. A minister with whom the

Chinese ambassador met earlier quoted the envoy as telling him that the Taiwan issue will not only have a negative impact on bilateral relations, but it will leave unimaginable damage for Bangladesh as well.

The ambassador quoting Chinese intelligence report also told the minister Beijing also had infor-Bangladesh-China People's riendship Association in a press mation that a quarter within the government and a particular minisrelease strongly protested the launch of the trade office and asked try allowed Taiwan to open its office against huge bribe. the government to cancel the permission for such an office for the sake of the 'long-term interest' of

Sources said the ministers and policymakers assured the ambassador of urgently looking into the Bangladesh.

FROM PAGE 1

Baridhara office.

quit and call snap polls.

ment as lawmakers.

nor the government.

government".

sources said.

2001.

Mannan and Mahi, who pro

tested law and order downslide, price hike of essentials and wide

tentacles of corruption in the administration, marked the first

resignation from the eighth parlia-

The incident brings back the memories of the 1999 resignation of

Kader Siddiqui from the seventh parliament and the then ruling

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily

Star last night that the twin resigna-tions would neither affect the party

Sources close to Badruddoza predicted that some other lawmak-

Mahi and the former state minis-

ter will contest the by-polls to be held by the Election Commission in

90 days after their seats are declared

matter and informed him police seized the signboard of the trade representative on Monday night. As the foreign ministry is trying desperately to heal China's wounds

the BoI kept on promoting the Taiwan's Dhaka trade office until yesterday. Mahmudur Rahman, executive

chairman of BoI, told the UNB vesterday that it is a trade facilitating office, not linked to diplomacy. "This is in no way indicative of

any deviation from Bangladesh's one-China-policy. I find no reason for China to worry that Bangladesh has changed its foreign policy, Rahman told the news agency.

He added a Taiwanese delega tion would be visiting Dhaka later this month, followed by a 71member business delegation in April to explore investment oppor-tunities in Bangladesh. He claimed Taiwan would also import manpower through the new trade representative office registered under the BoIAct.

Foreign ministry officials how ever could not say whether the BoI could allow such a country to open its trade office with whom Bangladesh does not have diplo matic ties.

"We've also listed a few others who may desert the party, but we will not put pressure on them to stay with us," said an influential BNP leader, on condition of anonymity.

# India ready to offer

#### FROM PAGE 12

the issue. But he hastened to assure that things could move faster if Bangladesh made a review petition to the Anti-dumping Authority of India

In an exclusive interview with the news agency here yesterday, Shashank said trade bodies in Bangladesh had been requested to organise buyer-seller meetings and trade exhibitions in India to market Bangladeshi products over there.

There is a yawning trade gap between India and Bangladesh, with the balance heavily tilted towards New Delhi.

In 2002-03 fiscal year, India's exports to Bangladesh were worth \$1354.98 million against only & 84.08 million worth of exports from Bangladeshi to India.

About India-Bangladesh negotiations on FTA (Free Trade Agreement), the Indian foreign secretary said simultaneously with Safta (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) it would be useful to move ahead with the bilateral FTA as well, because under this framework Bangladesh could get access to Indian market for several goods of export interest.

Equally important, in the post-MFA (Multi Fiber Agreement) period, garment industries of Bangladesh could find an alternative market in India, which could be discussed in a bilateral FTA along with issues like non-tariff and paratariff barriers, Shashank added.

He pointed out that both India and Bangladesh registered remarkable growth rates in their economies, which augurs well for fostering economic cooperation and trade partnership for mutual bene-

country is now awaiting response from Bangladesh to a proposed About India's commitment of providing \$100 million for povertycomposite package for resolution of alleviation projects in the Saarc (South Asian Association for the demarcation issues offered by Regional Cooperation) countries, excluding India, Shashank said India during the last meeting of the Joint Boundary Working Group, India is also committed to funding held in March 2002.

#### Small NGO FROM PAGE 12

prepare these projects.

secretary said.

sectors.

gas pipelines.

received from donors, general council membership fees, interests/earnings from bank deposits, profit from investments and money from any other source will also be added to the BSNF fund.

tions to identify projects among the

regional countries so that the Indian

commitment can be implemented

at the earliest," the Indian foreign

that he did not come here to discuss

the issue, but mentioned the pres-

ence of an Indian business delega-

tion in Dhaka as they are interested

in promoting gas-based projects, particularly in power and fertilizer

Lanka and Thailand Economic

on energy cooperation. "But we

have to decide how to cooperate

with each other, not only in gas, but also in oil, hydroelectricity. Saarc is

also talking about energy grid, oil-

through Bangladesh to take gas to India from Myanmar and Thailand,

he said, "We have not made up our

mind. There is a private-level initia-

Replying to a question on India's

Asked about the Indira-Mujib

agreement, Shashank admitted that

he implementation of the Land

Boundary Agreement of 1974

remained unresolved for long. But

India is committed to working with

Bangladesh to jointly address and

The Indian official said that his

resolve the remaining issues.

proposed river-linking project, the

Indian foreign secretary said the project was still in a conceptual

tive about such a pipeline."

About a proposed gas-pipeline

About gas export, Shashank said

FROM PAGE 12 insists on the stand on requirement of multiple visa for carrying import-export documents by C&F agents of both Bangladesh and India. The Indian C&F agents, on the other hand, have refused to

abide by what they have termed as self-imposed rule of the BSF. Bangladesh government is incurring a loss of Tk 2 crore in revenue a day due to suspension of import-export through Benapole land port. Besides, the strike has left a negative impact on national economy as it hampers production

the expenditure on formation of a in mills and Industries, particularly taskforce by the Saarc countries to in garment units due to severe crisis of raw materials imported "It is now up to the Saarc secrefrom India. tary general to arrange consulta-

Benapole land customs has sought intervention of the National Board of Revenue to help end the deadlock. Customs sources have termed the situation as alarming, saying that perishable goods worth several crores of take have already gone rotten, causing huge financial loss to Bangladeshi importers.

### 500 tigers

#### FROM PAGE 12

He said Saarc and BIMST-EC 362 tigers in Bangladesh and around 250 in the Indian part of the (Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Sundarbans. Cooperation) countries had agreed

On the downside, only 34 of the 1546 pugmarks came from tiger cubs, indicating a possible decline in breeding.

Only five teams out of 32 actually saw tigers -- a total of seven -- during the weeklong census from February 26 to March 3, ministry officials said during the briefing.

Earlier, around 1400 pugmarks were found during a similar census conducted in the Indian part of the Sundarbans, which accounts for roughly 40 percent of the entire forest straddling India's eastern state of West Bengal and the southern tip of Bangladesh.

In July, India and Bangladesh will simultaneously disclose the final result of the joint census after analysing the pugmarks using a special computer software.

"Both countries are using the same software, so there is no chance of duplication. The number of tigers will indicate the kind of future action plan necessary to save the forest.

said M Aminul Islam, a biodiversity expert of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The UNDP granted \$50,000 for the Bangladesh part of the census.

already included on US visa and those finger images collected at the port of entry under the US VISIT programme.

in addition to the digitised photos

Talking about this new programme, Ambassador Harry K Thomas said, "The United States continues to balance freedom of entry with the need to maintain the security of its borders. The US VISIT programme and the collection of biometric data will enhance the security of US citizens, residents and visitors while safeguarding the privacy of our visitors.

showing commitments to achieving twin goals of fast economic growth and improving economic wellbeing of the people," MCCI said. Tolerance, respect for each other's views, and consultation on major issues of national interest are

absent in the Bangladeshi political culture. And this political trend makes the pursuit for economic growth and welfare of people, more than 35 percent of whom live below the poverty line, all the more diffi-

cult, the chamber said.

## Delhi offers diplomatic

tion, he said

#### FROM PAGE 1

anti-dumping duties were imposed on lead acid batteries imported not only from Bangladesh but from China, Korea and Japan.

Following complaints lodged by Exide Industries and Amara Raja Batteries, two local companies, India in March 2001 imposed an anti-dumping duty on maintenance-free and non-maintenancefree lead acid batteries imported from Bangladesh for use in automobiles and industries.

The companies alleged Bangladeshi companies were selling batteries on the Indian market at a price below the normal. The Anti-dumping and Allied Duties Department of Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry opened an investigation into the accusations. On receiving the probe report, New Delhi imposed the duties on Bangladeshi batteries as an anti-dumping measure.

The Bangladesh government approached the WTO in February this year, seeking consultations and redress on the issue.

In a communication to the WTO, questioning the veracity of the claims made by the complainants, Dhaka said the process adopted by India in sanctioning the duties was not fair under the WTO rules.

Shashank said such trade disputes should not be allowed to linger when India and Bangladesh were resuming free trade agree-ment (FTA) talks. Both the countries should go for diplomatic efforts as first steps to resolve their differences, he said.

With signing of the framework agreements for South Asian Free Frade Area (Safta) and the BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Co-operation) FTA, the region was moving forward in the right direc-

politics in the greater interest people," said Mannan, also chair-man of the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry, after tendering his resignations

from parliament and the ruling alliance leader BNP.

Mahi, son of former president and initiator of the alternative stream AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, echoed the same voice.

They said they sent their resig-nation letters to Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar under article 67(1) and to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Under 70(1), the membership of a lawmaker falls vacant as soon as they resign from the party that nominated them in the last general elections.

The speaker is likely to inform the House about their resignations on March 16 when the Jatiya Sangsad sits after 11-day recesses.

The last parliament saw resig nation of four lawmakers: Abdul Kader Siddiqui, Bir Uttam, resigned from the ruling Awami League to float his Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League and opposition BNP legislators Hasibur Rahman Swapan and Dr Alauddin lost their membership by joining the council of ministers against the partvline.

BNP legislator Akhtaruzzaman, also a retired army major, lost his membership after being expelled by his party for joining parliament disregarding its boycott decision.

### Finance ministry

FROM PAGE 12 financial support to them for triple super phosphate (TSP) and potash (MoP).

This year the government had to order special public sector import of potash due to its shortage in the market.

Meeting sources said the prime minister was apprised of how to attain a fresh breakthrough in farm production and augment output of oil seeds and pulse seeds.

The meeting was attended by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Minister of State for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Principal Secretary to the prime minister Kamal Siddiqui, Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, Agriculture Secretary Abdul Halim, Chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council M Nurul Alam, Director General (DG) of the Department of Agriculture Extension Tariq Hasan and DG of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute Shahidul Islam. Maj Mannan, Mahi

#### vacant Badruddoza's son Mahi B Chowdhury for Munshiganj-1 **ALTERNATIVE STRIPE**

Introducing Mannan as the memconstituency (Srinagar) signed their resignation letters in the presence of ber secretary of the proposed committee of the alternative platform, Badruddoza said the full committee the former president at his would be announced at a public meeting at Muktangon today.

"Life has become very difficult. It does not seem there is any government. I could not do anything for people in such a situation," Mannan said. He will formally announce his political programmes at the rally and the committee will form a political party in two months.

"Parliament is ineffective. I don't "A fragile condition prevails in the country. Prices are out of the easy reach of people. The crime wave is rising by the day," Mannan caid find any reason to stay in. I resigned to join alternative politics, added. he

Echoing his voice, Mahi said, "I cannot take the responsibility for said. The former army officer alleged corruption and crime of the BNP. the BNP did not keep a single elec-tion pledge it made to come to There was no environment in the BNP where I can express my views. power. The latest development in poli-

He claimed many BNP parlia-mentarians echoed his views and tics coincided with an opposition campaign to force the government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to said: "I hope they will quit too and join us to do something for people."

Badruddoza, BNP's founding secretary general, hailed Mannan's entry to his platform as pro-democratic, saying: "The resigna-tion is against the failure of the government. This is a positive development in politics. I hope the step will encourage leaders and workers of all parties, including the

BNP. Awami League, who later formed Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League.

The breach between Badruddoza and the BNP opened with his resignation as president in June 2002 after ruling party activists exerted pressure on him. Elected as president by parliament in November 2001, Badruddoza faced a threat of impeachment from parliamentarians.

The veteran physician returned to his old profession and hit the But Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, another BNP stal-wart, told BBC Radio he was surmedia spotlight, speaking against the government for corruption and prised by the resignation of Mannan, not Mahi. lawlessness and floating a concept of an alternative political stream in Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil says that more resignations are waiting in the wings that will begin the "end of the government" November last year.

Born in Noakhali, Mannan won he general election in 1991 from the Dhaka-10 constituency on the BNP plank against Awami League President Sheikh Hasina. Mannan served as a state minister for textiles and civil aviation and tourism in 1991-1996.

ers would join his political stripe soon after resigning from the BNP that formed an alliance with three The AL candidate, Dr HBM Iqbal, defeated him in the 1996 election. other parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, and was voted into office in Mannan was again elected as law-maker in the 2001 general election defeating Iqbal. He was the chair-The lawmakers are lying low under pressure from the BNP and sharp intelligence watch, the man of the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry.

Mahi, the youngest lawmaker, joined the BNP in 1992 and was elected as lawmaker in by-polls in 2002 after the seat fell vacant with his father becoming the president.

He mentioned the Indian govsioned by Indian Prime Minister

On non-tariff barriers, he said the Joint Group of Customs would meet in New Delhi on March 16-17 to sort out the problems.

Shashank also called for organising more trade shows in both countries and opening an FBCCI office in India to increase Bangladesh's exports to India.

Presiding over the meeting, FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo said non-tariff and paratariff barriers in the forms of countervailing duties, surcharges, central and provincial sales taxes, luxury duties, certification and quality approval requirement were hindering the bilateral trade.

Foreign Secretary Shamsher M Chowdhury, Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri, Bangladesh's High Commissioner in New Delhi Hemayetuddin and Japanese Ambassador Matsushiro Horiguchi were present, among others, at the meet.

ernment's offer of an initial contri-bution of US\$100 million to a poverty alleviation fund, envi-Atal Behari Vajpayee.

On facilitating cross-border trade, Shashank said New Delhi was working on a project to establish six land customs stations at

Deploring a meagre five-percent intra-Saarc (South Asian Associa-tion for Regional Cooperation) trade, the Indian for-

eign secretary said such agreements would improve the situation by augmenting regional trade.

As 1.3 billion people of the region are living with only US\$460 per capita income against a world average of US\$7,000, the countries in the region must start collective struggle against poverty, he

observed.

different border points with Bangladesh including Petrapole, Dawki, Sutarkhandi and Agartala.