RU recruits start fresh agitation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

employees of the Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday announced fresh agitation programmes as the authorities failed to confirm their jobs in last two days.

The aggrieved employees said they will hold sit-in strike in front of the administrative building today and go for tougher movements including hanging up admission tests and enforcing indefinite strike.

They gathered near the administrative building all day long and had meetings with RU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Faisul Islam Faruki, Registrar Abdus Salam and Treasurer Prof Abdul Zabbar Khan.

RU authorities, virtually sandwiched between employees' agitation and High Court (HC) order against the controversial recruitment, are unlikely to find an easy solution to the problem.

Talking to newsmen, VC Faisul Islam Faruki blamed Pro VC KAM Shahadat Hossain Mondol for the anomalies, saying that the latter was chairman of the recruitment com-

"Yet we are looking into the legal aspects of the matter and trying to find out ways for a settlement," he

to re-appoint the recruits to vacant posts, adding that he sent an emergency letter to the registrar to identify vacant posts and advertise for

ppoint the 546 employees till the Cstay order remains'

Registrar Abdus Salam said there are only 255 vacant posts in different departments and offices under the university and all departments and offices were asked to report whether they can create any new posts.

ACC busy mending

Besides, a meeting was scheduled to be held yesterday at the new ACC

of Matin and that they would decide

does not want to be with us," he said

The ACC, meanwhile, has sent only a draft rule on screening of ex-Bac staff for the president's approval, although some ex-Bac officials had told journalists that five to seven draft rules were sent for presidential

Commissioner Maniruddin

in the next 15 days they will prepare

legality of those committees formed before formulation of the rules, but the ACC did not dissolve them.

need to be reconstituted," he added.

Sources said one of the commissioners has reservations about the draft rule on screening and added that it would not be possible to axe any Bac staff if the criterion cited in the draft rule is followed. For this, the draft rule regarding screening will be formulated again.

A commissioner seeking not to be named said it will not be wise to absorb ex-Bac staff who had influenced the chairman in taking some decisions and steps to advance their own tenerest is noring ACC Act and without holding meeting or taking

their properties.

their lists of properties, but we (commission members) are yet to do so. If necessary, we will make the disclo-

bined opposition programmes, has now kept itself aloof from a countrywide demonstration on January 15.

The 14-party combined opposition yesterday at a meeting decided to hold the demonstrations to protest the price hike of diesel, kerosene and other necessities, but the CPB leaders said the party would not join the

Senior leaders of the main opposi-tion Awami League (AL), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), National Awami Party (Nap) and the components of 11-Party alliance excepting the CPB attended the meeting held at the AL central office.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil however said the absence of CPB leaders in the opposition meeting would not hamper the movement.

Contacted, CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said the party had no connection with the January 15 programme. "This is a programme of Awami League, JSD, Nap and the pro-AL groups in the 11-Party," he toldThe DailyStar last night.

The Awami League is doing its own politics declaring hartals by its front organisations when a common movement of the opposition parties was going on, Selim said blaming the AL high-ups for the bleak situation in the united platform.
"They (AL) even entertained war

criminal Salauddin Qader Chowdhury when he visited Sheikh Hasina's residence," the left leader said expressing discontent.

Salauddin, parliamentary affairs advisor to the prime minister, met Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence on January 2 to invite her to his son's wedding.

"Prior to the meeting with the Awami League and others, the 11party leaders held a meeting in the morning to set simultaneous antigovernment programmes. But, we failed to reach a consensus and the meeting ended fruitless," Selim

"Some pro-Awami League par-ties' in the 11-Party alliance are interested to do politics from a common platform with Awami League,"

Asked if it is a retreat of the CPB from the ongoing simultaneous movement of the combined opposition on a common nine-point charter of demands, Selim however said, "No, we are in the simultaneous

Rashed Khan Menon, president of

Pro VC Mondol said he was trying

He, however, said,"We can't

Authorities can manage nearly 300 posts to re-appoint, but in no way they can confirm jobs to 546 employees they recruited allegedly on political pressures and for bribes in April last year, sources said.

appointment of Reza-e-Rabbi as the secretary of the commission by the

headquarters at Agargaon but was rescheduled fortoday.

The ACC chairman said that they were yet to accept resignation letter about the matter at today's meeting.
"We cannot hold him back if he

when asked about the resignation.

Ahmed told reporters yesterday that a draft rule regarding inquiry and investigation into corruption had been formulated and it would be finalised at today smeeting.
The ACC chairman how

the ACC organogram and five draft rules before sending those for presidential nod.

According to the ACC Act, once the rule is approved the commission will decide which of the former Bac staff will be in the commission. But, a few days after taking charge of the ACC on November 23, the chairman and a commissioner formed two committees for screening ex-Bac staff and another for formulating

"The members of the committees cannot get down to screening before their own job status is defined clearly," said Commissioner Maniruzzaman Mian. He also said even the committees have not started

Mian said it will not be a good idea to include controversial ex-Bac staff in the committees. "The committees

consents of the members of the Anumber of Bac staff, meanwhile, did not make a disclosure of their properties and assets to the ACC by

mission. Even the ACC chairman and the members did not provide a list of

Almost all staff have submitted

decision of staging countrywide demonstration along with AL and other parties was taken at the 11party meeting. The Communist Party only

opposed Selim's view and said the

differed with the decision," he said. Yesterday's meeting of the combined opposition was attended, among others, by Amir Hossain Amu, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, Alhaj Abdus Samad, Pankaj

Bhattacharya and Nurul Islam. The meeting extended support to the January 12 hartal in the Khulna region called by trade unions in demand for reopening the closed state-owned mills and factories

First Test

the match live.

Zimbabwe have won four of the six previous Tests between the two table-bottomers of the ICC ranking while the remaining two matches were washed

Despite winning all three series, Zimbabwe, without their big name cricketers, will start as underdogs against the Tigers who have lost 31 out

of the 34 Tests they have played so far. For the young and inexperienced Zimbabwe, it will be a great relief as they will play their first Test after serving a temporary more-than-seven-months ban imposed by the ICC. The visitors last played against Sri Lanka at home in May 2004 and their substandard performance forced the game's world governing body to hand

them the temporary suspension. The series is also very important for Bangladesh with suggestions pouring in from all corners to cut down on their away matches for poor performance as

The Tigers, however, showed glimpses of improvement in the oneday series against India which they lost 2-1 last month.

Taking inspiration from the maiden ODI victory at home, against mighty India, Bangladesh will pin hopes on their spinners to deliver the goods. The wicket in Chittagong has been pre-pared to assist the local spinners. It is also expected to provide good bounce

in the beginning. Sri Lanka's S Vijaywardhene and Pakistani Asad Rouf will stand in the match as umpires and Akhteruddin Shahin will be the TV umpire. Roshan Mahanama of Sri Lanka is the match

Court to decide charge framing against Partha Jan 13

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court on January 13 will decide about framing charges against Saibal Saha Partha, arrested on suspicion of emailing a threat to kill Leader of the Opposition Sheikh

Partha was taken to the Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions ludge's Court under tight security for hearing on his discharge petition

After the hearing, Judge Rabiul Hassan (in-charge) of the court set he date.

Earlier, the defence lawyers submitted a petition for discharging Partha from the charges brought against him both in the FIR (first information report) and charge

Moving the petition, the defence lawyers told the court that the charges brought against Partha were false and fabricated. But the prosecution lawyers argued the charges were primarily proved and prayed for framing charges against him.

Earlier on August 25, intelligence igencies took Partha into their custody and handed him over to Dhanmondi police on August 29.
The email sent to the Prothom

Alo on August 23 from hikmatulzihad@yahoo.com claimed responsibility for the August 21 carnage on an Awami League (AL) rally that left 23 people

killed and over 200 injured. It also threatened to kill Hasina, also the main opposition AL chief, in a more planned way in seven days.

Seven killed in Rangpur road crash

Seven people died and 35 others were injured in a bus--truck collision on the Rangpur-Bogra highway in Peerganj upazila in the early hours

Police said the accident occurred at around 1:15am when a Dhaka bound bus from Rangpur crashed into a truck coming from the opposite direction on Angrare Bridge, killing four bus passengers on the spot. Three died on the way to Rangpur Medical College and

The dead are Ranjit, 30, Amulya, 35, Jagodish, 35, Rana, 8, Rashedul, 40, Shajahan, 45, and Shukur Ali, 50.

Of the injured, nine were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital while the rest to the upazila

health complex. A case was filed with Peerganj

Small industries

The CDSMI identified 11 priority areas for setting up SMEs: Electronics, software, light engineering, agro-processing, leather, knitwear, plastic, synthetics, education, and healthcare and diagnostic

Benapole strike

FROM PAGE 12 Islam yesterday failed to end the

In a bid to persuade port users to withdraw their strike, the government on Tuesday decided to withdraw 50 per cent of the enhanced charges on warehouse and equip-

Rajuk to take ACC

FROM PAGE 1 for approving designs and plans of buildings in the capital without lawful authority.

No fewer than 200 such files have disappeared from Rajuk office. Rajuk sources said those files were either stolen from the office or the officers did not maintain files, because those files had to do with unauthorised approval of building designs.

'We have come to know about 200 files. The number could be far more than that, as there is not any official document in our office," said a high official of Rajuk, requesting anonym-

One Rajuk official said those officers would provide illegally approved designs to building owners but did not keep any documents on them in the Rajuk office.

The authorities came to know of the matter when some inspectors found approved designs with the building owners but no files on them at Rajuk. Later, the authorities probed the case and terminated the three officers but let two others go.

Abdul Latif Helali, authorised officer of Rajuk, told The Daily Star that the illegal buildings include Happy Rahman Plaza at Bangla Motor intersection, Aziz Co-operative Super Market and another 14 buildings of a media house.

A section of corrupt Rajuk officers are making quick money by allowing most of the building owners to develop the structures without proper plans, slowly making the city unliveable, a Rajuk official said. According to experts, Rajuk offi-

cials do not comply with the Rajuk

codes and, as a result, the city has been expanding in an unplanned way, triggering unhealthy living conditions, traffic congestion, filling up of wetlands and commercialisation of also was a listed criminal and accused residential areas. in more than one criminal cases.

Plan for engineering

"We have placed a demand to the principal secretary to the prime

minister to form an expert committee consisting of BUET (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology) teachers and other experts to asses the quality of PWD's work," said a high official of the PWD. 'If the expert committee recommends setting up mini engineering cells, we will accept it," her said

seeking anonymity. The PWD's manpower includes 600 graduate engineers and 1,200 diploma engineers for construction and maintenance work involving about Tk 700 crore a year. The PWD does not however do such work for the Roads & Highways Department, railway, Telegraph & Telephone Board and Postal Department.

The ministries for health and education in some cases also go for their construction work. But slow implementation and poor quality of construction work done by the education ministry raised questions, sources pointed out. The Planning Ministry in a report in the middle of last year mentioned

try. The report also said the ministry takes a lot of time in implementing its constructions, raising the cost. "The PWD is responsible for any mismanagement and damage of

poor quality of construction of class-

rooms done by the education minis-

government structures due to poor quality of construction," a high official of the department said.

'If mini engineering cells are established in different ministries, they will have to hire consultants for construction as they do not have the expertise. The hired consultants will have no responsibility once construction is complete," he said.

Khulna

meeting also condemned negligence of patrol police to nab the attackers.

Dip Azad survived as the bomb at hit his back did not explode. The spot is near Moilapota polic box and patrol police were found unmoved when the bomb throwers ran away, eyewitnesses said.

None including patrol police helped me when I chased the bomb throwers, said Mokhlesur Rahman Pintu, proprietor of AL Amin Pharmacy who was with Dip Azad during the incident. Dip Azad received death threats several times from Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Janajuddho) and

New Biplobi Communist Party for writing on their terrorist activities.

Journalists Manik Saha and

Humayun Kabir Balu and police subedar Ashraf were killed by extremists in the city last year.

Cabinet body to help

FROM PAGE 1 jute owes Petrobangla Tk 54 crore, public works Tk 26 crore, home Tk 8.48 crore, communications Tk 4.89 crore, education Tk 4.22 crore, health Tk 4.24 crore and telecom Tk 2.9 crore, agriculture Tk 1.76 crore, civil aviation Tk 1.40 crore, local government Tk 1.24 crore and forest Tk 1.26 crore. Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation owes Tk 6.83 crore.

The ministries of fisheries, industries, land, water, information, shipping and Liberation War affairs, Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) and Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and Dhaka City Corporation are also on the list of defaulters.

Explaining the dilemma that turned the PDB into the biggest gas bill defaulter, Saifur said, "The PDB cannot pay its gas bills because its clients do not pay its electricity bills. I have told the power ministry to clear all government arrears of the PDB." Municipalities and mosques also do not pay utility bills, Saifur men-

tioned, adding, "We'll dir with them to decide how to deal with the situation."

mittee, the state oil and gas authority said the huge amount of unrealised bills has made it difficult for it to clear the millions of dollars monthly payments to international oil companies to purchase gas. Saifur said, "Unocal has already told the government that it will not accept

In its appeal to the cabinet com-

Asked about the Tk 4.52 crore the finance ministry owes to Petrobangla in unpaid gas bills, the finance minister claimed all gas bills of his ministry

arrears for more than a quarter."

He said, "The finance ministry, being the most generous ministry of Bangladesh, clears the pending bills of all government agencies, which no other finance ministry in the world The finance ministry receives over

Tk 3,328 crore a year from Petrobangla in revenues. Last year Petrobangla paid to the ministry Tk 1,823 crore in Vat (value-added tax) and supplementary duties, Tk 322 crore for debt service liability, Tk 175 crore as dividend, Tk 162 crore in income tax and Tk 39 crore in sus-

PM calls for crop

FROM PAGE 12

she told a delegation of agriculturists. The prime minister assured that the government would provide all

necessary support to attain selfsufficiency in agricultural products. ing diversified food production, she said Thailand and Malaysia, where weather was not much different from Bangladesh, have achieved remark-

Bangladesh lagged behind. Addressing the newly elected executive committee of Agriculturists Institution, Bangladesh at the International Conference Centre (ICC), Khaleda said agricultural production will have to increase, as

only mills and factories will not be able to take the country ahead. Mentioning her government's top priority on agriculture, she also called for inspiring the farmers for cultivation of soyabean, mustard seeds,

pulses and maize to meet the domestic demand. This will save a handsome amount of money spent on imports and the saved amount can be invested in other agricultural development projects,

"India, Pakistan and Thailand have advanced far," the prime minister said. "Why shall we lag behind?" A 29-member newly elected body of Agriculturists Institution,

Bangladesh led by its President Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil and Secretary General Kabir Ahmed Bhuiyan met the prime minister. Some 14 other agriculturists of different institutions and agriculturist

forums also accompanied the delega-

The prime minister said every inch of land will have to be utilised for agricultural production keeping in

mind that population was increasing, but not the land. number of fruits, once available in Bangladesh, are now coming from foreign countries like Thailand. She stressed the need for increased pro-

Constable stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A rickshaw-puller was arrested in the town yesterday two hours after he stabbed a traffic police constable to

death. Constable Md Selim was on-duty at the town's Kandirpar intersection when Badal, 35, of Mijangazi village in Natore, attacked him at 5:00pm. He stabbed him eight times in his

abdomen and neck and fled. Selim's colleagues rushed him to Comilla Medical College and Hospital where he died after half an

Police seized the rickshaw Badal abandoned on the scene and traced its owner Abdul Matin, who gave

them his whereabouts. Police arrested Badal from Station Road in the city at around 7:00pm.

Two killed in 'crossfire'

FROM PAGE 1 criminals opened fire on them, forcing the police to retaliate. During the exchange of shots, Sangkar and Aslam sustained bullets when they tried to escape from captivity," said Faruq Ahmed, deputy commissioner

of the Detective Branch. Both the injured were declared dead after they were taken to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH). Seven bullets pierced through Sangkar's forehead, chest and other parts of his body while Aslam received one bullet in the head. Assistant Sub-Inspector of police AB Siddique and constables Rafiq and Jahangir also suffered injuries

The law-enforcers seized one revolver, two bullets, one used bullet and 65 bottles of Phensidyle from the spot after the incident.

during the shootout, the police

A team of Cobra had nabbed Aslam, accused in two murder cases, from Mirpur at about 8:00pm on Tuesday. Following his confessional statement, a Cobra-Cheetah joint team arrested Sangkar at Mohakhali at about 10:30pm. A police press release said Sangkar

morning this correspondent found Sangkar lying in a pool of blood with his hands still inside the pockets of his pant. General Secretary of Swechchhasebak League Pankaj

Debnath told The Daily Star that

Sangkar was an active leader of the

organisation. "He was not a criminal. The cases filed against him are politicalones," he said. Sangkar's wife Sucharita said police picked him up from a hotel at Mohakhali on Tuesday night. "Half an hour into his arrest, one Jashim came to me and said police will release him if we provide them with

"About two hours later I reached

and told him that we could not man-

age the sum. The policeman then

asked her to bring at least Tk 3,000 by

Tk 20,000," Sucharita alleged.

Sangkar over his mobile phone. A policeman then took the phone and asked me to bring the money imme-Inter-organisational codiately. In replied that I would not be operation among the GSB, able to manage Tk 20,000 by that night," she said. Sucharita said her sister-in-law Mukta Rani again phoned the police-man, who demanded money earlier,

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Editor of the Dainik Bhorer Kagoj Abed Khan has resigned as per a decision of the daily's board of

Abed Khan

resigns from

Bhorer Kagoj

Khan, also a famous columnist, joined the Bhorer Kagoj as the editor on June 18, 2003.

He requested the publisher of the Bangla daily in a letter yesterday to effect his resignation from January 1. He started his career as a journalist in 1962 with now-defunct Dainik Jehad after graduating from Dhaka

During his long career, he was, in turns, elected president, joint secretary and member of the then East Pakistan Journalists' Union and Dhaka Journalists' Union.

JIC to quiz Hiqma chief again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The self-proclaimed Shahadat-e Al Higma chief, Sayed Kawsar Hussain Siddiki Raja, was again sent to the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka for interrogation yesterday.

Investigation officials said Kawsar needs to be questioned further for information about the patrons of his organisation, the only banned Islamist militant outfit of the country. "We're not at all worried about

Kawsar or his position. But we're

really anxious about the people guiding him," said an investigation official asking not to be named. "Despite being arrested several times, he returned to Al Hiqma activities each time he was released. Moreover, his speeches, sent to the press or found in writing, have

certain inconsistencies," the official

explained.

The JIC earlier interrogated twice, each time for seven days, since his arrest under the section 54 for storming a police station on November 6. Five others who were arrested

during the November 6 attack on Boalia Police Station in the city are now out on bail Sources said another sedition case may be filed against him on

completion of the JIC interrogation.

GLASHAT-DMGH-**ICD** demands ban on Shibir

politics DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Medical College (DMC) unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the ruling BNP, yespolitics of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), student wing of Jamaat-e-

Islami, on the DMC campus. The JCD made the demand at a rally on the DMC campus after the ICS men swooped on them on Tuesday. The incident left some 15 activists of the two organisations injured.

JCD leaders warned ICS to oust them from the campus if they try to organise any political activities there. The JCD men pasted posters on the campus that read, 'No ICS politics

The clash erupted when some

JCD men charged ICS activist Arif for taking his girifriend to his room in Fazle Rabbi Hall on January 1, sources said. At least 15 activists of the JCD and ICS were injured in the Additional police forces have

on the DMC campus'.

been deployed on the tensiongripped campus. The DMC authorities have formed a three-member inquiry committee headed by Prof Amzad Hossain of Orthopaedic department

28pc Dhaka

to probe the incident.

FROM PAGE 1 The Building Code must be followed strictly and methodically, said Atiq A Rahman, executive director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced

Had the recent tsunami struck our

country, the devastation would be

beyond our imagination, Rahman

said, adding, "Let's not spare the chance" to take measures to limit the extent of loss and damage in any such future calamity. A 200km continental shelf, created by a long span of shallow water alluvial deposition, played a signifi-cant role in saving Bangladesh from this year's tsunami. The shelf reduced the speed of the approaching waves, said ASM Maksud Kamal

of the Department of Geology of Dhaka University. Mir Fazlul Karim, director of the Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB), said tsunamis in the Bay of Bengal have a very low frequency -once in every 400 years. Nevertheless, precautionary steps are must to minimise the destruction from any such tsunami, though infrequent.

Meteorological Department, Water Development Board and the armed forces is needed to draw a comprehensive and effective earthquake disaster mitigation plan, he noted. Shamsuddin Ahmed of Unicef also spoke at the session chaired by FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam

Kuwait pledges \$75m for 3 projects

Arabia.

Kuwait has made a fresh pledge of \$75 million to finance three Bangladeshi projects, including the construction of the third Karnaphuli Bridge in Chittagong.

The two other projects to be financed by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) are greater Chittagong Power Transmission and Distribution project (supplementary loan) and Ziaur Rahman Medical College and 500-bed Hospital in Bogra.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait Nazrul Islam Khan apprised journalists in the capital yesterday of the Kuwaiti funding plan.

Briefing the members of Diplomatic Correspondents Association Bangladesh (DCAB) at the Jatiya Press Club, he said Bangladesh has so far received \$387 million in loan from the Gulf state for project financing.

Of the soft credit of \$75 million, Khan said \$ 40 million will be provided for third Karnaphuli Bridge project, \$15 million for greater Chittagong Power Transmission and Distribution project and \$20 million for Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital. In reply to a question, he said

negotiations are on with the Kuwaiti

government for the recruitment of

skilled manpower from Bangladesh

At present about 180,000

in IT, engineering and other sectors.

Besides, some 4,500 defence personnel (both in-service and retired) are working in Kuwait for cleaning up ammunition abandoned by Iraq during the Kuwait-Iraq war. Sixty medical doctors are also employed over there.

Bangladeshi workers, mostly

unskilled, are employed in different

development sectors of Kuwait,

altogether remitting the second

highest amount of wage earnings

from the Middle East after Saudi

"There are enough opportunities for expanding cooperation between Bangladesh and Kuwait," the envoy

He said since the volume of trade between the two countries is quite insignificant, Bangladeshi businessmen can explore market for their products, including garments. Dhaka mainly imports petroleum from the oil-rich Gulf country.

Describing the bilateral relations as excellent, the ambassador said Kuwait Foreign Minister Mohammad Sabah is expected to visit Bangladesh shortly.

Khan, who played a vital role in freeing abducted Bangladeshi driver Abul Kashem from captivity, said the driver was picked up by the Islamic Army of Iraq on October 18 on his way to Baghdad and got freedom "by the grace of Allah".

Bomber kills 15 at Iraq cop academy

REUTERS, Baghdad

A suicide car bomber killed at least 15 people at an Iraqi police academy yesterday, but Prime Minister Iyad Allawi vowed to stick to his timetable for a January 30 election despite escalating attacks. The bomber barreled his way into a

compound in the town of Hilla, south

of Baghdad in a lawless area known as

his explosives-filled vehicle after coming under heavy fire, police spokesman Hadi Hatifsaid. The attack was the latest by insurgents targeting Iraq's US-backed interim government and its fledgling

It came a day after gunmen assassinated Baghdad's provincial gover-11 people outside a police commando headquarters, a surge of violence that drew fresh calls for delaying the national ballot. "The government is committed to

security services in a bloody cam-

paign to sabotage the election.

Allawi told a news conference. "We know some Iraqis fear voting, but we have to overcome those fears." He insisted he had a plan to safeguard voters but gave few details

running the elections on schedule,

except to say more Iraqi troops would

(AL) rally in the capital.

Hasina urges FROM PAGE 12 grenade attack at an Awami League

Thousands of people, party lead-ers and workers greeted the AL chief, her son and daughter-in-law by showering petals and chanting slogans. More than 100 arches were erected on the roads at different points Girls wearing yellow and red-bordered saris welcomed Joy and his

Christine waved their hands with smiling faces in response to the ovation by the crowds. The AL president addressed impromptu rallies at Nimatala Bazar in Sirajdikhan and Sreenagar road crossing in Munshiganj district and Bhanga and Tekerhat in Faridpur district. She left the capital at

wife in Bangalee tradition. Joy and

the evening. Addressing the rallies, Hasina criticised the government for failing to control the prices of essentials. She also blamed the government for allowing the killing of people without trial and reminded that "Khaleda has not been given licence to kill people without trial".

We will not allow them to play

with the fate of the people," Hasina

said, adding: This autocratic regime

must be removed for restoration of

10:30am and reached Tungipara in

democracy and values of the Liberation War. Referring to the cancellation of her previous scheduled visit to Tungipara, the AL chief alleged that she and her family members were obstructed under a conspiracy hatched by the government.

On arrival at Tungipara, Sheikh Hasina, Joy and her wife offered fateha at the mazar of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and placed wreaths there. Earlier, Joy and Christine were

ceremonially greeted by Sheikh Razia Naser, mother of Sheikh Helal MP Awami League central leaders

Kazi Zafrullah MP, Sheikh Selim MP, Sheikh Helal MP, Syed Abul Hossain MP, Zahid Hasan Russell MP, Obaidul Kader, Zahangir Kabir Nanak and Mirza Azam MP accompanied them.

Mosul, the scene of deadly attacks. But raging violence has shattered trust in home-grown security forces that hardly seem able to protect themselves. A hospital official in Hilla, 100 km

52 miles) from Baghdad, said at least-

15 people were killed, including nine

be sent to the northern Sunni city of

policemen, and 25 wounded in the bombing at the police academy, which had been due to hold a graduathe "Triangle of Death," and blew up tion ceremony. Hours earlier, a car bomb target-

> ing a US military convoy killed two Iraqi bystanders in western Baghdad The Iraqi militant group Army of Ansar al-Sunna, which on December 21 week mounted the deadliest suicide attack on Americans since the start of the war with an attack on a US base in Mosul, claimed responsi-

bility for the bombing. Govt shortens tender process for food import

STAFF CORRESPONDENT The government yesterday decided in principle to amend food procurement regulations to quicken the process amidst apprehension that depleting food reserve and a low Aman output might necessitate

emergency import of food in the

The Cabinet Committee on

shortest possible time.

sensitive issue.

Economic Affairs at a meeting took the decision of shortening the time frame for food procurement tender to 21 days from 45 days now. Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, who chaired the meeting, said the decision was taken

to expedite food import as food is a

The floods last year caused losses of crops but the government is yet to get a final estimate of Aman output, If the prime minister approves yesterday's decision, the food ministry would also be able to procure food through bilateral negotiations

avoiding open bidding process in

case of emergency needs, meeting

government's food reserve now

According to official records, the

sources told The Daily Star

stands at 6.38 lakh tonnes, much lower than the critical food safety reserve of eight lakh tonnes. The government's internal food procurement drive also hit a snag as it could procure only two tonnes of rice till late December against a target of two lakh tonnes in the current procurement season --November to February -- because of

Market price of rice soured to Tk 16 a kg in the northern region wholesale markets while the government offered a rate of only Tk 13.10 a kg with almost no response from the Against this backdrop, the food

flood-induced losses of Aman.

ministry has planned to import 1.5 lakh tonnes of rice and procure one lakh tonnes from domestic market, Food Secretary Siddigur Rahman Choudhury said however the minis-

try has decided to import rice but the volume of import is yet to be final-

CPB won't join the Workers' Party of Bangladesh,