RMG workers

FROM PAGE 1 death of a co-worker, and agitating

for realisation of several demands. The agitation joined by workers from around 50 garment factories vesterday was peaceful, excepting a

brief clash between police and work-

ers in front of the Police Staff College

at Mirpur Section-14 at around 2:00

demonstrators as they vandalised some 10 vehicles on the main road in the area. The workers also pelted

police with stones for a short while. Thousands of residents of the area found it difficult to reach their destinations during the morning rush hours as vehicles could only ply through Mirpur Section-1. And after office hours, a large number of people had to walk their way back home.

BGMEA leaders said factories in the areas, which were closed due to the demonstrations, incurred huge losses. They however could not give any estimate of the losses right now.

Workers of almost all factories in Mirpur area skipped work since 8:00am to express solidarity with the demonstrating workers and barricaded Rokeya Sarani from Mirpur-10 roundabout to Sheorapara, and the road leading to Mirpur-14 from

Mirpur-2via Mirpir-10 roundabout. They did not allow any motorised vehicles through the road, nor rickshaws.

A large number of police in riot gear were seen at different points but they did not intercept the workers.

Many shops and business establishments were either closed or kept their shutters partially down.

Workers of many other garments including Moonlight, Rolex Fashion Ltd, Radester and BMB joined the demonstration. They alleged that the factory owners forced them to work overtime but did not pay for it properly, stopped providing treatment facilities for sick workers and did not pay wages and over time bill in due They also demanded pay rise

saying that they are finding life too difficult now due to skyrocketing prices of rice and some other essen-

BGMEA-OWNER-WORKERS'

chairman of SQ Group, BGMEA leaders and workers' leaders decided to form a committee to investigate whether a female worker (Salma) of SQ Sweater Ltd was killed or she died report," Parvez said.

A large number of people were seen

in long queues in front of the outlet

at the TCB building at Karwan Bazar.

are selling sova bean at a low price

compared to the current market

rate, we are making a profit of Tk 12

against each five-litre soya bean

before the price hike and we shall be

able to continue selling it from our

A huge number of people mostly

women were seen standing in

queues in front of the outlets for

for an hour to buy rice, onion and

sophomore of the Department of

Accounting at Tejgaon College at the

He said the authorities con-

cerned should increase the number

of counters for selling rice so that

people can buy rice at the outlets

A former scientific officer of

Bangladesh Agricultural Research

Institute, preferring anonymity,

said, "I've come to the BDR outlet

because I'm no more able to pur-

chase rice and oil at high rates from

outside market after my retire-

He urged the government to set

up such markets in every part of the

country to ease the plight of the

poor and low-income groups who

have been hard hit by the price

correspondent that he came to the

BDR-run market at Jakir Hossain

road of Mohammadpur at about

10:00am and collected his rice after

five hours, at 3:00pm. "I could earn

at least Tk 100 had I paddled rick-

shaw during the five hours," he

People were seen thronging the

"Though many people come to

the market everyday, we've no plan

to increase the number of (BDR-

run) markets soon", Colonel

Mojibul Haque, commander of

three kilograms of rice to each

customer in a bid to check selling of

rice outside the (BDR-run) market,"

Meanwhile, our Benapole corre-

pondent reports that National

Board of Revenue yesterday

directed the authorities concerned

open on Fridays and Saturdays to

speed up unloading shipments of

Indian rice following the unprece-

dented price hike of the staple grain

of rice through Benapole port yes-

terday, a total of 44,433 metric tons

of rice have been imported under

Benapole Customs House in last 11

Truckloads of rice are now wait-

ing at Petrapol port of India to enter

With the import of 4,000 tonnes bullets.

to keep customs offices and ports

"We're not selling more than

Operation Dal-Bhat 2007, said.

ne added.

this week.

BDR markets as early as 5:00am.

A rickshaw-puller told this

outlet on Indira road playground.

edible oil," said Sariful Haque, a

"I have been waiting in the queue

nours to buy rice.

without any hassle.

stock for another month," he added.

"We stockpiled soya bean oil

A TCB official said, "Although we

as she was not given, said BGMEA

Salma's co-workers alleged that the authorities had forced her to work at night shift on December 30, 2007, although she was ill. As her condition deteriorated, she was taken home at around 3:00am and shediedanhourlater.

The meeting also decided that the Police clubbed and dispersed the SQ Group chairman will handover the compensation money -- Tk 100,000 -- to the family members of Salma very soon.

> "We have reached a consensus at the negotiation and we have withdrawn our agitation programme from today. The abnormal situation at the SQ Group emerged from a misunderstanding," said workers' leader Zahidul Islam Zahid at a press briefing after the closed-door meeting with SQ Group Chairman Gulam Faruque, BGMEA President Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez) and other leaders.

Whether Salma was killed or she died due to other reasons would be investigated by the committee members in the next three months, Zahid

He urged the chairman of the SQ Group to re-appoint soon the workers forced to resign as the agitation began on December 30.

At the briefing, Gulam Faruque saidhe will re-open the factory in one or two days but kept mum on reappointment of the retrenched

He urged the workers to join their

The SQ Group has suffered loss of both money and reputation due to the workers' agitation over a very simple incident, he said.

He also said his factory might also lose orders from foreign buyers due

Parvez said the probe body will comprise officials of SQ Group, DGFI, DMP, workers' leaders, leaders of the BGMEA and other authorities concerned both in government and private sectors. "But the factory will run in two-

shifts until submission of the investigation report. The committee is scheduled to submit its report in three months," Parvez said. The committee will also see if it is

The tripartite meeting between the reasonable to run the factory in two shifts or not, he said.

"The next decision about the operation of the factory will be taken on the basis of the committee

Dinajpur, Sirajganj, Manikganj,

essentials, especially rice.

bles instead of rice.

through," he said.

Benazir's Pakistan People's

Party (PPP) has ridiculed the gov

ernment account of her death

which said that the shooter had

missed her and that she had died

fracturing her skull by smashing

her head against her vehicle's

investigation, something govern-

ment officials have ruled out, but

Musharraf announced Wednesday,

nation since Bhutto's death, that a

Scotland Yard team was on the way.

After exchanging 50 rounds of

bullet with the policemen, Bakkar's

associates fled the scene leaving

Bakkar to the Chittagong Medical

College and Hospital where the on-

duty doctors performed an opera-

tion on him and removed four

bullets, a gun, an LG and six car-

Officer-in-charge of Khulshi

Police Station Kazi Shahabuddin,

Assistant Sub-inspector Harunur

Rashid and Constable Abdul

Wadud were also injured in the

two fresh cases against Bakkar.

murder, robbery and rape.

Khulshi police yesterday filed

Bakkar, a top criminal backed by

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD)

already had 19 cases filed against

him on different charges including

tridges from the scene.

incident

Police took seriously injured

'Kana' Bakkar

FROM PAGE 20

The party demanded a UN

Netrakona, Khulna, Sylhet and

Bandarban correspondents

reported hardships of the poor who

cannot cope with rising prices of

Sirajganj correspondent said, add-

ing that some people took to vegeta-

Jobeda Khatun, 55, of

Price hike has forced some peo-

comment is reported to have added to this volatility on the rice market, pushing the prices one

Rice prices stable According to market sources, in the last two days, the price of perkgrice has shot up by Tk 5-7.

Different varieties of rice now sell between Tk 35 and 42 per kilo-

The paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), which is operating some essential commodity-selling outlets across the country, has also raised the price of rice by Tk 5 per ple to change food habit, our kgtoTk25.

Donors

FROM PAGE 1

Dhanbandhi village told The Daily Star yesterday that she ate radish request for 5 lakh tonnes of rice. curry with little rice in the noon The government made the because she could not buy rice request to donors at a meeting on following the price hike. November 27, saying it would pur-

Our Netrakona correspondent chase another 5 lakh tonnes itself. reports: Soya bean oil sold at Tk 105 The overall rice shortage this year vesterday though it ranged between s 29 lakh tonnes. Tk 90 and 95 a few days ago. Prices of

The WFP and FAO have proposed palm oil rose to Tk 85 from Tk 75 and better-quality palm oil jumped to Tk undertaking of a crop supply assess-87 from Tk 79 ment to review what is required but Our Manikganj correspondent are still waiting for an official governreports that low-income people are ment request, acting FAO represenpassing their days half-fed or withtative Lalita Bhattacharya told The out any meal while people in the Daily Star yesterday.

middle-income brackets are also WFP resident representative suffering a lot due to the price hike Douglas Broderick told The Daily Star that the UN system can provide Musharraf denies food aid in case of emergencies but the government will have to appeal FROM PAGE 16 to individual donors to arrange the with an intention of hiding some secrets or that the intelligence money for the 5 lakh tonnes of rice.

agencies instructed them to hide He, however, said the WFP is secrets," Musharraf told reporters ready to assist the government in summoned to the presidential procuring and shipping the rice and palace for a news conference. is already bringing in 30,000 tonnes "It is just inefficiency on the part of rice by the end of January for the of these people who think things cyclone-hit areas to lessen the govhave to be cleared and the road has ernment's burden. to be cleared and traffic has to go

A number of donor countries also advised the government to ask international lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) if they are in need of additional funds. according to donor agency sources.

A high official of one donor agency told The Daily Star that with a foreign reserve of around \$5.5 billion Bangladesh should purchase the 5 lakh tonnes of rice--which is estimated to cost around \$200 millionwith its own money.

in his first major address to the Another senior official said, "Until we have proper numbers, we cannot take a view on the matter." Senior officials of other donor countries echoed the view, saying they are waiting for the WFP assessments to

decide on the matter. Donors also suggested long-term government measures to increase agriculture production, ease fertiliser supply, and better manage food inflation to meet the recurrent food shortages in the country.

AL now wants

The law enforcers recovered 13 FROM PAGE 1

taking timely actions to control the price hike of essentials is the main cause of the crisis. The AL would observe

Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day on January 10 in a befitting manner. AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said the party has already chalked out elaborate programmes including a discussion on January 10 at Institution of Engineers Bangladesh Auditorium to mark the day.

Rice crisis

FROM PAGE 1

Gen Moeen

the Cyclone Sidr victims.

ing down the prices."

due to increased fuel price.

it, Insha-Allah," he said

how to control it," the army chief said

while talking to reporters after

receiving relief in cash and kind for

He mentioned various activities,

including OMS, VGF and Food for

Work Programmes, and said: "Our

efforts will be directed towards bring-

Gen Moeen attributed the price-

hike of essentials to production loss

of about 20 lakh tonnes due to two

floods and cyclone last year, increase

in rice price on international market

General Moeen said he heard that

people are buying additional quan-

tum of rice apprehending the short-

age while some husking mill owners

are hoarding rice to make extra

profit. "This should also be looked

supply of fertiliser, power and diesel

during the next Boro season. "It is not

the responsibility of the government

army has been extending all cooper-

ation to the caretaker government in

curbing corruption, improving law

and order and preparing voters list

and ID cards. He said already 20

million (two crore) people have been

eration and will continue to do so as

long as the government wants,

received more than Tk 1.6 crore and

6,800 euro from different organisa

yesterday denied having made

criticisms among the people as

well as in trade circles. Even, his

Cabinet colleague Finance Adviser

Mirza Azizul Islam openly dis-

of coordination among govern-

ment machinery that failed to

For last few days, country's rice

control abnormal rice-price hike.

market remained volatile as neigh-

bouring India decided to increase

The advisor's controversial

the exportable rice price.

The adviser also denied any lack

agreed with his observation.

His remark triggered a flurry of

Enough food

General Moeen said.

tions and individuals.

FROM PAGE 1

such a remark

"The army is extending full coop-

Yesterday, General Moeen

For the last one year, he said, the

alone," the army chief said.

He stressed the need for smooth

FROM PAGE 1

corruption. And the acute scarcity of rice is corruption. The crisis is not supposed to be created if consistency between supply and demand is maintained.

"I have nothing to do. The government will take steps in this regard," he said in reply to a question whether ACC would track traces of corruption behind rice

and exorbitant transportation cost He added that there might have been involvement of individual "If we consider it as a disaster and businesspersons or officials conwork together, we will be able to face cerned behind the crisis.

The ACC will focus on the issue of fertiliser as a part of its drive named "institutional corruption" initiated at the end of last year.

The ACC chief observed that if a crisis persists despite normal supply, then it is necessary to investigate the dealership.

Other service-oriented ministries and departments set to be brought under the drive include education, telegraph and telephone (T&T), Roads & Highways, communications, and Local Government and Rural the Emergency Power Rules. Development (LGRD).

able we can go for action against corrupt suspects as we are not mithis wealth statement.

influenced. We need hard evidence to make move because if we fail high-profile corrupt suspects would get away." He made the comment in reply to a question over not taking action against "graft" by LGRD, though it has earned the reputation of being the most corrupt government ministry as per a report of Transparency International, Bangladesh.

The anti-graft watchdog chief also briefed reporters about prevention and eradication of corrup tion, and status of the cases being conducted by ACC. CASEAGAINSTRAJU

ACC Assistant Director Abubakar Siddique filed the case with Jessore Kotwali Police Station for amassing Tk 20.64 lakh wealth earned beyond known sources of income.

In the first information report the complainant mentioned that Raju in his wealth statement concealed information about wealth worth Tk 29.37lakh including those amassed illegally.

The case was filed under sections 27 (1), 26 (2), and 15 (d) (5) of

Raju submitted the statement "If pieces of evidence are avail- on July 22 after the ACC on July 3 served a notice asking him to sub-

Hike oil prices

FROM PAGE 20

under-pricing of petroleum products poses considerable risk to fiscal management of the government, as the liabilities will have to be shouldered by the government if BPC fails to pay its loan on time.

As of November 20, 2007, BPC's (Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation) liabilities to three government-owned commercial banks stand at Tk 3,310 crore with another \$585 million debt to Islamic Development Bank.

Referring to the last price increase of petroleum products in domestic market by the government and the prices in international market as of December 26, 2007, the report calculated estimated implicit subsidy for diesel and kerosene for FY 2007-08.

The report says even after the price adjustment in domestic market, BPC's loss per litre diesel and kerosene were Tk 20.49 and Tk 19.67. Estimated implicit subsidy for diesel for the FY 2007-03 would be Tk 6,196 crore, whereas for kerosene, it would be Tk 1,371

In the budget for FY 2007-08, the government has assumed the liabilities of BPC of Tk 7,523 crore and allocated the same amount in the budget as non-cash bond.

"As a result of the government's assumption of BPC's liabilities in the budget for FY08, the budget deficit is estimated to rise from 4.2 percent to 5.6 percent of the GDP," the report observed.

The report suggested the gov-

ernment phase out the subsidies in diesel and kerosene within a span of one and half years. "This can be done through periodic adjustments as per the pricing framework of petroleum products approved by the government in November 2003," the report said.

To reduce the adverse impact of price hike of fuel, the report came up with a number of suggestions. The government may select poor households and give them cards to get kerosene allowances to be disbursed by banks and other financial institutions for enabling them to purchase kerosene from the market for lighting purposes, one of them said.

The experts also suggested that the government encourage CNGconversion of vehicles continuing the duty-free import of CNGconversion kits and cylinder and equipment for CNG stations.

"As of November 30, 2007, CNGrun vehicles stood at 1,23,573. As a result of this initiative, a total of Tk. 3,400 crore was saved from importing oil in FY07," the report said adding, "This has been reflected in the declining growth of import of petroleum products, especially octane and petrol."

Besides, the report said that to offset the impact of price adjustment on farmers, cash transfers through social safety net programmes from the budget may be undertaken for enabling farm ers using diesel for irrigation pur-

DU student tells

FROM PAGE 20

August 21-22 when violence erupted on the campus and adjacent areas following a scuffle between a student and an army person on August 20.

A senior reporter of private television channel ETV, Kanak Sarwar, also gave statement in the same cases but did not say any thing against the teachers and students. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate

AKM Enamul Haque recorded the statements of the two witnesses as Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani, who is conducting the trial, was on leave yesterday.

In his statement, Safayet told the court that following the scuffle between the student and the army person on the DU playground, students from different DU halls gathered there in the evening and surrounded the army camp on the DU campus.

Naming Hassan Mahmud, Saiful Islam Firoz, Shamsul Kabir Jiku and Quamruzzaman as being present there, Safayet said there were attacks and counter attacks between the students and the policemen.

A group of students gathered at the Arts Faculty building the next day and torched an effigy in front of Rokeya Hall. Then they marched towards Shahbagh and Nilkhet and damaged vehicles, Safayet stated. The witness said in the after-

noon the same day he went to the Duta office where a general meeting was going on. He saw Duta President Prof Sadrul Amin coming out of the office. On August 22, Duta leaders and

students, wearing black badges, gathered at Aparajeyo Bangla and brought out a silent procession. It ended at the Central Shaheed Minar where Prof Anwar gave a speech, the prosecution witness said. In his statement, Kanak Sarwar told the court that he was on duty in

DU area on August 20 or 21 and saw students bringing out a procession and holding a rally. He saw police charging batons on the procession and throwing teargas shells. After a few days of the incident,

the ETV authority handed over CD to the investigation officer of the case, Sub-Inspector Sirajul Islam, in his presence. Kanak said he signed a white paper for the seizure list.

In reply to a question, Kanak told the court that the investigation officer did not interrogate him about the incident and he did not know what contained in the CD seized by the police from his office.

The court then fixed January for next hearing of the case. The four teachers were permit

ted to sit on a bench in the dock during yesterday's hearing. On August 22, the cases were

filed against some 6,000 unnamed students and teachers of DU and outsiders for violating the EPR, vandalising public and private properties, obstructing the police from discharging their duties, and assaulting law enforcers on the campus and in adjacent areas.

But the police pressed charges on September 9 against four teachers and 15 students of the university for instigating violence on the campus and in Shahbagh area on August 21-22.

Ruhul Amin

FROM PAGE 20

issue for last few weeks.

He conveyed his sympathy to the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Foreign ministry sources here said Ruhul Amin's meeting with the officials of the French foreign ministry focussed on the issue of the Bangladesh artefacts. The government decided not to dispatch the artefacts to Guimet for their company.

Museum in Paris for exhibition following the stealing of two Parisbound terracotta statuettes from Zia International Airport. After the meeting, Sakhawat said. Ambassador Ruhul Amin along

with an officer returned to Bangladesh mission in a car, but the officer found him collapsed in might be cancelled. the car. He was immediately About the demand for barring rushed to a specialised hospital in Paris, the sources said.

They said the ambassador had been under stress over the artefacts

Vishnu's torn face

FROM PAGE 1 According to eyewitnesses, the fragments of brown-coloured 'Bust

of Vishnu' grew pale. Talking to The Daily Star, Gazi Abdul Mannan, deputy assistant director of Rab-1 who led yesterday' drive, said: "We found the fragments by digging out at least four layers of the garbage.

"Other fragments were also recovered from the spot yard and al the pieces were found within 30-40 yards. The remaining pieces might be hidden there."

Rab-1 sources said they also recovered two other fragments of the 'Bust of Vishnu' on Wednesday and 28 others on December 28. The two priceless artefacts were

stolen on December 21 from the Zia International Airport (ZIA) while these were on way to France for an exhibition. Rab personnel have so far

arrested 27 people in this connection and of them three -- former lawmaker Anwara Begum, Abbas Ali alleged ringleader of "Abbas-Nasir' smuggling gang of ZIA, and Nasir Uddin -- were placed on a three-day remand.

The rest have been sent to the

Sub-inspector Monu Sohel Imtiaz of Airport Police Station, also the investigation officer (IO), said: "The three-day remand ends today [Thursday] and they will be hauled before the court tomorrow [Friday].

"There have been major developments following the interrogation and we are now looking for some other persons. Our higher authority will decide whether to remand them further.

Maj Md Aminul Huq of Rabsaid: "We're hunting for Mohammad Ali, who was a sweeper of the civil aviation and was sacked for his illicit activities, and Razzak, who is involved in smuggling at ZIA."

Abdus Salam Pintu FROM PAGE 1

grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Interpol also issued a red notice on its website against Taijuddin.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said it was investigating if Pintu has any involvement in the August 21

Both the brothers went into hiding soon after the emergency rules were imposed.

SMAK Azad, director of the Legal and Media Wing of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), said he heard about Pintu's arrest but the Rab did not arrest him.

As of 12:15am, Gulshan police said the former deputy minister was not handed over to them.

Court summons

FROM PAGE 20 Speedy Trial Tribunal, Diproman Sarker, issued the summons, saying the court will record their statements on January 8 and 9.

The subpoenaed are Abul Hossain, joint secretary at establishment ministry and former deputy commissioner of Sylhet who was also injured in the grisly attack, Shafique Anwar, deputy secretary at expatriate welfare ministry and former metropolitan magistrate of Dhaka, three police sub-inspectors -- Abdul Awal Chowdhury, Sabiur Rahman and Shah Alam, Dr Matiur Rahman and Munshi Atiqur Rahman, investigation officer and former assistant police superintendent of Criminal Investigation Department.

The judge, however, recorded the depositions of prosecution witness Abul Kalam Azad. With him, 47 prosecution witnesses, out of 57, have so far given their statements in the case.

Recording the depositions was hampered earlier as prime accused and Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) chief Mufti Hannan could not be brought to Sylhet from Dhaka where he was taken for interrogation in the August 21 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina.

The Huji operatives carried out the grenade attacks on 21 May in 2004, killing three people and injuring 70 others, including the Bangladesh-born British high commissioner.

EC wants power

FROM PAGE 1 power to formulate rules for the

local government elections. At present, the rule-making

power rests with the government. The commission wants to carry out the Supreme Court's eightpoint directive in local government

polls as well. According to the court directives, a person aspiring to be a lawmaker will have to provide information through affidavit about their academic qualifications, criminal records if any, profession, sources of income, assets and liabilities, and bank loans, if any, taken by them or dependants

"We will recommend that the government make the eight-point directive applicable to the local government elections too,

Citing from the EC's proposals, he said if anyone provides false information in affidavit they would be fined and their candidature

the war criminals from elections, the election commissioner said those convicted of war crimes would not be allowed to contest polls to any local government.

Govt's food security

FROM PAGE 1

for bureaucratic tangles, a committee of that sort would help cut short the time.

Uttam, a research fellow of the CPD, also suggested lobbying the donors for quick release of food aid pledged after Cyclone Sidr. Meanwhile, the government has

been having difficulty procuring Aman. It wanted to buy at least two lakh tonnes, but farmers appear reluctant as they have been offered much below the market price. The rate for per kilogram rice has

been fixed at Tk 20 and paddy Tk 13, whereas the current market price is Tk32-35 and Tk18-20.

It is also struggling to increase to the 5 lakh tonnes of rice that the food stock through import as prices Indian government had pledged to this year are much higher on the

international market. The food ministry estimated the overall food deficit in the current fiscal at 29.60 lakh tonnes. Of that, the deficit in rice is 14 lakh tonnes and

wheat 15.60 lakh tonnes. The demand for rice has been calculated to be 2.85 crore tonnes and the production 2.71 crore

tonnes. The government data show wheat requirement for the current fiscal is 24 lakh tonnes while the production FROM PAGE 20 target 8.4 lakh tonnes.

According to the Bangladesh Bank, the amount of rice and wheat imported in July-October of 2007 was 13.16 lakh tonnes while it was 5.85 lakh tonnes on the corresponding period in 2006.

On the other hand, the food ministry said import of rice and wheat was 16.2 lakh tonnes in July-November of 2007.

imported in recent times is higher than the previous years. Still, we are faced with a crisis due to domestic production losses caused by floods and cyclone," said a food ministry official requesting not to be named.

Agriculture ministry sources said the production target in the current fiscal for Aus was 22 lakh tonnes and for Aman, the main crop, was 1.30

According to the government assessment, at least 14 lakh tonnes of Aman has been lost in Cyclone Sidr and floods last year, but CPD, an independent think-tank, put it at

over 22 lakh tonnes. The losses of Aman production may be even more, reported our correspondents from different

There is no official figure of Aus

production though its harvest ended in July last year. Meanwhile, a two-member delegation of the food ministry will visit India to discuss matters relating

export to Bangladesh following the devastating storm of November 15. The delegation will seek to finalise the price, time of delivery and ports

to be used. "The five lakh tonnes, if imported soon, will obviously help things by increasing supply and bringing down the price," observed a govern-

ment official.

Sabekunnahar and Jahirul, who were playing beside the wall at that time, also fell victim to the wall collapse. Sabekunnahar died on the spot, while Jahirul received minor injuries.

Locals rushed to the spot and

dead and Lameya and Jahirul injured. They sent Lameya to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in "The volume of rice and wheat a critical condition. Jahirul was given first aid. Imran's father Taslim Ahmed filed a murder case with Tejgaon

Police Station naming all the

found Imran and Sebekunnahar

employees of Nagar Homes Ltd as accused. Police picked up nine employees of Nagar Homes Ltd for interro-

situation needed stabilising after

Pak opposition sceptical public that the security

from self-imposed exile saw nearly 140 people killed in a suicide bombingon her convoy in Karachi. Sherry Rehman, spokeswoman

for Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), said her widowed husband and the party's de facto new leader, Asif Ali Zardari, would lead the campaign after its mourning period ended early next month. "The party's co-chairperson Asif

Zardari will address some major public meetings after February 7 all over the country," she said. Farooq Naik, Benazir's lawyer and top aide, said "the party will certainly

demand foolproof security from the government" during the election "We want the government to provide security to Asif Ali Zardari, Nawaz Sharif and other political

leaders to the same level as President Musharraf," Naik added. The postponement of the vote has been criticised as a ploy by Musharraf loyalists in the govern ment to rob the PPP of any sympathy vote it may have won in the after-

math of Benazir's slaying. The PPP, the country's largest party, has alleged the delay is an attempt to give Musharraf's allies time to fix the result. Musharraf, a pivotal US ally in the

address to the nation to appeal for national unity, which he said was essential in fighting terrorism.

"war on terror" used Wednesday's

riots that left nearly 58 people dead, the decision has reinforced the perception that the vote could end up a farce, analysts say. "The decision to postpone is a sign of weakness and the elections will not be viewed as credible,"

Najam Sethi, the editor of Pakistan's Daily Times newspaper, told AFP. "It was taken in disregard of the opinion of the opposition and was based on the recommendation of bureaucrats who owe their alle-

giance to the former government."hesaid. Meanwhile, a team of British police is preparing to leave for Pakistan to help investigate the killing of Benazir Bhutto and hopes to be ready in 24 hours, a Scotland

Yard spokesman said Thursday. Qatar minister

FROM PAGE 20 There is already an agreement on overseas employment between Qatar and Bangladesh signed in 1988, which has option of meeting once in two years, but the additional protocol will provide opportunity for bilateral meeting to

An opposition Tamil lawmaker who was gunned down on New Year's Day at a Hindu temple was cremated in Colombo Thursday amid heavy security and protests by human rights groups, which hold the gov-

ernment responsible for the slaving. The government has denied

announced it was formally pulling out of the Norwegian-brokered 2002 ceasefire agreement, after months of escalating violence and with authorities believing they now have the upper hand in the decades-old

Government spokesman and media minister Anura Yapa said the government viewed the 2002 truce agreement as a "flawed document."

ceasefire agreement," Yapa told reporters here. "But it does not imply that the government has shut the door for negotiations."

were to lay down their arms -- an unlikely event -- the government could resume talks facilitated by Norway, which broke down in October 2006. Sri Lankan military chiefs have promised an imminent turning

point in the war and have vowed to eject the rebels from their mini-state in the tropical island's northern Wannijungles. Under the ceasefire that went into effect from February 23, 2002 both the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers had the option to pull

out after giving two weeks' written notice to the Norwegian foreign

"Presently, there are over 1 lakh Bangladeshi workers in Qatar and there is no major concern over

Heavy fighting

Two government soldiers were also killed and three wounded in another mine attack in the north-central part of the island on Thursday, police said.

nvolvement. On Wednesday night, Sri Lanka

conflict.

"The government does not want to be a party to a non-functioning

He said that if the Tamil rebels

Colombo's withdrawal will also lead to the collapse of the Norwegian-led Sri Lankan

Monitoring Mission, which recorded

an architect of the 2002 truce, expressed his concern over the possibility of a slide back into all-out

Development Minister Erik Solheim,

"This comes on top of the increas-

escalate even further."

of the game. Tamim and Zunaed have earned their place with some good partnerships during the justconcluded one-day series which they lost 3-0. Aftab Ahmed is also making a comeback into the Test fold after nearly two years. Shahriar

Siddons was not making any outlandish claims for his team ahead of the Test.

"How will we react? We're capable of anything. We could respond really well, or we could capitulate -that's how good we are."

be hosting its first ever Test and the quality of the pitch could become a focus of controversy. A recent first class match ended

within two days after pace bowlers exploited an unusually damp and green surface, although authorities have been working hard to bring it up to Test standard.

discuss manpower issues twice a But far from convincing a workers' issues, the official said.

> violations and provided the only independent account of violence in the troubled regions. Norway's International

"I regret that the government is taking this serious step," Solheim

said in a statement. ingly frequent and brutal acts of violence perpetrated by both parties, and I am deeply concerned that the violence and hostilities will now

Tigers' 50thTest

become the 50th player to represent Bangladesh at the highest level

Nafees is slated to bat in an unaccustomed middle-order position. Bangladesh coach Jamie

"We've got a lot of young boys that are going to have a lot of bad days before they have some good ones," he said.

Dunedin's University Oval will

Mosharraf Traders.

Rice price, meanwhile, came down by Tk 1 to 2 per kg at Benapole

began enquiries about importing and stocking of rice by different

Our Rangpur, Nilphamari,

vesterday after intelligence agencies

mporters, said local rice importer