Unfit CNG cylinders

the CNG conversion workshops the company designated.

The workshops verify cylinders' integrity, submit reports and give new dates for checkups but there is no authority to monitor if the CNGrun vehicles plying on the streets are following the instructions or have fit cylinders, businessmen concerned said.

There are many unauthorised CNG conversion workshops that do not follow proper procedures in converting vehicle fuel system, said Navana CNG Ltd General Manager Sumit Kumar Saha.

"Oxygen and other gas cylinders are used for CNG-run vehicles and the genuine cylinders are not maintained properly... all these add up to high risk of explosions of cylinders endangering lives," he told The Daily Star.

According to him, half the CNG conversion workshops are unauthorised but the government does not monitor conversion workshops or if the cylinders had the periodic checkups.

Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Owners Association Vice-president Manoranjan Bhakta, however, said there is a small chance of genuine CNG cylinders exploding even if they had no periodic checkups.

"The performance will drop but surely all cylinders must be timely verified for integrity for safety reasons," he added.

He said he has doubts whether the around 10,000 CNG-run autorickshaws that were imported from India in 2001 had their cylinders verified. He said it was an alarming issue.

He said in 2001 the RPGCL

converted around 1,500 vehicles for running on CNG while private workshops converted around 100 vehicles. The use of CNG as automobile fuel started in Bangladesh in 1985 but it became popular in 2001. Now, there are over 1 lakh motor vehicles running on CNG, he

claimed. Referring to a CNG cylinder explosion in Narsingdi where three people died, Akhtar Hossain Babu of SUEP said 87 percent of the cylinders that exploded had faulty designs or were sub-standard counterfeit cylinders.

The placement of cylinders in vehicles is sometimes incorrect which increases the risk of an explosion when the vehicle had a small bump. The issue must be addressed, he said, adding, "Each cylinder blast has the power of a 500-pound bomb and can cause

serious damage. Even though RPGCL is responsible for licensing the CNG conversion workshops and monitoring and supervising their work, it never goes to the workshops to see if they were working properly or fitting correct kits to vehicles, he claimed.

RPGCL Director (operations) Shafiqul Islam said a discussion is going on between the ministries of communications and energy on how to monitor CNG cylinders.

Engineer Humayun Rashid Khalifa, director of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) that checks vehicle fitness every year, said they do not check the CNG cylinders.

"In a meeting with RPGCL, we asked it to provide officials at major CNG conversion workshops to monitor their activities," he said.

ment would be responsible for any

unpleasant situation on the campus

if the detained teachers and stu-

their solidarity with SAR at the rally

are Prof MM Akash, Prof Mezbah

Kamal, Prof Monawar Uddin, Prof

Anwar Hossein, Prof Muhammed

cultural programme in front of

Applied Physic Department

demanding the release of the

Building and Curzon Hall after the

two-hours class boycott

programme was over. A few num-

bers of classes were held at Business

under the banner of Journalists for

Human Rights and Justice formed a

human chain in front of Aparajeyo

Bangla demanding the withdrawal

of DU correspondent of the daily

Banglabazar Potrika Golam Azam

Khomenee's name from the charge

sheet of a case filed for torching an

army car at Shahbagh intersection

involved in the torching in any way

as he was beaten by police on the

night of August 20 while he was on

Various organisations including

Bangladesh Chhatra Union and

Bangladesh Chhatra Federation

yesterday demanded immediate

release of all the detained teachers

and students of DU and withdrawal

Bar Association (SCBA) in a joint

statement said people of all profes-

sions and classes hoped that the

caretaker government would

resolve the problem positively. They

said the government has deepened

the problem taking wrong advices

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur

Rahman said detained teachers and

students of Dhaka University (DU)

will be released within the next few

of Dhaka University will be released

as soon as the legal process ends. We

have taken certain measures to end

the legal process quickly. Taking

depositions of witnesses will end

tomorrow. Don't worry, the teachers

and students will be freed," he said

yesterday while addressing a media

briefing in Labaid Hospital in the

He also said the caretaker gov-

ernment has given serious consid-

eration to the matter deciding to

solve the problem, especially the

release of the detained teachers

and students, who were charged in

two cases in connection with

breaking the Emergency Power

meeting headed by Chief Adviser

Fakhruddin Ahmed. In the meet-

ing, we unanimously decided that

the issue of Dhaka University will

be solved within the next few days

for restoring peace on the cam-

pus," he said at the briefing soon

after visiting ailing playwright

Selim Al Deen, who is scheduled fly

to Bangkok today for better treat-

Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz and

Education Secretary M Mamtazul

Islam were also present.

Dhaka University Vice

"We have held an emergency

Rules 2007.

"Detained teachers and students

from a certain section.

EDUCATIONADVISER

Leaders of the Supreme Court

of the cases filed against them.

They said Khomenee was not

during the August violence.

professional duty.

STATEMENTS

SCBA, OTHERS MAKE

Earlier, a group of journalists

Studies Faculty.

No classes were held in Arts

SAR Carzon hall unit staged a

Samad, Prof Akmal Hossein.

The teachers who expressed

dents were not freed by January 18.

• DU teachers

Though the VC during the briefing did not clarify what the "legal procedure" meant, he said he was positive that the detainees would be proven innocent at the court of law. "If not,

dure." The VC however could not mention any tentative timeframe of their

the teachers will be freed soon after

the completion of the legal proce-

release. Asked about the two other cases filed for torching an army vehicle during the August violence last year, Faiz said he had placed the matter to the government with due importance. He however refused to comment over the government's reaction in this regard.

Fifteen students and four teachers of DU were charged in two separate cases for breaching the EPR on and around the campus in August last year. Among them, four teachers and one student are currently in jail custody.

Names of seven other detained students have recently been included in the charge sheet of one of the cases filed for torching the army vehicle. Charge sheet of the second case filed for the same incident is yet to be pressed.

Prof Faiz said, "We are optimistic about the positive result in these two cases and the teachers and students will come back to campus."

Following the press briefing, Prof Faiz went to visit the detained teachers at Dhaka Central Jail,

sources said. Later in the evening, VC Faiz in a meeting informed the DU Syndicate of the government decision. The syndicate welcomed the decision and urged the government to expedite the legal process. It also asked

the students to maintain a conge

nial atmosphere on the campus. Earlier on December 9, the government, amid demonstration of teachers and students of DU, assured to release all the detained teachers and students within two weeks. The teachers and students were not released even after the deadline of the assurance ended on

December 23. The next day, a government deal brokered by VC Faiz failed as the family members of the detained teachers refused to file a writ petition with the high court seeking bail of the detainees. They also refused to seek mercy from the president as

part of the deal.

STUDENTPROTEST Students Against Repression (SAR) - a platform formed mainly by left leaning student organisations, yesterday set a five-day ultimatum to the government for the release all

detainees. The platform continued its demonstrations vesterday on the campus through class boycotts, street graffiti, rally, silent procession

and cultural programme. At a rally in front of Arts Building in the afternoon, the leaders of SAR announced a two-hour class boycott programme from 11:00am to 1:00pm every day until January 17. SAR would also form human chains on the campuses of all universities including that of DU during the period.

Starting today, SAR will begin collecting signatures of students who express solidarity with their demands. It will organise a solidarity rally on the DU campus tomorrow encouraging teachers, students and their guardians to support the

The SAR leaders said the govern-

Demo at RU

FROM PAGE 1 silent procession at 11:00am from

Rabindra Arts Building. The procession of students marched about the campus before gathering at the grave of martyred RU teacher Prof Dr Shamsuzzoha to observe a one-minute silence in remembrance of his supreme sacrifice for the students in 1969.

In February 1969, Dr Shamsuzzoha, the first martyred intellectual, sacrificed his life to protect the students from the atrocities of the then regime of Ayub Khan.

At the grave the students took an oath to continue their protest until the 10 convicted students and the employee of RU are released.

Calling on the RU authorities to withdraw the case filed on August 23, the students said they would otherwise launch tougher programmes against the university authorities.

The students also demanded immediate release of the detained teachers and the student of Dhaka University.

A huge number of police and intelligence personnel were present on the campus to avert any untoward incident.

In a case filed for torching a DGFI vehicle on RU campus, Rajshahi court on December 12 last year acquitted two teachers and an official of RU, but sentenced 10 students and an employee of RU to three years rigorous imprisonment and a fine ofTk5,000 each.

Sohul

FROM PAGE 1

hampering the EC's ability to maintain its course in line with its own electoral roadmap announced on July 15 last year.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda, who last week announced the EC's plan for redrawing the boundaries, is likely to announce the commission's next course of action today at a scheduled media briefing, officials in the EC Secretariat said.

Talking on the matter, Sohul however said during the electoral reform talks between the EC and political parties, that took place over the last three months, the commission informed them about its plan to redraw the boundaries of the constituencies, and none of them opposed it back then. "Now they are opposing it. We

will discuss the issue with political parties again when we will sit with them again with the electoral reform proposals," Sohul said. In defence of the EC's plan, he

said one of our constitutional tasks is to redraw the constituencies following every population census.

"We have to do it now since the Census Report 2001 was published recently," the election commissioner said adding that the issue was included in the electoral roadmap at the time of its announcement.

The political parties argued, once the EC would begin the field level activities for redrawing the boundaries, it would be swamped by a large number of litigations which would end up delaying holding of the poll.

Earlier, the constituencies were redrawn in 1973, 1979, 1984, and in 1995 on limited scales. During some of those endeavours the EC had to face a significant number of cases filed by many aggrieved

The EC however argued that the 2001 census report was published only recently, meaning the boundaries have not been redrawn in this decade, and since only minor changes were brought to the boundaries in the last 30 years, the existing constituencies vary dramatically in their densities of popu-

The delimitation ordinance identified three criteria for redrawing the constituencies --- population, administrative convenience and keeping the administrative units intact.

Purchase

FROM PAGE 1 Another 60,000 tonnes of Granular urea will be purchased from

KAFCO for Tk 112.86 crore. The committee approved the LGRD ministry's proposal to develop three roads in Sunamganj

at a cost of Tk 39.94 crore. It also approved the third proposal to procure 'Supply and installation of power system metering equipment' on turn-key basis from the lowest bidder at a cost of Tk 25.24 crore.

Finance Advisor Mirza Azizul Islam, who presided over the meeting, admitted stiff rise in inflation.

He said he is not sure of achieving last year's GDP growth of 6.5 percent. "I do not agree with them," he said when his attention was drawn

to the views of some economists that the country's economic condition is deplorable. Economic indicators - industrial term loan, credit flow in agri-

culture sector and import of industrial goods - have increased in the recent months, he said.

He, however, admitted export earning during July-September period was not satisfactory.

"But after that export has been increasing," he added.

Hasina, Rehana, Selim

Democracy has been in danger in

the country many a time and

military dictators have assumed

last four/five months she was not

allowed to talk to anybody, not

even her lawyers. "I was kept in

times that elaborating the state-

ment at this stage of the case is

unnecessary and at one stage

stopped Hasina from talking.

Counsels of the AL chief then

became excited and shouted for

allowing her to speak. During the

chaos a lawyer called the court

ing, Selim maintained his inno-

cence, saying the allegation

duced as a piece of evidence of

extorting money does not corrob-

orate with the status of my bank

And the allegation that I shared

the extorted money with Sheikh

Hasina has no proof. Going to

of different law enforcement

agencies and areas with CCTVs.

And no evidence that I went there

with the money could be pro-

tion, he said, "No accused or

offender can be forced to give

statement but I have informed

the court of the circumstances

under which I gave the judicial

statement and later retracted

fire and electric shock, and was

even tortured blindfolded to give

the statement," he said, telling

that even the prosecution lawyer

would also give such judicial

statement against head of the

state if they are put in similar

section 164 must be withdrawn,

"The statement given under

Hasina's chief counsel barris-

ter Shafiq Ahmed filed a petition

with the court seeking "enough'

time before the trial begins. The

duced himself as the counsel for

Selim and told the court that his

client is "aggrieved at the order

and wishes to move to higher

Sharfuddin Khan Mukul opposed

Shafiq Ahmed's prayer and

sought fixing of the date for take

The court fixed January 17 to

ing deposition of the witnesses.

Cops beat up

some vehicles prompting the

police deployed in the area to club

were injured in the police action,

suffered serious injuries when she

fell on the stairs on the seventh

floor of the building that houses the

factory in the rush of workers as

police also charged batons inside

the factory, alleged a number of

unconscious. For a while, rumour

spread that she had died. However

Ruby was released from hospital

The agitating workers went back

to work at noon after a deal was

struck in a meeting among the

representatives of the workers,

owner, the joint forces and the

Bangladesh Garments

Manufacturers and Exporters

Association (BGMEA) at the factory

such incident in the area since

January 2. Earlier, workers of SQ

Sweater Ltd staged demonstrations

on January 2 and 3 while workers of

three other factories of the group

barricaded the busy Rokeya Sarani

on Saturday in support of similar

at the entrances of all garment

factories in the area following the

demonstration to avert any unto-

WORKERS' AGITATION IN

Additional police were deployed

Yesterday's agitation is third

Ruby was taken to a city hospital

workers seeking anonymity.

Several workers and passers-by

A pregnant worker named Rub

begin the trial.

FROM PAGE 16

the workers.

witnesses said.

after treatment.

building.

demands.

ward incident.

to adjourn the trial for 21 days.

court". He appealed to the court

Chief Public Prosecutor ABM

Syed Rezaur Rahman intro-

court rejected the petition.

"I was threatened with cross-

from that.

circumstances.

he pointed out.

Reading out from the constitu-

duced against me," Selim said.

"I did not receive any money.

Before Hasina started speak-

He said, "The cheque pro-

total confinement," she said.

Hasina mentioned that in the

The judge told Hasina several

power," she said.

"illegal"

against is not true.

account at that time.

FROM PAGE 1

ensure justice, you would be in trouble the following day," she told the court adding, "I know I won't get justice here and so I look to Allah and the people of this country for justice."

Hasina made the comments when the judge asked her and Selim to say if they were guilty or

As both the accused kept making statements the judge said all he needed to know was if they plead guilty. He observed they would have plenty of scope to defend themselves once the trial begins.

Sitting at 9:30 in the morning, the court said the day's business would be confined to delivery of its orders on charge-framing.

"I find sufficient grounds to frame charges against all three accused," the judge said in his ruling based on submissions by the defence and prosecution, Selim's judicial confession, evidence and documents produced by the prosecution.

The charges were brought under sections 384 and 385 read with section 34 of the penal code for extorting money, making threat Gonobhaban means going of injury, and committing the through numerous checkpoints extortion in connivance with one

another. If convicted, a person would be sentenced to three years' imprisonment or fined or both under section 384 while his/her sentence would be imprisonment not exceeding 14 years and less than five years, or fine or both under section 385.

Hasina and Selim were brought to the court minutes before the judge took his seat.

Dressed in a violet sari, the AL chief exchanged greetings with her party leaders and workers and others thronging the court set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises. She said, "I have never asked for

or received a single penny in bribe from anyone. "The case is an attack on those who have survived the brutal kill-

ings on August 15, 1975." She said she believes it was filed since they had failed to kill her also in the August 21 grenade attacks in

"It's all because they want to undermine the family members of the father of the nation. They know people are on my side and will vote for me if there's an election. How can I stand such false allegations against me," said a visibly irritated

"Had I been offered Tk 100 crore I would have turned that down,' she said referring to the charge that she had received Tk 1 crore from Selim at Gonobhaban. It was allegedly her share of the money extorted.

The complainant alleged that Selim gave Tk 1 crore to Rehana as

"I am daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, why should I need to take Tk 1 crore extortion. None of our family has ever been involved in graft or bribery. There is no property in the name of my brothers--Jamal, Kamal and Russell," said Hasina.

"If I had greed for money I could have made a lot when my father was a prime minister," she contin-

Even the house at Dhanmondi where their parents had stayed has been kept in trust to provide stipend for the children, Hasina said.

Referring to her visit to America last April, she said the government, which sought to prevent her from returning to the country, was forced to lift the ban on her coming home as world opinion and the people of the country were in her favour.

'Even the advisers asked me not to return home, proposing that all cases against me would be withdrawn if I stayed abroad. The case was filed only because I did not want to stay abroad and wanted to return home," Hasina said, adding, "Later, cases were filed one after another. I do not even know who Azam J Chowdhury is."

Hasina said, "If I had any plan or did anything to take bribe or extort money by delaying work of power generation, then how was I able to reduce power crisis during that

period? She asked the judge what could be the procedure to cancel the judicial statement taken "forcibly"

from Selim.

In reply, the judge said, "I cannot do anything beyond rules."

recently that an accused would be

tried under existing laws, Hasina

said, "His speech is false. What he

said is not happening in reality.

This trial is being held like a camera

spiratorial.

NARAYANGANI Referring to article 35 of the Our Narayanganj correspondent constitution, she said the constituadds: Workers of three factories of tion has been violated by bringing Partex Group barricaded the the case under speedy trial. Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at According to the article, a trial Dewanbagh area in Bandar Police should be going in accordance with Station in the district demanding the existing law. hike in salary and bonus.

The former premier also raised The blockade caused severe questions over bringing the case traffic gridlock on both sides of the under the Emergency Power Rules highway. Later, police went to the and objected to the setting up o'. spot and brought the situation the court on the Sangsad Bhaban under control. Police and workers said that the Quoting the chief adviser saying

workers of Partex Star Particle Board Mills Ltd, Partex Plywood Factory and Partex Furniture Industries stopped their work at around 8:00am and barricaded the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at around 10:00am.

trial, which is motivated and con-The workers, however, returned "Politicians are being under- to work after a successful meeting mined and the anti-graft drive is between the Partex group managebeing conducted against them. ment, police and the workers.

Corruption case

FROM PAGE 16

accused are former energy secretary Dr Towfiq-e-Elah Chowdhury, former Powe Development Board (PDB) chair man Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan and Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja, Director

Abul Kalam Azad and

Bangabandhu Memorial Trust

(BMT) curator Sayed Siddigur

Rahman. In addition to the seven accused in the FIR earlier, name of the BMT curator was also included in the charge sheet, as the investigators found he was involved.

ACC Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on September 2 last year. He accused Hasina and the six others of helping a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up the power plant, depriving the lowest bidders.

NIKO CASE The same court passed the order following a petition by the investigation officer (IO) of the case, ACC Deputy Director MM Sabbir Hasan, for showing Rafiqul Islam arrested in the case.

The case was filed with Tejgaon Police Station against Hasina and six others on December 9 last year on charge of causing a huge loss to the state through awarding gas exploration deals to Canadian company Niko through abuse of power. On December 31, Hasina was

also shown arrested in the case. Other accused in the case are

former principal secretary to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Di SA Samad, former energy secretaries Dr Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and M Akma Hossain, former Petrobangla chairman Mosharraf Hossain and Vice-president (South Asia) of Niko Research Bangladesh Ltd Kashem Sharif.

Babar

FROM PAGE 16

last year. The army-led joint forces also recovered four firearms -shotgun, a rifle, a pistol and Brazil-made revolver -- two maga zines, and 297 rounds of ammuni

He has already handed down 17 ears of rigorous imprisonment for possessing the arms and ammo

The joint forces recovered Tk 20 crore, which he received from Bashundhara Group in exchange for not implicating the conglomer ate's boss' son Shafiat Sobhan in murder case.

In July 2006, Humayun Kabir Sabbir, a director of Bashundhara Group owned by Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, was murdered and his body was found lying outside an apartment building in Gulshan. Sobhan's son Shafiat was the main suspect in the killing.

Sobhan cut a shady deal with Babar that he would pay the latter Tk 20 crore in exchange of sparing his son of the murder charges.

Tigers face

FROM PAGE 16

the second and last Test, Bangladesh were 51-5 in their second innings, still 199 runs behind. To add to their woes, key bats-

man Tamim Iqbal, is unlikely to ba because of a broken thumb, leaving veteran Habibul Bashar to lead the resistance. New Zealand took command of

the match in an inconsistent innings which saw a mixture of authority and indiscipline. Fleming was out for 87 -- his

43rd half-century in Tests and 13 runs short of his 10th century while Vettori fell for 94, only six runs from his third Test century after compiling his 13th 50.

After Fleming had revived the innings, which was in difficulty at 35 for two on Saturday, Vettori led a late-order charge which made New Zealand's lead substantial. Bangladesh staggered when

faced with New Zealand's heavy first innings lead Sunday, losing five quick wickets and showing little determination to stave off a sixth loss in six Tests against New Zealand.

New Zealand quickly got amongst the Bangladesh batsmen as they batted again. Shahriar Nafees, opening in

place of Tamim, Zunaed Siddiqui, Mohammad Ashraful, Aftab Ahmed and Mushfigur Rahim were all out before stumps.

ACC's plea

year, the High Court, following writ petition challenging the legal ity of the ACC action had stayed the operation of the notice. It had also issued rule asking the

ACC to explain why the notice should not be declared to have been issued without lawful author-On July 17 last year, the ACC

served notice to Khaleda Zia to submit her wealth statement as part of its initiative to find out whether there is any ground for filing graft case against her.

AL asks govt

He said the government should follow the Election Commission in arranging dialogue with political parties as every party has its own stand and ideology. The EC sat separately with the parties

on electoral reforms. Zillur Rahman said the release of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina would be high on the agenda during the proposed dialogue, with Tofail adding that the issue of keeping war criminals out of the elections and bringing them to trial would also be on the agenda of the AL

Tofail, however, said the agenda for the proposed dialogue would be finalised at party forum which will be convened after getting the date for the Replying to a query, Zillur said they

want early polls and would move ahead with Sheikh Hasina's demand for elections by March-April this year. He said there should be no problem in holding the elections early because the country is now witnessing stability,

adding that voter registration is a continuous process and the government could hold the polls right now if theywantso. Giving the AL's formal reaction to

the speech of Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, Zillur said the only positive side of his address was that he assured the nation that the elections would be held according to the announced electoral roadmap. Zillur expressed frustration as the

chief adviser did not say anything about the release of state prisoners and university teachers, labour unrest, closure of mills and factories, leakage of question papers of National University and sixth wage board award for newspaper employees.

"Although the chief adviser admitted to rice crisis, he failed to give any permanentsolution to it, 'Zillursaid.

On whether the AL would only demand the release of Hasina or would also call for the release of other political leaders including Khaleda Zia, he said their party wanted the release of all state prisoners but added that Hasina's was more logical and it would get

Asked whether the AL supports what Hasina said in court on her arrest, another presidium member Motia Chowdhury said Hasina's statement was a clear reflection of the feelings of the whole nation because people have no doubt about the trick behind her

REACTION TO CHARGE FRAMING AGAINST HASINA

The acting chairman of Jatiya Party (JP), Anisul Islam Mahmud, said the trial of Sheikh Hasina should be transparent. "The law should take its own course and if she is not convicted, she

should be freed, "he told The Daily Star. Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon alleged that despite their repeated request, due process of law has not been followed in Hasina's trial. "The entire anti-corruption drive will be questioned if due process is not

"Everybody is trying to gain political

advantage; the entire opposition is

trying to take political advantage," he

offered to exhume her body and con-

duct an autopsy, but Benazir's family

says it will only agree if Musharraf

allows a UN-led inquiry into the mur-

tion." Musharraf told Newsweek

There are not two or three countries

involved. Why should there be a UN

investigation? This is ridiculous.

"There cannot be a UN investiga-

"We are totally in cooperation on

the intelligence side," he said. "But we

are totally against (a military opera-

tion). We are a sovereign country. We

will ask for assistance from outsiders.

Theywon'timposetheirwillonus.'

The Pakistani government has

Musharrat

der, which he has ruled out.

FROM PAGE 16

They said when the government price of rice in the wholesale mar-

significantly, we made a profit of Tk 40-60 per maund. But we usually get Tk 5-10," said a wholesaler at Mohammadpur Krishi Market.

incurring loss as they are forced to sell rice at a reduced price. "We sold rice at lower price as sale

Meanwhile, potato was sold

Indian and Bangladeshi onions were sold yesterday at Tk 13-15 per kg which were Tk 12-13 three days back.

Bush asks Tehran

Pakistan's approval

emanated from the Iranian vessels. The Navy Times reported that US

naval experts now believe the threatening voice may have been that of a local heckler known as the "Filipino Monkey" who frequently interrupts ship-to-ship radio traffic with insulting interventions. Tehran accused Washington on

Sunday of distorting the incident "to fool the region" during Bush's visit

light. But their plans fell flat," foreign ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini said. Bush also used his speech in Abu Dhabi to urge Israelis and Palestinians to have faith in the

"To the Palestinian people, the

terrorists who represent the greatest

"To the people of Israel, you with your neighbours is the best to the commission. path to long term security. We

newspaper. Saying confusion has already been

followed." Menon, a key leader of the

AL-led 14-party combine, told this

created over the legal process of the charge brought against Hasina, he urged the authorities concerned not to further deepen it. Menon hoped that Hasina would be exonerated if due processwere followed.

Terming the issue as legal one, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu said the matter should be resolved legally. He urged the government to follow due process in Hasina's

US ELECTION

stage

AP, Washington

With nomination contests in lilywhite Iowa and New Hampshire settled, minority voting power now moves into the spotlight.

Historical realities suggest that

much of a role in determining the Republican Party presidential nominee. But this year's Democratic primary and caucus schedule was designed specifically to give increased influence to minorities, particularly Latinos. Voters in both groups are ener-

linois Sen. Barack Obama, Latinos by the intense, sometimes xenophobic debate over immigration. But it's far from clear how those influences will play off each other. Nevada's caucuses on Jan. 19 will give an early showcase of Hispanic voting. However, observers say the true impact of Latino influence might

victoryin 2004 was razor-thin. When South Carolina Democrats hold their primary on Jan. 26 the state GOP contest is Jan. 19 the choices of substantial numbers of black voters will be tallied for the first time in this

Wazed Miah

critical. Dr Sohrabuzzaman added. Wazed Miah fell seriously ill a few months ago. At the time he was taken to Square Hospital and recov-

ered after about three months. Dr Wazed had been suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure and psychiatric problems for a long time. He underwent a bypass sur-

price of rice US\$ 425 in importing per metric tons of rice was maintained and

took initiatives to import rice and launched open market sales, the ket went down making the wholesalers to incur loss. "When the price of rice soared

He said the wholesalers are now

went down in the last few days. We have to incur heavy losses if we have to sell rice at a reduced price," he

yesterday at Tk 11-12 per kg which was Tk 10 just two days back in the wholesale markets

FROM PAGE 16 released of a voice threatening to blow up the US vessels may not have

and called on US officials to apolo-"They tried to bring it up at the same time as Bush was travelling to the region to paint Iran in a bad

renewed peace negotiations launched in Annapolis outside Washington in November and to shun the alternative of armed struggle and war.

dignity and sovereignty that is your right is within your reach," said Bush, who after a first visit to the Holy Land as president last week, said he is "very hopeful" a final peace deal can be reached before he leaves office in January. "Oppose the extremists and

threat to a Palestinian state. The United States will help you build the institutions of democracy and prosperity and make your dreams of a state come true. know that peace and reconciliation

activities. During meetings in Tehran on Friday and Saturday, the International Atomic Energy Agency's director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, and Iran's

FROM PAGE 16 him of amassing assets worth over Tk 1.44 crore by illegal means and

of not mentioning about the wealth in his wealth statement submitted

Emergency Power Rules 2007.

Minority vote moves centre

blacks and Hispanics won't play

gized: Blacks by the early successes of

places where George Bush's margin of

not be felt until the general election,

notably in Western states like

Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada

His condition is serious but not

Rice prices up

Musharraf was also asked in the interview about reports that the United States is thinking about launching CIA operations in Pakistan with or without

though it requires tough decisions." Bush also renewed his call for

> War II where he said a thriving democracy had been built without affecting indigenous culture or religion, despite the strong opposition of supporters of an absolute He listed a string of Arab countries, which had held elections in

reform in the Middle East pointing

to the example of Japan after World

Earlier the UN atomic watchdog clear up all remaining issues regarding Tehran's disputed nuclear

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad agreed that the socalled "work plan" for clearing up outstanding issues "should be completed in the next four weeks," the agency said in a statement.

Astonishing Ramna Police Station, accusing

The case was filed under the

believe that peace is possible,

recent years. Even in the United Arab Emirates, indirect elections to an advisory federal council, which are the only polls to have been held so far, were the "first step in a wider reform," he said. said yesterday that it had agreed with Iran a four-week deadline to