CA meets advisers

FROM PAGE 1

Asked about the cases filed against students of Dhaka College and Bangla College at Mirpur for the August violence, Faiz said the meeting did not discuss this, but he would request the education adviser to speak on it when he speak before the

On apprehensions that only the teachers, not students, will be released, he said there is no reason for such fears.

STUDENTS PROTEST Students of the DU under the banner of Students Against Repression vesterday held a cultural programme in front of the central library on the campus demanding immediate release of the detainees by withdraw-

ing all the cases against them. Besides, students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) formed a human chain on the campus expressing solidarity with the DU students'

agitation. Another platform of students named "Chhatra-Bandhu" yesterday held a press conference at DU Modhu's Canteen demanding release of the detainees immediately.

They also announced some programmes including laying a siege to the VC's office, and expressed support for the teachers' scheduled token hunger strike tomorrow.

Earler, the DU students on Friday called for a one-hour class boycott at all educational institutions in the country on January 23, and urged the students and teachers to wear black ribbons tomorrow and form human chains at their respective institutions on January 22.

They set a fresh deadline of January 23 for release of the detained DU teachers and a student as their five-day ultimatum ended yesterday. They will also continue boycotting classes for two hours every day until

their demands are met. The DU Teachers' Association also announced programmes, including a three-hour token hunger strike at Aparajeyo Bangla from 10:00am to 1:00pm tomorrow and, not holding any admission tests at the university until the detainees are

released. Our RU correspondent adds: Students of the university continued their demonstrations on the campus demanding release of 10 convicted students and an employee of the university in the DGFI vehicle torching case.

Earlier, the students staged demonstrations to press their demands

Prof Wahiduddin

caretaker government not to

engage the law enforcement agenies in the market monitoring drive as they think it might erode the confidence of businesspeople

Instantly disagreeing with the proposal, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said the government will continue its monitoring in the market involving the law enforcement agencies, particularly the joint forces comprising army, Rab, BDR, police and other forces.

adviser told the press that the government might go for some adjustments in the prices of different products, including petroleum and fertiliser, as such suggestions came from the economists.

He noted that in any adjustment, some are benefited and some are losers.

"But the government tries to do the adjustment keeping an option so that the poor won't be affected. Their interest will be looked into through a mechanism. Assessment of broader public interest will be the main focus.

On the issue of recent price hike of essentials which warranted the market intervention, the finance adviser said the meeting tried to ascertain why this instability on the market, whether it's for supplydemand mismatch or for the present monetary policy.

"We have felt that monetary policy is on the right track and now focus should be on the supply-side management," he told the journal-

Tearful Khaleda

7:20pm, he attended a janaza there. The jail authorities took Koko to Cantonment Police Station at around 1:50pm and kept him there till 4:40pm

Tarique too was not directly taken to Moinul Road. He was first brought to Shahbagh Police Station from the Central Jail.

Khaleda Zia was released from the sub-jail on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises at 7:23pm. Amid tight security, the motorcade carrying her used the Old Airport Road to avoid newsmen who massed in front the Shaheed Jahangir Gate.

Sayeed Eskandar and Shamim Eskandar received their sister Khaleda at her residence where she

stayed for about two hours. An air of gloom settled over with her entering the house at 7:30pm. Her eyes brimmed with tears as she met the family members and rela-

tives including her grand children and in-laws. Inspector General of Police (prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hasan told

The Daily Star at 10:20pm that the BNP chairperson was brought back to the subjail at around 10:00pm.

Earlier in the day, the body of Taiyeba was flown in to Dhaka by an air force helicopter. It was taken to Moinul Road by an ambulance from Kurmitola.

The chopper left the northern district town for the capital at about 2:40pm. Shamim Iskandar, younger son of Taiyeba, accompanied the

Taiyeba Majumder died of cardiac arrest at Zia Heart Foundation and Research Centre in Dinajpur at 8:45pm Friday. She was 87.

that also include release of four Dhaka University teachers and a

student. The students staged a protest sitin and cultural programme at the Shaheed Minar on the campus wearing black ribbons yesterday.

They threatened to launch a tougher movement including students strike at the RU if their demands are not met.

Rice prices

their nationwide market monitoring

Owners of wholesale and retail shops hung prices of rice at their shops as they knew joint forces would be monitoring the market. The joint forces asked all rice traders to keep documents of their transac-

Sources said joint forces yesterday visited all large wholesale and retail markets in the capital and recorded statements of wholesalers about their rice in stock.

Traders at Babubazar and Badamtali said there is very little possibility of further decline in rice prices as the current wholesale prices are close to the prices at Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Open Market Sale

They said sellers who kept nice in stock sold their rice at a lower price than the market price, fearing the joint forces monitoring, and the sellers would build their stock again in a week, which would send the price high again.

"We are monitoring to stop irregularities in the market," said a BDR official at the BDR headquarters

"We are observing the markets so that none can make extraordinary profits and to prevent traders from making long term stock," added the BDR official wishing anonymity.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) sources said the joint forces launched the monitoring of markets to prevent prices of essential commodities like rice, flour and edible oil from skyrocketing.

Visiting different wholesale markets in the capital, The Daily Star saw large quantity of rice entering the markets of the capital in trawlers boats, launches and trucks.

Rice prices started rising since the last week of December and have been fluctuating since the first week of January. The highest the coarse rice prices ever got to was Tk35 akg.

Gen Moeen

Asked if the army would continue providing such support in future, he said, "Yes, we can do that. You saw how we stood by the people in the past one year--during two floods and acyclone.

Commenting on whether the imposition of state of emergency on January 11 last year could have been avoided, he said the situation at that time was critical. Had the political violence continued for a few more days, Bangladesh would have become a failed state.

He said he does not see any prob-After the meeting, the finance lem in holding the national election before December 2008

"This government's goal is to hold a free, fair and credible election and hand over power to a political govemment. The Election Commission too has set a roadmap accordingly. And I don't see anything wrong there," he said

Already 2.6 crore people have been registered as voters and 3 crore forms filled up and distributed, he said, adding: "Inshallah, if all of us work together, we shall be able to hold the election by 2008.

He said the political parties have to reform themselves for a credible election. He said he hopes they have realised that it would be difficult to run the country in the old system.

General Moeen said he has no plan to become the country's presi-

"I do not want to be the president or chief executive. I only want the army to help the country develop and work for the people."

He said he thinks in a democracy like Bangladesh, there should be a balance of power. "We should consider the ground reality. We've seen different systems--parliamentary, military and presidential. Taking lessons from these, we should have something to maintain the balance

In a parliamentary system, power lies absolutely in the hands of prime minister, he said adding that experts can study and find out what is best

for Bangladesh. Asked if there is a lack of coordination between the army and the Chief Adviser's Office and even within the government, General Moeen said the army does not get involved in any

decision that the government makes. "However, we give our opinions if the government wants suggestions on disaster management or law and order," he observed

Asked what should be the army's role, he said like police and BDR, the army is part of the government. They will work on government instruc-

He thinks the war criminals must be tried and the present government

can at least start the process, if it The army chief said there can be a national security council to help the government. "There are some dis-

cussions going on with the government about the issue, but that's not a high priority now." He said the greatest challenge

confronting the government is to control the price hike of essentials. He said identifying corruption as

the number one problem and working to contain the menace are a success of the present administra-

"It is not possible to eradicate corruption completely, but people at least learned that this is the number one enemy," he said.

Of the money siphoned out of the country, Tk 1,010 crore has been already recovered and efforts are underway to retrieve Tk 500 crore more, he said.

FROM PAGE 16

the ostracised would be fined Tk

Local administration and Islamic University police apparently resolved the matter through arbitration, but soon after the bigots pressed Moazzem to convert to mainstream Islam, threatening that they would otherwise be killed at dead of night following which the family left the village.

Police said they would take prompt action if they find any anomalies.

Missions asked

community abroad", Iftekhar

He said expatriate Bangladeshis have sent remittances that touch nearly \$7 billion last year, which is a record for all times. "Most certainly, they need better looking after".

"Today, we have "second generation non-resident Bangladeshis who are keen to retain their connections at home by investing," the adviser said.

He said Chinese and Indian expatriate investors have played a key role in development of their respective economies. The foreign ministry will work very closely with the Board of Investment to facilitate this phenomenon.

The adviser also indicated that the government is contemplating setting up of special economic zones to attract expatriate Bangladeshi investment.

Advisers

FROM PAGE 1

asked not to make frequent comments on the issue to avert confusion and misunderstanding, said a

The government wants to proceed according to a plan so that the dialogue is fruitful, it added.

Another source said there is little possibility for the talks to start soon since the government wants the Election Commission (EC) to complete first its dialogue with the political parties on electoral reforms.

But the EC, faced with legal complexities over meeting BNP, is uncertain about the fate of the talks that began on September 12 last year and were supposed to be over by November.

Already one and a half months behind schedule, it is still searching for ways to resume the dialogue that it cancelled following a High Court stay order on November 18 last year.

The HC ruling came in response to a writ petition filed by detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia challenging the legality of the EC's invitation to the Saifur-led faction of her party.

On November 5, the commission sent the invitation to the proreform group, dismissing pro-Khaleda faction's claim that they represent the mainstream BNP and so Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the secretary general appointed by the chairperson, deserves to be in the dialogue.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan

FROM PAGE 1 are being implemented very slowly despite the forecast in the budget that the country may need 2.3

million tonnes of food grain. The budget also warned that the government would have to feed 50 lakh people in the current fiscal

These forecasts had been made before the floods and the cyclone hit the country, but government steps do not correspond to them,

Recalling his experience with political governments as a bureaucrat for 16 years, the former finance secretary said, "I can tell you there was never any such rise in food prices during the rules of political governments.

"The political leaders may be corrupt, they may be inefficient and bad, but they were very careful at least about this issue," he said.

On political reforms, he said negotiation is the only way to reach a consensus with the political parties on this. "Obviously political reform is needed but there is no permanent solution to fully reforming the political situation, Akbar said, adding that no country

has a perfect political system. Political reforms should be done with the consensus from every part of the society. "If you do not have a consensus, you have to

pay high in future," he said. Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Economic Association, Yussuf Abdullah Harun, former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, presented the keynote papers at the discussion on economic problems and how to over-

come them. Former caretaker government adviser Sultana Kamal said, "Punishment to bad people and reward for good people should be ensured otherwise no reform can help change the country."

Dr Kamal Hossain said, "We want democracy. But it should not come through just holding an election. We must have appropriate representatives who must be self-sufficient and responsible to the country."

Ahmadiyya family | Micro endeavours

FROM PAGE 16 "At the beginning I was producing ice-cream sticks from bamboos. was looking to make it cost-effective, and for a much easier than traditional way of manufacture it, but could not do that for lack of capital,' he said recalling his early struggling days in the business.

He finally imported an ice-cream stick manufacturing unit from India with a microcredit of Tk 70,000 from an NGO in addition to his own capital he had in his hands, and started manufacturing the ice-cream sticks using local petuli trees.

Now, Anwar's business is not only earning money for himself and his family, he also showed the people in his locality how to generate income using a locally available raw material, producing quality products. Moreover, he is employing a number of local people in his factory, and people who supply raw materials to him are also getting a boost in their

Best Microentrepreneur Barrison in her emotional brief speech said it was very hard for her to maintain a family of seven with the sole income from her husband's small grocery shop.

"One day, I saw a flower grower transporting large bundles of flowers to a market. Seeing that I decided to start my own flower growing business, and taking a microcredit of Tk 5,000 from an NGO, I started growing flowers," she said adding that her flower growing business changed the lives of her family members since

"My future plan is to expand my business," she added.

Expressing her reaction, Best Woman Microentrepreneur Rahima Begum said she comes from a very poor family and her husband was a day labourer who worked very hard to earn aliving.

Becoming a member of a microlending NGO in 1993, she took Tk 3,000 as a loan and started a crab farm that has changed not only her family's fortune but also the financial condition of her community.

Mahfuz Quadri, executive director of Anannyo Samaj Kallyan Shangstha, received the best microfinance institution award on behalf of his organisation. Established in 1983, Anannyo works mainly in Pabna. Its strategy is to bring development to villages one by one in the area. Some of the notable programmes of Anannyo are, reproductive and maternal and child health (MCH) clinics, Anannyo hospitals, urban health care projects, research, and publications. It has a large number of borrowers benefiting from its microfinance programme too.

In his instant reaction, Mahfuz said, "Microcredit is a medium for changing the livelihoods of common people, especially the ultra-poor."

Speaking at the ceremony, the finance adviser urged banks and non-banking financial institutions to come out of the box of traditional lending and to get involved in microlendingtoo.

"Microlending and

microentrepreneurship are essential to establish a balanced economy. It is needed to link up microcredit and microentrepreneurship with mainstream industrialisation and entrepreneurship," he said. In his welcome speech, Wahiduddin said there is a gap

between loans from mainstream banks and the microcredit system. In recent times, there is a trend of upsizing microcredits with large loan offers. If the mainstream banking sector starts microlending, the gap between the two will be eliminated,

Citi Country Officer in Bangladesh Mamun Rashid, and Founder Executive Director of Shakti Foundation for Disabled Women Humaira Islam also spoke at the event jointly organised by Citibank NA Bangladesh, and Shakti Foundation.

The Daily Star, the Prothom Alo, Channel i, Radio Today and Dhaka Sheraton were partner organisations in the programme.

Prothom Alo roundtable

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the first time a caretaker government has treated politicians as "untouchables"

He said the government's priorities should be holding elections, trial of the war criminals, correcting contentious history and reducing fear and uncertainty over the political future of Bangladesh.

Former BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan urged all stakeholders to ensure that the country does not return to a situation similar to that before the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11 last year. There is no alternative to elections, he said.

He asked politicians to reach a consensus on a number of issues, such as holding no hartal, accepting election results, not boycotting parliament, and neutrality of the speaker of parliament.

Mannan said the parliament rules of procedure should be changed while article 70 of the constitution should also be altered.

AL acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam endorsed the idea of a citizen's charter and termed it a "new Magna Carta" for Bangladesh's politics Ashraful called for a stop to the

massive attack on politicians. "This weakens the political processes in the country and pushes it towards depoliticisation of the government,"

"Secular democratic forces in the country have to be strengthened...There is no room for religious extremism in the country," he added. BNP standing committee mem-

ber and former army chief Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman said the present state of Bangladesh military is vastly different from those that ruled the country decades ago. "These days the army believes in the need and importance of democ-

racy. This is the people's army," said Mahbub AL Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury said policies should be made with a vision for the

He said political parties should set agendas for the dialogue with the caretaker government which must

The AL leader also said there is no alternative to an election which would ensure a transition to democ-Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said political stability is inextricably linked with economic stability

and the government must ensure economic justice to maintain political stability. Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said certain quarters labelled the left-leaning parties' opinion as illegitimate and non-

mainstream voice. Warning about the rise of militancy, he said if the government continues to claim that militancy has been wiped out from the country, the problem might rise again in near future putting Bangladesh in a similar situation faced by Pakistan at

lose its credibility if the general election is not held by the end of 2008. Security Council is not essential adding that the government has failed to communicate its message on the issue effectively. Former BNP lawmaker Ziaur

constitutional posts is not a sustain-

the process of appointment. It needs

to be more institutionalised, he said.

Party said the government would

Khan said the political problems created in the past cannot be resolved within a year or two. Those can be sloughed off by putting in place a check and balance system in the government.

coalition government of taking bribe for appointing ministers. "I am not sure whether it went up to the prime minister, but inquiries need to be conducted in this regard,

He also accused the last BNP-led

Gono Forum Presidium member Pankaj Bhattacharya said although people want a successful and sustained anti-corruption drive, the government must have public sup-

port for its programmes. Jatiya Party leader Anisul Islam Mahmud urged the government to make the anti-corruption drive more transparent adding that the process needs to be strengthened.

Asif Zardari

showed complete ignorance about

an offer of becoming Prime Minister for the one-year interim period and which they had planned to mix with made it clear to the messengers that he is not interested in any government office for next five years and he will only look after his party. He gained more respect from his close colleagues after throwing away the proposal of becoming Prime Minister for one year.

According to the sources close to Zardari, PPP will be very much interested in forming a government of national reconciliation only after getting majority in the coming elections. PPP will prefer to form a government with PML-N, ANP, MQM and other nationalist parties but PPP is not ready to give any commitment for making a coalition with PML-Q in centre and Punjab. Zardari is under intense pressure from within the party not to speak with any important leader of PML-O before elections. Asif Ali Zardari is determined to get power for his party only through fair and free elections and not through any back channel deal. He is planning for a mass agitation in case of delay in election on February 18th. Asif Ali Zardari is hopeful that following the instructions of new COAS General Asfaq Pervez Kyani to all the Army officers for not meeting with politicians the role of Army intelligence agencies in politics will also be

minimised and elections will not delayed Asif Ali Zardari will restart the election campaign of PPP from Liaqat Bagh Rawalpindi next month where his wife and leader Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on December 27th 2007. New PPP Co-chairperson is also planning to make Lahore as his future party headquarter because he got lot of positive response from the Punjab province after his first press conference where he made it clear that PPP will continue the politics of

federation. He will soon give some responsibilities to important leaders from Punjab including Chaudhry Aizaz Maj Gen (retd) Ibrahim of Kalyan Ahsan after consulting the Central Executive Committee of PPP. Zardari is confidant people of Punjab will play the same role in He said the creation of a National coming elections which they played in 1970 when PPP emerged as the single largest party in West Pakistan with the help of people from Punjab.

that be"

He is sure that if the establish-Ziaur Rahman. Rahman Khan said reshuffling in ment will tolerate the majority of PPP in Punjab then he will be in a able way to bring about reforms in position to make more confidence building measures with "power Hossain and Nazir Hossain accompanied Hafiz.

"Security forces used artillery, mortars and small-arms fire to engage

the miscreants. Reportedly, 50-60 miscreants were killed and (the) rest of them dispersed," it said.

There were no casualties among troops, it added.

Separately, in the Chaghmalai area of South Waziristan, militants ambushed a convoy moving from the main town of Wana, prompting a fierce-one hour gunbattle, the statementadded.

Between 20 and 30 rebels were killed, while four troops were injured and two army vehicles damaged, it added. Pakistani helicopter gunships

also opened fire on two suspect cars

near a third fort in South Waziristan

on Thursday, killing a further eight militants, it said. The growing boldness of the militants in challenging Pakistani troops is set to provoke a bloody showdown in the tribal belt, with pressure on Islamabad to take action

against Mehsud. Musharraf's government issued a purported telephone recording of Mehsud, the day after Benazir Bhutto's death, in which he is said to congratulate one of his followers for her assassination.

But many Pakistanis are sceptical about the tape, and also about the conflicting official accounts of whether she died from a gunshot wound, a suicide blast or a head injury from her car sunroof.

The country has also seen no letup in a wave of suicide bombings that have killed nearly 900 people in the past year, with an attack on a Shia mosque in the northwestern city of Peshawar on Thursday leaving 10 people dead.

Echoing Hayden's claims about a

"nexus" of extremist groups,

Pakistani officials said they believed the Sunni extremist group Lashkare-Jhangvi, which has close links to both Mehsud and al-Qaeda, was behind the Peshawar attack. "The bomber first fired some shots and then blew himself up. The modus operandi is the hallmark of

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and it shows they

have plans to stoke up sectarian

hatred," a senior security official told Meanwhile, Pakistani police arrested five suspected militants early yesterday who planned to use cyanide powder to poison water during the Shia Muslim festival of

Ashura, a police official said. The militants, who belonged to Sunni extremist groups, were planning to launch an attack Sunday on the Ashura festival in Karachi, provincial police chief Azhar Faroogi told a news conference.

"The aim was to cause wide-

spreadhumanlosses," Farooqisaid. The five, including a would-be suicide bomber, were arrested in Karachi, while three others involved in the plot were detained earlier in

Police recovered six kilogrammes of explosives to be placed in the suicide bomber's jacket, three hand

the nearby city of Hyderabad.

grenades, six detonators, two pistols and two kilogrammes of pellets, Faroogisaid. "We have also recovered from them 500 grammes of lethal cyanide

the water distributed at kiosks established specially during Ashura," he Pakistan is on high alert ahead of the weekend Muslim festival of Ashura, which is often hit by sectarian violence. Ashura is when Shias commemorate the death of the

Prophet Mohammed's grandson in the seventh century. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has strong links to Osama bin Laden's network and its members have been convicted of involvement in the 2002 murder of US reporter Daniel Pearl and in several attempts to kill Pervez Musharraf.

Bill Gates

Zia

FROM PAGE 1 stressed the need for coordination between technology and microcredit programme in fighting pov-

He also explained how the programme has been contributing to the alleviation of poverty.

FROM PAGE 16 and Rizvi Ahmed accompanied Delwar. BNP standing committee nominated Acting Secretary General Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed along with leaders of his

faction placed wreaths and

offered fateha at about 12:30pm. Talking to reporters, Khandaker Delwar said BNP is united under the leadership of Khaleda Zia. He said BNP is committed to the ideals of late president Ziaur Rahman and vowed to free Khaleda to ensure democracy and development in the

"There is no split in BNP," he said, adding that some leaders were misguided for reasons already known to the people. Maj (retd) Hafiz said Zia intro-

duced the politics of development and production to make Bangladesh a self-reliant country. He urged the party men to take a fresh vow to follow the ideals of military and other supporters of BNP leaders Maj Gen (retd) ZA | the coup, he said.

Khan, Shah Mohammad Abul

Pakistani troops 70 people killed

FROM PAGE 16 building, he said. Amid the rubble was found yellow headbands and anti-government literature.

Two policemen were killed by teenage snipers during Saturday's clashes in Nasiriyah. The snipers, two 14-year-old boys, were quickly arrested, police said.

Police officials said at least 35 cultists were killed in Basra and 18 in Nasiriyah. A total of 14 police, two Iraqi soldiers and two civilians were also killed.

At least 25 cultists were arrested in Naisiriyah and 75 in Basra.

Followers of the cult, led by Ahmed al-Hassani al-Yamani, seek to hasten the return of Imam Mahdi, an eighth century imam who vanished as a boy and whom Shias believe will return to bring justice to the world.

Yamani has his own website on which he claims to be an ambassador for the Mahdi, whom he says is

imminently to re-appear. The fighting comes as around two million Shias have descended on the holy city of Karbala in central Iraq for Saturday's climax of the Ashura rituals, which commemorate the killing of Imam Hussein by armies of the Sunni caliph Yazid in

During Ashura last January, another militant sect dubbing itself the Jund al-Samaa, or "Soldiers of Heaven," clashed with US and Iraqi forces outside Karbala and another

holy Shia city, Najaf. Last year's fighting left 263 sect followers dead, including their leader Dhia Abdul Zahra Kadhim al-Krimawi, also known as Abu Kamar, who believed he was descended from the Prophet

Mohammed. Proceedings in Karbala were continuing peacefully, governor of the province Aqil al-Khazali told a press conference on Saturday.

"Two million people have come

"There have been no security

nies have gone ahead without incident. "We are preparing buses to take

violations so far and the ceremo-

people home," he added. Thaksin allies

to Karbala for Ashura," he said.

FROM PAGE 16 two thirds of the 480 seats in parlia ment, he said.

"This will ensure that the gov-

ernment can last a long time," he Samak, 72, refused to say if he would become the next prime minister, although he now appears

Parliament will open on Monday and could choose a new prime minister within a week, he Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej

to be a top contender.

then must give his official approval, a formality that normally takes a few days. Although the party won the election -- the first since a bloodless coup in September 2006 their victory had been threatened by legal challenges filed at the

Supreme Court and dozens of vote

fraud investigations by the Election Commission. After a flurry of legal activity on Friday, the PPP found itself in the clear as the top court dismissed the most serious charges against it and election officials announced they had settled most of their investiga-

The creation of a new govern ment led by Thaksin's allies delivers an enormous blow to the royalist generals in the military, who had relentlessly sought to erase the flamboyant billionaire's political and corporate dynasty. After the coup, Thaksin and 110

from politics and his oncedominant Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais) party was disbanded. Military-appointed investigators froze about two billion dollars worth of his assets while lodging

criminal corruption charges

of his top lieutenants were banned

against Thaksin and his wife. Thaksin has remained in selfimposed exile in Britain since the coup, but succeeded in remaining in the spotlight at home, especially with his purchase of Manchester City Football Club.

His allies regrouped under the

banner of the PPP, and won last

month's polls even with most of their strongholds still under martial law since the putsch. A PPP government is widely expected to welcome Thaksin back to Thailand, possibly by April, though many questions remain

about exactly how that would

happen. He and his wife both risk possible prison sentences over corruption charges. Thaksin would also have to find a way to placate the royalist forces in the military that led the coup, in part by reassuring policies on the issue. them of his devotion to the king.

coalition's formation," said political analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak, warning that there could be intense jockeying behind the scenes over the choice of prime minister. make some concessions" to the

wrangling will continue after the

"They have to have a facesaving way to move on, and if Thaksin is smart, he'll allow that."

Ashura ceremonies have been targeted by Sunni insurgents in the past. On Thursday a suicide bomber blew himself up during a procession outside a mosque in Baquba, 60 kilometres (35 miles) north of Baghdad, killing eight

people. British forces handed over control of the oil-rich province of Basra to Iraqi forces in mid-December, amid warnings that it could descend into violent turf

wars between Shia militias. Britain expects to sharply reduce its nearly 5,000-strong troop presence in the province, but says around half that number will stay at their base at Basra airport to support the Iraqi security forces

and for training purposes. Pintu quizzed

theattack

FROM PAGE 1 links with Hawabhaban, the investigators are examining whether the influential people of Hawa Bhaban had any role behind the attacks on

the AL rally. As the investigators have yet to unearth fully, who plotted the attack, what was the motive behind it, and why the evidence were destroyed deliberately -- they are quizzing Pintutogetanswers.

Babar was at the helm of the home ministry when the erstwhile investigators of the case wove a story implicating a ward level AL leader, and a former ward commissioner of Maghbazar area in the capital Mokhlesur Rahman. They attempted to feed the public the woven story through an ostensible confessional statement made by a petty criminal Joj Miah, in which he had named Mokhlesur as one of the planners of

Sources also said Babar held

repeated meetings with investigators

and directed the erstwhile additional inspector general of CID to submit a charge sheet based on the confessional statement of Joj Miah, who had been invented out of the blue by the then supervising officer of the case, CID's erstwhile special superintendent Ruhul Amin. The sources said investigators are also cross checking the information gleaned from Pintu and seven other

Alam, Abu Sayeed alias Doctor Zafar, Abul Kalam Azad, Jahangir Alam, Mosaddek Billah, and Halim, all of whom already made confessional statements. The sources also said if needed,

detained Huji leaders. The seven are

Hannan's brother Mohibullah alias

Mofizur Rahman, Sharif Shahidul

the seven will be produced before Pintu in the TFI cell to cross check his A total of 29 people including Pintu were arrested in connection

with the case, 20 of whom are now out on bail. During the immediate past rule of BNP-Jamaat alliance government the investigators arrested some suspects including Shaibal Shaha Partha, and kept them in custody for quite a long time, allegedly torturing them severely in custody so that they

would make statements before the courtimplicating themselves.

programme.

BBC Sanglap with Kamal Ahmed of BBC Bangla

Service moderating the

Jatiya Party (JP) lawmaker, Manik

Golam Habib Dulal, former

Chowdhury, director of Kurigram-based NGO Jibika, and Rehana Begum, former head of district Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal were also featured in the programme as panellists. Responding to a query, they said to make the much-talked

dialogue with political parties

fruitful, the government could

approach the court seeking

release of both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia -- detained chiefs of AL and BNP. The JP leader said the dialogue might not be fruitful and both AL and BNP might be divided over the issue if the government held the dialogue with the chiefs of both parties in jail. The government's attempt to restore a con-

genial atmosphere might even fail, he observed. Replying to another query, the panellists said the next parliamentary election might not be held as per the timeframe announced in the electoral roadmap if the Election Commission (EC) does not concentrate on its main task of holding a free and fair election and redraws the parliamentary con-

On tackling Monga (severe food crisis due to unemployment) in the northern regions of the country, they said Monga could be tackled within five to 10 years if the government adopts long-term political and financial All the speakers strongly criti-"The legal and constitutional cised the government for its

stituencies now.

and corruption in the fertiliser distribution process that led to a severe fertiliser crisis in the country. They urged the government to simplify the fertiliser distribution "The Thaksin camp will have to process and address the difficulties encountered by farmers.

failure to check mismanagement

In reducing the people's sufferings due to the skyrocketing prices of essentials, they urged the government to initiate rationing system for the general people.