Charge-framing

limit for the trial, Judge Firoz Alam

of the special court-1, set up at the Members of Parliament Hostel in the national parliament complex, adjourned the arraignment till February 7. The judge also solicited cooperation from both parties 'so that a congenial atmosphere for the trial prevails in the court'.

During the 45-minute pithy hearing, which started at 9:45am, two of the eight accused, AL chief Hasina and former energy secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, were present in the dock, looking quite lively.

Meanwhile, following a petition a High Court bench yesterday granted Toufiq bail in the case, and issued a rule upon the government seeking explanation as to why the trial of the case under the Emergency Power Rules should not

be declared illegal. Hasina arrived in the court at 9:38am holding a handbag and a black diary, and conversed with the former energy secretary intermittently. Earlier, soon after the hearing started, the defence sought permission for letting the accused sit while in the dock, which the court granted at once.

After the court sat, Mukul rose and mentioned to the court that the accused standing in the dock were only the two of eight. Although seven persons had been accused in the first information report, the name of Bangabandhu Memorial Trust (BMT) Curator Sayed Siddiqur Rahman was included on the charge sheet, Mukul told the court.

Mukul said an invitation for international tender was published on October 24, 1996 for setting up barge-mount power plants at three places -- Shikalbaha, Hariupur, and Khulna -- prompting responses from 25 companies.

Eighteen of the contestants were found qualified including New England Power Company (NEPC), Wartsila Power Development Ltd, and Summit Group, who bid for the Khulna power plant project, Mukul mentioned in his statement.

Mukul told the court that NEPC was the lowest bidder among the three with a quotation of \$4.59 for one KW/hr while the rates offered by Wartsila and Summit were \$5.82 and \$6.17 respectively.

Wartsila created a company compfising United Group and Summit Group and named the conglomerate KPCL, Mukul mentioned.

Mukul also mentioned that Hasina approved the project summary on October 11, 1997 after she had received eight pay orders made out to Natasha Ahmed and Nasrin Ahmed, daughters of Badrunnnesa Nahid and neighbours of Bangabandhu Memorial Trust. The bribe was allegedly taken to purchase a two-storey building and

19.11 kathas of land for the trust. "Some of the pay orders were received by the prime minister herself while the rest were received by Siddigur Rahman," Mukul said.

As Mukul went on to say that before October 11 Hasina received all eight pay orders from the two ladies, defence counsel Syed Rezaur Rahman stood up petitioning the court for more time.

Rezaur also mentioned that it was not necessary for the PP to go on with the case summary as the defence lawyers had not been informed about many aspects of the case and the PP would have to repeat the information.

Anti-graft drive

League is given the opportunity, people will be able to have rice at Tk 15/16 per kg and prices of other essentials would be halved

"If Allah provides us with the opportunity, we will feed people rice at Tk 15/16 per kg and prices of other essentials will be reduced to half," Zillur added quoting Hasina.

Zillur also expressed concern about her health saying she is not receiving proper treatment and she is suffering from high blood pressure.

This is inhumane. She is prescribed medicine over telephone and without her doctor's opinion," Zillur added.

Zillur said he wonders how the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman can be involved in corruption when she has distributed all her properties for the wellare of the people.

"The government confuses donation with extortion. The government is making a mistake," said one of the counsels of Sheikh Hasina advocate Qamrul

Islam. Following the comments, advocate Abdul Mannan Khan said, "Hundreds of crores of taka is being given as aid to the Sidr-

affected people. This is donation. If donations were not made, no development work can be done." He also said the power plant

installation job was given to the firm that gave the lowest rate considering the then market rate.

"The lowest bidder that participated in the tender was nonresponsive. Non-responsive tender is not a tender in the eyes of law. So, the job was given to the second-lowest bidder," said Mannan adding that no illegal facilities were given through the tender that was floated to minimise power crisis and people's sufferings.

Mukul responded by saying that he was just giving his 'opening statement'

After the court proceedings had been over, Mukul however briefed journalists about the case mentioning that Hasina received three pay orders of total Tk 1.45 crore on October 7, 1997, one pay order of Tk 55 lakh on October 8, 1997, and another pay order of Tk 1 crore on November 24, 1997.

A power purchase and implementation agreement was signed between KPCL and Power Development Board on October 16 of the same year.

A time petition for examining the case documents on behalf of Toufiq was also submitted during yesterday's hearing.

Rezaur also petitioned the court for allowing more sitting arrangements in the courtroom to accommodate journalists and defence lawyers. Rezaur also sought permission from the court for meeting their client Hasina.

Prosecution lawyer Syed Shameem Ahsan Habib at that point rose and said more than three days could not be allowed to examine the documents, adding that the defence lawyers did not mention what type of documents they wanted to examine, and those must be examined in the courtroom.

The judge also allowed an hour for the accused to meet with their relatives and 10 of the defence

THECASE ACC Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan lodged the case with Tejgaon police station on September 2 last year, accusing Hasina and six others of using their influence through mutual understanding in helping a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up a barge-mount 100MW power plant in Khulna depriving the lowest

Hasina's co-accused at the time were former energy secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan, its Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja, and its Director Abul Kalam

Morshed Alam, deputy director of the ACC, submitted the charge sheet in the case on January 10 of this year including the name of BMT Curator Siddigur Rahman.

A Dhaka court on January 15 issued warrants against former energy secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and the six others.

A Dhaka court transferred the case to the special court on January 27 for a speedy trial.

Kenya opposition wants AU peacekeepers

BONDO, Kenya

The leader of Kenya's opposition has called for the African Union to send peacekeepers to help stem violence sparked by the country's disputed presidential election.

"The AU should bring in peacekeepers because the violence in Kenya is appalling," Raila Odinga told The Associated Press with his wife at his side at his family home in Bondo, a village in western Kenya.

Western Kenya has been at the center of fighting that has killed more than 800 people and engulfed the country since the Dec. 27 election, which returned President Mwai Kibaki to power after a tally that foreign and local observers say was rigged. The violence has often degenerated into ethnic clashes over decades-old grudges about land and resources, with much of the anger and attacks aimed at Kikuyu, who are resented for their long domina-

tion of politics and the economy. On Sunday, gangs with machetes and arrows were facing off in the western town of Sotik, and smoke billowed into the sky from burning houses. A day earlier, young men from the rival Kalenjin, Kikuyu and Kisii tribes hunted each other through the streets of another western town, Eldoret, burning houses

and blocking roads. Former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan brokered a deal between Kibaki and Odinga on Friday laying out a plan to end the violence before moving onto the tougher political issues at the root of the fighting. Annan said it should take two weeks to decide the immediate crisis and up to a year for the deeper problems.

The agreement calls for illegal militias to be disbanded and for investigation of all crimes connected to the violence, including those allegedly committed by the police, who have killed scores of people.

Both men who signed Friday's deal were still talking tough. Kibaki accused his opponents of orchestrating the violence, and Odinga said Kibaki's "aggressive statements" were undermining efforts to quell the fighting

With the two sides trading blame, as they have done repeatedly since the outset of the crisis, the fighting has continued unabated.

Cobweb of death

FROM PAGE 16 Officer-in-charge at Natore Police Station said, "We expect more information from them during the interrogation. Three more bodies were recovered in the town in last few weeks. We will look to it whether the gang has any link with the murders.

FROM PAGE 1

Camp, US principal deputy assistant secretary for South and Central Asia, was talking to reporters at a brief joint press conference yesterday with Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain after a bilateral meeting on his first dayhere.

Asked about his thoughts on the year-long state of emergency here, Camp cited that the ban on indoor politics in Dhaka had been lifted and said, "I am sure there will be more, which will be welcomed."

Reluctant to elaborate on the matter, Camp instead stressed the importance of this year to Bangladesh because of the planned elections by the end of this year.

A US embassy press statement said Camp reiterated his government's support for the caretaker government and "Stressed the importance of implementation of the electoral roadmap."

Camp also underlined the importance of dialogue between the government, civil society, political parties, the private sector, and international partners, said the press state-

Touhid told reporters that the two sides also discussed bilateral trade issues during the meeting, but did not elaborate on the specifics. He also said the two sides are also

discussing US assistance in post-Sidr rehabilitation in the cyclone affected The US embassy also a held a reception last night in honour of Camp's visit, which gave promi-

nent politicians along with civi

society and business leaders the

chance to meet the US diplomat. Camp is to meet Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, chief election commissioner and the foreign adviser tomorrow among others.

CA announces

FROM PAGE 16 (VGF) programme, another government bid to alleviate the misery of the hardcore poor, the chief adviser said usually feeding through VGF cards does not continue during this time of the year. But considering the damage to crops and property in the floods, he said the government is continuing the programme

"The objective of VGF is to bring people below poverty line under safety net so that pressures of price of rice don't affect them.

Commander of Muktijoddha Sangsad of the upazila M Azizul Islam, president of Gangachhara Imam Association AKM Nurunnabi Ansari, Nure Alam Sarker of Brac, president of Gangachhara press club Sazu Ahmed Lal, principal of Gangachhara Degree College Anisur Rahman, union parishad chairman Anwarul Islam, president of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mostafa Azad Chowdhury and UNO of Gangachhara Mukesh Chandra Biswas, among others, spoke at the meeting presided over by Rangpur Deputy Commissioner Khandokar M Atiar Rahman.

Fakhruddin

FROM PAGE 16

the aftermath of the cyclone. They said they might need government's support in designing and site selection. The CA assured government's necessary cooperation in this regard.

The mission made the visit to Bangladesh, particularly to the Sidr-hit areas, to explore how best IDB could utilise the donation in a transparent way.

ERD Secretary Aminul Islam Bhuiyan, Secretary to CA's office Kazi M Aminul Islam and CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim were also present.

1,300 fowls

all-out preparations to combat the situation. They culled at least 1300 domestic fowls and destroyed 199 eggs within the one-kilometer radius from the place in Birhai village where the infected bird was first detected.

Our Chittagong correspondent reports that more crows have been found dead in the port city over the last few days including over one hundred crows at Dewanhat yesterday.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) is continuing its awareness programme. Yesterday they started oral announcements in different areas warning people about bird flu and what to do if

they find any birds dead. Four more control rooms have been opened at the offices of district administration, CCC, livestock department and civil

surgeon. Meanwhile, officials have collected sample of dead poultry from a farm in city's Bakalia area and sent it to Feni for laboratory tests, sources said.

The 100 dead crows were found at CSD Food Godown at Dewanhat Mansurabad area under Double Mooring Police Station. A labourer working at the place said that crows have dying here for the last ten days.

BSS adds that special assistant to the chief adviser for the ministry of fisheries and livestock Manik Lal Samaddar yesterday said that the government is considering increasing the compensation money for poultry infected by avian flu.

US to welcome | Titas staff

FROM PAGE 1 used to work as a supervisor

using his influence. Through his connections with dishonest officials, Mollah built close contacts with many industries. He used to provide these industries with illegal gas connections and played a role in reducing their gas bills, thus earning huge money in return.

Much of his income at the time would also come from controlling transfers and postings of Titas staffs, said sources. With money pouring in,

Mollah dreamt of setting up

industries. Mollah's former colleagues said none of his industries came under the enquiries conducted by Titas during the whole tenure of the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

After his voluntary retirement in 1997, Mollah was mostly involved with commercial activities of Titas directly and indirectly, said sources.

Hailing from Panchkandi of Narsingdi, Mollah has a threestorey house at Tinishpur in Narsingdi town. He plans to build a swimming pool on the third floor of his house near the municipal stadium.

The taskforce asked Mollah for his wealth statement on October 25 and later from his family. On November 4, Mollah submitted the wealth accounts of his mother Noorjahan Begum, wife Nasima Begum, daughters Kona, Deena and Aduri, son-inlaw Sharif Hossain Jahangir, adopted daughter Salma Akter Runa, brother Chan Mia Mollah, his wife Mazida Akter and another brother A Rahim.

Mollah has 15 industries in the names of himself, his wife and other family members.

These include Thermex Textile, Aduri Apparels, Thermex Cotton Spinning, Thermex Melange Spinning Mills, Thermex Home Fabrics Ltd, Thermex Knit Yarn, Thermex Blended Yarn, Thermex Group,

said adding that even if it was

possible, questions are being

raised because the matter was

made public without first inform-

ing the secretary general of the

yers also met her earlier, but she

did not convey any [such] mes-

sage [to them]. What has hap-

pened now that she had to convey

the message through Mr

Saifur Rahman before meeting the

chairperson. So what can I do if

do anything about the ones

comment regarding the meeting

between Saifur Rahman and Rizvi

Ahmed, acting office secretary of

Friday morning at his Gulshan

residence as an envoy of Delwar

for finding ways to reunite the

for frequently changing their

position, Delwar said although

Saifur and Maj (retd) Hafiz had

claimed that they would quit

their posts from the party, some

preconditions they set are creat-

ing obstacles in the unification

forming of a national government

before holding the election is

unconstitutional. "The country

now needs an elected govern-

ment. A national government

could have been formed after the

has been physically and mentally

Finance adviser

as the price will vary if it comes

through railroad rather than water-

delegation, Aziz said the IFC

expressed their interest in contrib-

uting to both public and public-

assisting us in infrastructure and

agriculture sector," he told the

in the construction of Padma

Bridge where a huge amount of

As per the initial estimation, a

sum of \$1.6 billion will be needed

to construct the bridge while vari-

ous donor agencies and countries

IFC executive vice-president

pledged to contribute \$9.6 million.

Lars Henrik Thunell led the seven-

member team of the IFC, World

Bank's soft-lending window. WB

country chief Xian Zhu was also

the reporters that they have keen

interest in contributing to private

sector, including SMEs, and giving

more support to Bangladesh.

After the meeting, Henrik told

money will be needed.

The adviser told them to assist

private partnership sectors.

About his meeting with the IFC

"They expressed their interest in

Claiming that Tarique Rahman

Liberation War," he said.

FROM PAGE 16

journalists.

present.

Responding to a query, he said

process.

Blaming the pro-Saifur leaders

Rizvi met Saifur Rahman on

Delwar also said he could not

He did not however make any

questions are raised?" he added.

expelled by the chairperson.

"He [Khokon] also spoke with

Khokon?" said Delwar.

"Her relatives and other law-

FROM PAGE 1

party.

Thermex Denim, Aduri Knit Composite, Aduri Washing and Printing, Aduri CNG Refuelling and Filling Station, Gazipur Gas Company, Padma Enterprise and Nakshi Textile Dyeing and

Printing Industries Ltd. In his wealth statement, he showed movable and immovable property worth Tk 58.78 crore in his name and in shares. These properties are actually worth Tk 85.54 crore.

Although his wife has been shown to have properties worth Tk 49.88 crore, those are worth Tk 92.61 crore. Properties in the name of his daughter Kona have been shown to be worth Tk 35.35 crore, Deena's Tk 35.33 crore, and Aduri's 6.78 lakh.

Mollah has a 5,536-squarefeet flat at Naya Paltan, a 1,800-sft flat at Shantinagar, a 2,899-sft flat at Dhanmondi, a 1,640-sft flat at Siddheshwari and a 1,450sft flat at Kakrail in the capital.

He claimed that the price of one square foot of the flat at 30/A, VIP Road in Naya Paltan would be Tk 1,554. It was, however, learnt that its highest selling price was Tk 4,000.

Mollah has flats at Chamelibagh, Dhanmondi, Purana Paltan, Bailey Road, Gulshan and Banani in the names of his wife, daughters and other family members. There is a five-storey building on Sangeeta Road in Narsingdi in his wife's

Kader Mollah has 29 different kinds of cars, microbuses and lorries, which he showed to be worth Tk 4.59 crore although those should cost Tk 13.77 crore

Talking on curbing corruption at Titas, Special Assistant to the chief adviser Dr M Tamim yesterday said, "There should be stricter provisions for punish ment and that have to be implemented properly."

He said the incidents of such corruption and irregularities should be tried under the Gas Act, a law under making.

devastated as he was tortured

during remand, he said torture in

the name of interrogation is a

violation of the laws of the land

and existing international rules

and Koko is serious," Delwar said.

He urged the authorities to

arrange better treatment for

them or release them so that they

can get better treatment them

suitable environment for dia-

logues and a meaningful election.

briefing at his Dhanmondi resi-

dence yesterday evening rejected

the allegation raised by Delwar,

saying that he did not give any

false statement using Khaleda

Zia had asked me to [convey]," he

said adding, "A few people, who

are hatching conspiracies to split

the party, have misguided him

had written a letter to the

Election Commission urging it to

invite Khandaker Delwar for the

He also noted that Khaleda

"I have only said what Khaleda

Meanwhile, Khaleda's lawyer

"Physical condition of Tarique

of human rights.

Delwar doubts claim

FROM PAGE 1

the case, is likely to be questioned in this connection at the makeshift jail

others in connection with inflicting a huge loss to the state by awarding gas deals to Canadian gas exploration company Niko abusing their power.

The co-accused of Khaleda Zia are detained former law minister Moudud Ahmed, detained former state minister for energy AKM energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam, and Vice-president (South Aisa) Niko Research Bangladesh Ltd Kashem Sharif.

A separate case was also filed with the same police station on the same day against detained former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six others in connection with the same charges.

Moudud Ahmed and AKM

following investigation.

The magistrate asked the OC to register the extortion case as a regular one.

Rakib complained that Harris and Hasnat, boasting that they are Hawa Bhaban men, took Tk 9 lakh from him in the name of sending

to their promise and also refused to pay the money back.

stated that the two brothers had taken Tk 26 lakh from him on different dates, promising that they would win construction-work orders for him. But they did not deliver, Rakib said.

Harris, who is implicated in a dozen cases, has already been given a three-year jail for illegally possessing foreign and local currencies and sentenced to 59 years in prison in connection with giving a government vehicle to a friend for use.

Rice import

that in the corresponding period last year. Still, it is not sufficient in view of the present context.

to use more of its stock to run programmes like open market sale and vulnerable group feeding," he said adding that insufficient supplies on the local market and higher prices might further shrink the

tonnes were rice and 2.14 lakh | Bush, arguing her rival was an tonnes wheat, he said.

Delwar also insisted on Khaleda's freedom for creating a tonne wheat.

tonnes," he added. Mahbub Uddin Khokon in a press So far the government has imported 2.70 lakh tonnes of rice in

> Supply Corporation has submitted Bangladesh. The deal has not been settled as the governments have yet

> The West Bengal Corporation's asking price is about \$400 per tonne while the Bangladesh side has been negotiating for Indian local market price that is \$350-\$360.

upcoming electoral dialogue. Govt mulling

FROM PAGE 1

Zia's name.

[Delwar].

Tamim, chief adviser's special assistant in charge of power, energy and mineral resources, said the demand for gas now stands at 1,833 million cubic feet per day while the current production is 1,738 million cubic feet.

He said the government has already received a proposal from Myanmar. "We're thinking of buying gas from Myanmar as it is the only country around us with gas surplus,

On Myanmar's condition that they will export gas to Bangladesh if a portion of the fertiliser to be produced in Chittagong is shared with them, he said, "I think it's possible in principle. There shouldn't be any problem with that."

Imported gas could be used in producing fertiliser, he said adding "Most importantly, we will have a pipeline built that we can use if we find any other sources later." Tamim said he is yet to read the

after studying theirs. Asked when the gas deficit would be eradicated, he said, "As per our plan, we can overcome the deficit by 2009."

Myanmarese proposal. The govern

ment may send a formal proposal

About his plans to solve power and energy crisis, he said exploration for new gas fields would be one of his priorities. Besides speeding up the process of setting up two big power plants, he would seek to recruit skilled manpower.

Referring to the ongoing vigilance and investigation by a government task force at Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, he said similar measures should be taken for the Power Development

Niko graft case

early March, UNB reports.

ACC Assistant Director Mahbubul Alam filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on December 9, 2007 against Khaleda and four

Mosharraf Hossain, former acting

Mosharraf have already been questioned by ACC officials in this regard.

Harris Chy

cognisance and ordered the officer-in-charge (OC) of Motijheel Police Station to submit report on the misappropriation charges

one of his relatives to the US. But the accused failed to live up

In his second case, the plaintiff

FROM PAGE 16

in the country now is higher that

"This year the government had

government's food reserves. The food stock stood at 6.41 lakh tonnes last week. Of that, 4.27 lakh

At the same time last year, the stock was 6.03 lakh tonnes--5.87 lakh tonnes of rice and 0.16 lakh

"We are now planning to take our stock of rice to at least 10 lakh

the current fiscal year. Food ministry sources said the West Bengal Essential Commodity tender to the Indian government for supply of five lakh tonnes of rice to

to reach a consensus on the price.

CID team

FROM PAGE 16

the CID chief and additional inspector general of police, told The Daily Star yesterday, "The CID officials have been sent to Kolkata to verify whether the arrested are Bangladeshi criminals Joy, Emon and Haris. They would also talk to the Indian police about the arrested Bangladeshi criminals."

He, however, said, "The CID officials might talk to the Bangladeshi arrested criminals But it is not sure if the CID officials will return with the Bangladeshi According to the sources, the

West Bengal CID has demanded deportation of arrested Indian criminals including recently arrested Jiban Singh and one of his accomplices, reportedly hiding in Bangladesh, from Bangladesh in exchange for Bangladeshi criminals arrested in India. The CID high officials in

Bangladesh said although there is no extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India, the West Bengal authorities are likely to deport the Bangladeshi criminals as good relations exist between the two countries. Five other criminals were deported before as a goodwill gesture, they added. At least 350 to 400 Bangladeshi

criminals have been in hiding in India while a good number of Indian criminals are also hiding in Bangladesh, the sources said adding that law enforcement agencies of both the countries already arrested a number of them. In October, at the meeting between Bangladesh Rifles and

Border Security Force of India, the

two countries exchanged lists of

such criminals.

Gas line repair

FROM PAGE 1 The CNG-run vehicle drivers were found queued up in the refuelling

stations till late at night. Prices of kerosene-stoves also shot up as many rushed to Karwan Bazar, New Market and elsewhere to buy these to make sure that they would not have troubles next day.

"My mother had to cook up to 3:30am yesterday," said Sarwar, a resident of Demra, adding that the supply of gas was totally zero since morning. "I also had to give my brother a

ride on my motorbike to his college in Maghbazar as he didn't find any vehicle to go there," he told The Daily Tahmina Begum, a resident of

Nazimuddin Road in old part of the city, said that while gas pressure at her house was low until noon, it became zero after 1:00pm. "The gas pressure was so low from the morning that it was not possible

to cook," Shamima Sultana, a housewife at Sharulia in Demra, said. Another housewife Shammi Akhter at Laxmibazar in old part of the city, however, said that although

they had feared that there would be

no gas pressure yesterday, the pressure was normal until 2:00pm. Talking to The Daily Star, a number of residents in Uttara, Mirpur Tejgaon, Gulshan and Maghbazar, however, said that they did not experience any problem in gas pressure.

Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners Association Vice President Manoranjan Bhakta said the gas pressure in many of the CNG refuelling stations was lower.

"Usually 15 pound per square inch (PSI) is required for refuelling,

why those could manage yesterday.

him. Chief Adviser's Special Assistant for energy M Tamim said that the authorities began repairing the gas pipeline at Daudkandi and it will be

midnight, he added. Gas is being diverted from the unhindered zones to the areas that were affected so that no area faces zero pressures, he told journalists at a

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited earlier announced that gas supply will be disrupted at Postagola, Zurain, Jatrabari, Dhalpur, Bibirbagicha, Gopibagh, Kamalapur, Khilgaon, Basabo, Shahjahanpur, Badda, Rampura, Ulan, Tejgaon Industrial area, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Nayatola, Madhubagh, Shantinagar, Siddheswari, Motijheel, Wari, Gendaria, Nawabpur, Sadarghat, Sutrapur, Banglabazar, Bakshibazar,

In addition, gas supply in Sonargaon, Meghnaghat and Rupganj in Narayanganj, Gazaria in

Obama chases Hillary

FROM PAGE 16

Hillary Clinton, 60, meanwhile was pounding western states California, Arizona and New Mexico, partly to drive home her primacy among Hispanic voters, who along with blue-collar workers and women make up the core of her powerbase.

countless stump appearances, struggled to be heard at times above the cheers as she thanked supporters gathered at California State University. "Some people running for office

tion," the New York senator said. likened Obama to the widely unpopular President George W.

untested neophyte who would be a

"leap of faith" for voters.

"We cannot afford to elect someone as we did with George Bush and then be somewhat surprised by the decisions that are made," she told reporters aboard her campaign plane.

McCain arrived Saturday in Nashville, Tennessee, a state where he has a narrow lead over his top rival Mitt Romney and former

The former Vietnam war hero's emergence as party front-runner after wins in South Carolina and Florida last week, sparked a furious backlash among social conservatives who have long opposed him, and threaten to split the party.

beat Hillary Clinton or Obama in November.

Obama," he said. He also made a bold prediction about Super Tuesday, though insisted he was not taking anything

EC to talk

Khulna expired in May last year while the tenure of the city corporations of Barisal and Sylhet expired in last November and December respectively. According to election laws, polls to the five city corporations are supposed to be held within 180 days prior to the expiration of their tenure.

But due to the state of emergency and for a lack of a fair voter list, the polls to the city corporations could not be held. The EC which began the field level task of preparing a voter list with photographs in August last year from Rajshai City Corporation area, has almost completed the job in five of the six city corporation

The commission will now publish a draft voter list prepared for the city corporation areas for scrutiny, which will then be final-If the polls to the city corpora-

tions are held in April, those will be the first ever polls held in the last one year since the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11,2007 Besides, the EC has plans to hold the due polls to some

but it was around 5 PSI yesterday. Many stations were therefore forced to shut down," he said, adding each station refuels gas of Tk 1 to 1.5 lakh

Khandakar Rafiqul Hossain Kazal, president of Association of Bus Companies, said most CNG-run buses refuelled on Saturday, which is

"I am afraid what will happen tomorrow (today)," he told The Daily Star. Manoranjan Bhakta echoed

complete in the scheduled time. Gas supply will be normal from Monday

press briefing at the Secretariat.

Islampur, Hazaribagh and Azimpur.

Munshiganj, Daudkandi, Homna and Titas in Comilla, and Banchharampur and Kachua in Chandpur came to a halt.

"I assume I will get the nomina-

tion of our party," McCain told

reporters. "I assume that unifying

Romney, vying to become the

first Mormon in the White House,

planned to attend funeral services

for his Church's president Gordon

Hinckley in Utah, before heading

back to the campaign trail in

Rasmussen Reports on Saturday

showed Clinton holding firm

among Democratic voters.

against Obama, 45 to 37 percent

Saturday had Hillary Clinton up

nationally by 48 percent to 41, up

from a three point lead on Friday. It

gave McCain a 20 point lead over

Democrats in 22 states and

American Samoa vote on their

presidential nominee, while

Republicans will select their

favourites in 21 states. In all, 19

states have hosting contests for

delegates to national party conven-

tions in August and September

which will formally anoint party

The states account for half the

"Super Tuesday" will see

A Gallup daily tracking poll

The latest daily tracking poll by

and I'm confident I can do that."

our party is a very critical item ... Her raspy voice, strained by

think only about the next election

I'm thinking about the next genera-Hillary Clinton on Saturday

Baptist preacher Mike Huckabee.

But McCain, who mounted a stunning comeback after his campaign was left for dead last year, insisted on Saturday he was the best bet among Republicans to

"When you look at the polling data it shows I stack up best against Senators Hillary Clinton and

for granted.

two days came amid fresh fighting between government forces and Tamil rebels across the embattled north at the weekend

ministry said in a statement. Casualty claims from both sides cannot be independently

Since the beginning of this year, at least 908 rebels and 36 soldiers have been killed in heavy fighting, according to defence ministry figures. At least 137 civilians have also died during the same period, according to both sides.

pulled out of a tattered truce with ing for a separate Tamil homeland since 1972 in a conflict that has left tens of thousands dead.

aviary of the Dehiwala zoo caused panic among visitors, but police

There also was no claim of responsibility for the zoo attack. The two explosions came a day after a powerful bomb ripped through a bus in the north-

President Mahinda Rajapakse

that left dozens dead, according to the defence ministry.

verified

The government in January the rebels, who have been fight-

11 killed FROM PAGE 16

both parties.

receiving treatment, Soysa said. There were no foreigners among the casualties, hospital sources Earlier, the grenade blast at the

urged calm. The zoo was shut indefinitely for visitors, officials

moved in reinforcements and

central town of Dambulla, killing 20 passengers and wounding 68. Sri Lankan police and security forces have been on high alert ahead of Monday's celebrations to mark the country's 60th anniversary of independence from

condemned the bus bombing and urged Sri Lankans not to be provoked by what he called a "savage attack" by the Tamil The string of three attacks in

Troops backed by heavy artillery fire killed at least 44 suspected rebels on Saturday, while only two soldiers were killed, the

municipalities also starting from