EU concerned about election, urges Pak govt to free political detainees

AFP, Islamabad

The leaders of Pakistan's main polls. opposition parties put up a united front yesterday for next week's general elections after polls showed them pulling ahead of President Pervez Musharraf's

Party officials said Asif Ali tee. Zardari, the widower of slain former premier Benazir Bhutto, agreed at a meeting late Tuesday with Nawaz Sharif, another exprime minister, to work together after Monday's polls.

Two polls released in recent days tip Benazir's Pakistan popular in the country since her assassination in December, followed by Sharif's, with allies of Musharraf in third place.

"Both agreed to work together after the elections, regardless of which party wins a majority," a senior PPP official, who accompanied Zardari to Sharif's house for talks, told AFP.

At a joint press conference late Tuesday, Zardari told reporters that

Gen Moeen

last year but had postponed it due to his preoccupations at home and

This time his visit is almost confirm and officials concerned are making the final arrangements of his tour and discussing with the Indian officials about his meetings with top government officials.

Sources said Moeen is likely to leave Dhaka on February 24 and return home on March 2. Dates and time of his meetings are yet to be finalised.

An important official of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka also confirmed Moeen's visit. The Indian media has already published a number of reports regarding the visit of General Moeen, the official said.

During his visit, Moeen is expected to pay courtesy call to President Pratibha Devisingh Patil. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Defence Minister AK Antony.

He will also hold meetings with Indian Chief of Army Staff General Deepak Kapoor, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sureesh Mehta and Chief Marshal Fali Homi Major.

Sources said the visit of the Bangladesh army chief to India is being considered significant as the army-backed caretaker government in Bangladesh is currently carrying out various important tasks, including anti-corruption drives, reforms and proceeding towards the general elections by December this year. The army has been playing an

important role and extending allout support to this government to achieve the goals.

The army chief is also expected Tajmahalin Agra.

he would "take along all democratic forces" if his party wins the

PPP spokeswoman Farzana Raja said yesterday the two leaders had agreed to cooperate but that any decision on a post-election alliance "will be taken by the party's central executive commit-

A spokesman for Sharif's party said there were "several issues on which both sides have agreement and there are a number of issues on which both sides can work together in a post-election scenario."

Sharif was set to address a major rally in central Punjab province People's Party (PPP) as the most later Wednesday, defying security concerns following Benazir's murder at a political meeting seven weeks ago and a subsequent wave of suicide attacks.

The European Union yesterday expressed concerns about the elections, urging authorities to improve arrangements and free political detainees.

6,500 MT rice

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being sold at \$340 per tonne at Bardhaman in West Bengal.

The desperate traders paid a higher price to import over 10,000 tonnes of rice which remained stuck on the Indian side of the Petrapole border.

Sources said if rice is imported at \$505 per tonne, the retail price of per kilogram of rice will be about Tk

Unscrupulous traders in Benapole, Sharsha, Jhikargachha, Navaron, Noyapara and Jessore started hoarding huge quantity of rice to make extra profit.

Taju, owner of Taj Enterprise, said the traders have to incur loss due to sudden hike in the import

Clarification

FROM PAGE 16

"We would like to put on record that no ransom money was paid by Brac to the abductors. Nor, to the best of our knowledge, any ransom money was paid by his family. The father of abducted Hemonta Chakma, Mr Pratindra Lal Chakma, who is also the headman of No 86, of Indian Air Force Air Chief Fatikchari mouja has stated in writing that no money was given by the family," said the clarification.

"We feel that the initiatives of the law enforcing agencies, who promptly set to locate the abducted person, led to his quick The clarification further said,

"As you are well aware, the matter of abductions is a sensitive issue which has long term implications for people involved in development activities in the area and also for local residents. Any wrong news will have long term consequences like encouraging abductions."

to visit Ajmeer Sharif and the

FROM PAGE 16

They say these criminals extort hefty amount from them to 'ensure' uninterrupted production in a problem free environment. A bleak future awaits the expansion of garment business in and around Kalma if this situation persists, they observe.

They further blame the law enforcement agencies for not taking initiatives to check crime despite being repeatedly informed.

The recent burglary occurred at the machine room of Garden Fresh Preservation (GFP), a cold storage in Kalma, on February 6. Robbers made off with a number of parts worth Tk 20,000 after unscrewing those from a transmitter. The GFP filed a case with Savar Police

Station on February 8. Earlier on January 8, a gang of around 10 made an attempt on a factory near GFP past midnight. The gang arrived in a bus and surrounded the factory taking position at several strategic points.

The authorities filed a general diary with Savar police. Sources and eyewitnesses say in both cases criminals came on a bus and took strategic position split-

ting into groups. They are organised gangs and getting more and more strategic overnight, they observe.

The robbers were equipped with firearms, sharp weapons and sticks. But their attempt failed as neighbours, mostly workers and Police Station, Abul Khair Fakir, labourers, arrived on the scene. The authorities concerned beefed up security on their own as law enforcers have yet to make a strong move.

I've encountered three such more can I do with 80 policemen attempts and managed to foil for my jurisdiction with eight lakh those. But this time they were so population? organised and strategic that they broke in, tied up me and my son, and took away machinery parts." to complain we will take the case."

Crime wave hits says GFP night guard Golam

Mustafa. The guard shows the range, special blade to cut iron rod, necessary electronic equipment to unscrew machinery and sacks left by the robbers.

"I can neither quit nor pay more attention to my job since there is a security concern for my life as well," says Golam.

Speaking anonymously, a top official from an industry said: "I've to ensure food security of the poor informed authorities and law people," he said, adding that such enforcers about the robberies deficit financing will not pose any when breaches of security in the area were reported much earlier. But who cares?" tion are poor, facing serious prob-

Industry officers and employees say both the incidents occurred at the same hour of night.

During a field visit, it was found that the industries usually post four to five night guards each to check security lapse.

In both the cases the robbers came in large groups of 12 to 20, enough to outdo the security men on hand.

Moreover, police patrol the area only once in the day by car.

Neither employees nor officers of the factories even dare talk about the incidents and they don't even want to report to the police.

Worse communication system and comparatively less population made the area vulnerable at night. The officer-in-charge of Savar

denied having any complaint or case filed. "The factories have their own

guards and some carry out production round-the-clock. We also "Since the month of Ramadan patrol the areas all day long. What

"If anyone files a case, we'll try to get the accused; if anyone comes

Birsreshthas

FROM PAGE 1 of Birsreshtha Sepoy Hamidur Rahman in Jhenidah, is being changed into Hamid Nagar. Sector commander Maj Gen (Retd) CR Dutta will inaugurate the library plus museum at the village in memory of Hamidur Rahman on March 9.

Agarpur, the union of Birsreshtha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir, will be turned into Jahangir Nagar in Barisal. Lt. Col. (Retd) Kazi Nuruzzaman will inaugurate the library and the museum in memory of Jahangir. Birsreshtha Sepoy Mostofa

Kamal's village Moutupi in Bhola district will be renamed Mostofa Kamal Nagar and former Army Chief Maj Gen (Retd) KM Safiullah will inaugurate the library and the museum in memory of Mostofa Kamalon March 23.

Bagpachra, the village of Birsreshtha Ruhul Amin in Noakhali will be turned into Ruhul Amin Nagar and Air Vice-Marshal (Retd) AK Khondokar will inaugurate the library and the museum in memory of Ruhul Amin on March 12.

Salamatpur, the village of Birsreshtha Lance Nayek Munshi Abdur Rouf, will be renamed Rouf Nagar in Faridpur district. Lt Gen (retd) Meer Shawkat Ali will inaugurate the library and the museum in memory of Rouf.

Mohishkhola, the village of Birsreshtha Lance Navek Noor Mohammad Sheikh in Narail will be renamed Noor Mohammad Nagar. The library and the museum will be inaugurated at the village by Col (Retd) Abu Usman Chowdhury on March 18.

Laxmanpur, the village of language martyr Abdus Salaam in Feni, will be renamed Salaam Nagar and Language Movement veteran Dr Halima Khatun will inaugurate the library and the museum at the village in memory of Salaam.

Language martyr Rafiq Uddin's village Paril in Manikganj will be turned into Rafiq Nagar and Language Movement veteran Begum Rawson-ara-Bachchu will inaugurate the library and the museum at the village in memory of Rafig on March 23.

Pachuya of Mymensingh district, the village of language martyr Abdul Jabbar, will be renamed Jabbar Nagar. Language Movement veteran Abdul Matin will inaugurate the library and the museum in memory of Jabbar on February 19.

According to a statement of the LGRD ministry yesterday, the government has asked the authorities concerned to complete the projects before the Independence Day on March 26.

"The politicians have to move

forwards if they want to work for

the welfare of the country and its

people. I don't want any post or

leadership. I'm only trying to say

what is good for the country," said

Dr Yunus said if the opportuni-

ties for curbing corruption and

bringing about political reforms

are not utilised properly now, the

entire nation would have to pay for

The Nobel laureate said he

would support any move for wel-

should rather design a three-to-five-

year plan immediately. Moreover, the

government will have to take some

hard decisions that are relating to the

directly responsible for creating an

economic emergency, but they

should prepare for facing such chal-

government should be providing all

necessary support for the poor or

fixed-income people who are likely

to be severely affected due to the

government cannot help the poor

and fixed-income people, it would be

to raise the deficit financing in order

problem to the economy as the

About 40 percent of the popula-

lems in their daily livelihood due

mainly to the price hike of essentials

such as rice and edible oil, according

because of price spike in the interna-

tional market. Dr Akbar said prices

may not be cut locally in the upcom-

ing years as climate change and

expansion of farming for bio-fuel

have ushered in a huge change in the

our agriculture and the government

will have to take strict decision as to

fertiliser and diesel policies," he said.

starting disbursement of diesel

subsidy to the tune of about Tk 750

crore, he said any decision should be

omy has some good indicators,

robust foreign reserve and a favour-

able exchange rate and economic

growth, the country is facing some

major challenges including high

inflation rate and negative invest-

president of Federation of

Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce

and Industry, presented the keynote

paper at the seminar. ICAB President

Humayun Kabir also spoke at the

Yussuf Abdullah Harun, former

Criticising the government for not

Dr Akbar said although the econ-

"We need to put all-out effort into

global agriculture.

implemented properly.

ment growth.

function.

Local food prices are going up

country has a good foreign reserve.

very difficult for them to survive.

The former adviser said if the

"The government will be required

existing economic crisis.

Dr Akbar said the first task of the

The present government is not

Prof Yunus

FROM PAGE 16

the Nobel Laureate.

fare of the nation.

FROM PAGE 16

lenges, he said.

Akbar Ali

common people," he said.

Hasina not produced

while the rates offered by Wartsila

and Summitwere \$5.82 and \$6.17. The prosecution said Hasina approved the project summary on October 11, 1997 after owners of Summit Group and United Group paid the eight pay-orders to Natasha Ahmed and Nasrin Ahmed, daugh ters of Badrunnesa Nahid, as the price of their house adjacent to the house of Bangabandhu Sheikh

The house was donated to the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust for the Bangabandhu Memorial

Mujibur Rahman.

Defence counsel barrister Shafique Ahmed informed the court about the recent HC judgment that quashed the extortion case against Hasina filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury. The court also declared the government approval to bring the case under Emergency Power Rules (EPR) illegal, he said.

"This particular [Tk 3 crore graft] case stands in the same place," Shafique argued.

He said the date of occurrence of the incident mentioned in the case is 1997 whereas the state of emergency was declared on January 11 last year and the Emergency Power Ordinance was promulgated on January 12.

"The law does not permit bringing of an offence committed before the declaration of the state of emergency under the EPR, so why should Hasina be in jail?" Shafique said, adding that Hasina is also seriously

He also argued that the money was given to the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust as the price of a piece of land donated to it for the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

Reading out an article from a Bangla newspaper and a report from an English daily, barrister Shafique said the power plant project was given to the lowest bidder and the donation was given to the trust.

The graft case against Hasina cannot be maintained, he argued, urging the court to grant her bail.

Chief prosecution lawyer ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul argued that there is yet no copy of the HC judgment that declared inclusion of the EPR in Azam Chowdhury's case illegal and quashed it. He said the facts of a case never

die. Even if a section of a case is declared illegal, the case itself never Referring to the defence's argu-

ment that the money was paid as a donation, Mukul said Hasina illegally favoured to the Summit Group.

issued in the case filed against

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of

the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's

Court passed the order following a

criminal appeal filed by Pintu's

lawyers against bail rejection order

Magistrate's (CMM) Court on

January 22 rejected Pintu's bail

after he was produced before the

court on expiry of his three-day

lawyers told the court that their

client was implicated in the case as

part of a conspiracy to harass him,

as his name was not included in the

FIR (first information report). He

was shown arrested in the case on

the basis of a false allegation, they

Opposing the bail petition,

prosecution told the court that

Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) leader Mufti

Abdul Hannan, in his confessional

statement on November 1 last year,

disclosed Pintu's involvement in

yesterday, told the court that he

was minister in charge of Faridpur

district when the law enforcers

arrested Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji)

leader Mufti Abdul Hannan in

After hearing both sides, the

Members of the Criminal thana

connection with the case.

court rejected his bail petition.

Investigation Department (CID)

arrested the BNP leader at his

wife's government residence at

Five other Huji men had earlier

given confessional statements to

August 21, 2004 left 24 AL men dead

ACC Assistant Director Nasir Uddin

Ahmed, who is also the investiga-

tion officer (IO) of the case, submit-

ted the charge sheet against

Mahfuz to the CMM's Court, show-

ing 23 people as prosecution wit-

The IO prayed for issuance of

arrest warrant against him and the

court order to attach his properties

as he has been absconding since

Assistant Director Helal Uddin

Sharif filed the case with Kafrul

plainant mentioned that Mahfuz

had concealed Tk 4,95,89,897 in his

wealth report submitted to the ACC

After scrutinising the case docket

and other relevant documents,

and amassed Tk 1,67,78,345

On September 23 last year, ACC

In the case statement, the com-

the case was filed against him.

Police Station against Mahfuz.

BASUNDHARA GROUP CASE

through illegal means.

and scores injured.

MAHFUZCASE

Motijheel in the city on January 18.

Moving the bail petition, Pintu's

The Chief Metropolitan

of the lower court.

remand.

the incident.

them for grabbing public proper-

ties in the city's Baridhara area.

AUGUST 21 GRENADE ATTACK

Hossain, 30, manager of Hotel Shyama Residential on Nawabpur Road in Kotwali, before slaughtering him. The two injured were identified as - Mohammad Shamim, 25, and Alam, 26 - both employed as hotel boys.

Police arrested the ex-employee of the hotel named Shiplu from Kadamtala within seven hours of the grisly attack. They also picked up seven suspected sex workers from the hotel who had witnessed the gruesome attack.

the killing.

He opposed the bail petition, saying another bail petition for Hasina in connection with this graft case is already pending with the HC, so another petition is not maintain-Barrister Shafique, however,

countered that there is no bail petition in the HC in connection with this He said they had filed a writ peti-

The investigation clearly shows

that the Summit Group paid eight

pay-orders not to the trust but to two

women as per Hasina's desire, Mukul

said, adding that the record of the

Natasha and Nasrin have given

confessional statements under

section 164 of the Criminal

Procedure Code (CrPC) saying they

received the pay-orders in their

names from the then prime minister

He argued that this kind of dona-

Mukul also told the court that

trust is being examined.

Sheikh Hasina.

tion is illegal.

tion with the HC challenging the inclusion of the EPR in this case and seeking bail According to section 498 of the

CrPC, there is no bar to entertaining this petition even though there is a bail prayer in that writ petition, the defence argued.

Advocates Syed Rezaur Rahman and Yusuf Hossain Humayun of the defence also made submissions while Public Prosecutor Advocate Syed Shameem Ahsan Habib assisted Mukul.

2 robbers killed

responding to the call for help from the local mosque loudspeaker, began

to assemble there. The gunfight began at about 12:30am in neighbouring Bagha upazila where police and ansar teams, lying in wait for the fleeing robbers, opened fire on them, said

Locals later found three bulletwounded robbers who were taken to Lalpur Health Complex where doctors declared two of them dead.

Police, however, could not recover the loot. Of the injured, assistant sub-

inspectors Abdus Sabur, Abdul Jalil and Ziaur Rahman, police constables Amzad, Ansar, Gafur and Abu Hanif, ansar members Shah Alam, Saiful and Yaar Ali and locals Mojibor Rahman Sarder, Tutul and Khoda Bux were treated at police hospital and Lalpur Health Complex.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shahin

Uddin accepted the charge sheet of

the case and issued arrest warrants

against Shah Alam and Abu Sufian

as they have been absconding

(SI) Sohrab Hossain, who is also the

IO of the case, submitted a charge

sheet against Shah Alam and three

Shamsuddin Ahmed and

The IO prayed for issuance of

arrest warrants against Shah Alam

and Abu Sufian and the order to

Shah Alam and others grabbed 80

acres of public property at

Baridhara in the city's Badda area.

DB Inspector Salahuddin filed the

case against Shah Alam and three

others with Badda Police Station on

Balu murder case

Tribunal delivered the verdict

while five of the accused were

present in the courtroom. Prime

absentia and another accused was

Dainik Janmabhumi, along with a

freedom fighter was killed in a

bomb attack on June 27 in 2004 in

front of Balu's residence on Haji

filed the case with Khulna Sadar

Police Station without mentioning

Inspector Abdul Hamid of Khulna

Metropolitan Police (KMP) sub-

Detective Branch (DB)

Judge of the speedy trial tribu-

Inspector Chitta Ranjan Pal of

nal ordered reinvestigation of the

case following a petition filed by

DB of KMP pressed a supplemen-

tary charge sheet on August 8 last

year implicating Nazimuddin in

the murder case, raising the total

Four out of the eleven accused

were killed in shootouts with law

enforcers. The killed accused are

armed Janajuddho activists BDR

The court recorded statements

Judge Abdus Salam Shikder in

Altaf, Shoeb, Suman and Shyamal.

from 24 out of 36 prosecution

his judgement said he had no other

option but to acquit the accused as

the charge sheet was extremely

flawed and it lacked necessary

properly either and therefore the

accused could not be proven guilty

during the trial, the judge added.

The investigation was not done

witnesses during the trial.

evidence.

number of accused to eleven.

prosecution lawyer Abu Zafar.

anyone's name as accused.

Ismail Road under Khulna sadar

Sub-Inspector Maruf Hossain

Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of

According to the prosecution,

others to CMM's Court, Dhaka.

On February 4, Sub-Inspector

since filing of the case.

now in jail custody.

June 7 last year.

FROM PAGE 1

out on bail.

But Pintu who was in the dock accused Dada Tapan was tried in

The grenade attack on an mitted charge sheet to the court on

Awami League rally at April 25, 2005, accusing ten per-

Bangabandhu Avenue in the city on sons for the murders.

attach their properties.

Pintu's bail petition

FROM PAGE 16

The attackers first stabbed Sohrab

Police said Shiplu admitted to

Hotel staff said Shiplu, who was formerly employed as a hotel boy, fled the hotel about a week ago with Tk 60,000 he collected from custom ers who visit sex workers at the hotel.

Following the incident, the hotel manager Sohrab threatened Shiplu of handing him over to the police and taking legal steps against him. This enraged Shiplu.

Early yesterday morning Shiplu and three others, armed with sharp knives, waited for the victim at the hotel gate. They attacked Sohrab when he came down with an outgoingboarder at around 6:00 am. "Sohrab tried to escape by run-

ning up to the first floor of the hotel but the attackers chased him into a room and stabbed him indiscriminately," said Shirin Akhter, one of the seven arrested who witnessed the attack.

Talking to newsmen at Kotwali Police Station, Shirin said that as Sohrab cried out for help, Shamim and Alam rushed to his aide and the attackers stabbed them as well They fled after slaughtering

The whole incident was over within five minutes, she said. Shirin added that she believed the attackers slaughtered Sohrab to

ensure his death. The police was called in and they recovered Sohrab's body with his throat half-slit and sent it to Mitford morgue

The victim's brother has filed a case with Kotwali police in this regard.

Shamim is undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital with five stab wounds on different parts of his body. Alam is at Chest Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali with wounds on his chest and abdomen.

Local shop owners alleged that sex trade that continue in different residential hotels in Nawabpur area often lead to criminal attacks in the

to stabilise the BoP and competitive value of taka, "vigorous efforts are needed to further boost up export earnings and workers' remittances."

Capturing new markets, export diversification, more skilled manpower exports and moving to high-end products would be key to match global market demands and increasing exports, the report notes.

Between July and January in FY 08, the country imported 13.61 lakh tonnes of rice worth \$455 million, upped from 2.04 lakh tonne worth \$42 million during the same period in FY

Engineer Abul Kalam Shamim are Besides, LCs have been opened for 21.99 lakh tonnes during the same period, compared to LCs for 2.89 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period in

> Wheatimports have gone up by 150 percent in July-January FY 08, with LCs in the same period rising by 95 percent. Edible oil imports went up by 56

> percent between July-January FY 08, with LCs to purchase edible oil upped by 100 percent in the same period. Chemical fertiliser imports upped

> by 67 percent with a rise of 41 percent for LCs between July-January FY 08. The foreign exchange reserve is also likely to dip below \$5 billion with the country expected to pay \$600 million for the import bill to the Asian Clearing Union. Bangladesh's foreign exchange

reserve stood at \$5.44 billion yesterday. BB sources say the foreign exchange reserve needs to stay above \$5 billion to match the country's presentimportvolumes.

Bird flu

FROM PAGE 16 flu infection in the district in the last three months.

Meanwhile over three hundred poultry farms remain closed in the district due to bird flu infection, official sources said.

This round of culling was arranged after about a thousand fowls died at Usha Poultry Farm in Vabanipur under Shujanagar municipality. Joypurhat Livestock Research Institute confirmed the presence of the H5N1 virus, which causes bird flu, in the dead fowls. Livestock office sources said they

culled 4,946 fowls and destroyed 3,153 eggs at the farm. The team also culled over 181 free range fowls, 18 ducks and 137 pigeons from different households within one kilo metre radius of the affected farm. Local administration has imposed red alert in this area. Our Khulna correspondent adds:

ment has culled 13,702 fowls from 73 poultry farms during a massive operation in the city on Tuesday Shabujbag and Shahanghat areas under Sonadanga thana of the

Khulna district livestock depart-

metropolitan city. The team also destroyed 763 eggs. This is the second time such an operation has been carried out in the city. The earlier operation was

carried out on January 30. Anisuzzaman Panna, president of Khulna District Poultry Farm Owners Association, said that he believes that bird flu infection is fast reaching epidemic proportions in the area.

The disease, if not checked, will wipe out poultry industries in the district and city, he said.

Hotel manager | 68 Titas staff

According to the wealth information provided to the taskforce by former meter reader Abul Kashem, he owns 74 acres of land in Narsinghdi and North Bengal, 12 kathas of land in Uttara Model Town of the capital, a paper mill on a 10 bigha land in Narsinghdi, falts in Uttara, and bank a balance of several crores of taka.

Meter reader Mahbubur Rahman owns a 3-storey building in Goran of the capital, another 3-storey building in Demra, a chemical factory in Shibpur of Narsinghdi, a 2,000 square feet flat in New Bailey Road area of the capital, three acres of land in Kararchar of Narsinghdi, and savings of over Tk 50 lakh in various banks.

Technician Habibur Rahman owns a 5-storey building on a five katha land in South Goran, another 6-storey building on a 5 katha land in South Banasree of the capital, about four acres of land in Chandpur, and savings of over Tk 30 lakh in various

Supervisor Sohrab Hossain has a three katha land in Gulshan of the capital, a five katha land in Uttara, a 30 katha land in Laxmipur, and savings of about 10 lakh taka in several banks.

Assistant Coordinator Sultan Alam has two shops and 10 kathas of land in Savar, four acres of land in Joypurhat, and savings of Tk 20 lakh

Taskforce sources said the implicated Titas staff themselves submitted their wealth statements, which the taskforce found to be untrue.

Taskforce officials said they interrogated 450 former and present staff of Titas, 136 of whom admitted to their involvement in corruption and promised to handover their illegally amassed properties to the govern-Following the promise, 117

already handed over their illegally earned properties to the government, signing undertakings with the taskforce where they said they will never ever get involved in corrup-

Corrupt Titas Gas staff amassed the illegal properties through multipronged corruption including theft, abuse of power, taking of bribes in exchange for giving jobs to incompetent people, and nepotism. Lt Col ATM Hasan, commanding

officer (CO) of the taskforce, yesterday said, "Handing over of properties illegally amassed by Titas staff, proves that corruption was actually committed in the agency, the range of which was so widespread that even class four employees also became millionaires.

"Unearthing of the corruption in Titas Gas sheds light on similar corruption being committed in other government service sectors," said the CO adding that he was assisted by Capt Md Anwarul Islam, Capt Sohana Sabrin, and Capt Hanifur Rahman Bhuiyan in the investiga-

Hannan Shah

and requested a few minutes to be prepared. The police however did not allow him the time and took him along at 9:00pm on way to the Gazipur Police Station. Hearing the news of his arrest, a

number of BNP followers gathered in front his house and chanted slogans demanding his release. Shah Riazul Hannan, son of Hannan, told journalists that his father was arrested on false allega-

tions and the Hannan family would continue their legal battle to free him. Earlier yesterday, Hannan held a meeting with Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the Khaleda Zia-appointed secretary general of BNP, in the capi-

tal to discuss party affairs.

However, the two leaders, after emerging from the closed-door meeting at Delwar's Nam flat, did not disclose the topic of discussion! "We have discussed organisa-

tional matters," Hannan told jour-

nalists after the meeting that lasted around 45 minutes. Hannan refused to make any further comment on party affairs and the unification process, saying that he was optimistic and he would speak with the media after further

discussions with other leaders of the

Earlier, when Hannan arrived at the Delwar residence at 11:15am, he was greeted by a number of leaders and activists of BNP including Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, Acting Office Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, former lawmakers Sohrab Uddin, Selim Reza Habib, Kazi Rafiqul Islam, former Chhatra

Dal president Habib un Nabi Sohel. BNP leaders said most of them want the party unified as soon as possible and they believe that the release of Hannan and the recent statements made by four senior members of the BNP standing committee would help the pro-Khaleda

leaders gain the upper hand. Although Delwar categorically said that the pro-Saifur faction must cancel its decision taken on October

29, Saifur Rahman said any strings

would not be acceptable to his fac-Four standing committee members -- Dr RA Gani, Tanvir Ahmed

attached to the unification effort

Siddiqui, M Shamsul Islam and Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmad -in separate replies to a notice issued by the HC regarding the factional feud in BNP, said the October 29 meeting was not a meeting of the standing committee since only the party chairperson is empowered to call such meetings. The HC had issued rule on the acting secretary general and six standing committee members

following a writ petition filed by Khaleda-appointed Secretary General Delwar, challenging the Election Commission's invitation to the Saifur-led faction of BNP to represent the party at electoral reforms dialogue with it. Some leaders were hopeful that Hannan would take the initiative to

unite the party as per the direction of detained party chief Khaleda through her attorney Mahbub Uddin On Sunday, the HC granted a three-month interim bail to former

minister Hannan who had been

detained in charge of violating emergency power rules. He was arrested on November 7 in connection with violence near the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar where BNP followers had gathered to observe the National Revolution and

Solidarity Day. On January 30, the HC declared Hannan's detention illegal and granted him bail. Fatulla police arrested him again on February 7 at the gate of Narayangani Jail in con-

nection with a separate case. A police sub inspector had filed a general diary against him with Fatulla Police Station on charge of violation of emergency power rules as he allegedly attempted to hold a rally on Link Road. The HC issued the bail order after he appealed for cancellation of the case.

Obama hammers Hillary

FROM PAGE 16 victories in Texas and Ohio on March 4, the next big night of nominating clashes, to keep her hopes alive.

in midwestern Wisconsin, where he hopes to drive another dagger into Senator Hillary bid to be the first woman president on February "We won the state of Maryland. We won the Commonwealth of

Virginia. And though we won in

Washington, DC, this movement

won't stop until there's change in Washington, DC," he said. Obama barely referred to Hillary, instead turning his fire on McCain, in a preview of a potential November

general election matchup. "John McCain is an American hero. We honor his service to our nation," said the Illinois senator who has rocketed to the forefront of US politics in just four years, on a quest to be America's first black president.

"His priorities don't address the real problems of the American people, because they are bound to the failed policies of the past." As Hillary team suffered another

night of losses, her deputy campaign manager Mike Henry reportedly The operation was carried out at | resigned, two days after the former first lady decided to replace her campaign manager Patti Solis Doyle, US media said.

But a defiant Hillary showed no sign of giving up the fight.

"We're going to sweep across Texas in the next three weeks, bringing our message about what we need in America, the kind of president that will be required on Day One to be commander in chief, to turn the economy around," she said after flying west even before Washington area voting had closed.

"I'm tested. I'm ready. Let's make it happen!" she told a rowdy rally in El Paso in a veiled reference to Obama's perceived inexperience.

McCain, 71, also seemed to preview a contest with Obama, striking the charismatic Democrat's signa-Senator Obama, 46, celebrated ture theme of "hope."

> tested in hard and cruel ways that few will ever experience," said the former Vietnam war prisoner. "I do not seek the presidency on the presumption that I am blessed

"Hope, my friends, is a powerful

thing. I can attest to that better than

many, for I have seen men's hopes

with such personal greatness that history has anointed me to save my country in its hour of need. "I seek the presidency with the humility of a man who cannot forget

With most of the vote counted, Obama led Hillary 64 percent to 36 percent in Virginia, 75 percent to 24 percent in Washington, and 59 percent to 34 percent in

that my country saved me."

In a rolling count of nominating delegates by RealClearPolitics.com. Obamaled with 1,259 to 1,210. A total of 2,025 delegates is needed for the nomination. McCain led Republicans with 797

delegates to Huckabee's 240. Republicans need 1,191 for the nomination. Exit polling showed Obama making inroads into Hillary's support base, in a trend that could spell

disaster for her if repeated nation-

In Maryland, Obama won among men and among voters of every age group and income level, expanding his political base and auguring well for key states to come. Exit polls in Virginia showed

Obama triumphing in the former first lady's normal bastion of women by 58 percent to 42 percent, and splitting another of her key power bases, white voters.

FROM PAGE 1 The Daily Star already published in different banks. details of the illegally earned properties of former sales assistant Abdul Kadir Mollah, former deputy manager Emdadul Huq, and former receptionist Olifa Akhter.