Unrest for price hike

FROM PAGE 1 ultra-poor households.

"There is a serious food situation that we need to monitor," he said, however stressing, "We are not in a famine situation."

Broderick said they have received indications that the upcoming Boro crop would be "good" and he is hopeful the crisis will not spiral out of control because the markets are operating "well".

The government is currently in a process of importing rice from India, but negotiations have hit a snag due to high prices.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said the government is also trying to import rice from Southeast Asian countries and they are trying to negotiate with India for a lower price.

Corporation of Bangladesh, prices of rice have gone up by 25-30 percent in the country over the last few months and 67 percent over the last year.

According to WFP figures, remain high for years. internationally the price has gone up around 50 percent over the past year.

WFP officials say global food prices have been driven up, in part, by the astronomic rise in the price of oil which has pushed up a whole set of agricultural costs such as fertiliser and transport.

The price of coarse rice, which is largely consumed by poorer households, has been much higher, exacerbating the problem. Moreover, costs of imports from India have also risen due to

Rice import FROM PAGE 1

not be inked yesterday despite several rounds of discussions between authorities of the two countries in the last two days. The decision to allow export of

the rice was taken after two rounds of meeting between India's central Commerce Minister Kamal Nath and the Organisation of Export Import Association on Monday-Tuesday. Earlier on Monday, India's

Federation of Export Import Association threatened to stop export-import through borders of he two countries indefinitely from Wednesday. Trade through the borders between Bangladesh and India is supported by 375 Indian exporters' associations.

The lorries had been stranded at Petrapole port since March 6 after India imposed restrictions on exporting rice to Bangladesh at prices below \$650 per tonne on March 5. IMPORT OF 4 LAKH

TONNERICE

Meeting sources said negotiation teams from both the countries are vet to reach a consensus on the price of rice, timeframe for the export, mode of transportation and procurement.

"But, the negotiation process is not over. It will continue up to March 23 to have a fruitful outcome as both the countries seem to be in a win-win situation about striking the final deal," said Pius Costa, director general of Directorate of Food, after the third round of negotiation meeting yesterday.

He said the issues of price and timeframe are very important for Bangladesh since the next harvest of boro crop is very close.

"I have asked them to supply lakh tonnes of rice in three phases--one consignment in 30 days another in 45 days and the last in 60 days," Pius said, adding, "If they can ensure us the supply of rice within this timeframe, we can solve our rice problem."

He said the Indian side wants to send rice through the Chittagong Port. "But we want the import

through the land port," he added. In reply to a question, he said at present the country has a stock of 6 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat and 5,000 tonnes of rice have already arrived in the country from India in the last two days as part of a 1 lakh tonne consignment at \$399 per

He said the arrival of 1 lakh tonne rice will be completed by April 15. A total of 17,000 tonnes of rice was imported yesterday by private sector importers.

tonne.

"We should remove confusion from people's mind that the Indian government only committed to export 5 lakh tonnes of rice to Bangladesh. But, L/C was opened for importing 1 lakh tonne of rice at \$399 per tonne. The price of remaining 4 lakh tonnes would be Puetermined after the negotiation,

SK Kar of India's Mineral and Metal Trading Corporation, S Sarker of State Trading Corporation, DPS Narang of Project Equipment and Commodities Ltd and YK Jain of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India attended the meeting for the trading agents, sources said.

ACC forms team

investigators. The assistance sought includes principal secretary to the Prime allocation of rooms for the investigators, providing them with necessary files and documents, and appointing a liaison for them.

Hanif also expressed hope that Petrobangla chairman Mosharraf the investigation will produce a list Hossain, and Vice-president of suspects.

The ACC in different briefings since last year announced launching of a drive against institutional mier now detained on corruption corruption and building up of a charges, for causing a loss of database based on a research work Tk10,000 crore to the government by the commission on varieties of coffers by awarding the deal to institutional corruption.

the appreciation of the rupee

against the taka. But, unlike other countries such as India, Bangladeshi taka has not been appreciated enough against the US dollar and has failed to offset the rising price of

In stark contrast, the real income in Bangladesh has dipped by 2-5 percent last year, according to BIDS. The worst affected in rural areas have seen their incomes drop by more than 5 percent.

In Bangladesh, like in other parts of the world, crops and harvests were wrecked by natural disasters, namely two country wide floods and cyclone Side which devastated the southwestern coast.

WFP Executive Director According to the Trading Josette Sheeran told Time recently that the organisation might have to cut its relief programmes unless it raises an extra \$500 million this year as the WFP expects food prices to

"We are seeing a new face of hunger. People who were not in the urgent category are now moving into that category," said Sheeran.

Sector commanders

liberation war on the military front in 1971

The SCF hoped that the government would not again repeat the same "mistakes" and rather help in making the convention a success "without any interference"

"We'll sit in the place where we're obstructed and hold our convention there", Lt Gen (retd) Harun-ar-Rashid, chief coordinator of SCF, told at the press confer-

"The government will be responsible for any consequences," said the former army

Meantime, the home ministry recently directed the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner to give permission for the SCF convention provided that they abstain from giving any provocative speech at the convention and do not display any banner, placard, and similar things outside the building.

The SCF was scheduled to hold the convention on March 15, but postponed it on March 13 as the government refused to let them

The conference was originally slated for December. But the forum kept out of arranging the grand gathering as the authorities gave permission at the last moment.

The national convention aims at drumming up public support for the trial of war criminals. The SCF leaders called on all to

socially boycott the war criminals and anti-liberation war elements in the country. They also urged the diplomatic missions in Dhaka not to issue visas to war criminals. Some of the diplomatic mis-

sions have accepted our request and are not issuing visas to war criminals, said Harun, adding that trying war criminals is of utmost importance as war crimes are the worst of all offences.

Niko graft case

Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui said, "We arranged a meeting between Sheikh Hasina and her lawyers on March 16, the day after she had refused to accept the ACC notice without consulting the lawyers.

"But she did not agree to meet them anywhere other than her room. Since we have some rules, we cannot allow a visitor where an accused is kept." The jail authorities have hung

the ACC notice on her room's wall as rules say if anyone refuses to accept, the notice should be put in a place from where it can be viewed by the addressee, explained the DIG prisons.

Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, who along with two others went to meet Hasina, said, "We were kept waiting for about two and a half hours and at the end not allowed to meet her. We wonder how they expect her to receive the

letter without consulting us." The ACC filed the case against the AL chief on December 9 last year on charges of causing a loss of over Tk 13,630 crore to the public exchequer by initiating a gas exploration deal with Canadian company Niko Resources Ltd.

Replying to a query, Major Siddiqui said, "The notice says if she does not reply within five days of its posting, she would be considered having nothing to say in her

Taposh, Hasina's lawyer and nephew, said, "We wanted to meet her in the cabin she is staying, but they denied us access. After about | day. two and a half hours, they returned to say she does not want to come out of her room."

He added, "It is surprising that she does not want to see us at a time when she is facing a number of cases and suffering ill health."

The other accused in the case seeking assistance for the ACC are detained former state minister for energy Rafiqul Islam, former Minister's Office Dr SA Samad, former energy secretaries Dr Akmal Hossain, former

(South Asia) of Niko Kashem Sharif. The ACC also filed a case against Khaleda Zia, another former pre-

Rice price

FROM PAGE 1

"I purchased Minikate rice at Tk 42 two days ago, but today the price of same rice has jumped to Tk 44," he added.

The prices of edible oil and sugar continued to drop on both retail and wholesale markets during the last week after witnessing skyrocketing prices a week ago.

A kg of non-brand soybean oil sold at Tk 106 to Tk 108 at retail markets yesterday. It was sold at Tk 120 to Tk 130 a week ago. A kg of palm oil and super palm

oil was selling from Tk 95 to Tk 100 yesterday while the price was Tk 110 a week back. Wholesalers at Moulvibazar and Karwan Bazar said the prices of

soybean and palm oil plummeted to Tk 350 to Tk 400 per maund within a week. They said price fall of edible oil on the international market

country. A kg of sugar was selling at Tk 38 to Tk 40 per kg yesterday while it was sold at Tk41 to Tk42 three days back. Price of 50 kg sack of sugar came down to Tk 1820 from Tk

resulted the price decline in the

Emon

FROM PAGE 16

Both the Detective Branch (DB) and CID suspect Emon had involvement in the murder of former National University vicechancellor Prof Aftab Ahmad. A DB team went to the CID interrogation cell to talk to Emon in this regard.

But Emon said the murder was carried out by another top terror Khandakar Tanvirul Islam Joy.

DB sources said they would pray before the court for showing Emon arrested in Aftab murder case.

Emon said he passed the SSC and the HSC examinations in 1986 and 1988 from Chittagong where his physician parents were posted at that time. He also said he obtained star marks in both the

He was his parents' obedient son. But everything went wrong after he enrolled at Dhaka College failing to take BA honours course. As he got enough money from his parents during student life, he had no dearth of friends.

He was involved in Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal politics and got acquainted with many youths, many of who were engaged in

He later got admitted to Dhaka University and met a former JCD president, who afterwards became a BNP lawmaker. Emon told the interrogators it was "Pintu who brought him to the underworld activities".

EC may ask army

the run up to holding the parlia-

mentary election, sources said. In defence of depending on the army, senior officials of the EC Secretariat said if the army does the job, the expenditure will not exceed Tk 10 crore, whereas Tk 22 crore was spent for printing the voter list in 2000, and over Tk 22 crore was spent for the purpose in 2006.

Besides, the army is also interested in doing the job since it does not want to take any risk regarding printing of the final national voter list, senior officials involved in the

project said. The army, which has been working in the project of preparing the voter list since the beginning of it, is currently printing area wise draft voter lists, wherever voter registration has been completed.

Already procured 500 computer printers have been set up at upazila levels across the country, while a few more are scheduled to be purchased with fund from the project for preparing the voter list with photographs, the sources added.

Currently, the army is printing three copies of each area wise draft voter list. Five copies of the final national voter list will be printed for holding of the ninth parliamentary election, and another four to five copies of the final national voter list, excepting the area wise lists for the six city corporations, will have to be printed to hold upazila elections.

If the number of voters stands at eight crore, the EC will have to print 40 crore names only for holding the parliamentary poll.

"The army may print the final voter list using the printers set up at field levels. Besides, another batch of printers will be purchased to make the job easier," a senior EC official told The Daily Star yester-

The EC met on January 15 and 21, but it did not take any decision regarding how to finish the job of printing the final national voter list. The commission will soon sit in a meeting with senior army official to take the decision, the sources added.

Final voter lists for four city corporations and seven municipal ities are set to be ready for printing by the end of this month after Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and M | publication and scrutiny of the draft lists for those areas.

The EC already directed field level election offices on Sunday to start publishing area wise draft voter lists wherever voter registre. tion has been completed. After the one responded when ACC officials area wise draft voter lists are published and scrutinised, printing of | civil servants to stand up and claim sion wants to monitor progress in the area wise final voter lists will | that they were not involved in the police administration regard-

AL, allies

FROM PAGE 16

offices across the country. Demanding immediate release of Hasina, Zillur Rahman said none can resolve the present crises in the country except her.

AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu said Hasina's party will arrange her treatment if the governmentreleases her. Another AL Presidium Member

Abdur Razzak said the government is not responding to the repeated demands for sending Hasina abroad for treatment. "If anything happens to her, you

[the caretaker government] will be

responsible for that and the nation

will not forgive you," he said. As some female AL activists shouted at Razzak asking him to demand for Hasina's release, Razzak replied, "For the release of Sheikh Hasina, Awami League has taken a decision to announce agitation programmes, then we will see who are with us," adding that the party's unity might be hampered if disci-

pline is not maintained. Tofail Ahmed, another AL presidium member, said there is a deep public confusion as to whether the election will be held.

He asked the EC to hold the parliamentary election according to its electoral roadmap to reinstate democracy in the country. He said the country is passing

through a very critical time due to price hikes of essentials and a fertilizer crisis, among other things. Workers Party President Rahed

Khan Menon said politicians will have to take a decision as to 'whether the army will decide the direction of "If we don't speak against con-

trolled democracy and politics, the people of the country will not forgive us," said Menon, a key leader in the AL-led 14-party coalition. He said, "If Sheikh Hasina is deducted from politics as part of the so called minus two theory, it is not

racywill also be deducted." Referring to different foreign diplomats' influence in national politics, he said influence of foreign

only she, but the politics of democ-

and army powers in national politics must be stopped. Menon also put out a call to the Anti-corruption Commission chief for investigating if there is any cor-

ruption in the Directorate General of

Defence Purchase. Asking the government to lift the

Extortion case

FROM PAGE 16 Salahuddin Ahmed continued his submission yesterday.

The Supreme Court on February 26 granted government's leave to appeal against the HC verdict that delivered on February 6 and also stayed proceedings of the case until disposal of the appeal.

Hearing on the appeal started

on March 16. On June 13 last year, Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the extortion case with Gulshan Police Station against Hasina and her cousin and former minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

On July 16, the home ministry directed the police to bring the case under the EPR.

On July 24, Obaidul Haque, investigation officer of the case, indicted Hasina along with her sister Sheikh Rehana and cousin Sheikh Selim, but did not include the relevant sections of the EPR.

Hasina filed a writ petition on July 29 and the HC bench of Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman and Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury issued a rule on the caretaker government, asking it to reply why its approval for bringing the case under the EPR should not be declared illegal.

After hearing on the rule, the HC bench delivered its judgment on February 6.

state of emergency, AL Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta said if the

cratic process will not be established. "If the democratic process is not established, the electoral process will not begin," he added asking the government to immediately start the proposed dialogues with political

emergency is not lifted, the demo-

parties. JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu emphasised on formulating strategies for maintaining unity among pro-liberation war forces and the 14party coalition, to face the current challenges before the nation in the aftermath of January 11, 2007.

AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said Bangabandhu is not a property of AL, as he is the father of the nation.

Dhaka University Teachers Association General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain said the entire nation is waiting for a direction to get out o the present situation.

He asked AL leaders to seek Hasina's release within 72 hours instead of demanding for her treatment within 72 hours.

AL Publicity Secretary Asaduzzaman Nur moderated the discussion where AL Advisor Council Member HT Emam, Poet Syed Shamsul Haque, BDB Secretary General Maj (retd) M Abdul Mannan Gonotontri Party President Nurul Islam, CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim, Samyabad Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua LDP Secretary General Prof Jahanara Begum, Gono Forum Presidium Member Advocate Jahirul Islam, JP Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam, NAP General Secretary Advocate Enamul Haque, CK Convenor Asit Baran Roy, GAL President Abdus Samad, and Dhaka City AL Acting General Secretary Advocate Qamrul Islam also spoke.

BSMMU corruption

department, reported that the BSMMU authorities took on 3,600 staff against openings for 1,600

The report said a large number of the new recruits, including at least 51 teaching staff, did not have the qualifications mentioned in the advertisement. Besides, standard procedure of giving preference to seniors was not followed during promoting employees, it said.

The university syndicate, however, did not take action against the corrupt on the basis of the probe report. It instead formed a review committee that also submitted its should be treated as political agenda report on November 27 last year.

Senior teachers complained that the review committee was formed in a bid to sidestep the probe committee report, adding that if the report's recommendations were implemented, many high-ups of the university adminiswomen when it comes to nominattration would have found them

selves at fault. The probe committee repor also revealed gross anomalies in procurement process, saying it caused a loss of Tk 8 crore to the secretary of the Awami League said university.

"The procurement was made on approval from administrative officials. So all purchasecommittee members, including the then vice chancellor, should be held responsible for the pur chases," said one member of the investigation committee prefer ring anonymity.

The syndicate meeting, however, decided that administrative action would be taken as per the university ordinance against those involved in procurement irregular-

"We're trying to take decision as soon as possible," said BSMMU Vice Chancellor and syndicate chairman Prof Mohammad Tahir on delay in taking decision against the corrupt officials.

FROM PAGE 1 Although the unprecedented antigraft drive has succeeded in creating an impression that no-one is above the law questions were raised about discrimination in targeting corruption suspects.

Different sections of people expressed their surprise why public offices, which are always blamed for huge corruption, are not coming under the purview of the present drive.

Sources say fearing an adverse reaction in the bureaucratic machinery the bodies responsible for combating corruption could not take any initiative to dig out corruption of government officials and prosecute them. The same allegations were

raised at the district level anti-

corruption meetings organised by ACC sources say many locals during the meetings came up with allegations of corruption in presence of incumbent DC, SP and other officials of the local adminis-

tration.

But no officials protested against the allegations. Even nocorruption.

At the meetings, locals demanded actions against corruption by public servants and police at district and upazila levels. They said it would not be possible to eliminate or curb corruption if administration and police remain Sources say growing demands

to enquire into corruption by at least the ex-DCs. The sources add that ACC is also planning to examine wealth statements recently submitted by the government officials to the estab-

like this exerted pressure on ACC,

prompting the anti-graft watchdog

lishment ministry. An ACC official said despite shortage of manpower to deal with the huge tasks of ongoing drive, it is now possible to probe corruption by some government officials because of a few new recruitments. The sources say ACC is not going

to dig corruption in police administration now as Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad assured Gen Mashhud in several meetings of taking all necessary steps to curb corruption in the force. An ACC official said following almost in every meeting asked the the IGP's assurance the commis-

ing corruption.

Tigers win FROM PAGE 16 South Africa, who whitewashed the

Tigers in both forms of the game, last

Back in the day's match, Bangladesh showed signs of a similar top-order collapse after Tamim Iqbal and fit-again Aftab Ahmed departed playing rash shots. But skipper Mohammad

Ashraful, who hit the headlines only the other day for slapping a jeering fan, and left-handed Nafees not only stopped the slide for a change but also made sure that the victory was achieved with an approach that always should be followed. Ashraful, who scored 45 runs in

his last five matches and was under tremendous pressure following his side's miserable performance in the last few series, took 13 balls to get off the mark. He also rotated the strikes with his left-handed partner to steady the ship.

On his way to an unbeaten 64 off 90 balls, his 13th half-century in 111 ODIs, Ashraful struck eight bound-Nafees however took twelve

matches to make a fifty since he hit an unbeaten hundred in the World Cup last year. The left-hander smashed eleven boundaries to make a 121-ball 90. Earlier, Mashrafe gave the home

side a bright start by removing openers William Porterfield and Reinhardt Strydom with the scoreboard read ing 20 after touring skipper Trent Johnston won the toss and decided to bat on a slow and low pitch. The visitors never looked com-

fortable against the Bangladesh slow bowlers, save a 65-run seventh wicket partnership between Alex Cusack (38) and Johnston (31 not

was three big sixes by Eoin Morgan who made second team highest 35. Mashrafe finished as most successful bowler by picking up three

The highlight of the Irish innings

wickets for 22 runs in 10 overs. The second match takes place at the same venue tomorrow.

Women policy

Linking women's development to the progress of the country, BNP

Vice president Osman Farruk said they should be included in the development process but no gov ernments took steps in this regard. Former adviser Sultana Kamal

said women have shied away from

partisan politics, not from politics She stressed that fundamentalist groups are using the woman policy in a bid to divert attention from the demand for the trial of war criminals.

"It is a shame for the progressive-

minded people to see how the law adviser made apologies to the funda mentalists," she added Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said though women have always distanced their movement from politics, their issues

Emphasising the need for change in political culture, joint secretary general of the BNP, Selima Rahman, said women's participa tion in politics should be ensured to make the nation democratic and self-confident.

"Political parties don't consider

ing candidates for elections even though they give the party ticket to a housewife if her lawmaker husband dies," she said, adding the BNP has no woman on its standing committee except for the chairperson. Dr Dipu Moni, women affairs

the government has to decide whether they favour woman or the fundamentalists. Among others, Mahfuza Akhter, Maleka Banu, Samia Zaman, Hazera Sultana, Mahbub Alam, Farah Kabir, Shirin Akhter and acting editor of Weekly 2000 Moinul Ahsan Saber participated

in the discussion.

FROM PAGE 16

Programme Project. Later, she went to Sonakata to visit a village cooperative set up under the World Bank-financed Social Investment Programme Project

The donor-agency MD went on a walkabout talking to villagers about their welfare. She said she was impressed with the enthusiastic approach of the rural people, specially the women, as they told her that they are now prepared with confidence to fight against poverty.

regarding SIPP schemes, Iweala said the bank will continue to assist Bangladesh in eradicating poverty. Locals informed her that they are getting substantial benefits from the SIPP programme and requested her to give more funds from the UNsponsored funding agency, World

Asked about the World Bank plan

Bank, so that they can improve their infrastructure in the area. SIPP has transformed lives of nearly two million people living in the 1000 project villages in Jamalpur and Gaibandha by empowering the community to collectively identify, prioritise, plan, fund and implement

As local people informed her about availability of the vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards, she said the number of VGF cards should be increased to ensure its availability for the poor. The World Bank MD assured

their development needs.

ernment in this regard. Encouraging the struggling poverty-stricken people she said, "Poverty cannot be eliminated in a day, it will take time. But I hope and believe that you will be succeeded

and World Bank will continue to

them that she would talk to the gov-

Asked whether the rail tracks should be removed from the Jamuna Bridge as breaches developed at different points of the bridge, she said, "We have to talk to the Bangladesh government to identify the priorities of the repair works." World Bank South Asia Region Vice-President Praful C Patel and

County Director Zhu Xian accompa-

support you.

niedher.

Fakhruddin-Brown

Downing Street, the British PM's official residence in London, yester-

dayafternoon. A release received from Bangladesh High Commission here last night said Ahmed and Brown noted that in present times both the

countries "needed each other". Brown said the British people hold Bangladesh and Bangladeshis with "great affection".

The CA noted that Bangladesh too considers the UK as a "dependable friend and partner" and attaches great importance to the intellectual, trade and investment links between the two Commonwealth nations. The meeting covered a wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues,

including bilateral trade and investment, development cooperation for attaining Millennium Development Goals, climate change, counterterrorism, and contribution of the Bangladeshi Diaspora towards strengthening the vibrant relations between the two countries. They expressed satisfaction at the robust bilateral trade and invest-

ment relationship and agreed to take economic partnership between the two countries to a higher level. Fakhruddin expressed hope that

British investment would continue to grow in Bangladesh and that Britain would play a leading role in the G8 and in multilateral trade negotiations to secure duty-free market access for LDCs.

He highlighted the climate change challenge uniquely faced by Bangladesh due to global warming and sealevel rise.

Prime Minister Brown praised Fakhruddin for his personal initiatives in voicing the climate change concerns of vulnerable countries and assured that Britain would continue to work closely with Bangladesh bilaterally and internationally to secure an effective response to combat climate change.

He announced his country will

hold a climate change investment

conference for Bangladesh in Dhaka

and London this year. The British prime minister also assured the CA that the UK would stand next to the people of Bangladesh in their pursuit of higher standards of education and their

aspirations for attaining the MDGs. Fakhruddin hoped that Britain would continue to support the caretaker government's initiative to set up a Catering Institute in Sylhet for

MiG-29 case FROM PAGE 1

the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin, gave the order that removed all barriers to resuming the trial of the case pending with Dhaka Divisional Special Judge's Court. The trial court fixed March 25

for appearance of all the seven

accused in the case before it. The other accused are former army chief Lt General (retd) Mustafizur Rahman, former air chief Air Marshal (retd) Jamal Uddin Ahmed, retired defence secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain, Air Commodore (retd) Mirza Akhtar

tary Mohammad Hossain Serniabat and businessman Noor Ali. Following a government petition, the High Court on September 6 rejected Sheikh Hasina's petition for quashing the case regarding the controversial deal for purchase of

the fighter jets from Russia.

Maruf, retired defence joint secre-

tion on the grounds that the alleged offences were disclosed in the FIR and the charge sheet. According to the case filed with Tejgaon Police Station, the purchase of the eight fighter jets dur-

The HC had rejected the peti-

ment caused a loss of Tk 700 crore to the public exchequer. The now-defunct bureau of anti-corruption filed the Mig-29 scam case against Hasina and six

ing the tenure of the AL govern

others in December 2001.

Ctg port FROM PAGE 1 Chittagong Port and in fact India had already made formal approach to the

Bangladesh government in this regard," he said. India is now waiting for a reply from the Bangladesh government on the issue. "The trade and economic relation of both the neighbouring countries would be strengthened to a great extent if Bangladesh allows us

the transit and port facilities," he Replying to a question, Chakravarty said India wants a free, fair and credible general election in Bangladesh provided all political

parties participate in it.

"We hope the election in Bangladesh will be held in due time as per the roadmap, "he said. Earlier, the Indian envoy held a views-exchange meeting with the leaders of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) at

the temporary chamber office on the

CITF premises. The CCCI has organ-

ised the month-long fair. At the meeting, he informed the chamber leaders that Bangladeshi goods have a great demand in the north-eastern states of India and Bangladesh may take advantage of

He assured the CCCI leaders that India would soon issue a circular to pave the way for duty-free access of eight million pieces of Bangladeshi readymade garments to India. CCCI President Saifuzzaman

this opportunity.

Chowdhury urged the Indian high commissioner to take initiatives to reduce the existing \$1 billion trade deficit between the two countries. He also requested Chakravarty to take steps to develop the infrastructure of customs stations along the borders of the two countries. Assistant High Commissioner of

India Subrata Bhattacharya, CCCI Senior Vice President MA Latif, CITF 2008 Chairman Syed Jamal Ahmed and directors Mahfuzul Haq Shah, Nasiruddin Chowdhury and Habib Mohiuddin were present at the meeting.

producing skilled chefs from Bangladesh.

He informed about the caretaker government's unequivocal commitment to hold a free, fair and credible election by December 2008.

Gordon Brown assured CA of "continued British support towards

elections in Bangladesh" Fakhruddin invited Brown to visit Bangladesh to see for himself the home-grown development

Akbar Ali

FROM PAGE 1

programmes.

"In section 85 of the budgetary announcement, it promised to feed 50 lakh people, citing effects of inflation. But instead it has taken measures to feed only 40 lakh. By this time, the situation has reached a point where now it must feed 1.5 crore people," said Akbar, also a former adviser to caretaker govern-

He made the observations after a weekly meeting of the reforms com-

He said when the finance adviser announced the decision back on June 7 last year, Cyclone Sidr did not yet hit the country while the price of ricewas around Tk 18 to Tk 20.

Since then, things have got much

worse and the government should

make arrangements for more people to be fed under the Vulnerable Group Feeding programme, he observed. "The finance minister had said that it takes 4 lakh tonnes of rice to feed 50 lakh people for eight months. That means you'd need another 4 lakh tonnes to feed 50 lakh more. If

the government wants, resources

should not be a problem." Explaining his recent comment that the people are experiencing a 'silent famine', Akbar said, "People do not die of starvation in these famines, but they suffer from various diseases stemming from malnutri-"Women and children are the

from undernourishment. I talked about it to get the government's Akbar said, "A lot of doctors these days say that more and more children are suffering from malnutrition,

and it's a situation that usually pre-

worst hit in the ongoing food crisis

and no one talks about their suffering

Pak court meets

possibility that they may discuss the

cedes a big food crisis."

current situation," without elaborat-The incoming ruling coalition has pledged to restore about 60 judges sacked by Musharraf under emergency rule in November -- including Chaudhry -- through a parliamen-

tary resolution within the next 30

the head of the court's bar associa-

tion who has led a campaign for the

Firebrand lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan,

reinstatement of the sacked judges, has expressed fears the pro-Musharraf court could block the planned parliamentary move. Key US ally Musharraf, who grabbed power in a military coup in October 1999, sparked mass protests against his rule when he sacked

Court reinstated him in July. Meanwhile the country was ablaze with the start of the new parliament that held its inauguration ceremony on Monday.

tained sober outlook, the MOM

members were noticed for their

flamboyance. The qameez-pyjama

While the PPP and PML-N main-

Chaudhry on March 9 last year on

misconduct charges. The Supreme

of yore had been replaced by expensive branded suiting.

Public servants FROM PAGE 1 "Of course, the salary and other allowances of the government officers and employees will be increased very soon. But, at this moment it is difficult to say the exact time when the decision will be taken and how much money will be needed," the adviser told the

reporters after a programme of Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) at the finance ministry. Around 12 lakh government officers and employees got last pay scale in 2005 and the prices of essentials almost doubled in the last two years. The next pay scale for the government officers and employees

Sircar

FROM PAGE 16 The speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad however said, "Since the caretaker government system is in the constitution, we should abide by this.

Brig Gen (retd) Hannah Shah,

former vice-chancellor of Dhaka

is due in 2010, sources said.

University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader ASM Abdur Rob, among others, spoke at the meeting. They described Obaidur as a

brave and honest politician who

always worked for the betterment of the people. It is rare in the history that an elected government hands over power to an unelected body that cannot be held accountable for their

actions, Sircar said.

constitution for holding the general election has long been over and public patience is wearing thin, he observed. Blasting the idea of forming a 'government of national unity', he said, "We don't want an autocracy in

disguise. There is no alternative to

The 90 days' time stipulated in the

democracy. Emajuddin Ahmed said there is no alternative to transferring power to an elected government. ASM Rob stressed the need for

national unity among the political parties to overcome the present crisis.