## Wholesale prices

FROM PAGE 1

The retail prices are not yet reflecting the falling trend at the wholesale markets because the commodities that are being sold now had been purchased from wholesale markets at higher prices earlier, explained the

The price of each 50-kg sack of pulse dropped by Tk 300 to Tk 500 in the last three days on the wholesale markets while the price of edible oil plummeted by Tk 600 per maund (37.20 kg) in the last two weeks.

Price of sugar also came down by Tk 300 on each 50-kg sack at wholesale markets during the last week. The price of each 74-kg sack of flour also declined by Tk 300.

The falling wholesale price of sugar -- down to Tk 1,700 from Tk 2,000 for a 50-kg sack in the last few days -- had a slight impact on the retail market yesterday.

Sugar was selling at Tk 38 to Tk 40 per kg yesterday while it was sold at Tk40 to Tk42 a week back

A kg of high quality pulse --Australian Kangaroo and local variety, was sold at Tk 96 and Tk 94 respectively at wholesale markets a week ago. The Australian Kangaroo pulse was selling at Tk 88 a kg yesterday while the high quality local pulse price came down to Tk84 a kg.

Akg of Turkish pulse was selling at Tk 74 to Tk 75 at the retail markets yesterday while the price of the same was Tk82 a week ago.

Hasan Uddin, owner of Hasan and Sons at Rahmatganj Dal Patti, country's largest pulse market, told The Daily Star that falling prices on international market and the availability of local pulses triggered the price decrease on the wholesale markets.

The wholesale prices of edible oil, flour and sugar also continued to fall during the last couple of days.

Non-brand soybean oil was selling for Tk 3,700 per maund at the wholesale markets yesterday as opposed to Tk 4,300 two weeks ago.

However, the retail price of nonbrand soybean oil was between Tk 105 and Tk 110 a kg yesterday.

The wholesale prices of 'super palm' and palm oil were Tk 3,450 and Tk 3,300 per maund yesterday while the price was Tk 4000 and Tk 3900 two weeks back.

A kg of 'super palm' and palm oil was selling at Tk 100 and Tk 95 per kg at the retail markets.

Abul Hashem, general secretary of Bangladesh Wholesale Edible Oil Merchants' Association and organising secretary of Bangladesh Wholesale Sugar Merchants' Association, said reduced price on

the international market and adequate supply of edible oil and sugar contributed to their falling prices.

Wholesale price of a 74-kg sack of flour dropped to Tk 3,000 from Tk 3,300 in the last couple of days, without making any impact on the retail market. A kg of flour was selling for Tk 44 to Tk 47 on the retail markets vesterday.

Flour wholesalers at Moulvibazar also said the price fall of wheat on the international market resulted the price decrease.

Fish prices increased by Tk 10 to Tk 100 per kg on both retail and wholesale markets, with hilsa being the priciest.

Chicken (farm) prices yesterday jumped to Tk85-Tk90 akg from Tk80 two days back. The price of domestic chickens also rose by Tk 10 to Tk 20 apiece yesterday.

Egg prices spiked by Tk 1 per 'hali' (four eggs) on the retail markets last week. Eggs (farm) were selling at Tk 17 to Tk 20 per hali yesterday while regular eggs were selling at Tk22 to Tk 24 per hali.

UNB adds: BDR Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed yesterday urged the business leaders to import more and make less profit as a measure to help contain the spiraling

"Though the food prices are high on the international market, the prices in Bangladesh are much higher in comparison to that. It cannot be allowed to go. But we don't want to interfere, you should take immediate steps in this regard," he told the business leaders.

The BDR chief was exchanging views with the importers and leaders of various business forums at Moulvibazar Business Association office in Old Dhaka.

Director General of Rab Hasan Mahmud, army Dhaka zone operation officer Col Mujibul Haq, Badamtali Rice Traders' Association Secretary Haji Nizamuddin, Edible Oil Importers' Association Secretary Abul Hsahem and Sugar Importers' Association president Ali Asgar Kamal, among others, attended the meeting chaired by Moulavibazar Business Association President Abur Razzak

Assuring the businessmen of providing all possible help for import, storage and marketing their goods, Gen Shakil urged them to do business in a manner so that the common people do not suffer for unusual price hike.

In response, the business leaders called for formulating a specific policy for import, export, storage and

### ADP cut okayed

Donors' increased budgetary support to Tk 5,425 crore, 158 percent more than the previous

Even though the power sector is a priority, the revised ADP cut Tk 644 crore from the sector's development projects and it now stands at Tk 2,989 crore. The revised ADP set a target to spend Tk 1,341 crore in the agriculture sector, reducing Tk241 crore.

As per the revised ADP allocations, development projects under the education ministry will spend Tk 3,029 crore, reduced by Tk 721 crore. The health sector's development budget was cut by Tk 286 crore and the revised budget allocated Tk 2,442 crore.

transport sector will have Tk 2,551 crore to spend after receiving a Tk 752 crore cut.

meeting, the finance adviser admitted that the government reduced the development allocation due to low ADP implementation rate. A number of the sectors, ministry as they have observed that lised.

it was not possible for them to spend the money within the current fiscal year.

He said agriculture, power, education and communication sectors share 72 percent of the total allocation in the revised ADP.

The NEC yesterday approved a special allocation of Tk 20 crore to improve the livelihoods of people in 10 districts where poverty rate is 48 percent or more. The districts were selected

following a survey on household expenditures carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The government selected 198 upazilas of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Pabna, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Jessore, Khulna, Patuakhali, Rangamati and Bandarban for its Development projects of the district development programme.

The government in implementing the programme will involve local government bodies for socio-Briefing newsmen after the economic development of poor people in the areas.

The NEC meeting yesterday also discussed the ADP implementation done in eight months of the fiscal year, between July 2007 and like power and transport, have February 2008. Thirty percent of surrendered money to the finance the original allocations were uti-

## SC for hearing

interpretations, as the Fifth Amendment had ratified regimes since the August 15, 1975 changeover until April 9, 1979.

Court sources said the bench took the decision as it felt the necessity of hearing such matter of great importance by a greater

Amendment to the constitution, meaning the rules by Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed, Abu Sadaat Mohammad Sayem and Ziaur Rahman since August 15, 1975 until April 9, 1979 were unlawful.

The verdict had come upon a decades-old writ petition challenging the Martial Law Regulation donor status, the official said this (MLR) 7 of 1977, issued to legalise all acts of the martial-law governments.

observed that martial law as a whole is 'illegal and unconstitutional' and all the actions, laws, and rules made under martial law are 'illegal'

between August 15, 1975 and before the national elections of 1991 were not carried out constitutionally," the HC verdict had said.

A High Court bench comprising Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice ATM Fazle Kabir also had

observed that the constitution does not permit anyone to assume power by any means other than the ones mentioned in the constitution. "If anyone does so, it will

amount to sedition." The court, however, noted that although all government activities between August 15, 1975 and April 9, 1979 had been declared illegal, the On Aug 29, 2005, the High Court history cannot be altered. "Many of declared "illegal" the Fifth these illegal acts were done in public interest." From this perspective, the court 'condones' some of these actions that could have been done

#### Dhaka wants

in line with the constitution.

FROM PAGE 16

was actually a token donation. There are many countries that donate \$2,000 or more yearly, he In the verdict, the HC had said. "We shall also donate a minimum amount."

On how Bangladesh's national interest regarding the Rohingya issue will be ensued when it gets the donor status, the official said "The changes of government Bangladesh can discuss in details its views and problems with the UN agency and its other donors regarding the issue.

We cannot force repatriation of the Rohingya refugees, but can surely have amicable solutions of problems centring it," he said.

marketing so that they can do their business without harassment.

The businessmen attributed the soaring prices of essentials to the price hike of goods on the interna tional market, short supply of food and sharp fall in production in Bangladesh due to two consecutive floods and Cyclone Sidr.

They said the government can also import goods through TCB apart from the private importers.

#### SCBA polls

FROM PAGE 1

at the meeting decided to carry over the date to the last week of April on requests from the government side.

Complications rose after Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Sunday slapped a ban on holding the election for what they said was the SCBA's not having the permission as required by the emergency power rules.

However, yesterday's meeting was unanimous in its opinion that there is no need for permission to hold the polls, Barrister Amir added. The talks were held at a Gulshan

guest house since everyone involved preferred a neutral venue Law Adviser Hassan Ariff was there from 10:00am to 12:00pm.

Five of six presidential candidatesbarrister Shafique Ahmed, Humayun Hossain Khan, Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, Saifur Reza and Sirajul Islam Khan--were present at the meeting.

Later in the evening, the leaders gathered at the SCBA building where Convener of the election committee Nizamul Haque Nasim announced the new dates.

Attorney General Fida M Kamal was among those present at that

Earlier in the morning, a good number of lawyers thronged the SCBA building to cast vote. But the bar leaders told them the voting would remain stalled as they were going to have a meeting with the government. Many of those who massed on the SC premises expressed resentment.

A large contingent of police was deployed to avert anything unto

### Black night

the one-minute blackout as a symbol of journey from the dark to a brighter future.

SCF has urged all the citizens of the country to observe the oneminute blackout in silence from wherever they be -- in houses, motor vehicles, launches or anywhere else - in remembrance of the black night Bangladeshis were thrown into and massacred in hundreds.

Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum for secular Bangladesh, in a separate programme will arrange a candlelight procession tonight from the Central Shaheed Minar to the killing field of Jagannath Hall of the University of Dhaka where many were brutally killed on that fateful night of 1971.

They will hold a discussion meeting at the Central Shaheed Minar before commencing the candlelight procession.

Projonmo Ekattor, an organisation of the children of martyred intellectuals, will join the discussion and procession.

University of Development Alternative (UODA) will stage various programmes after sunset today that will continue till sunrise on Independence Day.

UODA will arrange a nightlong programme of painting, poetry recitation and patriotic songs with the participation of renowned singers of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, and a film show to pay homage to the sacred memory of the martyrs of the Liberation War.

#### Iwo cops held

FROM PAGE 16

DB officials said they first arrested SI Selim Mollah after identifying him as one of the culprits. Following his statement, they arrested SI Amiruzzaman.

Police produced the two before the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court and prayed for their five-day remand.

The police mentioned in the forwarding report that the two need to be remanded to identify their cohorts and arrest them.

Ripon Mia, a Bangladeshi expatriate in Saudi Arabia, came to Dhaka from his ancestral home in Kishoreganj on Friday afternoon to convert Saudi riyals into taka. When he got down from a bus at

Mohakhali Bus Terminal, a gangled by the two SIs forced him to board a microbus, identifying them as policemen. They took him to a remote place in Savar and snatched 86,000 Saudi

Riyals and a mobile phone from him. Later, they pushed Ripon out of the vehicle. Ripon returned to the capital and filed a case with Tejgaon Police

Station on Saturday.

Sources said Selim and Amir are among the 8,00 Sub-inspectors, who allegedly gave bribes to get appointed in police force in 2005. During interrogation at the DB office, they said they had to land Tk 7 lakh to give bribe to top police officials and political leaders for getting their jobs and they had to resort to unfair means as they had failed to repay the loan in the last

### Govt to sit with parties

an immediate start of the dialogue, the military-backed administration now does not want to wait for the Election Commission (EC) to wrap up the electoral reforms talks first to begin its own, said insiders.

An official announcement will be made soon after the government finalises matters relating to negotiations with the political parties, they added.

"How long can they afford to wait," a person close to the advisory council told The Daily Star yesterday, explaining the reason why the government is planning to begin the talks in the first week of April. Chief Adviser Fakhruddin

Ahmed in his address to the nation on January 12 announced that the council of advisers had decided in favour of having dialogue with the political parties. He also said his administration would soon take steps to that end. But later, a number of advisers said the government's talks would

not take place before the EC completes its reforms dialogue that seems to have lost way in legal quagmire stemming from leadership dispute in BNP. The commission began second round of its talks on February 24 and

had discussions with 15 parties in five days. But it could not finish off the job since it must wait for the BNP issue to be resolved at the High Court. "The government should have

begun the talks soon after its decision to that end on January 10. Things could have been much better in that case," observed the adviser. Those who have been invited to the electoral talks are likely to be

The political parties look to raise

asked to join the discussions with

a myriad of current issues while the caretaker government would want

them to reach a consensus over vital national issues. Complete withdrawal of restrictions on indoor politics across the country would figure in the topics the country. of the talks, a source said.

Besides, a decision on whether to relax or lift the state of emergency might come after the dialogue.

Earlier in February, the EC urged the chief adviser to lift the restrictions on indoor politics countrywide at the end of March to allow the political parties to resume their activities and prepare to register with it by June.

#### EC wants army

**FROM PAGE 1** military for maintaining law and

Election Commissioner Sakhawat also said the EC is working on a proposal aimed at taking punitive measures against polling offi-

order during union parishad elec-

cials and law enforcers including members of the armed forces for any act to influence the elections. If any allegation is lodged with the commission, it will investigate it, he said adding that once the individual involved is found to be guilty, the

action against the accused. "In case of criminal offences actions might be taken under existing laws," said Sakhawat.

commission would ask the authori-

ties concerned to take departmental

Persuading one to cast vote, dissuade one from casting vote and any other act that would influence someone during the voting or have impact on poll results would be considered punishable offences, said sources.

### Charge sheet

FROM PAGE 1

the government too.

"The charge sheet in the illegal wealth case against Tarique can get approval from the commission [ACC] any moment and it can be done in this week," said ACC Director General (admin) Col Hanif Iqbal in a routine press briefing vesterday.

"Scrutiny of the investigation report in the case against Tarique has been completed. It is at the final stage and awaits approval from the commission to be placed order of the lower court. as a charge sheet," Hanif added. Sources in the ACC said the

investigation report submitted to the ACC by the ACC investigation officer (IO) Assistant Director Taufiqul Islam proposed charging Tarique with earning wealth of about Tk 4.81 crore illegally.

The IO submitted the investigation report in January but two months were spent in just scrutinising the report.

The ACC filed the case against Tarique Rahman, his wife Dr Zubaida Rahman and mother-inlaw Igbalmand Banu in connection with amassing wealth illegally and

concealing wealth information. In the first information report (FIR), Tarique was charged with gaining wealth over Tk 4.82 crore illegally and concealing information about properties worth over Tk 4.23 crore in his wealth statement

submitted to the ACC. Tarique submitted his wealth statement to the anti-graft body on June 10 through jail authorities, claiming to have assets worth Tk 1.37 crore in his name, his wife's and his daughter's name.

On March 7, the joint forces arrested Tarique at their cantonment home. He has since been in

His mother Khaleda Zia and younger brother Arafat Rahman Koko were also arrested on September 3 on graft charges. There are 11 other extortion and deception charges filed against

Tarique and none of them are under trial. Meanwhile, a Dhaka court rejected the bail petition of hugewealththroughillegal means.

Secretary General Tarique Rahman in connection with the general diary (GD) filed with Kafrul Police Station in connection with his alleged involvement in corruption. Our court correspondent

detained BNP Senior Joint

reports: Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after defence lawyers submitted a petition seeking bail for their client against the rejection

On March 15 last year, the same court had rejected Tarique's bail petition saying that it had no jurisdiction to grant bail to any person in connection with the case filed under the EPR. In the GD, police mentioned

that during the four-party alliance's rule larique himself, his party friends and business part ners earned a large amount o money through unbridled corruption in local and foreign tenders.

There is no legality of the source of his earnings, according to the Besides this, he amassed a huge

amount of money taking commis sion from those who earned illegal money by appointing people to different posts in the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. Moreover, he siphoned of

crores of taka which he earned through manipulating tenders using his, other family members' and business partners' influences in purchasing CNG-run autorickshaws, setting up power plants and manufacturing electric poles which caused huge loss to the

government, reads the GD. Police said Tarique needs to be confined to jail to prevent him from such activities.

Later, he was shown arrested in ten extortion cases and one in which he is accused of cheating, following confessional statements of his close friend and business associate Giausuddin Al Mamun.

The ACC also filed a graft case against Tarique, his wife and mother-in-law for accumulating

### WFP seeks \$500m

Sheeran warned, without the food aid, WFP would have to reduce its global food aid operations because of rising food and oil prices.

WFP Acting Country Director Edward Kallon told The Daily Star last night that the food and funds shortfalls are also affecting the UN organisation's operation in Bangladesh, which is among the 40 countries being closely monitored for food shortages.

"Bangladesh is being closely monitored because of the increased food needs due to the cyclone emergency and the large number of poor people who cannot access the markets, especially the 27 million ultra poor," said Kallon. Kallon said WFP is still assessing

the shortfall in its food aid to Bangladesh, which is as a whole estimated at 5 lakh ton at the The shortfall is affecting the emergency food assistance to areas affected by cyclone Sidr," said

requested in the emergency appeal in the aftermath of Sidr.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID), WFP's biggest donor with a billion dollars | Topkhana. a year donation, was forced to cut \$120 million from future aid programmes to pay for emergency aid needs.

Recently, regional WFP officials expressed fears of political and Paltan police station has however social unrest in Bangladesh due to soaring food prices, while International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) told the media, "This is a serious security issue." In WFP's letter to donors,

face of hunger, increasingly affecting communities that had previously been protected.' Some global food analysts forecast that bringing down food prices could take at least a decade, especially due to rising oil prices

and increasing food demand in

Sheeran wrote, "This is the new

China and India. Additionally, rising meat consumption has pushed up the Kallon adding that WFP has demand for grains used as animal received only \$37 million in feed, which in turn has reduced response to the \$52 million landuse for food grains.

#### Saifur calls

FROM PAGE 16

occasion of the Independence Day. "But we should remain alert so that any individual cannot capture everything in the name of democracy," he said adding that they would work for establishing an accountable democratic system in

Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, former secretary general of BNP, hoped that the parliamentary election would be held as per the electoral roadmap.

"I hope the elections will be held timely in a congenial atmosphere after completion of the voter list,"

He also said those who don't want to bring unity in the party are not friends of BNP.

"I want to tell you that unity will

be brought in the party and nationalistic forces centring BNP would be united before the election," he added. Maj (retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, acting secretary general of the pro-Saifur faction, said democracy

would be established soon in the country. If anyone tries to create obstacles in the way to democracy, he would find himself in troubled

waters, he said. "Despite huge allegations against politicians, now it is proved that only politicians can run the

country properly," he said. Maj Gen (retd) ZA Khan, MA Hakim, Shah Abul Hossain, Nazir Hossain, Zahiruddin Swapan, Fazlul Azim, Mofazzal Karim, Prof Jasim Uddin Ahmed, and Tareq Shamsur Rahman, among others, spoke.

#### EC talks

FROM PAGE 16 The court also adjourned until

April 10 the hearing on another writ of similar nature in the form of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Nasir Uddin Ashim, a BNP On November 4 last year, the High

Court, upon Ashim's writ, had issued a rule upon the EC and the government to explain why they should not be directed to invite legitimate BNP officials for the pre-election dialogue on electoral reforms. The BNP-leadership dispute

arose when on November 5 last year the EC, ignoring Khaledaappointed BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, sent a letter to Maj (Retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed to participate in the dialogue with political parties on

electoral reforms. Aggrieved at the decision, Khaleda Zia, also the immediatepast premier, moved to the High Court for seeking redress.

On November 18 the same year, the High Court, responding to Khaleda's writ, had stayed operation of the EC letter to the BNP standing committee-nominated acting Secretary General, Maj Hafiz, causing the Election Commission to inconclusively conclude the crucial first round of its reform dialogue with political

The court also had issued a rule upon the EC, the acting secretary general and six members of the BNP standing committee and the chief adviser of the caretaker government to explain why the impugned letter 'should not be

#### declared illegal'. Cops foil

programme.

FROM PAGE 16 gathered in front of the Communist Party's Paltan office at 10:00 am yesterday for the

A contingent of police including

the assistant commissioner of Motijheel and officer-in-charge of the Paltan police station had been deployed in the area beforehand. Members of the law enforce ment agency at one point snatched away banners and placards from

protesting activists and forced them to leave the place, telling them that they cannot hold a hunger strike there. Police then tried to bar the gathered leaders and activists from

marching towards DLA's Topkhana

Road office to stage the protest Pedestrians spontaneously joined the march protesting the price hike and demanding availability of essentials at lower prices while the DLA leaders and activists moved towards its office at

DLA leaders and activists claim that at one point, the police charged baton on a section of the marching crowd. Assistant Sub-Inspector of

denied the allegation. "We just requested them to leave the place and not stage their protest as such programmes are not allowed under the Emergency Powers Act," ASI Shajahan of Paltan police station

told The Daily Star last night. The police didn't attack the crowd, he said. Communist Party of

Bangladesh and Workers Party have criticised the police interference at the DLA programme and the attack on the crowd. Zonayed Saki, Comrade Tipu Biswas, Abdullah Sarker, Saiful

Haq, advocate Abdus Salam,

ent at the protest.

Moshrefa Mishu, Abdul Matin Talukder, Hamidul Haq, Babul Biswas, among others, were pres-

### Kingdom of Bhutan

other infrastructure.

planet.

FROM PAGE 16 The switch to democracy is a major step for Bhutan, which is about the size of Switzerland and is one of the most insular countries on the

Before the king's dynasty took over in 1907, the country was divided up into countless local fiefdoms. It had no roads, telephones or currency until the 1960s, and only allowed television in 1999.

The landlocked country, which calls itself "The Land of the Thunder Dragon", was also never colonised. For centuries the Bhutanese relished their isolation, maintaining a barter economy and allowing few

foreigners to visit. The educated elite have traditionally dominated politics, and indeed only university graduates were allowed to stand for the 47 seats in the new National Assembly.

The candidates represented two parties, the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) or Bhutan United Party and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which campaigned on the slogan: "Service with Humility: WeWalk the Talk."

Both parties promised to stick by

the royal concept of Gross National

Happiness, but also pledged to

boost growth and develop roads and

accurately, and then -- while depending on Allah -- storm, seeking martyrdom and paradise."

followers that the only way to liberate Palestine is not through negotiations or dialogue, but "iron and fire." He also urged Muslims to partici-

Jerusalem. Zawahiri's message coincided with a visit to the West Bank by US Vice President Dick Cheney, who warned on Sunday that attacks on Israel by Palestinian militants were

ings with Israeli leaders, with whom he also discussed Israel's arch foe

killing our fugitive and surrounded

respect the constitution and uphold therule of law," Gilani said. A senior member of Sharif's party said earlier that several of the judges who remain under detention. including former Supreme Court

chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, would be free as soon as Gilani is sworn in. Gilani himself was in prison for half a decade on corruption charges, which he said were cooked up by Musharraf's regime to discredit him.

His spell in prison won him respect within the PPP's ranks. The charges dated from his time as speaker during Bhutto's second term in power from 1993 to 1996. He was also a minister during her first term from 1988 to 1990.

There is speculation that Gilani

will be a stop-gap premier until Benazir Bhutto's widower Asif Ali Zardari, who is not an MP, becomes eligible to stand for the post by contesting a by-election in May. But local daily The News quoted Zardari as denying this, saying that

he is not interested in the job and that Gilani would be prime minister "for five years and not for three months." A Pakistani court earlier Monday acquitted Zardari of involvement in the 1996 murder of a retired judge, his lawyer said, the latest in a string of

cases against him that have been

The case was the latest in a string of charges against Asif Ali Zardari that have been dropped by courts since Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party won general elections last month. "The court acquitted Zardari as

dropped in the past month.

there was no evidence against him,' his lawyer, Shahadat Awan, told AFP after the hearing in the southern city Zardari was charged with involvement in the killing of retired high

court judge Nizam Ahmed and his

son Nadeem Ahmed, a lawyer, 12

years ago in Karachi. Public prosecutor Naimat Randhawa said that the investigation failed to produce any evidence against Zardari.

full support to the new coalition, hailing the start of what he called a "real democratic era" in the country, which has been plagued for months by violence linked to al-Qaeda and In the latest militant attack in the

Musharraf on Sunday pledged his

were injured when insurgents in a border town blew up 36 tankers supplying fuel to US and Nato troops in neighbouring Afghanistan.

way democracy has started. We didn't have to fight for it," said Tshewang Tashi, a 41-year-old civil

the idea of democratic change was

We don't know if the prime minister will serve like the king," she said.

The kingdom's move to democracy began in 2001 when former king Jigme Singye Wangchuck handed over daily government to a council of ministers and finally stepped down in favour of his son in

### Support Our People in Gaza",

FROM PAGE 16

Sunday and monitored here by SITE Intelligence Group. Zawahiri urged the faithful to "monitor the targets, collect the

money, bring the equipment, plan

The address became the second public message coming from the al-Qaeda leadership in less than a

killing hopes for their "long overdue" state. Cheney made his first trip as vice

wiped away tears and then shook hands with Gilani. "Today, democracy has been restored thanks to the great sacrifice of Benazir Bhutto," the 55-year-old

a crisis that a single man cannot save it," he said. Just after his election Gilani on Monday ordered the release of all

"I order all the detained judges to be released immediately," Gilani, a key aide of slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, told parliament just moments after the national assem-

judge following the order, an AFP photographer witnessed. Musharraf sacked dozens of judges in November, fearing they could overturn his victory in a presidential election. Some, including

pro-Musharraf candidate Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi secured 42 votes. There were several abstentions.

Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerged as the biggest party from the February 18 vote and formed a coalition with the party of former premier Nawaz Sharif and two smaller groupings

in December. The coalition is headed for a confrontation with Musharraf after

grip on power. November, when it looked like the

Election officials at polling stations handed out badges reading "I voted in the National Assembly Elections 2008. "We are very excited. It's a very proud moment for us because of the

Pema, a 28-year-old teacher, said

good news -- but still somewhat troubling. "We are very happy. Sometimes we worry because it's a new system.

spokesman said the vote counting had started. Preliminary results were expected later in the day, with final official results due on Tuesday.

# Top al-Qaeda leader

As-Sahab information network on

week. On March 20, Osama Bin Laden insisted in a similar appeal to his

pate in military operations against US forces in Iraq as a means of fighting for Muslim holy places in

president to the West Bank for talks with moderate president Mahmud Abbas, following a string of meet-

Gilani elected

Gilani, wearing a dark suit and tie,

judges detained after President Pervez Musharraf imposed emergencyrule last year.

blyvoted him in as premier. removing barbed wire outside the house of the country's deposed top

former Supreme Court chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, remain in detention. Gilani won 264 votes in the 342seat lower house of parliament, while

Musharraf, who seized power in a military coup in 1999, is set to swear in the new prime minister on Tuesday.

after routing Musharraf's allies. Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in a suicide attack at an election rally

who could challenge the president's Musharraf deposed the chief justice and dozens of other judges under a state of emergency in

"If we have to make this country successful then we will have to make parliament supreme, we will have to

Tsherap Dorji, 25, said Bhutan's "sovereignty and security" would be safer if the king had remained in full

late 2006. An election commission

Zawahiri blasts what he sees as

collusion between the United

States, Israel, Egypt, and other Arab states against the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and its people. He accuses Israel and its allies of restricting access for Palestinians to the most basic necessities and killing them. The al-Qaeda leader also encourages Muslims to support Palestinians through decisive

actions against these states, rather

than demonstrating their disap-

"Let us strike their interests

proval by other means.

everywhere, just like they gathered against us from everywhere," Zawahiri said. "Let it be known to them that they will get blood for every dollar they spend in the killing of the Muslims, and for every bullet they fire against us, a volcano will turn back on them."

He insisted that Israeli warplanes

were bombing people in Gaza

based on the American decision, the Egyptian siege, and Arab collu-"They will never be able to insult and make a mockery out of our Prophet, peace and prayers of Allah upon him," Zawahiri went on to conclude. "They cannot expect to support Israel, then live in peace and enjoyment while the Jews are

### In the speech titled "Rush to people."

teenage son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, sitting in the public gallery,

"I invite all political forces to join us because the country is facing such

said in his first speech to parliament.

Pakistan police Monday started

vowing to reinstate sacked judges

Supreme Court might overturn his October re-election as president.

Taliban militants.

nuclear-armed nation, 100 people