

Govt mulls ethical

FROM PAGE 1 (Tk 1,050 crore) for this project, which is likely to be increased up to \$170 million, sources say. They add the donor agency also suggests that the government formulate NIS. A draft of NIS is expected to be prepared by mid-September, said Matiar Rahman, joint secretary (committee and development) of the Cabinet Division, who is working as the co-ordinator of the Good Governance Programme. Rahman said the ultimate goal of NIS is to strengthen integrity at the individual, institution and national levels "because the values, ethics and morals have already been distorted which we need to rebuild in every level."

The NIS is mainly to prevent corruption in government institutions. Our ultimate vision is to free the country from corruption. Through implementation of the strategy, we want to prevent corruption in public sectors and ensure proper service to people through public institutions. "We have plans to work on integrity issue from family to national level. As a result of NIS, we want to get a country free from corruption and people will get proper services from public offices," added Rahman. In Asia, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines have such integrity strategies in different names. The Malaysian strategy is called 'National Integrity Plan', he said. Different sources say India and Pakistan are also working to formulate such integrity strategies. "We have examples that some countries have gained many achievements through implementation of such integrity policies," said Barrister Manzoor Hasan. "As integrity will increase in our society, the ordinary citizens have a greater sense of ownership. They will be able to express their views without fear. The quality of basic services -- health and education -- will improve," he added. The government has designated IGS to prepare the draft of the strategy and IGS submitted a National Framework on it to the Cabinet Division in June. The IGS on August 27 submitted another detailed document to the Cabinet Division as a process of finalising the draft. Sources say initially it was proposed by IGS to set up a 'national integrity institute' by this month, which will be run under policy guidance of a high-powered National Integrity Advisory Committee (NIAC) headed by the prime minister or the chief adviser. It was also proposed that the government would form a 'national integrity council' (NIC) to lead the implementation of the strategy and the government's plan is to make NIC functional before the national elections proposed to be held in the third week of December. But the government is not willing to set up a separate institute to implement NIS, the sources say. According to the policy guidance of NIAC, an NIS cell in the Cabinet Division headed by an additional or joint secretary will now facilitate implementation of the strategy through ministries, constitutional bodies and other institutions. The NIS cell will facilitate formation of Ethics Committee and appointment of Ethics Focal Person in each ministry and other government institutes (those will be considered as participating agencies of NIS) headed by the secretaries of the ministries and head of the institutes. The ethics committees will work to ensure integrity within the ministry and in other organisations or offices under the ministries in line with the national documents of NIS, which will set a minimum standard of integrity to be maintained. Besides, these committees will make an action plan in line with NIS

CA not happy

FROM PAGE 16 The chief adviser said investment in education is the best investment for the country. Keeping this in mind, the present government has made the highest allocation -- of over Tk 12,000 crore -- for education and technology sectors in the national budget. Meanwhile the second Primary Education Development Programme involving about Tk 7,500 crore is being implemented to ensure 'Education for All' by 2015, he told the audience. Dr Fakhruddin however applauded the country's success in gender parity in enrolment in primary schools and recruitment of teachers in these schools in the current year. The CA distributed prizes to winners of different competitions organised to mark National Primary Education Week 2007 and 2008. He also distributed prizes and certificates to the best teachers, students, primary schools, managing committees and officials in recognition of their outstanding contributions to primary education on the occasion. Primary and Mass Education Adviser Rasheda K Choudhury presided over the function, while Primary and Mass Education Secretary M Mosharrar Hossain Bhuiyan presented the welcome address. Rasheda K Choudhury said it is the responsibility of the state to provide standard education to all children. Advisers to the CG, special assistants to the CA, representatives of development partners, students, teachers and government officials were present at the function. It was revealed at the function that the government has donated Tk 2 crore from the CA's Relief and Welfare Fund to Shishu Kalyan Trust (Child Welfare Trust) to provide scholarships for poor meritorious students.

Meanwhile, in separate letters to the chief election commissioner (CEC) in the morning, Jamaat and IO criticised the EC for introducing the provision of casting 'no' votes in parliamentary polls, use of transparent ballot boxes, and for introducing the provision for 33 percent women office bearers in all committees of the parties to be registered with the EC. "All these steps have made holding of the coming parliamentary poll more complicated," Jamaat said in its letter signed by Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid. Referring to the previous two rounds of dialogues with the EC on electoral reforms, Mojahid said they had given great importance to the talks and discussed openly. "But it doesn't seem that the dialogues produced any positive result for holding a free and fair national election."

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Charge hearing

FROM PAGE 1 grenade attack will be held at the same court on September 21. At least 22 people, including AL leader Irvy Rahman, were killed and several hundred, including AL chief Sheikh Hasina, were injured in the grenade attacks on the party's rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital on August 21, 2004.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1 The court then fixed the date. Sheikh Selim was produced in the court yesterday. Advocate Sahara Khatun stood for Hasina who had earlier been exempted from appearing at the court in person during the proceedings. Azam J Chowdhury, Managing Director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case with Gulshan Police Station against Hasina and her cousin Sheikh Selim on June 13 last year on charge of extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him in exchange for awarding a contract to set up Siddhirganj Power Plant. On June 15 this year, Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court sent the case to the Special Court-5 for quick disposal. Hasina's younger sister Sheikh Rehana, who lives in London, was included in the charge sheet and shown absconding. Meantime, the hearings of two other cases -- barge-mounted power plant case and Niko graft case -- against the Awami League chief were also held at the special courts located on the Jatia Sangsad Bhaban premises yesterday. The trial court dealing with the barge-mounted power plant graft case against Hasina and seven others fixed October 21 for next hearing as the High Court (HC) extended the tenure of its stay order. Judge Firoz Alam of Special Court-1 set the date after the defence counsels submitted the copy of the extended stay order. Another special court set October 25 for next hearing on the Niko graft case against Hasina and eight others on the same ground.

After hearing the HC bail orders, Appellate Division's vacation chamber judge Justice Md Joydul Abedin also asked the corruption watchdog to file regular appeals within this period. MOUDUD, ABBAS Moudud Ahmed secured bail from the HC in a case of evading Tk 4.12 crore in income tax and another for depositing Tk 2.2 crore to a bank in another person's name through forged documents. The National Board of Revenue filed the tax evasion case with Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on August 31 while Motijheel police filed the other case on August 27. Moudud was arrested at his Gulshan residence on April 13 last year with 16 bottles of foreign liquor, 32 cans of beer and 220 pieces of sari belonging to the government relief fund. Mirza Abbas got bail in a case filed on charge of selling out 18 abandoned government houses at a fake auction. On March 29 last year, the ACC filed the case with Motijheel Police Station against Abbas, former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, former prime minister Khaleida Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, three former secretaries and a number of high officials of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha and Power Development Board. According to the prosecution, the accused in connivance with one another sold 18 abandoned government houses at a fake auction at prices much lower than their market value. Moudud and Abbas recently filed writ petitions with the HC, challenging the legality of initiation and continuation of the pro-

SC drops

FROM PAGE 16 petitions before the vacation bench of the Appellate Division's chamber judge. Chamber judge Justice Md Joydul Abedin returned the petitions back to the attorney general on grounds of those being prepared improperly. Sheikh Hasina's counsel Barrister Shaquie Ahmed told reporters that the SC dropped the government petitions from its docket since those were not prepared properly. Upon two petitions filed by Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, who is now abroad for treatment following release on parole, the HC on July 7 stayed all proceedings against her in Niko and barge-mounted power plant graft cases filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC). The HC also issued separate rulings asking the government and ACC to explain why the proceedings of the cases should not be quashed. The government recently filed the two petitions with the SC for staying the HC orders.

Moudud, Mirza Abbas

FROM PAGE 16 ceedings of the cases against them. After hearing their petitions, the HC yesterday also issued rules upon the government to explain why initiation and continuation of the case proceedings against the petitioners should not be declared illegal. Barrister Rafique-ul Huq assisted by barrister Mahbubuddin Ahmed Khokon and barrister Ahsanul Karim argued for the petitioners. STAYED HC BAILS Upon separate petitions, the HC recently granted an interim bail to BNP leader and former health minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain in two criminal cases and stayed the case proceedings. One of the cases was filed on charge of committing corruption in selling out a plot of Kakoli High School at Dhanmondi when Khandaker Mosharrar was chairman of the school committee. Another case was filed for amassing illegal wealth and concealing information from the ACC. The same court had also granted an interim bail to former state minister for energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain in Gatco corruption case, former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in a case involving setting up of a press, and Khandaker Akter Hamid Paban, son of BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, in a case filed for amassing wealth through illegal means and concealing information from the ACC. The ACC recently filed applications with the SC for staying these bail orders. Advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, advocate Anisul Huq and advocate Hafizul Karim Nehal appeared for the ACC.

AL talks with EC

FROM PAGE 1 national poll is becoming uncertain due to the unilateral decisions of the EC and the government. Ashraf was briefing journalists after AL's final session of the two-day meet with its 14-party coalition partners. AL met Jatia Sama/Jantrik Dal (JSD), Gono Azadi League and Communist Kendra yesterday, following its meet with the rest of the coalition partners the day before, in a bid to reach a consensus on the issues to be discussed with the EC today. Through the meetings, 14-party coalition reached a consensus on holding the national election before any local government poll, lifting of the state of emergency before the elections, and barring of war criminals from contesting in any poll. Issues including holding the national election first, withdrawal of the state of emergency, scrapping of the provision of casting 'no' votes, banning of religion based political parties, and barring of war criminals from contesting in any election will feature prominently in the discussion between the EC and AL today, according to the party's leaders who attended the meeting. Ashraf said they will also ask the EC to scrap the mandatory provision for parties to sever ties with front organisations and foreign chapters. He however firmly said AL will contest in the upcoming parliamentary poll under the leadership of its President Sheikh Hasina and hoped to form a government. Meanwhile, in separate letters to the chief election commissioner (CEC) in the morning, Jamaat and IO criticised the EC for introducing the provision of casting 'no' votes in parliamentary polls, use of transparent ballot boxes, and for introducing the provision for 33 percent women office bearers in all committees of the parties to be registered with the EC. "All these steps have made holding of the coming parliamentary poll more complicated," Jamaat said in its letter signed by Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid. Referring to the previous two rounds of dialogues with the EC on electoral reforms, Mojahid said they had given great importance to the talks and discussed openly. "But it doesn't seem that the dialogues produced any positive result for holding a free and fair national election."

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is released. The EC's second invitation to BNP came up for review in a party committee meeting yesterday. The six-member committee headed by BNP Standing Committee Member Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddique met in the NAM flat of party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain in the capital. "We want to join the dialogues with the Election Commission and the government, and also want to take part in the polls once our party chairperson is freed," Tanvir told reporters later. "We are reviewing the chief election commissioner's letter and drafting our reply," he added. "We have yet to decide whether we will join the talks. We will sit again and will inform you about our decision," he told the reporters. Committee members BNP Vice-president MK Anwar, Law Affairs Secretary Jynal Abedeen, Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed and former minister Prof Abdul Mannan attended the meeting. BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan could not attend the meeting due to illness. In a letter to the EC Sunday morning, BNP said it will not participate in any dialogue if the recently made 'unconstitutional' electoral provisions and rules are not scrapped. TWO PARTIES JOINT TALKS Participating in the talks yesterday, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Jatia Party (Manju) asked the EC to announce the schedules for parliamentary poll, and for Dhaka City Corporation and upzila elections together. But parliamentary polls must be held before the others, both parties said. LDP chief Oli Ahmed told reporters that the EC assured them of considering their proposals. LDP agreed with the criteria for parties' registration while Jatia Party (Manju) asked for relaxing the criteria. Both parties demanded lifting of the state of emergency ahead of the polls. Awami League, Krishak Samik Janata League, Jatia Sama/Jantrik Dal (Rab) and National Awami Party are scheduled to sit with the EC today.

Tarique

FROM PAGE 1 German Embassy if they all get UK visa, said Tarique's family sources. Aazam Khan, who is working to obtain visa for the three, yesterday told reporters that it might take about a week to complete the process for getting visa. He also said Tarique's medical treatment would not be possible in a single country as he is suffering from multiple complications. Tarique Rahman will first go to London for medical treatment and then to Germany," said Aazam who visited Tarique at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital. "Finally, Tarique will go to the United States for treatment," he said, adding that Tarique might have to receive medical treatment for six months or more. When asked about Tarique's condition, Aazam said his condition deteriorated yesterday. Tarique, arrested at his mother's cantonment residence on March 7 last year, was granted bail in all the cases and released on September 3. He has been receiving treatment at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSSMU) Hospital since then. Their mother and BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia, now detained at a makeshift prison in the Sangsad Bhaban Complex, has been accused in several corruption cases. Out of four cases, she secured bail in two cases. The former premier also sought bail in the other two cases, hearing of which will be held today. "If the court grants her bail in the two cases, she might be released anytime today or tomorrow," said one of Khaleida's counsels.

JS polls date likely

FROM PAGE 1 as a possible date for the national ballot. After the EC announces a specific date for the parliamentary poll, the detailed schedule for it will be announced 45 days before the polling date. In that case, the detailed schedule might be announced in early November. The caretaker government asked the EC to hold elections to as many upzilas as possible before the parliamentary election, but failed to make the commission agree to its demand. The EC wants to hold the polls to about 100 upzila parishads by the end of October, the sources said. It polls to around 100 out of 482 upzila parishads are held in October, the elections to the remaining upzilas will be held immediately after the parliamentary poll. The EC had earlier planned to hold polls to over 200 upzila parishads starting from October 23 before the parliamentary election, but it changed its plan in the face of strong opposition from political parties, and due to the deteriorating flood situation in the country, the sources added. According to the latest plan, the long over due polls to Dhaka City Corporation will also be held by the end of October. Participating in talks with the EC since Saturday, almost all parliamentary political parties asked the commission to announce a specific date for the long stalled ninth parliamentary poll. The parties also opposed hold-

6 Titas staff

FROM PAGE 16 during Taskforces questioning to being involved in amassing wealth by illegal means, 124 returned ill-gotten wealth worth about Tk 350 crore to the taskforce state on February 5. The Taskforce launched a drive at Titas Gas after discrepancies surfaced with the wealth statements submitted by the officials. The Taskforce interrogated 450 former and present staff, 136 of who admitted to their involvement in corruption and promised to hand over their illegally amassed property to the government. The astounding findings of Taskforces include the case of former meter reader and former CBA leader Abul Kashem who was found to own property worth Tk 300 crore. A former sales assistant who used to draw Tk 4,000 salary a month amassed Tk 2,100 crore. Like them, meter reader Mahbubur Rahman was found to own property worth Tk 250 crore, technician Habibur Rahman worth Tk 200 crore, former receptionist Olifa Akhter, who had also been promoted illegally by the post of deputy general manager of the IT department, worth Tk 30 crore. The taskforce also found that each of the remaining implicated Titas staff owns property worth at least Tk 1 crore. The Taskforce investigation revealed that corrupt Titas Gas staff amassed the illegal property through multi-pronged corruption including theft, abuse of power, taking bribes in exchange for giving jobs to incompetent people and nepotism. Meanwhile, three more government officials and two of their wives have applied to ACC to face TAC. Following voluntary disclosure of information by the corruption-suspects, TAC has so far primarily ordered 40 people to return about Tk 14.85 crore to the state. Once the graft-suspects deposit confessed money to a certain account of the Bangladesh Bank, TAC would then pass the final order announcing clemency to them.

British International Development Minister Douglas Alexander and World Bank Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala will attend the conference along with 200 other participants including speakers from vulnerable countries, donors, private sector, academia and NGOs. The government consulted selected members of the civil society, private sector and donors to draw up the strategy to identify potential physical impacts of climate change. Finance Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam will lead a 3-member Bangladesh delegation to 'Conference: Bangladesh Facing the Challenge', Special Assistant to Chief Adviser for Environment and Forest Raja Debashish Roy will also attend the London conference as a member of the delegation. According to experts, the country is likely to suffer from more intense and frequent floods, droughts, cyclones and storm surges, with adverse impact on agriculture, water security and health.

FROM PAGE 16 World Bank are expecting to contribute to the new Bangladesh fund. The Bangladesh government has already formed a fund and allocated Tk 300 crore during last fiscal year's budget. British International Development Minister Douglas Alexander and World Bank Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala will attend the conference along with 200 other participants including speakers from vulnerable countries, donors, private sector, academia and NGOs. The government consulted selected members of the civil society, private sector and donors to draw up the strategy to identify potential physical impacts of climate change. Finance Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam will lead a 3-member Bangladesh delegation to 'Conference: Bangladesh Facing the Challenge', Special Assistant to Chief Adviser for Environment and Forest Raja Debashish Roy will also attend the London conference as a member of the delegation. According to experts, the country is likely to suffer from more intense and frequent floods, droughts, cyclones and storm surges, with adverse impact on agriculture, water security and health.

Climate talks

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4 mayors

FROM PAGE 1 held on August 4. As per the rules, the newly elected representatives of the local government need to take oath within 30 days of publication of the gazette notification after the election. Therefore, the newly elected representatives of the local government have to take oath by September 11. Considering it, the Local Government Division decided to hold the oath-taking ceremony today. The division has also asked the deputy commissioners (DC) concerned to administer the oath of the councillors of four city corporations and also the councillors and mayors of nine municipalities by September 11.

HSC results

FROM PAGE 16 three letters of their respective boards, give space and then type their roll numbers and send the SMS to 4636 or 2323 (short code) to get results. The examinees of HSC Business Management, Diploma in Commerce and HSC vocational under the Technical Education Board have to type FBM, DIC and VOC respectively and then send it to TeleTalk with their roll numbers, Rahman said. TeleTalk Assistant Manager Rezanul Haque Jami said the examinees staying in Dubai and the United Kingdom would be able to get the results by sending SMS to TeleTalk from local mobile operators through the same process. The examinees in Dubai will have to send the SMS to 2254 while the examinees in the UK must type the first three letters of their respective boards and EBS and then send the SMS to 878080. He said they have to pay the usual charge for sending SMS. Rezanul Haque Jami also said TeleTalk earlier provided the examinees with results of all examinations held under the National University through SMS. TeleTalk also provided the voters with SMS service to help them find their names on the voter list, the area of voting, serial number and names of polling centres during the elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities in August, he said. An agreement has recently been signed between TeleTalk, education boards, computer centres and the Technical Education Board to provide the examinees with the service, Rezanul added.

Sharif now assures

FROM PAGE 16 controversial constitutional changes made by Pervez Musharraf, which give him the right to dismiss parliament, as well as make key military and judicial appointments. Sharif's party has already demanded that Zardari, who will be sworn in as president on Tuesday, resign as co-chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which won general elections in February. Sharif quit the country's coalition government late last month over differences with Zardari on the reinstatement of judges sacked by former president Musharraf last year. The split came one week after Musharraf resigned under threat of impeachment. Sharif's close aide and former minister Ahsan Iqbal said Zardari expressed his desire that the former premier rejoin the government but he declined to say if his party would continue to play the role of a constructive opposition. "We are in the opposition but we don't want to weaken the system," Iqbal said. "We will play a positive role in helping the government steer the country out of economic crisis and extremism and terrorism," he added. Sharif made the visit Monday because he will be unable to attend Zardari's inauguration ceremony as he is travelling to London to visit his wife who recently underwent back surgery there. He will instead be represented by his brother, Shahbaz Sharif, the chief minister of Pakistan's Punjab province. Earlier at least 21 people including women and children were killed Monday in a missile strike by suspected US drones on a Pakistan tribal town near the Afghan border, officials told AFP. The drones fired several missiles that hit a house near a madrassa or Islamic seminary in North Waziristan, the officials said, in the fourth such strike in the rugged tribal region in almost a week. "Seven civilians and 14 militants have died in the missile strike," an intelligence official said, hours after the 11am (0500 GMT) strike. Women and children were among the dead, as well as the militants, including nine "foreigners" believed to be of Arab origin. A security official told AFP that more than 25 people had been wounded. "The latest casualties include an important Arab militant identified as just Hamza and two other Arabs identified as Musa and Qasim," the official said but was unable to give full names immediately. Some of the injured are in critical condition, hospital officials said. "Foreigner" is a term used by Pakistan authorities for Al Qaeda militants. The drones were apparently targeting the house or the madrassa established by former Taliban commander Jalaluddin Haqqani during the 1978-88 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, residents said. Haqqani, who was a close aide to fugitive Taliban leader Mullah Omar, has not been seen since the fall of the hardline regime in Afghanistan in 2001. Residents said two pilotless aircraft circled over Dande Darpakhel, three kilometres (about two miles) north of the region's main town of Miranshah, before at least one drone fired several missiles. On Friday, three children and

two women were killed in the same region during a suspected strike by a pilotless aircraft. At least five militants were also killed the day before when a missile fired from an unmanned plane hit a house in the North Waziristan village of Mohammad Khel, officials said. The latest strike follows Pakistani claims that US-led forces based in Afghanistan killed 15 people in a border village in neighbouring South Waziristan district last week. That attack was condemned by Pakistan's parliament and the foreign minister who issued a tough statement calling the incident "shameful" and stating that only women and children had been targeted. Around 3,000 Pakistani tribesmen chanted "Allahu akbar" and "death to America" in Wana, the district's main town, after Friday prayers to protest against that raid, which involved helicopter gunships and ground troops. Both the US-led coalition and the separate Nato-led security force operating in Afghanistan have said they have no knowledge of the incident. South Waziristan is a known haven for Taliban and al-Qaeda militants. Missile strikes targeting militants in Pakistan in recent weeks have been blamed on US-led coalition forces or CIA drones based in Afghanistan. Pakistan does not have missile-equipped drones. US and Afghan officials say Pakistan's tribal areas are a safe haven for al-Qaeda and Taliban militants who sneaked into the rugged terrain after the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001. Meanwhile, at least 10 militants were killed after clashes with troops who pounded their suspected hideouts in restive northwestern Pakistan, the military said Monday. Clashes between soldiers and militants erupted in Kadal district of Swat valley late Sunday and continued until dawn, a military spokesman said. The exchange of fire was heavy, he said, adding that troops used artillery and mortar shells to target suspected hideouts of fighters loyal to radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah. "We have confirmation that at least 10 militants were killed," spokesman Colonel Nadeem Anwar said, adding that the final toll may be higher. There were no military casualties, Anwar said. The clashes erupted after militants hurled a grenade into a gathering of troops on a golf course in Kadal, wounding two soldiers. Pro-Taliban cleric Fazlullah launched a violent campaign to enforce harsh Islamic Sharia law in the region last year. Since then, the former popular tourist destination of Swat has been rocked by fierce clashes.

Indian chopper

FROM PAGE 16 navigation system based on Global Positioning System (GPS) failed, sources said. The pilots also said they were heading for Gandha Chhara BSF camp from Agarotola to campyapat. A major of Bangladesh Army said the Indian pilots apologised for their mistake.

Disease

FROM PAGE 1 The overall flood situation in four upzilas of Gaibandha remained unchanged. While visiting two flood shelters at Raidasbari School and Al-Furkan Kindergarten School in Gaibandha Sadar, crowd of flood victims were seen who were driven out of their home after Gaibandha town-protection dam was breached. "We have been staying here for seven days but none came to help us with food and drinking water," said Jogesh Chandra, who took shelter there. Army personnel visited four flood-affected wards in Gaibandha municipality and distributed relief materials among 600 families. According to district administration, 16 bridges and culverts were damaged by the surging water and 75km of roads were washed away in the flood-affected four upzilas. A correspondent from Munshiganj reports: Road communications between different places in the district remains snapped. Our staff correspondent in Bogra reports: More areas in Dhanat and Sherpur upzilas were inundated as the water level of the Bangali and Karotta increased. Situation in other areas remains unchanged.

Iran's first nuclear

FROM PAGE 16 the nuclear fuel needed for the plant's reactor. Moscow however insists that it is as worried as any Western country about the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and has joined Western calls for Tehran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program until international experts verify it is not being used for weapons-making. Russia and Iran two years ago signed a deal under which the spent nuclear fuel rods from Bushehr must be repatriated to Russia for treatment. Separately, a US official said the United States would announce later Monday that it was withdrawing a US-Russia civilian nuclear cooperation pact from consideration by Congress over Russia's recent moves in Georgia.

Sharif now assures

FROM PAGE 16 controversial constitutional changes made by Pervez Musharraf, which give him the right to dismiss parliament, as well as make key military and judicial appointments. Sharif's party has already demanded that Zardari, who will be sworn in as president on Tuesday, resign as co-chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which won general elections in February. Sharif quit the country's coalition government late last month over differences with Zardari on the reinstatement of judges sacked by former president Musharraf last year. The split came one week after Musharraf resigned under threat of impeachment. Sharif's close aide and former minister Ahsan Iqbal said Zardari expressed his desire that the former premier rejoin the government but he declined to say if his party would continue to play the role of a constructive opposition. "We are in the opposition but we don't want to weaken the system," Iqbal said. "We will play a positive role in helping the government steer the country out of economic crisis and extremism and terrorism," he added. Sharif made the visit Monday because he will be unable to attend Zardari's inauguration ceremony as he is travelling to London to visit his wife who recently underwent back surgery there. He will instead be represented by his brother, Shahbaz Sharif, the chief minister of Pakistan's Punjab province. Earlier at least 21 people including women and children were killed Monday in a missile strike by suspected US drones on a Pakistan tribal town near the Afghan border, officials told AFP. The drones fired several missiles that hit a house near a madrassa or Islamic seminary in North Waziristan, the officials said, in the fourth such strike in the rugged tribal region in almost a week. "Seven civilians and 14 militants have died in the missile strike," an intelligence official said, hours after the 11am (0500 GMT) strike. Women and children were among the dead, as well as the militants, including nine "foreigners" believed to be of Arab origin. A security official told AFP that more than 25 people had been wounded. "The latest casualties include an important Arab militant identified as just Hamza and two other Arabs identified as Musa and Qasim," the official said but was unable to give full names immediately. Some of the injured are in critical condition, hospital officials said. "Foreigner" is a term used by Pakistan authorities for Al Qaeda militants. The drones were apparently targeting the house or the madrassa established by former Taliban commander Jalaluddin Haqqani during the 1978-88 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, residents said. Haqqani, who was a close aide to fugitive Taliban leader Mullah Omar, has not been seen since the fall of the hardline regime in Afghanistan in 2001. Residents said two pilotless aircraft circled over Dande Darpakhel, three kilometres (about two miles) north of the region's main town of Miranshah, before at least one drone fired several missiles. On Friday, three children and

two women were killed in the same region during a suspected strike by a pilotless aircraft. At least five militants were also killed the day before when a missile fired from an unmanned plane hit a house in the North Waziristan village of Mohammad Khel, officials said. The latest strike follows Pakistani claims that US-led forces based in Afghanistan killed 15 people in a border village in neighbouring South Waziristan district last week. That attack was condemned by Pakistan's parliament and the foreign minister who issued a tough statement calling the incident "shameful" and stating that only women and children had been targeted. Around 3,000 Pakistani tribesmen chanted "Allahu akbar" and "death to America" in Wana, the district's main town, after Friday prayers to protest against that raid, which involved helicopter gunships and ground troops. Both the US-led coalition and the separate Nato-led security force operating in Afghanistan have said they have no knowledge of the incident. South Waziristan is a known haven for Taliban and al-Qaeda militants. Missile strikes targeting militants in Pakistan in recent weeks have been blamed on US-led coalition forces or CIA drones based in Afghanistan. Pakistan does not have missile-equipped drones. US and Afghan officials say Pakistan's tribal areas are a safe haven for al-Qaeda and Taliban militants who sneaked into the rugged terrain after the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001. Meanwhile, at least 10 militants were killed after clashes with troops who pounded their suspected hideouts in restive northwestern Pakistan, the military said Monday. Clashes between soldiers and militants erupted in Kadal district of Swat valley late Sunday and continued until dawn, a military spokesman said. The exchange of fire was heavy, he said, adding that troops used artillery and mortar shells to target suspected hideouts of fighters loyal to radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah. "We have confirmation that at least 10 militants were killed," spokesman Colonel Nadeem Anwar said, adding that the final toll may be higher. There were no military casualties, Anwar said. The clashes erupted after militants hurled a grenade into a gathering of troops on a golf course in Kadal, wounding two soldiers. Pro-Taliban cleric Fazlullah launched a violent campaign to enforce harsh Islamic Sharia law in the region last year. Since then, the former popular tourist destination of Swat has been rocked by fierce clashes.

Indian chopper

FROM PAGE 16 navigation system based on Global Positioning System (GPS) failed, sources said. The pilots also said they were heading for Gandha Chhara BSF camp from Agarotola to campyapat. A major of Bangladesh Army said the Indian pilots apologised for their mistake.

Disease

FROM PAGE 1 The overall flood situation in four upzilas of Gaibandha remained unchanged. While visiting two flood shelters at Raidasbari School and Al-Furkan Kindergarten School in Gaibandha Sadar, crowd of flood victims were seen who were driven out of their home after Gaibandha town-protection dam was breached. "We have been staying here for seven days but none came to help us with food and drinking water," said Jogesh Chandra, who took shelter there. Army personnel visited four flood-affected wards in Gaibandha municipality and distributed relief materials among 600 families. According to district administration, 16 bridges and culverts were damaged by the surging water and 75km of roads were washed away in the flood-affected four upzilas. A correspondent from Munshiganj reports: Road communications between different places in the district remains snapped. Our staff correspondent in Bogra reports: More areas in Dhanat and Sherpur upzilas were inundated as the water level of the Bangali and Karotta increased. Situation in other areas remains unchanged.

Iran's first nuclear

FROM PAGE 16 the nuclear fuel needed for the plant's reactor. Moscow however insists that it is as worried as any Western country about the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and has joined Western calls for Tehran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program until international experts verify it is not being used for weapons-making. Russia and Iran two years ago signed a deal under which the spent nuclear fuel rods from Bushehr must be repatriated to Russia for treatment. Separately, a US official said the United States would announce later Monday that it was withdrawing a US-Russia civilian nuclear cooperation pact from consideration by Congress over Russia's recent moves in Georgia.