Fresh grabbing

But the Gazipur district administration in April this year demarcated the Turag and the Balu, excluding the foreshores despite Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority's (BIWTA) plea for saving those.

Meanwhile, the district administration and BIWTA along with land officials on Monday launched a survey to include the foreshores, seven months after a ministerial committee asked for a resetting of the pillars on the basis of a foreshore map prepared in 2006.

The survey is scheduled to be completed by January 15 next year.

In line with the committee's decision, the BIWTA and the district administration have to prepare a list of all encroachers on the floodplains, wetlands and foreshores of the rivers, and take legal action to free those.

The committee had asked to reset the pillars with high watermark during August and September but the DC said the job was not possible then, as the low-lying land of the river had gone under

In the meantime, the land grabbers took full advantage of the situation.

Shahjahan Siraj, assistant it. director of BIWTA, said the district administration had ignored the 2006 map while setting up the pillars.

"In many instances, land grabbers occupied the river further and filled it up with earth by taking advantage of the wrongly placed boundary pillars," he told The Daily

The map shows that the pillars were set up through leaving out 20 metres or more

of the river land.

many cases unoccupied foreshores too were excluded from the river, giving grabbers the opportunity to occupy them.

Resetting the pillars, however, would mean a waste of nearly Tk 1 crore in public money, an official said.

A recent visit to the river revealed that many of the pillars had been pulled up and damaged. Earlier, the HC had

ordered the deputy commissioners of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Munshiganj to demarcate the Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Turag, Balu and Dhaleshwari rivers as per CS records of 1913 and RS records of 1983. It also directed the DCs to retain the eroded and newlyformed lands as part of the rivers and protect them with pillars, walkways and planta-Kamal Uddin Talukder,

deputy commissioner of Gazipur, said the river had been demarcated not by the definition of a river and foreshore but by the CS and RS records.

Asked how the authorities would recover the river land grabbed after the setting up of the boundary pillars, he said he would place the issue before the National Taskforce on Saving Rivers to decide on

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said the fate of the Turag testified to the fact that massive land grabbing could not happen without the connivance of the administration. Referring to the setting up

of the boundary pillars, she said, "This is not river demarcation as per law and HC

BIWTA officials say in broke the news of gross anom-

alies in the demarcation of the rivers. Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan launched the programme on the day.

Later, the National Taskforce on Saving River formed a special ministerial committee headed by the minister of state for land Mostafizur Rahman to look into the controversy. The committee visited the Turag and the Balu on May 20.

In its report in late May, the committee said the district administration had failed to comply with the HC order that recognised foreshores as integral parts of rivers.

The committee found many individuals and organisations had filled up the wetland adjoining the rivers and erected structures. Such illegal occupancy will lead to loss of many river areas forever unless the activity is immediately stopped.

Gazipur DC Kamal Uddin had earlier admitted to leasing out foreshore land to individuals over time. He had also said that reclaiming all the foreshores would require a cancellation of private ownerships.

Interestingly, he denied on Monday that any foreshore land had been leased out in his district.

WASTE OF PUBLIC MONEY

The district administration undertook a Tk 1.4-crore project to set up 800 concrete pillars along the 18-km stretch of the Turag and the Balu. The Public Works Department (PWD) set up 310 pillars along the thin waterline of the Turag from Ashulia and also along a part of the Balu.

The pillars already set up will be of no use when pulled

BNP wants

BNP national standing committee at a recent meeting discussed the party's strategy. And BNP-led four-party alliance at a meeting on Monday night decided to join the president's talks to raise a common demand.

"We will join the dialogue with the president only to place our demand for restoring the caretaker government," BNP's acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

Some other opposition parties, which are not components of the four-party alliance, also decided to request the president to make efforts to restore the CG system for holding free and fair parliamentary polls.

Joining the talks separately with the president yesterday at Bangabhaban, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) also demanded restoration of CG.

They unequivocally said the next parliamentary polls will not be free and fair under a partisan government.

"I want to tell you frankly that I have limitation to address your demand. It depends on the parliament, President Zillur Rahman said in response, as quoted by LDP chief Col (retd) Oli Ahmed.

"I am only empowered by the constitution to appoint the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners," Oli quoted the president as saying.

The president however assured the LDP delegation that he will inform the government about their demands, said Oli who led the party's nine-member delegation to the talks.

The president also suggested that LDP places a bill in the parliament seeking restoration of CG.

Oli told The Daily Star that he requested the president to intervene to save the country from possible political unrest centring the CG system.

LDP also drew the president's attention to deterioration of law and order, police repression on opposition leaders and activists, secret killings, etc.

After LDP, the president sat with a delegation of CPB led by its chief Manzurul Ahsan Khan. CPB also demanded restoration of CG, and suggested enactment of a law for formation of the EC in future.

The president told the CPB delegation that he is trying

sincerely to forge a consensus over the formation of the new

Like previous days of the talks, the president asked LDP and CPB to suggest names of eligible people for appointment to the EC. But both parties were reluctant to suggest any name.

"The caretaker government should be reinstated to hold the next parliamentary polls in a credible manner," the CPB chief said at the talks.

Yesterday's talks suggest restoration of CG might dominate the rest of the talks when the opposition parties will sit with the president.

And if things move in line with the main opposition party's plans, the debate over restoration of CG might generate much heat in politics in the coming days.

Similarly, another signifi cant question might be raised as to whether the president has the authority to take steps to resolve the political stalemate over the CG issue.

Political analysts appreci ate BNP-led four-party alliance's Monday night's deci-

sion to join the talks. BNP has yet to finalise its delegation. "I think our chairperson should lead the delegation to the president's talks since we will urge the president to take measures for restoration of the caretaker government," Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, a member of BNP national standing committee, told The Daily

Star over telephone yesterday. BNP already made it clear that the party will not join the next parliamentary elections if the CG system is not rein-

Talking to reporters yesterday after placing a wreath at the grave of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman in the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, the party's acting secretary general Fakhrul said his party will bring to the president's attention the overall political condition of the country.

Before BNP meets the president, its alliance components Bangladesh Jatiya Party and Islami Oikya Jote will join the talks on January 2, and the day before respectively. They will raise the same demands as BNP's, said party sources.

It is expected that ruling Awami League will respond to BNP's and other parties' demand for restoration of CG on January 12, when its delegation will sit with the president for talks.

MISAPPROPRIATION Bashundhara

COURT CORRESPONDENT

chief sued

Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, chairman and managing director of East West Properties Development Ltd, a concern of Bashundhara Group, and four others were sued yesterday on charges of misappropriating Tk 3.93 crore from a businessman. Selim Ahmed, director of

Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka. Metropolitan Magistrate

Hasibul Haque recorded the statement of the complainant and directed the officerin-charge of Badda Police Station to investigate the case and submit a report by February 15 next year. The four other accused

are Sadat Sobhan, Shah Alam's son and one of the directors of the company, Mahbub Morshed Hasan, vice-chairman, Towhidul Islam, deputy managing director, and MA Hassan, assistant general manager of the company.

In the case statement, the plaintiff said he had bought three plots of five kathas each from the company's Baridhara project in 2007 at the company-fixed price of Tk3 crore.

After the agreement, he had paid Tk 3.93 crore, including registration fees. Following the registration of the plots in 2007, walls were erected around them.

In the meantime, Shah Alam went into hiding after the caretaker government assumed power in January of the same year. After his return in 2008, he demanded another Tk 3 crore from the plaintiff, saying he would complaint.

hand over the land or give back the money and told him that he could get the plots only by paying the additional amount, Selim alleged.

Musclemen

FROM PAGE 20 Contacted, Ali Akbar Masum, general secretary of Sujan Comilla chapter, said criminals are still in the campaigns of two key mayor hopefuls. "The drives against them should be strengthened. Even the candidates should desert the criminals," he insisted.

Regarding the usage of black money, Akbar said they have already talked to the authorities on this issue. 'Even we have discussed it with the mayoral candidates and they have promised to us that they will not distribute black money to influence the voters. I hope they will stand by their

promise.' "A mayor candidate's son who was sentenced to 20 years for possessing illegal arms is campaigning for his father," pointed out a local businessman wishing ano-

nymity. "Sakku is also not free of such allegations. The authorities should consider the issue seriously," he maintained.

However, both Afzal and Sakku had earlier denied the allegations.

Famed singer Asif Akbar, also a member of BNP central committee, yesterday alleged that a vital aspirant mayor, a local BNP leader and a local Awami League lawmaker are planning to distribute black money.

"People will take up positions in every area and will stay there round the clock before the polling day to prevent distribution of black money," he added. CECVISITS

COMILLA TODAY

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda will visit Comilla today to oversee the preparations of the commission and the local administration to ensure free and fair elections scheduled for January

5. The CEC will hold a meeting with the candidates and another with the officials concerned regarding the law and order, said sources at the EC.

Zardari hits out

The presidency issued Zardari's statement after the army and the government appeared to make efforts to quell tensions fuelled by socalled "memogate."

Pakistan's army chief, General Ashfaq Kayani, last week denied rumours that his military was plotting to overthrow the government. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani welcomed those

that he wanted to sack Kayani or ISI spymaster Ahmad Shuja Pasha. "The rumours that our government wants to remove Director General Inter-Services Intelligence (Lieu-

tenant) General Ahmed Shuja

Pasha and army chief General

remarks and denied rumours

Ashfaq Kayani are ridiculous, Gilani told a press conference. "This utterly wrong impression is being created by some opportunists... Had this been the case, I would not have pleaded them to take extension in service."

Gilani said the generals did not ask for extensions in their tenure after retirement last year, but he wanted them to continue as the country was fighting a war against terror-

"They did not want extension from me but I gave it to them myself... You can't change a general in the middle of a war... We are not America." Kayani and Pasha have

backed calls for an investigation into the memo, sent on May 10 and offering to overhaul Pakistan's security leadership in exchange for American help to reign in the military after the killing of Osama bin Laden.

Yesterday, tens of thousands of people gathered at

guarded perimeter of the compound to pay their respects, beating their chests and demanding that her killers be arrested. Bhutto, who was twice elected prime minister, was killed in a gun and suicide

city

attack on December 27, 2007 in the garrison city of Rawalpindi after addressing an election rally. "Today we pay tributes to her. The best way to do it is to defend and protect democracy and democratic institu-

tions in the country and foil all

conspiracies against it," said

Zardari in a statement issued

by his office. "Let us on this day rededicate ourselves to the democratic mission of... Benazir Bhutto whose life was dedicated to fighting dictatorship and those seeking to defame and dismantle democratic institutions," the presi-

dent said. "I therefore urge all the democratic forces and the conspiracies against democracy and democratic institutions," he said.

"There will be hundreds of thousands of people by the end of the day," Asif Haider Shah, commissioner of Bhutto's native Larkana district, told AFP. Around 6,000 policemen,

hundreds of paramilitary officers, electronic gates, aerial surveillance and sniffer dogs were ensuring security, he said. "More than 100,000 people

have already visited or are coming to visit the mausoleum. The number will certainly increase by the end of the day," senior police official

Hashim Laghari told AFP. Bhutto's mausoleum, converging outside the heavily

"We want revenge. Arrest Benazir's killers," the mourners chanted, carrying party flags and photographs of Bhutto, eulogising her and her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was hanged under military rule, an AFP photographer

Bhutto's son, Bilawal, who is co-chairman with his father of the main ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) appealed for democracy to prevail in an editorial written in the English-language Express Tribune newspaper.

"We must remain committed to the evolution of a democratic Pakistan and reject the calls for confrontation between institutions," he He also appealed to anti-

Americanism, which has recently been inflamed by US air strikes that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers on November 26. Millions of Pakistanis

oppose the government's alliance with the US war in patriotic Pakistanis to foil all Afghanistan and on Monday The New York Times said the counter-terrorism partnership can only survive in limited form.

"It is only under a democratic government that Pakistan finally stood up to demand respect from the United States and to do what the dictator with all his military might could not -- evacuate the Shamsi airbase," wrote Bilawal. The Americans were

ordered to leave the airbase, widely believed to have been a hub for a now stalled drone war on Islamist militants, this month as part of Pakistan's retaliation for the November 26 air strikes.



Hadiul Islam

Student killed

FROM PAGE 20

discipline, met the tragic death after he failed to embark on the moving vehicle on the campus, witnesses said.

Angered at the incident, students barricaded several points of Khulna-Satkhira highway disrupting vehicular movement until 5:30pm. S M Kamruzzaman, offi-

cer-in-charge of the Sadar police station, said students removed the barricades following the vicechancellor's assurance for arresting the killer bus driver. Earlier, aggrieved students vandalised at least

seven passenger buses, two university buses, Gallamari police outpost and residential quarters of university bus drivers, witnesses said. Meanwhile, hundreds of students also demonstrated

in front of Khulna Medical College Hospital after Hadiul's body was taken there for an autopsy. The administrative building of the university

students till filing of this report last night. Police were deployed in and outside the campus in apprehension of further

remained surrounded by the

violence.

8 hurt

FROM PAGE 20 Dhaka Medical College

Hospital (DMCH) with severe stab wounds. Others were taken to local hospitals. According to Marma

Singh Tripura, sub-inspector of Tejgaon Shilpanchal Police Station, a clash between "Joy group" and "Russel group" broke out at around 12:15am inside Latif Hostel of the institute in Tejgaon area.

A number of rooms were vandalised in the 15-minute clash before police rushed to the spot and took the situation under control, he said.

Muggers shoot

FROM PAGE 20

Habibur Rahman Shahin, one of the owners of the shop, said he along with Rubel and Nasir went to a bank on North South road to withdraw Tk 10 lakh around 3:30pm. On their way to the shop from the bank, an armed gang of 4-5 youths waylaid them and tried to snatch the bag containing the

A scuffle followed as Rubel challenged them. At one stage, the gang opened fire on Rubel and Nasir, added Shahin.

Mahtabuddin said he did Shahin said he tried to take not know the answer to either the bag from Rubel, who fell on the ground after being hit, and ran away but the criminot try to find the answers nals opened fire on him as well. At this, he left the bag and took shelter in a nearby sel that he was currently the

> Rubel, who was hit in the chest, was declared dead after he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Nasir sustained injures in his right leg and was admitted to the

56, was shot by criminals in of Uttara around 1:00pm.

from him as soon as he got Atahar Ali Member, Abdul down from his car, Akram said. Bari Mintu, Habibur Rahman Mridha, Sobhan and other collaborators from the area,

the money, he added. Akram was undergoing treatment at Pongu Hospital.

anyone in connection with the two incidents.

Talking to The Daily Star, against Delawar Hossain **DMP Commissioner Benazir** Sayedee in his testimony were Ahmed last evening said he had directed his forces to launch special drives across the capital to prevent mughave a profession. And as a ging and other criminal activlocal Awami League leader, he falsely testified against

> Replying to a query on the increasing number of mugging incidents, he said, "We often arrest the criminals, but they resume their activities after coming out of jail on

The Daily Star on April 12 out, said an engineer of the not hand over the plots FROM PAGE 20 otherwise, according to the witnessed the murder of Ibrahim, who worked in his On October 30 this year, house. the company refused to Poshari, who claimed to be

27 during the 1971 Liberation

case against Delawar Hossain Sayedee filed in connection with crimes against humanity committed in 1971. Poshari began his testimony yesterday after the three-member tribunal fin-

ished recording the deposi-

tion and cross-examination of

War, testified yesterday in a

the fifth prosecution witness Mahtabuddin Hawlader. Sayedee, now 71, was present in the dock during the proceedings. The Jamaat leader spent much of the time reading a pocket-size book He was allowed to lie down on the dock as he suffers from

back pain. After Poshari finished his deposition, Sayedee's counsels began cross-examining the witness yesterday. The cross-examination will con-

tinue today. Yesterday, Poshari, who was a fish trader in 1971, began his deposition by introducing himself. "During the 1971 Liberation War, my age was around 27 and I was in my home at Chithalia village of

Parerhaat.' Poshari said the Parerhaat peace committee was formed with Delawar Hossain Sayedee (who he kept referring to as Delawar Sikder), Sekandar Sikder, Danesh Ali Mollah, Moslem Mawlana, Majhar Talukder and other

collaborators. The peace committee members then went on to form the collaborators' force

in the area, he said. On May 8, 1971, Sayedee, Sekandar Sikder, Danesh Ali Mollah, Mohsin Mawlana, Momin, Hakim Kari and Sobhan Mawlana along with other collaborators and Pakistani soldiers came to Poshari's house in Chithalia.

ing, my brothers and I hid ourselves in the woods on the eastern side of our house," said Poshari. "We watched everything that happened in my house from there." Seeing the Pakistani sol-

"Sensing them approach-

run away. But they were captured and tied up.

"Then they looted the rice, paddy, money, gold and other valuables from my house," Poshari told the court.

While Sayedee, Danesh Ali Mollah, Moslem Mawlana and other collaborators disarmy and its collaborators tributed the looted gold and many valuables among themselves, other items, including rice, paddy and furniture,

Muken Chakrabarti, Satish were looted by the "public", he Bala, Chitya Talukder and

After the looting, under the

collaborators poured kerosene all over the house. "Delawar Sikder then torched the place..." According to Poshari, his house had sections--three residential quarters, a granary

valued at Tk 10 lakh in 1971. He claimed that the burnt corrugated iron sheets, pillars, wood and other remains of the torched house are still there even after 40 years.

After torching Poshari's

and a guest room--and was

Pakistani soldiers took Mofizuddin and Ibrahim to their camp in Parerhaat, Poshari said. "I followed them from afar

house, the collaborators and

to the Parerhaat Bridge, Poshari told the court. "From my end of the bridge, I saw the Pakistani soldiers consulting with

Delawar Sikder and Danesh

Mollah.' Ibrahim, who Poshari kept referring to by his nickname Kutti, was untied and taken to

the western end of the bridge. "They took him to the other end of the bridge. The Pakistani soldiers consulted with Delawar Sikder and shot Kutti, who screamed loudly

when he was hit.' Ibrahim's body was then thrown into the river, Poshari

Mofizuddin, the other captive, was taken to the camp and brutally tortured there. Between 1:30am and 2:00am the following morning, Mofizuddin escaped from the camp and returned to Poshari's house.

"His whole body was covered with blood and scars,' said Poshari.

Mahtabuddin Hawlader, the fighters captured Mobin, fifth prosecution witness, narrated how he had seen a collaborator shoot Bisha Bali on Sayedee's orders in Umedpur village of Parerhaat. "On June 2, 1971, I was on my way to Parerhaat around Ansary concluded the cross-

Earlier yesterday,

10:30am," said Mahtabuddin. It was then when he saw

Delawar Hossain Sayedee, Sekander Sikder, Mawlana diers, Mofizuddin, Poshari's Moslem and other collaboracousin, and Ibrahim tried to tors along with Pakistani soldiers enter Hindupara (a neighbourhood predominantly Hindu) of Umedpur village. "I quickly hid myself in the

> woods at the southern end of Hindupara," he said. He watched the Pakistani

enjoyed government facilities loot around 22 houses, Mahtabuddin Hawlader including those of Anik Mandal, Nalita Bali, denied that he was giving false evidence before the tribunal. Harendranath Chakrabarti,

Pak troops shoot after talking

The houses were torched leadership of Sayedee, the afterwards. "I saw the collaborators and peace committee members share the looted valu-

Robi Talukder.

Mahtabuddin.

the tribunal.

looted the house of Parerhaa

freedom fighter Mahbubu

Alam. Mahbubul earlier testi-

During the cross

examination, counse.

Mizanul Islam asked

happened to Bali's body.

during the last 40 years.

of the questions and he did

The witness told the coun-

Secretary of Parerhaat Union.

that Pirojpur sadar was liber-

ated from the Pakistani army

on December 8, 1971, under

the leadership of Major

Ziauddin. Parerhaat was

liberated on the same day

under the leadership of free-

dom fighter Ruhul Amin

Counsel Manjur Ahmed

examination by suggesting

that the allegations

Mahtabuddin brought

The counsel went on to say

that Mahtabuddin does not

Sayedee in a false case under

tribunal.

he said.

He later told the counsel

ables among themselves, said Mahtabuddin. Then the collaborators, led by Sayedee, tied Bisha Bali to a coconut tree and brutally beat him up, he said. "At one point, Delawar Sikder said something in Urdu to a razakar

[collaborator], who then shot Bisha Bali," said

On the same day, he heard that the collaborators had also fied against Sayedee before

money from Rubel. Mahtabuddin whether he knew the collaborator who had shot Bisha Bali, and whether he knew what had

Awami League General

The muggers then fled with the money, Shahin added.

DMCH, police said. In Uttara, Akram Hossain,

Nobin, who also testified against Sayedee before the front of his house at sector 14 After liberating Parerhaat, Three muggers on a motor-Nobin and other freedom bike tried to snatch Tk 5 lakh

> The criminals shot him in his right hand and took away

Police were yet to arrest

the directive of his MP, and bail."

Thai cop kills six fellow officers

A policeman in southern Thailand shot dead six fellow officers before turning the gun on himself after a drinking session in a police canteen turned sour, local police said yesterday. The incident, which also left one policeman severely

wounded, took place late on

Monday in a border patrol

police camp in Phatthalung

AFP, Bangkok

province, some 840 kilometres south of the capital Bangkok. A police official said the motive was still unknown but the eight men had been drinking together in the canteen where six of the bodies were

"At this stage we think it's a personal conflict," he added. The gunman's body was found some 200 metres (yards) from the scene after he cilled himself with the same assault rifle he used against

his colleagues, the official

confirm local media reports

Police were unable to

that the group was celebrating the promotions of some of the Law mınıster

ROM PAGE 1 of the trial. On Monday, the nternational Crimes Tribunal declined to take into cognisance the charges made against former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam as the

pare it 'properly'. Shafique said if charge is properly prepared it would help both the court and lawyers in the trial process.

prosecution failed to pre-

In reply to a question, the law minister said detailed investigation is needed against Ghulam Azam as he held meetings across the country during the Liberation War that had led to the occurrence of various criminal offences. The tribunal in its

Monday's orders said, "After

perusing the formal charges,

the investigation report

along with relevant papers and documents appeared to have been prepared in a scattered way and those are not in form and set in order." However, the tribunal asked the prosecution to submit the formal charge

afresh by January 5.