Fair polls

were possible under both partisan and non-partisan governments.

For that to happen, the government has to be sincere in providing the Election Commission with all necessary assistance, he

In Bangladesh, elections had been held under partisan governments and caretaker governments. "The last Election Commission and we [the present EC] conducted polls to some local government bodies in a free and fair manner. Opposition men also got elected in the polls," the CEC told report-

ers at the EC Secretariat. decide whether the next parliamentary polls will be held under a partisan or a non-partisan government, he said, adding, "The entire country looks to us. We are optimistic that the next parliamentary elections will be held in a free and fair manner with the participation of all political parties.

The scrapping of the

caretaker system has raised uncertainty as to whether all major political parties will participate in the next parliamentary polls.

The BNP-led opposition has already announced that it will not join the polls unless the caretaker system

is restored. Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday said the next general elections would be held in a free, fair and credible manner, as none would be allowed to interfere in the process.

The next general polls will be held the same way the present government ensured the credibility of Time has yet to come to 5,175 elections, including 12 by-elections, she said.

Talking to reporters, the chief election commissioner yesterday said the EC would hold the next parliamentary polls in line with constitutional provisions.

The polls will be free and fair if the government does not interfere in the EC's functioning at that time, he

Transport owners

FROM PAGE 20 The demands include increased monitoring on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, immediate measures to recover the looted goods and hijacked vehicles, arrest of the criminals, steps against those who purchase the looted goods and intensifying police patrolling by highway police at night and setting up of check posts in danger zones.

Vehicle owners and transport leaders said the highway from Meghna-Gomti Bridge to Ashulia is the most hijack-prone area where around 90 percent of the looting takes place.

"At least 30 MS rod-laden trucks and 20 other vehicles carrying goods were looted in the last one month. During the same period, at least eight transport workers were killed by the robbers," Sirajul Haque, chairman of Inter-District Goods-laden Transport Association, told The Daily

"We do not get support from the police stations concerned after such incidents. They [police] do not even take cases in most of the cases and try to shift the responsibilities on to other police stations. This is

harassment," he added. Abul Kashem Majumder, secretary general of Bangladesh Auto Re-Rolling and Steel Mills Association, said incidents of hijacking

and other goods were

increasing day by day. He said criminals were getting desperate and taking advantage of police reluctance in checking the

menace. "A syndicate with strong links is involved in such hijacking," he told The Daily Star on May 22 after robbers hijacked a truck from Savar by killing a helper.

Referring to the incident, Rustum Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck and Covered Van Owners Association, said, "We are now totally insecure. Not only are vehicles hijacked, the lives of our drivers and helpers are at grave risk as well."

Asaduzzaman Miah, DIG of Dhaka Range Police, said yesterday, "I have directed all the police stations under Dhaka Range Police to record cases where the incidents take place."

Earlier, he told this newspaper that he had asked businessmen and truck owners to use Global Positioning System (GPS) in all the vehicles to avert such incidents and also inform the district police control room before the trucks enter the district.

DIG Humayun Kabir, chief of Highway Police, however, said "We don't have adequate manpower and transport facilities to secure the entire highof trucks loaded with rods

correspondent visited her

time on Friday. He was sup-

posed to send home money

for the marriage of our

daughter by June 2. But he is

no more," she went on wail-

taken him away. How shall I

survive with my five daugh-

"What shall I do? Allah has

"I talked to Shaheen's

house in the afternoon.

Smoke kills 10

FROM PAGE 1

They

village.

Chouddagram.

not be known.

Comilla.

adding, the house had hardly any ventilation system.

"The bodies were kept at father [Hanif] for the last the mortuary of Salmaniya Medical Complex in Riffa," said Mohsin Chowdhury, director (welfare) of Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training.

The Bangladesh embassy was trying to send the bodies home as soon as possible, he told The Daily Star.

Mohammad Hanif, 48, Monir

Hossain, 35, son of Abul

Kashem of Jamira, Khorshed

Alam, 40, son of Lal Mia in

Jashopur village, Siddikur

Rahman, 25, son of Anwar

Ullah of Vuschi, Nurul Islam,

38, of Monipur village and

Abu Taher, 45, of Shushunda

Of the rest, Anwar

Hossain, 42, was from

Laksam, and Soleman Mia,

38, son of Sirajul Haque, and

Abul Hashem, 35, son of Tanu

The name of another

worker, who was from

Hajiganj, Chandpur, could

Yesterday, the news of the

deaths came as a terrible

ters and a son without him?" A correspondent from Her brother Khorshed Comilla learnt that six of the Alam and son-in-law Monir dead were from the district's Hossain are among the 10 Sadar South upazila.

were

workers. Hanif was a rickshaw mechanic and driver before leaving for Bahrain ten years ago by borrowing a good sum of money, his elder brother

Nurul Islam said. "He was yet to get rid of poverty. So he did not return home even in ten years," Islam said, adding that Hanif wanted to come back only

after paying off the debt. Ayatunnesa said her sonin-law Monir went abroad Mia were from Jugirhat,

two and a half years ago by borrowing Tk 1 lakh. "Who will now repay the loan? I just don't know." At Siddikur Rahman's

residence, relatives were mourning his death. His mother was in floods of tears. No one could console shock to the families in her.

"I talked to Siddikur on Ayatunnesa, wife of Friday for the last time. Mohammad Hanif, was Where shall I get back my crying her heart out as the dearson..." she cries on.

UK minister

During his three-day visit, Burt would hold talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia and civil society representatives, official sources said.

The aim of his visit is to reinforce the strong bilateral relationship and interests shared by the two countries, including supporting democracy, strong people-to-people links, development, trade and investment and climate

change. The British minister will also attend the celebration of the Queen's 60 years on the throne, said a press release of the British High Commission

in Dhaka. The UK is one of the largest investors in Bangladesh, with approximately £2 billion investment to date and some 70 UK-based firms operating successfully across

Bangladesh. The G8 nation also happens to be the third single largest destination for Bangladesh's exports, with readymade garments and seafood accounting for

majority of its total sales. The minister will visit Satexco, a UK-Bangladesh joint venture company at Savar Export Processing Zone at 10:00am today to inspect the progress made by UK's investment in the garments

sector here. On the second day, Burt is scheduled to inaugurate an exhibition themed on "Climate Change" at BRAC University at 10:45am and deliver a speech followed by an interactive session with the younger generation, titled "UK-Bangladesh relation-

Later that day, he will visit projects funded by UKaid in Sylhet to see for himself how it has helped Bangladesh meet the challenges of urbanisation and social exclusion. He will also address a press briefing there on migration issues at5:00pm.

assaulting three photojournal-

police headquarters, the addi-

tional inspector general of

police (establishment) yester-

day sent a proposal to the secre-

tary of the home ministry to

suspend him and attach him to

Chittagong Range police in the

afternoon. The ministry

AKM Shahidul Hoque,

additional IGP (admin), told

The Daily Star that the police

headquarters first decided to

transfer Shahidul to the Police

Training College at Betbunia in

Rangamati district and he

signed the transfer letter, but

later the IGP changed the deci-

swooped on Khaled Sarkar,

Sajid Hossain and Zahidul

Karim of the Bangla daily

Prothom Alo while they were

covering a demonstration by

students of Dhaka Women

After the incident, the

authorities instantly closed AC

Shahidul to DMP and sus-

pended a sub-inspector, two

assistant sub-inspectors and six

constables, including the body-

Attached to Chittagong

Range, he would be able to draw

50 percent of his basic salary

Meanwhile, the DMP

authorities formed a one-

member committee of a joint

commissioner to probe into the

policeattackon the journalists.

The probe body is aimed at

taking departmental action

against those responsible for

the incident, police sources

Khandker told The Daily Star

that the investigation was on.

KKR win

Jacques Kallis.

IGP Hassan Mahmood

Different organisations of

Manvinder Bisla played a

vital innings as he smashed

the CSK bowlers to all cor-

ners to make 89 off only 48

balls. He was aptly backed by

the last two overs, Shakib Al

Hasan and Manoj Tiwary

kept their cool to steer the

team home. Tiwary finished

the game by hitting two

successive boundaries in the

last over, sending the KKR

players and principal owner

Shah Rukh Khan into fren-

zied celebrations.

As the going got tough in

according to the system.

Polytechnic Institute.

guard of Shahidul.

Policemen led by Shahidul

According to sources in the

ists on Saturday.

approvedit.

AC Shahidul

The UK is the largest bilateral grant donor in Bangladesh, funding programmes to reduce poverty and help Bangladesh meet the Millennium Development Goals.

On Wednesday, the British minister will visit the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur to meet two Bangladeshi swimmers bound for London Olympics

2012. Before his departure, he will address a press conference at the British High Commission Club.

30 injured FROM PAGE 20

The agitated workers also set three shops ablaze in the area. On Saturday, Advocate Montu Ghosh, adviser of

Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, and two of his associates were critically wounded in an attack by unidentified assailants in Kanchpur.

The workers of Sinha Group, also located in Kanchpur, went to office yesterday morning and started a work abstention protesting the attack on Montu Ghosh, said Harun-or-Rashid, officer-in-charge of

Narayanganj Police Station. At one stage, around 10,000 workers of the factory took to the streets and staged a demonstration on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway around 10:30am, the OC said.

On information, police rushed to the scene and used truncheons on the agitators, prompting them to retaliate with brick chips, he said.

Law enforcers fired at least 50 tear gas canisters and rubber bullets to free the highway, said Nazmul Alam, superintendent of police of Narayanganj.

Road communications resumed around 1:30pm when additional police reached the spot and dispersed the workers, OC Harun

journalists yesterday staged

protests in front of Jatiya Press

Club, demanding punishment

Club, Bangladesh Federal

Union of Journalists, Dhaka

Union of Journalists, Dhaka

Reporters Unity, Bangladesh

Photojournalists Association

and Crime Reporters

Association of Bangladesh took

part in the protest programme.

resumes flights

Palestinian Airlines is back in

the skies after being grounded

for seven years by the deepen-

ing enmities of the Israeli-

Once hailed as a symbol of

Palestinian statehood

dreams, the carrier is a tiny

operation, with just two 48-

seat turboprop planes, two

weekly flights and a borrowed

being on the map again is

Yemen troops

Al-Qaeda in Yemen has identi-

fied the suicide bomber

behind last week's deadly

attack on troops that killed

nearly 100 soldiers, according

to a statement posted online.

Hamid Hussein Moufarrah

dressed in traditional Yemeni

garb was posted on a jihadist

based al-Qaeda in the Arabian

Peninsula (AQAP) also

described the May 21 bomb-

ing in Sanaa as a "commend-

able operation that was over-

seen by the emirs and the

military command of the

on condition of anonymity,

told AFP that Moufarrah was

"a soldier who infiltrated

Yemen's Central Security

forces, a unit of the army

where he served," adding that

the bomber's father was

arrested Saturday "for ques-

A police official, speaking

network."

tioning."

A statement by Yemen-

website late Saturday.

A picture of Haitham

But Palestinians say just

Palestinian

Airlines

AP, Marka Airbase

Palestinian conflict.

hub in Egypt.

what matters.

Al-Qaeda

identifies

bomber

AFP, Sanaa

Journalists from Jatiya Press

to the policemen.

15-16 Hindus murdered

FROM PAGE 20

men killed 15-16 Hindus at Unosatturpara of Chittagong during the Liberation War. Witness Sirajul Islam said

one Captain Karim on May 21, 1971, told him how the murders were committed. Karim was trying to recruit Sirajul as a freedom fighter. He claimed that the captain was hiding in a bush near a marsh along the road to Kaptai when he witnessed the murders.

He also told the court that a freedom fighter, who has now passed away, had told him that he had seen Salauddin kill Nutan Chandra Singh of Kundeshwari Oushadhalaya in Chittagong.

Testifying against the lawmaker from Chittagong, the prosecution witness also claimed that Salauddin and his associates had abducted an Awami League leader and his son from Hathazari of Chittagong in April 1971.

Sheikh Mozaffar Ahmed and his son Sheikh Alamgir were picked up from Tin Rastar Mor of Hathazari and were later killed. Their bodies were never found, the witness claimed. The 64-year-old witness

began giving his testimony on Thursday in the case against Salauddin, who is facing 23 counts of crimes against humanity charges at the tribunal. Tribunal-1, headed by Justice Md Nizamul Huq, yesterday finished recording the 220minute deposition of Sirajul Islam alias Shiru Bangalee. The defence began the cross-examination yesterday but the proceedings were adjourned after just one question.

In his testimony, Sirajul said on April 13, 1971, Salauddin along with Pakistani army personnel led a killing mission in the predominantly Hindu areas of Gahira, Sultanpur and Jagotmandal in Chittagong. The Pakistan army and its

collaborators shot and killed

people of different religions indiscriminately and looted their homes, he said. He said Salauddin's

father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury had lost the 1970 general election to a young Awami Leaguer by a considerable margin. Fazlul's family was unhappy and they thought that the Hindu community's votes had cost Fazlul the election. Salauddin and Fazlul led

mass killings, looting and repression on women and forced them to leave the country to assert their dominance in the area, said Sirajul, who learnt this from Capt Karim. Sirajul told the tribunal

that in Khagrachhari he had met Bibhuti Bhushan, who was a freedom fighter from Raozan of Chittagong. Bibhuti has passed away. Sirajul said Bibhuti told

him that he had climbed up a tree in Raozan, while he was going to Hathazari from Rangamati, as he had seen a convoy of Pakistani troops approaching. The convoy was moving toward Kundeshwar Oushadhalaya, a herbal medicine store. The Pakistani soldiers

dragged the owner of the store, Nutan Chandra Singh, out and interrogated him, said Sirajul, quoting Bibhuti. After the interrogation, the army left, he said. "As Salauddin Quader found his plan unsuccessful,

three soldiers," said the witness quoting Bibhuti. "Shoot him," was the order from Salauddin Quader, who also shot a few bullets into Nutan for good

he returned to the store a few

moments later with two or

Bibhuti witnessed the whole incident from the tree branch he was sitting on.

measure, Sirajul said.

Sirajul said he along with other freedom fighters had begun capturing collaborators from October 27, 1971. They caught a close aide to Fazlul, Haji Abdus Sattar alias Sattar Haji, during the

Liberation War.

city

"On interrogation, I came to know that Salauddin saheb was injured by a bullet on September 20 during a guerrilla attack but managed to escape alive while his driver was killed," he said, adding, "Sattar showed me the September 21, 1971 issue of the daily Azadi as had refused to believe his statement."

Sirajul said the Al Badr force, led by Mir Kashem Ali used Hotel Dalim in Chittagong as a torture cell.

Sirajul said he had sworn to a martyred freedom fighter that he would kill Kashem Ali but could not keep his promise as Kashem went into hiding after November 15, 1971. The Al Badr, formed to

collaborate with the Pakistani army, actively opposed the country's independence. Salauddin's defence will

resume cross-examining the witness today. Meanwhile, Fakhrul Islam, a defence counsel of

Salauddin, vesterday responded to the show cause notice the tribunal had served on him earlier. The notice was issued on May 15 against him in connection with calling prose-

cution witness Prof Anisuzzaman a liar before the media. According to the document submitted before the court yesterday, Fakhrul apologised unconditionally

Tribunal-1 fixed Thursday for hearing on his application.

and sought mercy.

The tribunal also recorded the crossexamination of the investigation officer in the case against Jamaat-e-Islam leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee for the 12th day yesterday. The crossexamination will continue today.

The Jamaat leader is facing 20 counts of crimes against humanity at the

Tarique promised

bomb at Kotalipara where

Hasina was to address a rally.

They also carried out attacks on Hazrat Shahjalal's shrine in Sylhet, the then Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badaruddin Kamran, AL leader Suranjit Sengupta and former British High Commissioner Anwar Hossain Choudhury.

The Huji chief told the CID official that he along with Moulana Tajuddin, brother of former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, held a meeting at Pintu's Dhanmondi residence to plot the August 21 grenade attack.

Hannan told his accomplices that during a meeting at Hawa Bhaban, Tarique assured him that all the attackers would be provided safe passage out of the scene after the attack, and that Tarique communicated the matter to the then state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar.

On assurance from

Following the incident, BPC

formed a three-member

probe committee headed by

its Marketing Director

Muhammad Nurul Alam to

investigate the haul. The

committee was directed to

submit its report within seven

visited the premises of Padma

Oil in Sadarghat of the port

mittee's visit, the members of

the sales committee could not

properly answer the queries of

the probe committee," said

the official, who has knowl-

asked by the probe committee

whether they take permission

from the company's manag-

ing director or the general

manager (sales) before allow-

ing delivery of furnace oil to a

company. In reply the Padma

Oil officials said they do not

Shaheed Hosne Rabbee,

assistant general manager of

take such permission.

Padma Oil officials were

edge about the probe.

The probe committee

"During the probe com-

working days.

city yesterday.

Tarique, elder son of the then prime minister Khaleda Zia, Hannan collected grenades from Tajuddin and gave those to his accomplices to stage the attack. The CID official recorded

Hannan's statements in writing during the investiga-Abu Hena submitted the

written statement to his superiors -- the then additional Inspector General of Police Khoda Baksh Chowdhury, CID Special Superintendent of Police Ruhul Amin and ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman.

He also told them that Hannan would make a confessional statement before a Dhaka court.

The high-ups got upset with the CID official, as he included information on the August 21 grenade attack in his written statement. They directed him to drop the information and record a confessional statement only on the Ramna blasts.

The CID official complied

BPC finds some irregularities

Padma Oil, is the convener of

the three-member sales com-

mittee, while Abu Hasnath

Shahid, manager (direct

business), and Asif Malek,

deputy manager (marketing),

are member and member

secretary of the committee

on November 23 last year.

The three were appointed

The BPC official said one of

place in another committee of added.

the members of the sales

committee has been given

Padma Oil as well, which

indicates that he is favoured

tee was instructed to physi-

cally visit the premises of

furnace oil seeking compa-

nies to find out whether the

companies really need the

fuel and the amount they

The members of the sales

committee told the probe

body that they never visited

any company premises before

approving furnace oil supply,

said the BPC official adding, try.

He said the sales commit-

by the top management.

respectively.

with the instructions of his superiors. Hannan later made a

confessional statement to the Dhaka Chie Metropolitan Magistrate's Court but he did not mention anything about the August 21 grenade attack, Hena said. Of the 52 accused in the

grenade attack cases, Babar Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and 24 others, who are now in custody, were produced before the court yesterday.

Seven other accused including former Dhaka City Corporation ward councillor Ariful Islam Arif, now out on bail, were present at the court.

Tarique and 18 other accused have been shown absconding in the cases.

The CID on July 3, 2011 included Abu Hena as a prosecution witness in the charge sheets of the cases since he was present at the AL rally during the grenade attack.

"Had they made the visits

then there would not have

been so many fake companies

that bought furnace oil with

submit its report this week, he

illegal sale of furnace oil to

ships has been going on for a

while as much as legal sale.

it with the local currency.

The probe committee will

Another BPC official said

fake addresses."

"The democratic system cannot be sustained if the Supreme Court judgment is overlooked," he said, adding that elections in Bangladesh would be held following the examples in other democratic

The ruling party spokesperson also said the AL-led grand alliance would take part in the next election altogether as it did in the 2008 election.

The urge came from a meeting of the 11 parties at the Workers' Party office with President of Gano Azadi League Abdus Samad in the

the full verdict, which the HC delivered on April 25, was released.

Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star his client would not need to surrender before the lower court following the chamber judge's order.

tences of any convict.

"But nobody ever said anything about the practice," he The official said ship operators prefer to buy furnace oil from the black market to avoid bureaucratic hassle, ment. and because to buy the fuel The HC bench of Justice M from authorised dealers they

tigate corruption in Padma Oil, said a source in the minis-

Outages FROM PAGE 20

Suranjit Sengupta, Rashed Khan Menon, Mahbubul Alam Hanif, Enamul Haque, Sharif Nurul Ambia and Asit Baran Roy attended the meeting, chaired by combine Coordinator Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury. The leaders proposed not

to increase the price of fertiliser against the backdrop of a decreasing trend in the prices of rice and jute, meeting sources told The Daily Star. They also expressed serious resentment over the rise in killings, disappearances and criminal activities in the coun-They decided to sit on the

last Tuesday of every month to discuss the overall situation in the country. Briefing reporters after the

meeting, AL General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said the government would sit for a dialogue over an interim government, not the caretaker one, "if the main opposition BNP places specific and logical proposals to hold the next general election in a free and fair manner". "Discussions must be held

in a democratic system and the door [for discussion] is open," he said. At the meeting, Workers Party President Rashed Khan

Menon suggested preparing a framework of an interim government on behalf of the combine. He also proposed initiating a dialogue with the opposition after completing the combine's plan, meeting sources told The Daily Star. In response to Menon's proposal, AL leaders present

at the meeting said a discussion on the proposal would be held along with the prime minister. Menon told reporters that there was no scope to go back to the caretaker government

system. "If the opposition has

any proposal on the interim

government, it can place it

and a discussion can be held based on the proposal." He said the AL wanted all parties to take part in the next

elections.

Referring to the amendment to the constitution in line with the Supreme Court verdict that scrapped the caretaker government system, Ashraf, also LGRD minister, said there was no alternative to parliament but to implement the judgment.

countries of the world.

Meanwhile, leaders of the

11-party, components of the 14-party combine, yesterday urged the government to make a concrete framework of an interim government and resolve the ongoing political impasse with the opposition through an immediate dialogue.

chair.

SC stays

SC against the HC verdict in eight weeks. The order came a day after

Sarwar's counsel

In the verdict, the HC issued some observations on the powers of the president and the government to pardon, suspend or remit sen-

Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain delivered the judgment in response to a 15-year-old petition by Sarwar, who challenged the trial court's warrant for his arrest in Cox's Bazar in 1997, four years after he was given presidential

have to pay in dollars but on the black market they can buy The energy ministry also formed a one-member probe committee comprising Joint Secretary AK Mohiuddin Ahmed on Thursday to inves-

The action of the president or the government must be based on some rational, reasonable, fair and relevant principles which are nondiscriminatory and must not be guided by any extraneous or irrelevant considerations, according to the HC judge-

clemency while on the run. Barrister Rafique-ul Huq

appeared for Sarwar.