## Graft, poor infrastructure

people from top (politicians and senior government officials) to bottom, he

Around 83 percent respondents thought that illegal donations to political parties are very common Effectiveness of national parliament is seriously questioned by more than 75 percent of respondents, the CPD executive director noted.

"Unrecorded economic activities have increased, possibly because of increasing flow of black money in the economy, and the situation has been deteriorating over time.

Quality of electricity supply in the country is worse than in most other countries as perceived by more than 95 percent of respondents. They are also concerned about deteriorating

port facilities, Debapriya said. The survey covered relatively large companies that have total assets of not less than Tk 10 crore. The number of respondents has increased by 27 percent this year, and 93 percent of them is in Dhaka and 90 percent companies are owned by domestic entrepreneurs

Ninety-five percent businessmen strongly disapproved centralised policy making in the country and government control over almost all

Talukder had played a vital role in the

formulation of the Public Procurement

Regulation, 2003 to prevent corruption

in procurements. He has the reputa-

tion of being one of the few cleaner

"There are a couple of major power

projects in the pipeline -- the Sirajganj

450 megawatt (MW) and the

Meghnaghat-3 450MW schemes. The

minister had serious difference of

opinions with the power secretary and

a section of the Prime Minister's Office

(PMO) about how to award these

contracts. The vested interest lobby

has been pushing the ministry to sign

Meghnaghat-3 scheme based on

unsolicited negotiation and award the

Sirajganj bid to a pre-selected com-

obliging to their wish but not without

giving the higher authorities a picture

of what was going on in here."

The official noted that the state

minister was preparing a report on the

irregularities in the sector to the prime

ministry had already angered the

vested interest lobby so much that a

month ago, the PMO tried to remove

him. The prime minister at the last

moment, however, did not remove him

has now been removed -- we believe

that the vested interest quarter within

the government would not be able to

get approval of Meghnaghat-3 or clear

the Siraigani bidding process within its

tenure. But the quarter will be success-

ful in protecting the group of corrupt

officials and businessmen who have

drained out money by cheating the

alliance government awarded two

power contracts to Chinese company

Harbin to set up the Tongi 80MW plant

and the Fenchugani 90MW plant. A

third contract will soon be signed with

Harbin to build the 150MW Chandpur

plant. Of these, the Tongi plant started

operation in May 2005 and tripped

around 90 times, mainly because of

the plant's sub-standard designs and

Several hundred people at Daudkandi

outraged by erratic power supply and

load shedding for the last two days

came out of their houses at about

9:00pm and stormed the Palli Bidyut

office at the upazila headquarters,

the demonstrators to bring the situa-

tion under control and injured four. The

mob ransacked and damaged the

The injured are Suman, 25, Masud,

Our staff correspondent in Khulna

reports, the demonstrators under the

banner of Biddyut Adhikar Sangram

Parishad laid siege to the power

station for 10 minutes before law

Goalpara and all 12 substations in the

city were already on high alert from

Friday morning and beefed up security

in apprehension of eruption of violence

Zone Power Distribution Company

Limited (WZPDCL), 21 districts under

Khulna Zone (Khulna and Barisal

divisions and greater Faridpur) were

getting only 220 megawatts (MW) of

power against the demand for 513

MW during peak hours on Friday. One-

third of the total demand was supplied

PDB had sent letters to each puja

mandap in Barisal city expressing their

incapability to supply extra power

required during puja nights and

requested them to shut down extra

community and created resentment.

They said such a decision should not

have been taken after all preparations

The letters shocked the Hindu

and decorative lightings at night.

Our Barisal correspondent reports,

to Khulna city alone.

According to our sources at West

due to the ongoing power outages.

Khulna Power Station (KPS) at

power office at one stage.

enforcers dispersed them.

20 Sharif 27 and Jabbar 18

The police later charged batons on

**Protests** 

FROM PAGE 1

reports UNB.

In the last five years, the BNP led

nation," the official observed.

"Even though the state minister

Besides, his move to cleanse the

He added, "The state minister was

pany," an official noted.

at that time.

ministers of the government.

Power crisis

important decisions. Independence of the judiciary is strongly questioned as 80 percent of the respondents thought the judiciary is not free from political influence of the government.

"Deteriorating trend in the domestic business environment, threat of terrorism, political unrest and its potential negative impact on business have badly eroded the confidence of the entrepreneurs," Debapriya said.

Entrepreneurs earlier had a positive outlook about growth of their business but they have now become concerned about the negative factors at the national level, the renowned economist observed.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents strongly maintained that current political unrest in the country imposes

significant costs on businesses. Bangladesh's ranking in terms of business competitiveness index (BCI) has been deteriorating over time and a substantial fall occurred in 2006 108th) compared to 2005 (97th). The fall is 11 percent. If only the set of countries in 2005 is considered, even then Bangladesh's position came down to 106th from 97th.

In growth competitiveness index Bandladesh's position has come down to 121th in 2006 from 110th in 2005

machinery. Harbin's business lobby

last year admitted to The Daily Star

that it has richly bribed a section of

officials and the 'alternative power-

house' of the government. There is

wholesale irregularity in all these

the Tongi plant and the inaction of the

Power Development Board (PDB) to

penalise Harbin for setting up such a

faulty unit. Anwar Kabir Talukder two

months back forwarded all documents

Other than Harbin, the government

st year awarded a contract to Orion-

Belhasa for setting up the

Meghnaghat-2 power plant, violating

government rules. The Orion-Belhasa

group is so misfit in this scheme that it

could not arrange the project finance

and therefore has not signed the

the bid awarding the 450MW Sirajgani

power project to Summit Power at its

final stage -- on the unofficial ground

that the chief of Summit Power is the

Siddhirganj 240MW power project has

become uncertain as the authorities

appeared hell-bent to award this

contract to Harbin, violating the rules

again. The project's financier Asiar

Development Bank (ADB) has, how-

ever, resisted this questionable move.

the PMO has been overriding the

power minister's decisions all along

creating an anarchy and lack of lead-

over the charge of the power ministry,

he has tried to assert his power and

became a target of the vested interest

group. Talukder's conflict with the

current power secretary manifested

nee ANH Akhtar Hossain was made

secretary from the rank of deputy

secretary overnight through a double-

promotion under the President's quota

twice in a single day. There is no

precedence of such blatant violation of

Durga Puja. A girl aged between six

and 12, symbolising the Kumari

(virgin) form of Durga, is worshipped

in front of the idol of the goddess as

of the Kumari, a six-year-old girl

adorned with flowers and orna-

ments with alta-decorated feet and

a tilak of sindur on her forehead, at

the Ramkrishna Mission Temple in

Kumari Puja commemorates the

killing of Kolasur by the Goddess

Maha Kali. Legend goes that

Kolasur had occupied the heavens

and the earth. As the helpless

deities approached Mohakali for

help, she was born again in the form

of a maiden named Durga and killed

dances and aratis were performed

at different puja mandaps on the

ered in city's puja mandaps includ-

ing Jagannath Hall of Dhaka

University, Ramkrishna Mission

Ramna Kali Mandir, Siddheswari

Kali Mandir, Tanti Bazar, Bangla

Shandhi Puja was also observed

However, the devotees suffered

yesterday night according to the

due to repeated load-sheddings

during the whole day, Jayanta Sen

Dipu, president of Mahanagar

Sarbajanin Puja Committee told the

Daily Star. "We cannot maintain all

Bazar to see the idols of Durga.

lunar schedule.

occasion of the Kumari Puja.

Special devotional songs,

People of all walks of life gath-

According to Hindu scriptures,

The devotees knelt down in front

a living replica of her on this day.

Kumari Puja

FROM PAGE 16

the city yesterday.

The vested interest group's nomi-

Since Anwarul Kabir Talukder took

ership in the sector.

Other than these suicidal actions

In recent times, the tender for the

brother of an opposition lawmaker.

In 2004, the government cancelled

of this project to the Anti-Corruption

Commission for action

Frustrated by the performance of

New countries such as Barbados. Burkina Faso, Burundi, Lesotho, Mauritania, Nepal, and Suriname, included this year, remain above Bangladesh in this index

Bangladesh's position has been at the bottom of 125 countries in the public institutions index and corruption sub-index of GCI. it was also at the

bottom out of 117 countries in 2005. Sectoral distribution of companies shows that 47 percent respondents were from manufacturing sector, 15 percent from financial, eight percent from ICT, seven percent from real estate and construction and the rest 23 percent from other sectors. The WEF's GCR 2006-07 was globally launched on September 27.

Those present at the launching ceremony yesterday included Prof Mustafizur Rahman, CPD research director, Dr Fahmida Akter Khatun, senior research fellow, Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research fellow and other research-

### Qaeda video brands

Bush a liar

al-Qaeda No 2 Ayman al-Zawahri called President Bush a failure and a liar in the war on terror in a video statement released Friday, and he compared Pope Benedict XVI to the 11th century pontiff who launched the First Crusade

"Can't you be honest at least once in vour life, and admit that you are a deceitful liar who intentionally deceived your nation when you drove them to war in Iraq?" Osama bin Laden's deputy said, appearing in front of a standing

lamp and a small, decorative cannon. Al-Zawahri also criticized Bush for continuing to imprison al-Qaeda leaders in prisons, including al-Qaeda No. 3 Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged Sept. 11 mastermind who was captured in Pakistan in March 2003.

"Bush, you deceitful charlatan. 3 1/2 years have passed since your capture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, so how have you found us during this time? Losing and surrendering? Or are we launching attacks with God's help and becoming martyrs?" he said.

"What you have perpetrated against Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and the other Muslim captives in your prisons and the prisons of your slaves in Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan and elsewhere is not hidden from anyone, and we are a people who do not sleep under oppression and who do not abandon our revenge until our chests have been healed of those who have committed aggression against us," he said.

"And we, by the grace of Allah, are seeking to exact revenge on behalf of Islam and Muslims from you and your soldiers and allies.'

Al-Zawahri accused the United States and its agents of torturing Muslim prisoners seized across the

"Your agents in the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan have captured thousands of the youth and soldiers of Islam whom you made to taste at your hands and the hands of your agents various types of punishment and torture," al-Zawahri said.

Ben Venzke, head of the Virginiabased IntelCentre, which monitors terrorism communications, said al-Zawahri essentially gave al-Qaeda's spin on the arrests and detentions of its

"They are countering arguments that individuals have been able to provide useful information," he said. 'And they are continuing to reinforce their intentions for revenge

Al-Zawahri said Benedict is reminiscent of Pope Urban II, who in 1095 ordered the First Crusade to establish Christian control in the Holy Land.

"This charlatan Benedict brings back to our memories the speech of his predecessor charlatan Urban II in the 11th century ... in which he instigated Europeans to fight Muslims and launch the Crusades because he (Urban) claimed 'atheist Muslims, the enemies of Christ' are attacking the tomb of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him," al-7awahri said

### Hasina

FROM PAGE 16 the present government failed to add a

single megawatt to it," Hasina said. She further said AL had a plan to ncrease the power generation to 5,500MW by 2006.

"We had increased power generation through private-run and small power plants. We had been successful to supply adequate power. But this government is least bothered about public sufferings, they are busy plundering public money," she alleged. Hasina urged people to prepare

lists of those ministers and MPs who have embezzled public property, inflicting immense sufferings on the people. She asked the government to

accept the opposition's proposals for electoral reforms to ensure free and fair elections. "The government is against our

proposed reforms as it wants to involve itself in election engineering to cling on to power. The prime minister now proposes talks between AL's general secretary and BNP's secretary general. But the government should realise that we want reforms to

Hasina accused the government of politicising the administration. She urged the government employees to perform their duties as public servants,

not as party people. AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Kader, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Mukul Bosh

and Tajul Islam were present.

# Brac expands

from the Brac's commercial enterprises in the country, rather it aims to raise funds from the developed North American and European countries for

the African nations. "Our vision is to establish Brac as an international development organisation with a distinct identity as a south Asian NGO with its headquarters in Dhaka," founder and Chairperson of Brac Fazle Hasan Abed said at a press conference at Brac Inn Centre in the

The NGO, which has major programmes in micro credit, primary education, health and small enterprises in the country, has already launched its operations in Tanzania and Uganda and plans are afoot to expand to Kenya, Southern Sudan and Malawi soon, he said.

Brac will introduce its unique integrated development approach for poverty reduction in these countries by incorporating health, water and sanitation components along with micro credit schemes, he added.

It targets to open up 25 branch offices in Tanzania and Uganda by early 2007 and reach over 25,000 beneficiaries by June 2007.

The rationale for going to Africa is that, it poses the greatest develop-ment challenges of the 21st century with very little infrastructure, economic activity, education and healthcare, Abed said, adding that the donor agencies and the African govern-ments also had been asking Brac for operating in Africa.

"We have more chance of success as we the people of the developing countries understand our problems better than the NGOs from the devel-

Already registered in the UK, the

NGO will also enlist itself in the USA first and then in Belgium, Canada and some other developed countries for

ries of Brac, it raised funds from only NGOs like ActionAid, CARE, Oxfam or World Vision have many member countries for fundraising.

Bangladesh.

Afghanistan has already approved a licence for establishing a Brac Afghanistan Bank to help strengthen the financial sector in Afghanistan, he said adding that although some Bangladeshi staff will be employed initially for overseas Brac programmes, gradually the locals will be given the leadership in running

On the interest rate for the micro credit programme in the African countries, he said it would be more than that of Bangladesh, as density of popula-

Responding to a guestion. Abed said. "Bad politics and corruption are the top setbacks for the development of Bangladesh. The country could have done much better if it could solve

Brac's deputy executive directors Aminul Alam, Dr Moshtaq Ahmed and Manzur Hazan and director of research and evaluation Dr Imran

tors to clear the highway and traffic

The authorities do not regularly pay

"For the last few months, we have

movement resumed shortly afterwards.

salary, a worker of Syntax Sweater

demanded stopping employees' termi-

nation for trivial reasons, increasing our

salary to Tk 3,000, sick leave and timely

payment of our wage and for bonus," he

about our demands," said another

factory owners hired goons to torture

workers and foil their demonstration for

"The authorities are not at all serious

Many agitators alleged that the

Denying the allegation, owner of

Syntax Sweater Factory Omar Hanif

Chowdhury said yesterday's vandalism

was a result of 'quarrel' between two

groups of knitting section employees at

his factory two days ago. "We are trying to

settle the quarrel. If we fail, we will have to

shut down the factory," he told reporters.

Workers of Pioneer Garment Factory

demanding wage increase, bonus and

arrears blocked the Progati Sarani at

Rampura and vandalised five vehicles

after police assured them of fulfilling their

Garment workers of Machhihata

Sweater Factory at Panishail, who have

been agitating for the last few days for

wage hike, weekly holiday and removal

of the factory AGM, brought out a proces-

sion and hurled stones at the factory

when they saw their factory closed

yesterday morning, reports our corre-

Later police and Rab brought the

The authorities hung the closure

Meantime, workers of Hachong BD

notice vesterday in the face of workers'

Limited at Kaliakoir brought out a proces-

sion yesterday morning to protest termi-

nation of five colleagues.
As they started throwing brickbats

and broke windowpanes, police and Rab

rushed there and pacified them by giving

Income tax return

FROM PAGE 16 said an NBR press release issued

This time extension will also be

Persons failing to submit their

applicable in case of self-assessment

return timely will have to pay fine as per

Different occupational groups including the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce

and Industry demanded extension of

the time limit for submitting tax return

up to November 30 in view of the

Ramadan and political turmoil, NBR

ning further time extension, as it had long been the convention. Besides,

there are a few holidays before the last

But the finance ministry did not

Traditionally, onrushes of taxpay-

approve any extension after October

ers are observed during the last dates

of submission and a handsome

amount is collected in the government

coffer, sources said, adding that very

few tax returns have been submitted

Earlier the government was unwill-ing to extend the time as it planned to

ive a handsome amount by October,

Moreover, the current fiscal year

started with very low growth in revenue collection. During July-August period

growth rate of revenue was 10.43 per

cent that was 15.40 per cent during the

Due to the low revenue collection,

government's borrowing from banks

NBR authorities were also plan-

sources said.

date of submission.

by the end of its tenure.

same period last year.

ncome tax rule, NBR officials said.

The agitators withdrew the blockade

Factory told reporters.

Law enforcers arrested 16 demon-A few hundred workers of Syntax

Sweater Factory first gathered in front of the factory at around 8:00am when they learnt that goons hired by the factory authorities beat up three of their colleagues for agitating for higher wage, bonus and arrears, witnesses said.

they took to the highway and pelted Syntax factory with stones.

demonstrators, hundreds of workers from adjacent garment factories -Hachong, SKS Fashion, Pallab, Boutique, Naz, Kating, Laxma, SD, Bengal and STR - joined them to block the highway at Azampur and Jasimuddin

The demonstrators attacked different shops on the ground, first and second floors of Kushol Centre at Azampur, witnesses said, adding that they tried to loot Islami Bank and Gharoa Restaurant in the shopping mall. They also broke the glasses of the building.

Another group tried to break into

Social Investment Bank and Khazana Restaurant at Latif Emporium market in

After many more garment workers appeared there, policemen charged batons to clear the highway. The workers hurled brickbats and stones at the police. At around 9:30am, a few thousand

building with stones.

They also vandalised seven police vans and five other vehicles parked inside the police station

tear gas canisters and rubber bullets to scare away the demonstrators. Many demonstrators as well as

pedestrians were seen bleeding form

Commissioner (AC) Saleh Ahmed, AC Shafiq, Inspector Rafigul Alam, reporter of the New Nation Ibrahim Sarker, BDNEWS reporter Monir Hossain and

The demonstrators vandalised two double-decker Volvo buses and about 50 other vehicles logged on the highway. As a large number of vehicles snarled

up on the highway from Tongi to Progati Sarani at Kuril Bishwa Road, thousands of commuters had to walk a few kilo-

metres. At round 12:15pm, police and Rab

## Five injured as tank lorry explodes

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

A massive explosion wrecked a petroleum lorry yesterday that and damaged four buses at Mymensingh bus stand at Gaital

The lorry (Kishoregani Dha-41-0003) was brought into a workshop at the bus stand area for its tank repair by gas welding. The tank erupted in a huge explosion immediately after workers started welding

tered glass windows and damaged The injured are Abdul Quaium.

fundraising, Abed said

Making a comparison among the international NGOs, he said although there are some 100 million beneficiaone country, while other international

Abed said that to make its programmes in Africa self-sustainable, the NGO will establish business enterprises there, similar to those in

tion in some of those countries is thin.

the problems of the politics."

Matin were also present.

## RMG workers ransack

added.

garmentworker.

realising demands.

**RAMPURA** 

spondent.

situation under control.

movement, sources said.

assurance of mediation.

sterday morning.

the situation under control.

Joined soon by their other colleagues

As police rushed there to disperse the

agitators chased the policemen towards Uttara Police Station and broke the windowpanes of the police station

Policemen in riot gear fired about 35

police action and stone throwing.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Monir Hossain, Assistant Deputy Commissioner Faiz Ahmed, Assistant

Desh Bangla photojournalist Mahmudur Rahman were among the 50 who were injured during the clashes.

injured at least five people critically

it, sources said.

Locals said, flying objects with tremendous force from the exploded lorry hit the five people and powerful shock waves shatthe vehicles all around the scene.

30, driver of the lorry, Rafiqul, 20, is on the rise from the very start of the helper of the lorry, Ujjal, 18, workshop worker, Latif, 25, helper of a current fiscal, first month of which saw a 40 per cent increase in borrow bus nearby and Abdur Rahim, 30, a local. All of them were admitted to Kishoreganj sadar Adhunik Hospital, sources said.

# BSF kills 1

**UNB**, Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi youth near Roghunatpur border at midnight on

The dead was identified Rashidur Rahman Khokan, son of Iqbal Morol of Kagmari village under Benapole Port Police Station.

According to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), the Indian border guards of Jayantipur camp opened fire on some alleged smugglers while they were returning home through Horidaspur Pikepara field, leaving Khokan dead on the spot.

Immediately after the incident the BSF men took away the body and kept it at Bongao Hospital. BDR strongly protested the killing and asked to its Indian coun-

terpart to return the body. Satkhira villages

FROM PAGE 16

destroying crops and affecting agriculture production. The 16 affected villages are: Dhalbaria, Madanpur, Shubhashini, Noapara, Mirzapur, Tersi, Lautara, Jatpur, Kalapota, Tentulia, Dhandia

Nagarghata, Kumira, Islamkati,

Magura and Khalishkhali Almost 4.000 hectares of newly planted Aman were destroyed and around 865 shrimp enclosures and 1674 lakes and ponds overflowed sources in the agriculture and

fisheries department said. Scarcity of food and drinking water is prevailing in the area but the government is yet to come forward with aid. Locals fear the food and drinking water situation may worsen after the water recedes and diseases like diarrhoea might break

"It's like we are fasting for seven days," Mohammad Ali of Kalapota village said.

"Nobody has come to us with food," Bilkis Begum who took shelter on the Satkhira-Khulna highway

On contact, Tala Upazila Nirbahi

Officer Mostafizur Rahman said he has written to higher authorities asking them to take measures to mitigate the sufferings of the affected people. While talking to The Daily Star,

engineer Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, president district Awami League criticised the administration for not reacting to the situation with adequate relief supplies.

### Khaleda pledges FROM PAGE 1

The prime minister said the opposition has taken up destructive programme to push the country backward. They frequently enforce hartal, siege and blockade to halt the roadmap of development and weaken the economy. The prime minister alleged the

opposition wants to foil election in the name of "so-called reforms" Because, she said, they have understood that people will not vote for them because of their "misdeeds and misrule" during their rule. "They also know that people are behind the BNP-led four-party alliance." Khaleda, also the chairperson of

he ruling RNP, blamed her polit opponents for trying to create a constitutional vacuum by letting loose anarchy. But, she said, people do not want that rather they want continuity of the constitutional process.

She said the BNP wants free, fair and neutral election and it will hand over power to a caretaker government for holding the polls.

Khaleda hopes people will again vote for the BNP-led alliance to keep up development, democracy and peace in the country.

Chaired by local MP Rashiduzzaman Millat, the rally was addressed, among others, by Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, State Minister for LGRD Ziaul Huq Zia and Sultan Mahmud Babu MP.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated the newly constructed Pollakandi Bridge over the Old Brahmaputra River in Dewanganj.

### Talukder FROM PAGE 16

his removal from the power ministry after a week, sources said. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia

in Jamalpur presided over by BNP lawmaker Rashiduzzaman Millat. "The programme of the prime minister's visit was finalised a few days ago but after the recent

change I have no scope to accom-

pany the prime minister as per

yesterday addressed a public rally

protocol," Talukder told The Daily Star yesterday. Asked about the rumour of his resignation from the party, he said, "I have not yet thought what I will do in future, but till now I have not thought of resigning from the party or anything like that."

Anwar Kabir Talukder, a nephew

of former BNP secretary general late Abdus Salam Talukder, was elected from Jamalpur in the 2001 which would help reduce the amount of government's borrowing from banks election and Khaleda Zia appointed him the state minister for planning. On May 21 this year, the PM changed his portfolio and gave him

> replacing the previous state minister for power. On Friday, Talukder announced to resign following two days of movement across the country for

the charge of the power ministry

uninterrupted power supply. Soon after his announcement however, the Prime Minister's Office removed him from the cabi-

# Talks possibility

Abdul Jalil

Patricia A Butenis yesterday made a phone call to BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuivan and appreciated the move to hold talks with AL General Secretary

The US envoy told him that she is hopeful there will be a positive outcome of the negotiations over reform proposals, said sources close to Bhuivan.

Meanwhile, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury said the proposed talks will bridge the differences between the two sides over the upcoming "I hope they will continue this

differences," he told reporters while accompanying British cabinet minister Stephen Timms in a visit to a primary school in the city yesterday. "Bangladeshi people want to see their country as an advanced nation

contact and find ways to resolve their

which presupposes political stability and agreements," he said. Civil society leaders too welcomed the decision of the two major parties to sit at the negotiating table and work out ways to ensure a free and fair election. They observed that a consensus between the opposing parties will help to hold an acceptable

It will be a disaster for the country if they [political parties] fail to find out

a solution to the crisis over the reforms issue, they feared.

Former cabinet secretary Mujibul Haque told The Daily Star, "I am hopeful that two parties will show maturity and get the nation out of the crisis. It's a chance for them to prove their love for the country that will be in

serious trouble if the election is not

held on schedule. "I hope both the leaders will go to the talks with an open mind and arrive at a consensus over how to hold a credible election. Everybody knows that both the sides have lost public respect for their failure and so, a meaningful dialogue could present an opportunity for them to regain that

Hafiz Uddin Khan, former adviser to the caretaker government, told The Daily Star yesterday, "The whole nation was waiting for the news and I'm very happy to hear that the two

parties have agreed to a dialogue."

responsibly in this regard, he added.

On ruling coalition partner Jamaat's Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid's comment that the talks between the two parties would not be fruitful, Bhuiyan said, "He (Mujahid) actually did not

He said the agenda for the secretaries-general level discussion will be decided after talking to his colleagues and the final decision after the talks too will be taken in consul-

is no scope for anyone else to be involved.

'I called BNP Secretary General

Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at 12:10pm and told him that we have accepted his formal proposal over telephone and now we can talk about the electoral reforms," Jalil told reporters at his Mercantile Bank office yesterday. "I hope we will sit tomorrow

(tomorrow). As the ice has already broken, we (Bhuiyan-Jalil) may talk anytime. Anyway, I will call him tonight (last night) to fix the date, time and venue." Jalil said. By this time Bhuivan would consult his party and alliance lead-

(today) or the day after tomorrow

ers, Jalil said adding that he too 14-party leaders.

Asked on how many points they will compromise, Jalil said, "It is not

courage to make concessions at the

# FROM PAGE 16

The bill that passed by the Senate in pre-dawn hours by voice vote and cleared the House of Representatives a day earlier came as Iran and the European Union are engaged in delicate negotiations designed to persuade Iran to halt its enrichment work and avoid a major

Following the carrot-and-stick approach adopted by Washington, the Iran Freedom Support Act states that it should be the policy of the United States "not to bring into force an agreement for cooperation with the government of any country that is assisting the nuclear programme of Iran or transferring advanced conventional weapons or missiles.'

to remain in effect until Iran has suspended all enrichment-related activities, committed to verifiably and permanently refrain from such nuclear work in the future or the targeted country has severed ties with its Iranian partners.

the right to waive provisions of the bill, if he finds that US national security interests warrant it. The bill also authorises the presi-

promote democracy for Iran.

The countrymen expect the two leaders and their parties to act

Major General (retired) Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, another former adviser to the caretaker government, said, "I am quite optimistic about the talks. This is how a problem should be addressed in a democracy, not by clash or anything of that sort."

On the recent pressure from

different quarters for negotiations,

the AL general secretary said the

business leaders and others includ-

ing the civil society members had

expressed concern over the political

crisis in the country. But being

politicians, they have some respon-

sibilities, and for this they have

decided to sit in a dialogue, Jalil

Asked why they did not sit earlier

to break the deadlock, he replied

that in the meantime countrymen

have become convinced of the need

party combine, said certainly, the

government has realised that

reforms are a must for a free and fair

Jalil, also coordinator of the 14-

for electoral reforms.

# AL, BNP ready for talks

fair conclusion.

added.

oppose it.

tation with the party and alliance (four-party) leaders. Asked if they will take any assisance from others for the dialogue, he said that for the time being, there

**JALIL'S BRIEFING** 

would discuss the issue with AL and But as of 9:00pm, Jalil did not phone Bhuiyan and neither did he receive any call from the secretary general. He however had discus-

Hasina and senior leaders of the opposition alliance last night. Replying to a query, he said he and Bhuiyan have agreed to discuss every aspect of the reform agenda.

sions with AL President Sheikh

a matter of compromise. Here our stance is very clear: the dialogue will be held on the reform proposals. He added that they have the

negotiating table in the greater interests of the country. "I know which proposals are needed most to ensure a free and fair election and I will push for those." Jalil said adding that he

### hopes they will be able to reach a US sanction bill

missile technology.

nternational showdown. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was expected to confer with EU foreign policy coordinator Javier Solana and her counterparts from Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia over the weekend to take stock of progress reached in these talks.

The measure calls for this policy

The president has been granted

dent to provide financial and political

Tariq Azim Khan, Minister of

without evidence," he said. "If they have any evidence, they should provide us evidence and we will carry out our investigations.

### election and so they gave the proposal for dialogue. Asked what if the talks break down, he said the ongoing movement for reforms will continue alongside the discussion.

Brazil plane FROM PAGE 16 operated by Brazilian low-cost carrier Gol disappeared Friday afternoon after losing radar contact during a flight from the principal Amazon city of Manaus to the

The mayor of a remote town in the central state of Mato Grosso said the plane had crashed on a farm in Peixoto de Azevedo municipality. The report could not immediately be confirmed by other authori-

national capital, Brasilia, the com-

"From the information we have, the plane fell on Jarina farm," Mayor Valter Mioto said in an interview 'Hospitals in the region are ready to

receive the injured. The head of Brazil's airports authority, Infraero, said the Gol aircraft collided with another. smaller plane. Globo news agency reported. The report could not be

## Mumbai blasts

FROM PAGE 16

hour commuter trains and stations that killed 186 people and wounded hundreds. The new arrests took the total number of people in custody for their

alleged role in the blasts to more

arrested four more people in con-

nection with the attacks on rush-

than 15. They include an engineer, a journalist, a computer software orofessional and a doctor Seven blasts ripped through

commuter trains and platforms in

named Lashkar-e-Taiba as a prime

India's financial hub and home of Bollywood cinema In the immediate aftermath, Indian security officials blamed local Muslims with links to Pakistan, and

The Pakistani government and Lashkar have denied any role in the attacks and Islamabad offered to help with investigations. Pakistan said India shouldn't point fingers without evidence, after

Mumbai police on Saturday blamed

Pakistani spies and militants for a

suspect.

series of blasts that killed 186 people in Mumbai on July 11. "It is baseless, it is irresponsible and (done) out of habit," Tasnim Aslam, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said, adding that an official statement would be released

State for Information, also harked on what he called India's knee-jerk reaction in blaming Pakistan for militant acts when there are several groups running insurgencies there. "India has always chosen this

path of pointing fingers at Pakistan assistance to foreign and Iranian individuals and organisations that

### rituals that we used to perform in the for illumination have been completed. earlier years due to load shedding," Severe power crisis continued in the entire southwestern zone of the country including Barisal as only one However, the Committee presifourth of the demand is being supplied ensure people's voting right," she said. dent appreciated the law and secuto Barisal from the national grid, rity measures taken up by the govaggrieved consumers alleged.

In Barisal city, power demand has The devotees will bid farewell to almost doubled due to Ramadan and the goddess along with her children puja over the usual peak-hour and immerse the idols in river after demand of about 60 to 70 MW. observing Bijoya Dashami tomor-Currently, Barisal is receiving only 15 to 25 MW from the national grid.