# Govt readies agenda

Communications Adviser Maj Gen (retd) Ghulam Quader told reporters after a preparatory meeting with LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman at the housing and public

Zillur said they would first talk to major political parties to finalise the strategies and then with the small parties gradually. "We are trying different ways to create a ground to make the dialogue a success," he

Meanwhile, in a latest development last night, the AL decided not to hold any further talks--official or The decision came at a meeting of the party's Presidium meeting at acting President Zillur Rahman's Gulshan residence with him in the

Meeting sources told The Daily Star that the decision was taken following Monday's informal meeting between five advisers and four AL leaders without the party's knowledge of it. As senior leaders came heavily on Zillur for Monday's meeting, he apologised and assured them that no such meeting will be held

The meeting attended by Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia was called following a phone call from the commerce adviser to party Presidium member Tofail for a second round "unofficial" pre-dialogue talkat state guesthouse Padma.

Both Tofail and Motia who the venue.

Briefing reporters after the twohour meeting, acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said he conveyed the meeting decision to the education adviser.

"We will join the dialogue after receiving a formal letter and taking decision at the party forum," he said. About Monday's meeting, however, he said informal meetings could be held before the formal dialogue.

mal dialogue, Adviser Ghulam Quader said the date is yet to be decided. Adviser Anwarul Iqbal said, "The chief adviser will announce the date."

They said the informal talks with political parties will continue until fixing the schedule for formal dia-

"This kind of [preparatory] dialogue is very crucial for a successful dialogue to ensure a free and fair election. For this, we are meeting frequently," the commerce adviser said, adding that at yesterday's meeting they discussed different TALKSWITH JP

Chowdhury, Communications Adviser Ghulam Quader, Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman and LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal sat with JP acting Chairman Anisul Islam Mahmud, Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader, and presidium members GM Quader and Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu.

After the one-and-a-half-hour meeting, Anisul Islam told reporters that issues including how to hold a free and fair election, elect honest and competent candidates and govern the country efficiently after the election came up for discussion.

on holding local government polls before the parliamentary election, they urged the government to take effective measurers so that the pre-1/11 situation does not arise again.

Meeting sources said the JP leaders asked the advisers about the government position on lifting the state of emergency. The advisers told them that they would try for it but if it is not possible to lift the state of emergency, it would be relaxed.

Meanwhile, JP Chairman HM Ershad yesterday called upon all political parties to sit together to

reach a consensus on national issues. Addressing a meeting at a city "citizens' charter" about what they like hartal, street violence and boy-

cotting parliament, among others. JP's youth front Jatiyo Jubo Sanghati organised the meeting marking its 25th founding anniver-

BNP FACTIONS ON DIALOGUE

attend the dialogue without Khaleda's permission since she is in

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday sought permission from jail

authorities to meet Khaleda to discuss the government proposal for the dialogue. Party's acting office secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi handed over

Delwar's letter to the superintendent of the special jail on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises yesterday. DIG (Prisons) Maj Shamsul

Haider Siddiqui told The Daily Star that they would take necessary steps after reading the content of the letter.

"We cannot join any kind of talks without the consent of the party chairperson," Delwar said at a press

briefing at his Nam flat. He said BNP will not hold any formal or informal talks with the government if he is not allowed to talk to Khaleda, which he said,

would make the talks fruitful. Demanding parliamentary elections be held before December this year, he asked the government to lift the state of emergency and release Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

People will not accept any "doctored" election in the country, he said, asking the caretaker government to hold a free, fair and acceptable election "without dillydallying" and hand over power to an elected government "as people do not want to see a non-elected government any

Delwar accused the Election Commission (EC) of cheating and violating the constitution.

"It is not their [EC] task to hold the local government elections. The Election Commission wants (to hold the local government elections first] to delay the parliamentary election,'

He held the government responsible for "creating" split in the BNP. He said he would announce the next course of action of the party after consultation with party leaders.

Blasting the government for the ongoing food crisis, Delwar said the Monga-struck areas should be declared as "disaster prone" and emergency food relief should be arranged for these areas. He also demanded launching of rationing system for people.

At another press briefing at his Banani residence yesterday Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, acting secretary general of the pro-Saifur faction of BNP, said they would join the dialogue without the permission of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia as she is in jail.

He, however, said if there is any instruction from the party chairperson, they will abide by that as they want to go to the dialogue as a united

Sources, meanwhile, said every thing will be decided following today's verdict of the writ petition filed by Khandaker Delwar against the EC decision of inviting Hafiz to the electoral dialogue.

About an adviser's proposal to sit for a pre-dialogue meet, Hafiz said they are discussing the matter and will inform the adviser of their deci-

Hafiz said they will ask the government to announce the election date and suggest strengthening the food security and reducing prices o essentials.

## Magistrate, cops

FROM PAGE 16 and the two policemen hostage" said Sayed Nurul Islam, assistant commissioner (AC) of Lalbagh

"On information, we rushed to the spot with additional force and rescued them", he said adding that Babul's supporters also pelted brickbats at the law enforcers and hit SI Harun with a sharp weapon which police later seized from the commissioner's office.

Ward Commissioner Babul. however, said the attack was carried out by the evicted and their local sympathisers as the city corporation launched the drive without serving any notice beforehand.

He claimed that he bought the three-katha land and rented the shops on it.

Police arrested seven people in connection with the attack: Babul's brother Azizul Islam Mithu, Mohammad Hannan, Shaheen Alam, Saleh Ahmed, Abdul Khaleque, Shahidul Islam and Mohammad Hanif.

### Overloading

FROM PAGE 16 accidents. It was given seven days

The DG said they have filed case with the marine court against persons found to have neglected their duties, and have also started departmental case as per rules.

On the basis of the probe body's recommendations, the BIWTA has launched a drive with 22 officials taking action against unfit and unsurveyed river transports operating in different routes. The drive also seeks to involve district administration and police administration in inspecting launches and vessels on a regular basis.

A mobile court also started operation on Tuesday at Sadarghat in the capital to take action against illegally operating marine vessels and violators of river traffic rules, he mentioned.

Moreover, a process is on to form a permanent marine investigation cell to check accidents in waterways and to form a strong marine police force to strictly enforce river traffic rules initially on the 112 km waterways around

Shafiqullah said they have also taken some steps to reduce launch accidents. The steps include keeping the design of every launch and vessel inside it to enable an inspector to identify its fault, if any, and inscribing registration number on the body of every launch or vessel so that the same number cannot be

The ladders of all lunches and vessels have been cut down to prevent people from climbing on their roofs, he said. And masters of passengers launches have been asked to complete training course to increase their skill.

## Diesel subsidy

litre of diesel due to the price hike of

"There are additional demands from various ministries for subsidies of Tk 16,000 crore," a finance ministry official told The Daily Star. This is the reason why the finance ministry cut the subsidy in irrigation, he

(DAE) through a survey has identified farmers who cultivated Boro on highest 2.5 acres of land and sent to the agriculture ministry on Tuesday a list of farmers eligible for the subsidy. DAE conducted the survey during

January and March on the basis of a policy of the government on subsidy for irrigation. Distribution of cash subsidy will begin from April 20 and end by May 15, agriculture ministry officials say. The farmers who have cultivated Boro with irrigation by diesel-run

water pumps on the highest 2.5 acres land -- either of their own or leased --A seven-member union-level committee comprising Union Parishad chairman, member,

manage the subsidy distribution. The district and upazila-level committees formed to oversee the distribution will include a member

According to an agriculture ministry calculation, about 11.55 lakh diesel-run pumps -- 87 percent of the total number -- are in operation during this year's Boro cultivation. On the other hand, 80 crore litters of diesel worth Tk 3,200 crore is supposed to be used to run these pumps Farmers cultivate Boro on 49.35

lakh hectares of land this year, which was 43.75 lakh hectares last year. Of this, hybrid Boro was cultivated on 10.5 lakh hectares of land, according to the agriculture ministry record.

The government projects 1.75 lakh tonnes of Boro production this season, but many are hopeful the production will exceed the target.

## FROM PAGE 16

we were treated badly and some of us were beaten by the company's officials ... That's when we decided to run away to our consulate," Arab News quoted him as saying. The workers said they have not

attend their funeral," said another worker, Alauddin.

"We have been working for free

for the last 16 months and the company has not even provided us with food. We had to live by borrowing money from our fellow nationals." Ali Islam said the workers are asking for their unpaid wages as

well as their end-of-service payments and tickets for return home "Our salary was SR400 a month," he said. "Is that really too much for them to pay?"

### EC's letter to BNP

FROM PAGE 1 who is loyal to the party's reformist

faction, to its electoral reform talks as the BNP representative. Later, the EC cancelled the letter is

hadissued on October 5.

Lawyer Nasiruddin Asim had filed the petition on November 12 on behalf of detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Besides staying the operation of EC letter, the HC on March 18 issued a rule asking the EC, BNP acting secretary general and six members of the party's standing committee, and the chief adviser to the caretaker government to explain why the EC invitation letter would not be declared illegal.

Lawyers for the petitioner had argued that according to the BNP constitution only the chairperson can convene a meeting of the standing committee, but that was not the case on October 29 when the BNP standing committee declared M Saifur Rahman and Maj (retd) Hafiz as acting chairperson and acting secretary general of the party.

They also pointed out that while the standing committee meeting needs a quorum of eight members only six were present at that meeting.

Khaleda had already appointed Khandaker Delwar Hossain the secretary general of the party after expelling Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, exercising the power bestowed on her by the BNP constitution.

The pentioner's counsels argued that there is no scope for appointing an acting secretary general when a secretary general is already there. The court issued the rule on Hafiz,

ordering the defence to make him a party in the petition. Meanwhile, BNP acting Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed said they have

received justice. "We have stepped onto the first stage of victory through the High Court decision and we are confident we will also be victorious in releasing our leader Khaleda Zia," he told The Daily Star last night.

Standing committee member and pro-reforms leader Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, however, said they are ready for the dialogue and hope the EC will be able to sustain its decision through legal measures.

"We still represent the mainstream BNP and there is nothing to beupset," he told The Daily Star.

# Bangladesh, British

During her meeting with the

chief adviser earlier in the day,

Fakhruddin told Smith that the

emergency power rules will be

gradually lifted before the planned

local government elections next

talks with political parties had

already started to move ahead with

told reporters that she received

'strong assurances' from the chief

adviser, the army chief, and the

home adviser that institutional

reforms and voter registration,

among other preparations, are on

track for the general election to be

requisite for Bangladesh's interna-

more comfortable working with

fair trials must be ensured for

detained political leaders, main-

taining the highest of standards

and without fear or favour, adding

that protection of human rights is

an imperative for all law enforce-

British nationals having been

brought to Bangladesh under

'forced marriages' were reported to

the high commission. The UK

secretary had also attended an

event on 'forced marriage' and

stone for a new model police sta-

tion in Habiganj and met British

Bangladeshis in Sylhet yesterday.

She earlier laid the foundation

Smith's visit has been the third

high level trip by a British minister

within the last four months, follow-

ing visits by International

Alexander in December and by

Foreign Secretary David Miliband

Unrest in DEPZ

facilities and poor standard of

police personnel were injured

when the workers locked in a two-

authorities of the garment factory

filed two separate cases accusing

around 2,000 workers of the fac-

tory. Moreover, Bangladesh Export

Processing Zones Authority

(Bepza) formed a three-member

Arif Mohammad Khalid, general

manager (GM) of Experience

Clothing Company Ltd, filed a case

vesterday morning, accusing

around 1,500 to 2,000 workers, said

statement alleged that the rowdy

workers during their rampage in

the factory ransacked furniture

The Ashulia police on the other

hand, filed a separate case on

Tuesday night, accusing about 50

workers for attacking the police

told The Daily Star, "A three

member committee headed by

Industrial Relations Manager

Ahsan Kabir has been formed to

probe the incident and the com-

mittee is asked to submit its report

the workers' demonstrations and

rampaging were triggered by

alleged deterioration in the quality

of their launch provided by the

two more persons -- Kulsum,

worker and Mahbub, an outsider

in connection with the violence.

Ashulia police said they arrested

Responding to a query, he said

within seven days."

authorities.

SM Abdur Rashid, GM of Bepza,

and obstructing police duties.

and machineries worth around Tk

2 crore, added the police.

The factory GM in the case

Ashulia police.

committee to probe the incident.

hour-long clash with police.

At least 50 people including 15

Meanwhile, the police and the

in February.

Smith also said 54 cases of

ment and security agencies.

ways to tackle the problem.

democratic governments.

She said Britain has always been

The British home secretary said

He also told her that informal

At the news conference Smith

month, reported UNB.

the election roadmap.

held by December.

tional role.

FROM PAGE 1 the comments during a news con-

ference at the British high commission wrapping up her three day

"Yes there are linkages between terrorism in Britain and Bangladesh," she said when asked if there is any link between terror groups in the two countries, but refused to divulge specific name of any militant group in either coun-

"Linkages are highly likely because of the nature of international terrorism...terrorists travel widely, use dual nationalities," said Smith adding, the countries have a shared interest in helping each other tackle terrorism in both short and long terms.

When asked if her government feels that Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami, Bangladesh (Huji-B) is a threat to Britain, she answered, "Yes."

Asked if the UK is wary of any link between Al-Qaeda and Bangladeshi militant groups, she did not dismiss the notion, and said the global terror network does have the ability to work in a wide range of countries.

Smith said the vast majority of Britons, Bangladeshis, and British-Bangladeshis 'abhor' terrorism and are united to 'protect shared values of peace and freedom'

The counter-terrorism joint working group will be comprised of personnel from both government's ministries on security, foreign affairs, intelligence and police.

Earlier in the day, after her meeting with Home Adviser MA Matin, Smith said a strong and stable democracy cannot be built without defeating terrorism, while Matin said the two sides discussed cooperation, especially potential British training of Bangladeshi counter-terrorism teams, to prevent terrorist attacks on the country's aviation industry.

Currently, Britain provides Development Secretary Douglas counter-terror training, and finances and organises counterterror research by local think tanks, while having undisclosed counterterrorism defence ties with Bangladesh.

## AL, allies want

FROM PAGE 16 Hag Inu echoed Razzak.

Razzak said they will also give one-third representation to women in their party's important bodies as per the policy and for this, they have been encouraging women to come forward and lead the nation.

Samajik Protirodh Committee organised the meeting with the political parties at the Cirdap auditorium in the capital where representatives of 42 women and human rights organisations took part. Inu said that they would raise

the issue of women development policy in their upcoming dialogue with the caretaker government. "We will definitely talk about the trial of war criminals and women development policy in the dialogue with the caretaker government," he said addressing the meeting.

Pankaj Bhattacharya of Gono Forum said the movement demanding implementation of the women development policy would have to be extended across the country.

The spirit of liberation war will be suppressed if the policy is not implemented, he added.

Bangladesh (CPB) said that social freedom cannot be possible without the freedom of women. At the meeting, the women leaders urged the caretaker govern-

ment to cancel the review commit-

tee formed recently following the anti-women development policy demonstrations by a fanatic section backed by Jamaat-e-Islami. Shaheen Anam of Manusher Jonno Foundation said the women development policy will have to be

passed in parliament and for this the women leaders will press on.

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh Mohila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam moderated the meeting.

## Hungry

FROM PAGE 16 lives in a rented makeshift house near the Bogra Rail Station.

Hasirra barely makes Tk 40 to 50

Takain a day, selling the scrap papers. "This money is nothing compared to the need of my fourmember family. We need at least one and a half kg of rice everyday, but with this money I cannot buy more than a kg from the OMS outlet," Hasina told The Daily Star.

She says she dreads the onset of evenings now when her baby starts crying of hunger and she cannot breastfeed him, because she never gets to eat enough herself to produce any milk for the baby.

"I yearn to give my baby at least a piece of biscuit to suck on, but where is the money when I don't even earn enough to buy some rice to keep the rest of us alive," she sighs. After living on bare minimums for

Smith said she thinks, along the last couple of days, she went to a with the international community, neighbour yesterday to borrow at leastTk 100 money to buy rice, but he that holding free, fair, credible had turned her down. elections is a very important pre-Dejected, she rushed to look for

scrap paper on the roads. It was already 1:30 in the afternoon when this correspondent met her and she said she had no idea how much paper she would be able to find by sunset to sell.

The story remains the same

The poor, ultra poor or even others from fixed-income brackets all have a commonality today. They are either forced to borrow money from the lenders to be able to afford average meal or pass days half hungry because the prices of essentials continue to rise.

Abdul Latif Sarker, an employee at a driving institute of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation in Rajshahi and his schoolteacher wife Kohinoor Begum earn Tk 16,000 a month between them but even this is not enough to manage their family of

"Not a single month goes by without me owing some amount or the other to local grocery shop. I have been borrowing money almost every month for the last few months to make ends meet," Latif said as he worries over how he will manage with the continuing price hike.

He has no idea how he will pay off his debts, Latif said. Forty-year old Robin, a locksmith, owns a makeshift shop in Bogra

thana. He makes barely Tk 150 a day whereas he needs at least Tk 200 to feed his family of five. He has not managed meat even for a single meal in the last one and

halfmonths, he said. Though he is looking for the bare minimum for an average meal -- rice, potatoes, some vegetables and a little oil to cook them in, he is unable to

"I did not need to borrow a single penny three months back. Now, have been borrowing regularly for just food for the last three months.

## Train services

FROM PAGE 16

hours a day, railway officials and traffic police said. Nearly 5 minutes are lost when a

train passes a level crossing, they

Commuter trains are regional trains that shuttle between central business districts and commuter belts. Dhaka has a number of commuter trains operating within short distance such as to Tongi and Gazipur as well as inter-district trains such as Dhaka to Dewanganj and Dhaka to Brahmanbaria, that carry a large number of people

"The step will help a lot in reducing traffic congestion in the city," Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Naim Ahmed said.

Traffic gridlocks are caused due to stopovers at different level crossings during the office opening and closing hours and its impact remains throughout the day, he observed.

However, director general of Bangladesh Railway Belayet Hossain believes that the new plan will not see a significant improvement in the capital's traffic jam.

The DMP commissioner said that the trains scheduled to leave and enter the capital during the two hours, would be readjusted to

FROM PAGE 1

village to attend an invitation and left the children alone in the lonely hut by the sea.

studying under the light from the lamp while the two younger children, Nizam and Karim, were sleeping when the fire broke out. The children were trapped

fire and rushed to help, it was too late to save them. Officer-in-Charge of Anwara

Chittagong Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ashraf Shamim, Superintendent of Police (SP) Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan and Patiya Circle ASP Tofael Ahmed and local Union Parishad Officer (UNO) Prodip Das visited the spot

The DC said his office would provide one tonne of rice and Tk 10 thousand in cash to the bereaved parents, while the UNO gave them

was filed with the police in this connection.

# Violence rocks Nepal

FROM PAGE 16 signed up for peace, they have been under fire for intimidation of voters.

Maoist leader Prachanda, whose nom-de-guerre means "the fierce one," has also warned the rotund, dour-faced monarch of "a trial and strong punishment" if he does not go quietly -- a sign that peace has not yet truly taken hold.

The leftists also want to see the back of Crown Prince Paras, loathed for his playboy lifestyle in one of the world's poorest countries. In principle, the new constituent

assembly will boot out Gyanendra, who took the throne in 2001 after most of the royals were shot dead by a drunken, stoned and suicidal prince. Some mainstream politicians competing against the Maoists,

however, are sympathetic to the idea

of keeping some form of symbolic

monarch so as to guard the neutrality

of a country wedged between Asian giants India and China. With no single party likely to win a majority, the post-vote period could herald more unrest, the

International Crisis Group (ICG) has warned. "Nepal has many possible flashpoints, not least that the two armies that fought the war remain intact, politically uncompromising and combat-ready," the Brusselsbased think tank said, referring to the

Maoists and the pro-royal national

"The post-poll period will likely be difficult and dangerous. The behaviour of powerful losers will shape the immediate aftermath. Some, in particular the Maoists, may even be tempted to reject the entire election," the ICG said.

## Monga

The working group on livelihood is headed by Agriculture Secretary Abdul Aziz while the group on infrastructure development by LGRD Secretary Sheikh Khurshid Alam.

Kazi Aminul Islam, secretary to the chief adviser, will lead the group on human resources while the groups on information and energy, power and irrigation will be headed by PKSF Managing Director Dr Kazi Mezbah Uddin Ahmed and the energy secretary. Agriculture and Water

Resources Adviser Dr CS Karim,

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas **Employment Ministry Secretary** Abdul Matin Chowdhury, and high officials of different government departments and organisations were present. They hoped that the steps taken for combating Monga would help

reduce hardships of the people in

the country's northern region.

Campaigning has been marred by reports of intimidation by Maoist loyalists, many of whom have failed to adapt to civil life after years spent ambushing and bombing their way to the capital.

This has left the UN trying to reassure the Nepalese people, for whom democracy has been an all too rare event given the years of turbulence on the roof of the world, that the ballot will be secret.

The polls will be the most watched in Nepal's history -- with hundreds of international observers in the country. Security has also been stepped up, with precautions in place, including a ban on alcohol

Nepal's main parties, the centrist Nepali Congress and the centre-left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), are expected to grab most seats.

Analysts say the big question is whether the poll outcome gives the Maoists -- still listed by the United States as a foreign "terrorist" organisation -- enough political clout to motivate them to stay within the democratic system.

### N Korea

FROM PAGE 16

grants North Korea -- which tested an atomic weapon in 2006 -- energy aid and major diplomatic and security benefits in return for full denuclearisation.

The current phase required it to disable its main plutoniumproducing plants and declare all nuclear activities by the end of last The North says it submitted the declaration last November. The

United States says it has not accounted for an alleged secret uranium enrichment programme or for alleged proliferation to Syria. Media reports say there may have been a deal to address the uranium and proliferation con-

cerns in a "confidential minute,"

while the official declaration would

deal only with the acknowledged plutonium operation. The North has always denied any secret uranium-based weapons programme and any prolifera-

tion efforts. "The recent Singapore agreement fully proved the effectiveness" of direct talks with the United States, the spokesman said, adding it would watch that other members of the six-party forum kept their commitments.

The talks group the two Koreas, the US, host China, Japan and Russia. The North has complained about delays in delivering promised energy aid.

# Seven killed

Gilani, who is from Bhutto's party, condemned the violence and "appealed to the citizens of Karachi to remain calm and peaceful," a statement issued by his office said. The clashes started during a

protest by lawyers from the pro-

Musharraf Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) against the beating the previous day of former minister Sher Afgan Niazi, an MQM official Niazi, the ex-parliamentary affairs minister and a key Musharraf ally, was beaten with shoes and fists

by angry anti-Musharraf lawyers on Tuesday night in the eastern city of Lahore. "Our lawyers were staging a protest against an attack on Sher Afgan Niazi. Some other lawyers attacked the group, 10 were injured

including a woman lawyer," MQM

legislator Faisal Sabzwari said.

Clashes then spread to other parts of Karachi, a southern city of 12 million people, with police firing in the air to disperse rioters. Karachi's main bazaars and highways all shut down for hours. "We found five completely

in a multi-storey building. Four are men and one is a woman," local police officer Suleman Syed told AFF updating an earlier toll. A paramedic and a passer-by

were killed earlier in the crossfire

charred bodies in a lawyers' chamber

between rival groups, he said. Top Karachi bar association official Naeem Qureshi said the five people burned to death were "all lawyers but their bodies have not been identified.'

"This is the work of anti-

democracy forces," he said, adding

that the building contained the offices of 200 lawyers, 40 of which were torched, he said. Dozens of rioters also burst into a barristers' room at a district courtroom in the east of the city and set it

ablaze but there were no casualties, legal officials said. Television reports said a bank had also been burned down.

Lawyers have been at the forefront of a campaign against Musharraf since he deposed Pakistan's chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, during state of emergency in November. Karachi has been hit by unrest

several times in recent months, most recently after Bhutto's assassination at an election rally in December. Meanwhile, the new government

in North West Frontier Province has set up a committee of Cabinet ministers to prepare for negotiations with militants in the violence-hit Swat Valley, the daily Dawn reported Wednesday.

Dawn quoted provincial New Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Information Minister Sardar Hussain Babak as saying that jirgas councils of tribal elders will be used to resolve

> the issue of militancy peacefully. In recent years, armed insurgents have been blamed for attacks against security forces, railroads, gas wells and gas pipelines in Baluchistan, which borders Afghanistan. They have been pressing demands for the central government to increase royalties for resources, such as natural gas, extracted in the province.

## Rice prices

FROM PAGE 16 the city said rice hoarders have started to release their stockpiled rice in the market in the wake of falling prices, triggering the ongoing reduction in its prices.

The prices of onion and potato

increased on both the wholesale and

The retail price of local onion rose by Tk 2 per kilogram (kg) while the price of Indian onion crept up by Tk 1 a kg in the last three days. Local onion was selling at Tk 18 to Tk 22 per kg and Indian onion was being sold for Tk 14 to Tk 16 at different city markets

three days back.

stockpile onions with a hope to sell it at higher prices later. The wholesale price of potato also rose to Tk 11 to Tk 11.50 per kg from

ers across the country including in

his home district Pabna started to

Tk9.50 to Tk10.50 three days ago. At the retail markets yesterday, a kg of potato was selling at Tk 12 to Tk 14 as opposed to Tk 12 to Tk 13 three

he used to sell 50-60 sacks (80-kg per sack) of potatoes every day only a to 90 sacks a day in the last few days.

the increased price of potatoes. Meanwhile, prices of different brands of milk powder including Dano, Cerelac, Lactogen and

powder rose to Tk 230 from Tk 210 a week ago while the same sized pack of Cerelac rose to Tk 280 from Tk 245 ten days back. A 1-kg container of Lactgen-2 rose to Tk 800 from Tk 785 two weeks ago and a 1-kg polypack of Diploma rose to Tk 515 from Tk 490, said market sources.

### less rush hours. Five children

Rozina, Akbor and Asgar were

inside the house as the fire spread and unable to escape. By the time the nearest neighbours noticed the

Police Station, Mohammad Abdul Kader, said the whole village was in shock over what happened.

yesterday.

Tk 5000 in cash.

An Unnatural Death (UD) case

retail markets in the capital yesterday, after weeks of decline in their

vesterday. Onion farmer Abdul Awal, who sells his produce directly at the Karwan Bazar wholesale market, told The Daily Star that the wholesale price of a 5-kg bulk of local onions yesterday jumped to Tk 85 from Tk 75 He also alleged that onion hoard-

days back. Awholesaler at Karwan Bazar said

week ago, but the sale has reached 80 The potato wholesalers claimed that rising sales have contributed to

Diploma increased during the last couple of weeks. A 400-gram pack of Dano milk

FROM PAGE 1

works ministry.

unofficial--with the government unless it receives any formal letter.

further, the sources added. Chowdhury and Syed Ashraf Hossain

attended Monday's meeting clarified their position and told the presidium that they were not informed about the unofficial talks before reaching

Asked about the date of the for-

preparatory aspects of the dialogue. Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A

Supporting the government idea

hotel, he urged them to sign the would and would not do after the national election to prevent activities

BNP faction loyal to detained party Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said they would not sit in the dialogue with the government without her consent while the faction led by M Saifur Rahman said they would

used by others.

According to regular survey of the DOS, about 4,300 lunches ply the river routes. These include 2,100 passenger launches and about 200 big vessels while the rest are cargo carrying transports, the DG said.

FROM PAGE 1

petroleum products, they add.

The Department of Agriculture

will get the subsidy. government-nominated woman member, a farmer, an NGO representative and a block supervisor will

from the joint forces, sources say.

Workers camp

been provided the legally mandated minimum of 21 days of paid time off each year. "Both my parents died last year in Bangladesh but my employer did not give me money or time off to

Shah Alam of Communist Party

Aminul Haque

in a case filed against him for selling his duty-free car in violation of the rules. ACC Assistant Director Syed Ahmed, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief

Metropolitan Magistrate's Court,

showing 12 people as prosecution

The IO prayed for issuing arrest

warrant against Aminul Haque and

the order to attach his properties,

lawmaker Joynal Abedin alias VP

Joynal was granted ad-interim bail

as he has been absconding since filing of the case. The ACC filed the case with Ramna Model Police Station against Aminul Haque on December 5 last year for amassing wealth illegally and giving false information in his wealth statement submitted to the commis-

The commission in its primary

investigation found that Aminul

amassed wealth worth Tk 76.75 lakh beyond his known sources of income. In the first information report case was filed against the owner of (FIR), the complainant said that Aminul in his wealth statement concealed information about his assets worth Tk 76.75 lakh.

**CASE AGAINST JOYNAL** Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani passed

sought bail appearing before the Moving the bail petition, his lawyers told the court that their client had earlier appeared before the High Court (HC) seeking an anticipatory bail. After the hearing, the court

asked the accused to surrender

before the Chief Metropolitan

Magistrate's Court. The HC said the

lower court might consider the bail

in accordance with the law, the

bail to the accused after the haring

saying that the accused imported

The court granted an ad-interim

lawyers added.

the duty-free car on August 22, 2005 and sold it on February 1 last year. According to the prosecution, a team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized the car worth about Tk 1 crore from Executive Motors' Workshop Ltd in the city's Tejgaon on February 13 last year. Later, a

Rab pressed charges against Joynal on December 2 last year, as his involvement in it was found.

the workshop, Moklesur Rahman.

the order upon a Tk 1 lakh bond

with two guarantors after Joynal