FROM PAGE 1 League (AL) and BNP, have yet to decide whether they will participate in the talks. Talking to The Daily Star sources in both the parties said AL and BNP will decide on the matter after consulting their detained party chiefs --- Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia --- by the end of this week.

Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikva Jote (IOJ), two components in four-party alliance led by BNP, will decide on their participation in the talks after consultation with BNP sources said.

Other invitees -- Jatiya Party (JP), Gono Forum, Samyabadi Dal, Krishak Sramik Janata League, Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Unity for Political Reforms, Islami Shashantantra Andolon, Khelafat Andolon (Hafejjihujur), Progressive Democratic Party, and Khelafat Majlish of Shaikul Hadith -- already decided to participate, the sources added.

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu told The Daily Star that they will participate in the dialogues in an effort to pressure the government in ensuring holding of the parliamentary election in December this year, and in removing 'the obstacles on the way to a free and fair

Demands for trials of war criminals and for barring them from contesting in any election, lifting of the state of emergency, and curbing of price hikes of essentials among others will also come in the discussion, Inusaid.

The ISD president said if the government thinks that Hasina's participation in the dialogues is important then it should talk to her. Detained AL President Sheikh Hasina is also the chief of AL-led 14-party coalition, of which JSD-Inu is a component.

AL Acting President Zillur Rahman said, "The dialogues won't be successful without the participation of Sheikh Hasina." He was speaking at a doa mahfil organised for Hasina's release in the party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capi-

AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahemd said Hasina must be freed immediately to ensure her participation in the dialogues, without which it cannot be successful. AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said his party will participate in the dialogues and in the election as well, under Hasina's leadership.

Former Dhaka University (DU) vice-chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star, "I hope that the dialogues will be successful because if it fails, that will adversely affect the upcoming general election, holding of which the country.

Abdul Hai, owner of the trawler,

was standing on the riverbank

when he heard his staffers shouting

at a nearby mosque, locals gath-

ered along the riverbank. They

formed a posse and soon sur-

suspected robbers and beat them

up, leaving Russell and Liakat killed

Salauddin--were rushed to the

DMCH where Rafique died at

Abdul Hai said four other rob-

Salauddin claimed, "We were

sitting on a boat moored on the

riverbank when a gang of some 12

local criminals swooped on us. As

Russell, said, "Russell and Liakat

were sand traders. They also used

Mahmud and Badal over control of

fuel business and they were killed

Khilgaon Police Station, who

reached the spot when the locals

were still beating the four, told The

Daily Star, "I saw the mob beating

Rafique and Salauddin. They also

"We rescued the two and took

Locals alleged that robbery on

trawler has become quite com-

Witnesses said a gang of seven to

eight criminals led by Robin, a local

gangster, attacked Ashiqur and his

brothers in front of their house at

and at one stage of the indiscrimi-

DMCH, "Iftekhar Ahmed Jhalak

had been demanding Tk 12 lakh

from us for the last few days. He

had threatening to kill us and

occupy our house if we didn't pay

Ashiqur died minutes after arrival.

They had feud with local Hiru,

to sell diesel to trawlers."

because of that, he added.

set fire to a trawler."

monplace these days.

Wari at around 7:30pm.

bullet wounds.

him the money."

WARISHOOTING

scene."

bers managed to flee the scene.

around 2:45pm.

locals."

The two--Rafique and

on the spot and two others injured.

rounded the trawler with boats.

As he raised the alarm by a mike

They caught four out of eight

According to his statement, he

FROM PAGE 1

filed the robbery case.

Five slain in city

is the most popular demand right

On the issue of forming a national charter he said the government should change its position regarding the matter, and should deliberate on its opinion with political leaders. The whole nation expects the dialogues to be a success, he added.

Journalist ABM Musa said, "The primary question is whether both sides have real authorities to reach decisions on national issues without a mandate or tacit support from the people.

"I think only the two chiefs of the two major political parties have any real command over the people, so no dialogue can be successful until and unless they agree to participate or are allowed to participate in any political dialogue with anybody," he told The Daily Star.

Former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said they are 'doubtful about the possible outcome of the dialogues, due to a lack of sincerity on the part of the government'.

"It won't be successful without participation of the two chiefs ---Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia --who have the necessary public support," he said.

will enter into further complexities, said Dr Arefin, also acting chairman of the department of mass communication and journalism.

Former caretaker government adviser ASM Shahjahan said participation of the two major parties --- Awami League and BNP --- is a must for a successful outcome of the dialogues. "I'm hopeful about the outcome of the dialogues," he told The Daily Star.

The dialogues must be successful for restoring a sustainable democracy in the country, he

M Hafizuddin Khan, also a former caretaker government adviser, however said he is doubtful about the success of the talks. But there is no alternative to it for creating a congenial atmosphere for holding a free, fair and credible election in the country, he added.

"Dialogue means give and take and for that both sides --- the government and the political parties -must be ready to concede," he told The Daily Star.

Maj Gen (retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, president of Bangladesh Kalyan Party, said the dialogue initiative is the most genuine step towards taking the country to a democratic status by the year end. He urged the major parties to have a constructive approach to the talks for the sake of

property while the other two broth-

Their physician mother is a

private practitioner while their

completion of studies abroad.

Forest policy First day of dialogues | Poor nations have to spend The policy and the laws also need changes so that extension of the more on food imports: FAO forestland can be made alongside of the forest department is now

PTI, New York

Poor countries, relying on food imports, are expected to spend 40 per cent more this year than the last year, the UN Food and Agriculture

According to the latest Food Outlook, a biannual publication by the FAO focusing on developments affecting global food and feed markets, this year's food import bill for the Low Income Food Deficit Countries is forecast to reach \$ 169 billion.

Characterising this as a 'worrying development' the FAO noted that by the end of this year imports could cost four times as much as they did in 2000.

"Food is no longer the cheap commodity that it once was," said the agency's Assistant Director-General Hafez Ghanem, stressing that soaring food prices are likely exacerbate the food deprivation suffered by 854 million people.

"We are facing the risk that the number of hungry will increase by many more millions of people," Ghanem said.

Although the global production outlook is favourable, this is unlikely agriculture commodities because of the need to replenish stocks and rising

tion this year but says tight markets will result in continued price volatility.

International prices of most agricultural commodities, the Food Outlook report says, have started to decline, but they are unlikely to return to the low price levels of previous

The food price index has remained stable since February 2008, but the average of the first four months of 2008 is still 53 per cent higher when compared to the same period a year

Despite a favourable global production, the expected price decline in many basic agricultural commodities during the new 2008-09 season is likely to be limited, because of the need to replenish stocks and an increase in utilisation. Due to rising utilisation, more than one good season is required to replenish stocks and reduce price volatility, report

The FAO's latest forecast for world cereal production in 2008 points to a record output, now at nearly 2192 million tonnes, including milled rice, up 3.8 per cent from 2007.

Among major cereals, the tight wheat supply is likely to improve most, given the prospects for better

1 killed, 20 hurt FROM PAGE 16

people.

Five of the injured were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) while the rest taking care of their business and given first aid at upazila health complex. ers had recently returned home on

Trader freed

FROM PAGE 16

father, who was a Supreme Court lawyer, died a couple of years ago. screaming seeking their help. ADABAR MURDER

Abdul Mannan of Dhaka Housing in Adabar punched and kicked to death his neighbour Tariqul at about 1:00pm.

Tariqul who died on arrival at a local clinic came under attack when he tried to end a quarrel between his wife Hosne Ara and Mannan over fighting between their kids, said police.

Later, locals handed Mannan over to police and Hosne Ara lodged a murder case with Adabar Talking to The Daily Star, injured Police Station.

Agrı subsidy

FROM PAGE 1

we started running to safety they The government will also take began to shout 'robbers!' and soon initiative in the next budget so that we found ourselves ringed by its reform process gets momentum, he added. Fazlul Hug, father-in-law of

The adviser said the government faces various problems in preparing the upcoming budget as prices of imported products like food, fuel, and fertiliser have increased manifold.

Eminent economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, former Sub-inspector Ali Haider of adviser syed Manzur Elahi, President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Latifur Rahman participated in the discussion chaired by FBCCI President Annisul Haq.

The programme was broadcast them to hospital. We also recovered live simultaneously from Dhaka a machete and ropes from the and Chittagong.

Businessmen from different sectors placed proposals and asked questions relating to the upcoming

The chance of any let-up in food price spiral in the near future is slim, said Wahiduddin Mahmud, urging the government to create employment opportunity and increase income to cope with the They sprayed them with bullets price spiral.

nate shooting Robin also received measures for the rural people but such systems are absent in urban Injured Arif told reporters at areas," Mahmud said.

Speaking at the function, MCCI President said, " It is important to give tax holiday for the development of a sector. But in the existing system the government gives tax holiday only to a main industrial Eye witnesses said the criminals unit, not to its extended one ".

fled the scene leaving behind He also underscored the need for the improvement of agriculture Later, locals took all four bullet- sector, saying the development of hit persons to DMCH, where other sectors is not possible without the development of agriculture Family sources said Ashigur was sector.

Organisation has said.

If the dialogues fail, the country | to translate into the decline of many

It predicts record cereal produc-

border yesterday morning, He saw a BDR patrol team and started

The BDR men then chased the kidnappers, rescued Rafiq and arrested one of the gang members.

Save CHT forest

FROM PAGE 16 indigenous people from their lands,'

he said. The lone mangrove forest of the country--the Sundarbans--is being demolished to feed newspaper and hardboard factories in Khulna, he said adding that lands are being taken over by expanding industries and cultivable lands in the CHT area are losing fertility due to the effluents discharged by industries.

"We are not against industrialisation but we do not want development that destroys our forests, rivers and puts the indigenous people at risk," he said, adding, "Development is for the people... not for merely development and we should not go for anything that goes against the greater interest of the ethnic people."

Prof Muzaffer also said the ownership of lands should be specified and the rights of the ethnic communities should be protected.

He stressed the importance of planting local species of tress instead of opting for alien species to save the biodiversity of the country. "The environment will be dam-

aged and natural disasters will be more destructive if we do not take steps to save our forests and rivers he added.

In the keynote paper presented a the conference, Joint Secretary of Bapa Sharif Jamil said taking advantage of the lack of proper development plans and their implementation, a vested quarter is destroying the forests in the name of develop-

He said about 3,500 industries have so far been built illegally grabbing around 618 acres of land of Bhawal National Park, declared in 1982. He said the industries are There are many food safety | polluting the environment and harming the biodiversity of the

> He demanded the industries and structures be removed from the forest. He gave an overview of the pres-

ent condition of forests in Khagrachhari, Jaflang, Lawachhara and Bandarban. Iqbal Habib, member-secretary of Bapa, called on the government to take measure for environment-

friendly industrialisation. Bapa Joint Secretary Zakir Hossain and indigenous leader Arun Kumar Tripura also spoke at the conference.

Despite record production levels in several crops, tight markets will probably lead to continued price volatility during the season.

Heads of state and government will address the problem of high food prices and the challenges of climate change, bio-energy and food security at the upcoming three-day summit in Rome beginning on June 3. The rise in international prices of

oilseeds and oilseed products, it says, has accelerated in 2007-08, with values climbing to new record levels in March 2008. World markets have tightened

considerably as reduced supply

growth for oils and a drop in meal

supplies are coinciding with further expansion in demand. First forecasts for the 2008-09 season point towards a strong recovery in global oilseed production, and the resulting oil and meal output should be sufficient to meet global

demand, the FAO report adds. Regarding sugar, it says, generally favourable growing conditions led to a record world production in 2007-08 and although world sugar consumption is foreseen to increase at a sustained rate, it will not be enough to absorb an expected second consecutive global supply surplus.

International sugar prices are likely to remain under downward pressure, it predicts.

Global meat output, the agency says, is expected to grow in 2008 despite high feed prices. Strong economic growth is expected to sustain steadfast consumption in many developing countries. Global milk production, which is

responding to the past year's high milk product prices, is forecast to grow strongly in 2008. However, it says there is uncertainty as to where dairy markets will head.

FROM PAGE 16

conservation.

briefing was told.

Around 40,000 hectares of land

illegally occupied, said Chief

Conservator of Forests AKM

Shamsuddin replying to a query. Last year, 4,000 hectares of land

was recovered from land grabbers

and that land was included in the

12,000 hectares of land brought

under tree plantation last year, the

grabbing forest land by different

quarters including government

officials, Forest Secretary AHM

Rezaul Kabir said a dedicated team

A total of 352 proceedings are

going on against people in connec-

tion with land grabbing and 70

government officials and employ-

ees have been suspended so far, he

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin

Ahmed is to inaugurate the Tree

Plantation Campaign, 2008 at

Bangladesh-China Friendship

Conference Centre at 10:00am

Chief Adviser's National Award,

2007 for tree planting among the

The forest department, other

government and non-government

organisations, EPZs, BSCICs, edu-

cational and voluntary organisa-

tions are to plant a target 10 crore

month-long tree plantation cam-

paign is "Tree plantation will reduce

The government is embarking

on a Tk 650-crore project to plant

trees on 1 lakh hectares of land

across the country in five years

starting from next year, newsmen

After inaugurating the tree plan

There will be 109 stalls in the fair

tation campaign, the chief adviser is

to inaugurate the Tree Fair 2008 at

including 14 government and 89

Hossain Moon alleged that Jamaat

e-Islami and its student front Shibit

influenced the case in various ways

think law and order on the campus

will deteriorate and Shibir will again

create panic here," Moon told The

He said the BCL RU unit will meet

the university proctor and students

adviser today to place their demand

for ensuring coexistence of the

"If Salehi returns to campus, I

to have the verdict in their favour.

the National Parade Square today.

RU students

storms, cyclones and tidal waves".

winners in 18 categories.

trees this year.

for the plantation.

private stalls.

FROM PAGE 16

Daily Star.

is looking into the matter.

Citing the practice of illegally

Global trade in milk products is anticipated to fall again in 2008 mainly because of reduced exportable supplies.

Food Outlook forecasts that aquaculture production growth will continue this year with the historic milestone of reaching the same level as the expected capture fisheries in 2008. Prices for wild species from capture fisheries are moving upwards strongly but the price increase for farmed species are expected to be more moderate.

Worldwide potato production could expand over the next decade between 2 and 3 per cent annually with developing countries, especially those situated in Sub-Saharan Africa, being the main engine of

China, the world's biggest potato producer, is reviewing proposals for the potato to become one of the country's major food crops, while India plans to double its output in the nextfive to 10 years, it adds.

8 'outsiders'

FROM PAGE 16

Biological Science Faculty Dean Prof Atiqur Rahman, Law Faculty Dean Prof Zakir Hossain, Registrar Jahirul Islam, Railway Eastern Zone Divisional Manager Ibrahim Khalil and others high officials attended the meeting.

Angry students of the CU torched Sholoshahar station master's office, police room, signals and two compartments of the university shuttle train after a third year BBA (accounting) student was crushed under the wheels of the train at the station Thursday morning.

Rab, villagers clash

Mymensingh introducing him as an expatriate to Malaysia and gave further assurance about sending the young men abroad within six months. But Rezaul failed again. Nazir, who lived with Rezaul,

knew nothing about Rezaul's taking money from the youths. On May 20, the four went to

Rezaul's house in Dhaka but did not find him there. They picked up Nazir and took him to Bahalbaria and kept him captive. They called Nazir's family in Mymensingh over telephone and

demanded Tk 11 lakh in return for his release. Nazir's family informed the Rab-12 office in Kushtia of the incident

on Thursday. At a press conference at its Kushtia office, the Rab said a plainclothes team of Rab personnel went to Bahalbaria at about 2:30pm and raided Al Amin's house where Nazir

Finding Nazir, when the law enforcers tried to rescue him villagers including women attacked them and damaged one microbus of the

The law enforcers opened fire and charged truncheons to disperse

the mob. Abul Kalam, 22, son of Ferat Ali of the village, received a bullet injury and was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for treatment, locals said.

Upon information a police team from Mirpur Police Station rushed to the spot and assisted the Rab personnel in controlling the situa-

The Rab arrested Bahalbaria Union Parishad Chairman Amirul Islam Bannu, 55, Rokeya Khatun, 25, Arzoo Khatun, 22, Shiplu, 30, Gahar

Ali, 45, Masum, 25, and Piklu, 23.

When contacted, Rab-12 incharge Major Amjad Hossain Mithu denied any incident of bullet injury saying they opened blank fires only to disperse the mob.

On the arrest of the UP chairman, he told The Daily Star that Bannu was involved with the abduction and himself asked Nazir's family members to meet him with the money. Amjad claimed that Bannu also provoked the villag-

contacted with Bannu over mobile spot but he ignored his call. Three cases were filed against at

attacking the law enforcers and damaging a Rab vehicle. Rab said they would hand over

the arrestees to Mirpur police after interrogation. Police were deployed in the

China, Russia

FROM PAGE 1

China as well as the delivery of partially enriched Russian uranium, Kiriyenko said.

"The contract is worth more than one billion dollars, about 500 million dollars for construction and another 500 million for delivery of uranium," Kiriyenko said.

China has been seeking to expand its use of nuclear power, which accounts for less than two percent of its total energy production.

The fast-growing economic power is highly dependent on coal, which is blamed for worsening pollution and proved risky when supplies were cut off by severe snowstorms during the winter.

Russia has been competing with Western nations and Japan for a slice of China's nuclear power market.

ers into attacking the Rab. Major Amjad said he repeatedly phone and asked him to come to the

leaders and activists of all student organisations in the men's dormitoleast 100 villagers for abduction, "We will also request the university authorities to monitor Shibir's

activities on the campus," he added. BCL RU unit General Secretary Ayeen Uddin said, "We know Salehi is the killer of Prof Taher...We will launch a movement against the university authorities if Shibir cre-

ates panic on the campus through

their activities." Arafat Reza Ashik, convener of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal at RU Shere-Bangla Hall, also said, "We are not satisfied by the court judgment."

Taimur Faruk Tushar, president of JSD Chhatra League, said, "We are very much frustrated at the verdict following which we fear Shibir's terrorist activities on campus will increase."

He said, "We know very well that Salehi is the prime killer of Prof Taher

Leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation also rejected the verdict and demanded punishment to Salehi as he was the main mastermind of the

Alleging Shibir influence on the case, they also demanded reinvesti-Many RU teachers also expressed frustration over the verdict.

SCBs plan

primary stage they will fix some unified principles on various policy issues including staff salaries.

A seven-member committee comprising representatives from the SCBs -- Sonali, Agrani, Janata and Rupali banks-- has been formed to prepare a separate pay scale and service rules, 2008.

a separate pay scale for the banks. So, as an interim measure, all staffs will get three special increments," said a high official of an SCB. The service rules already drafted

"It requires some time to introduce

age may be raised further in future. Copies of the draft rules have already been sent to all the four SCBs, which will examine the draft and place

A performance standard for the bank executives holding posts of deputy general managers and above has been prepared and sent to the finance ministry. And a similar performance standard will be prepared for

"As officials of the banks (SCBs) will

it to their boards of directors, the

be rewarded for their performance as in private banks, they will also have to be accountable for their duties," said the SCB official. The SCBs will form a separate asset management company with the shares of these banks. The banks will

tant general managers.

A sub-committee formed by the banks has been asked to prepare a report on modalities of asset management.

Wholesale rice prices

FROM PAGE 1 sold for Tk 1,060-1,070 a maund yesterday which was sold at between Tk 1,080 and Tk 1,090 per maund on

the day before. A maund of fine-variety Miniket rice was selling at Tk 1,390-1,410 yesterday. It was sold at Tk 1,410-

1,430 Thursday. However, prices of common varieties of Irri, Parija, Najirshail and Miniket did not mark any fall on the retail market yesterday. Retailers were selling a kg of Irri at Tk 32-33, Parija at Tk34-35, Najirshail at Tk35-37 and Miniket at Tk38-40.

Except for Irri, prices of all the said varieties rather spiked by Tk1-2 per

kglastweek. The general secretary of Badamtali-Babubazar wholesale rice market in the city, Nizam Uddin,

attributed the price fall to increased

supply and decreased sale. "Sale dropped as many people purchased rice when Boro harvest started entering the market. Many city residents also carted in rice from their village homes while a good number of labourers went back to their villages during the harvest", he

today. He will also distribute the Masud Rana, manager of Ekata Rice Agency at Mohammadpur Krishi Market in the city who is now in Kushtia to procure rice, told The Daily Star over the phone that many farmers who stockpiled rice in order to sell it at high prices started to sell their produce as prices remained stable for the past few days.

The wholesale price also came A total of 19 crore saplings have down by Tk 15-20 per maund in been made ready at the forest Kushtia yesterday, he said noting that department and different nurseries prices there have been decreasing for the last two days. The theme of this year's three-

> Tk 1,300 and fine varieties Tk 1,650 per maund in the first week of April. Prices started coming down from late April as Boro harvest began to enter the city markets. Prices, however, saw a fresh hike

contributed to the spike at the time.

Rice wholesalers said prices usually witness a fall at the start of Boro harvest in mid-April every year and hit the rock bottom in the middle

This year, however, has been an exception on past years in that prices spiked at the start of the harvest and still range between Tk 1,060 and 1,410 a maund despite a bumper harvest while the price bracket in the city markets in May last year were Tk

680-870 per maund. Pias Costa, director general of the food directorate, told The Daily Star that they would collect 15 lakh tonnes of rice within August 30,

adding that 1.25 lakh tonnes have so far been collected. Food-directorate officials said this year the projected Boro production is 1.75 crore tonnes. Last year, it

was 1.45 crore tonnes. They said the government will import 5 lakh tonnes of rice from India this year; as of last week, the administration imported only 80,000 tonnes. The remaining consignments will be trucked in two-three months.

Arms snatched

FROM PAGE 1

looted gun and arrest the miscreants. They picked up 20 people for interrogation.

The injured policemen are now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Heroin seized

FROM PAGE 1 trade for long.

In Chapainawabganj, BDR personnel seized 1kg heroin from Poladanga border in Sadar uapzila on Thursday night. UNB quoted BDR sources as

saying that some smugglers entered Bangladesh territory from India along with a packet of heroin atabout 9:00pm. Sensing the presence of the

the scene, abandoning the packet.

Blow for Brown

FROM PAGE 16

"I want to go on building this broad coalition for change so we can bring our country better govern-

Labour's deputy leader Harriet

Harman dismissed suggestions

that the party's negative, classbased campaign against Timpson, the privately-educated heir of a shoe shop empire, had badly back-Harman said the result showed

mid-term blues with the government and voters' wider fears about the economy. Brown has two years before he must call a general election, but the defeat in Crewe is deeply worrying

the party's stronghold of northern England. Some commentators compared it to Labour's rise under Blair in the mid-1990s when the party began winning seats in Conservative heartlands in the more affluent south of England, leading to its

for Labour because it happened in

landslide victory 11 years ago. Labour's latest humiliation came just three weeks after the party suffered its worst local election results in 40 years and lost the London mayoralty to the Conservatives' Boris Johnson.

Crewe was the first chance for voters to respond to the government's hastily prepared compensation package for the low paid, which itself was prompted by widespread outrage at the abolition of the lowest rate of income tax

in April. Timpson won 20,539 votes, or scandals.

49 percent, to 12,679, or 30 percent, for Dunwoody, on an exceptionally high turnout of 58.2 percent.

said voters had "rejected the old politics, and voted for the positive alternative, put forward by the Conservative Party". "You have sent a message, loud and clear, that Gordon Brown just does not get it and the government needs tochange, "headded."

In his victory speech, Timpson

The by-election was triggered by the death last month of the outspoken but respected parliamentarian Gywneth Dunwoody, whose passing has now dealt more of a blow to the government than her frequent

criticisms of it when she was alive. It was a measure of the scale of Labour's defeat that at the last election Gywneth Dunwoody held a majority of 7,078 over the Tories -in more benign times a more than

comfortable cushion. It was the first time the Conservatives had won the seat since it was created in 1983.

In yet another blow to Brown's Party, figures released Thursday revealed that personal donations to Labour plummeted in the first three months of this year, leaving it heavily dependent on union con-

Labour is 18 million pounds (36 million dollars, 22.6 million euros) in debt. Personal contributions fell to less than 10 percent of their 2.23 million level last year, in the wake of a series of party fund-raising

Myanmar to allow

humanitarian workers and it was clear what they were going to be doing," said the official.

been able to give this assurance earlier because they needed a green light from the top," the official said. "We've got to turn that into the reality now. International relief organisa-

tions have repeatedly insisted that

more people will die unless they get immediate food, water, shelter and medical care. While welcoming thousands of tonnes of donated supplies, the regime has been blocking visas for most foreign disaster management experts and insisted reports of

survivors not getting enough aid were the work of "traitors". It was not immediately clear if the regime, which has often spurned the demands of the international community, would allow aid from US naval ships nearby which it said before would be rejected.

The breakthrough came on day two of Ban's visit -- the first by a UN secretary general here in more than four decades.

Ban said on arriving Thursday that he was coming with a "message of hope" for the beleaguered victims of Cyclone Nargis, the worst natural disaster in the nation's history. The international community

has been angered by the junta's handling of the tragedy. Those foreign aid workers who have been able to enter the country have mostly been barred from the delta and restricted to the main city Yangon.

"The important issue is whether we can leave Yangon or not," Paul Risley, spokesman for the UN's World Food Programme, said in The Myanmar regime had not neighbouring Thailand. The military, which has ruled

> spurned the demands of the rest of Prime Minister Thein Sein told diplomats on Thursday that the provision of food, clothing, shelter and medical care was "now almost

> Myanmar with an iron hand for

nearly 50 years, has gone back on

previous agreements and often

But AFP reporters who have been slipped through the security cordon have found scenes of misery in the delta, where entire villages were washed away and corpses were still floating in the water three weeks on. Many villagers say they have not

received any government aid.

Reporters saw people jumping into

complete at this stage."

dirty river waters to retrieve packages of noodles thrown there by volunteers. The junta has meanwhile pressed ahead with plans to hold a second round of a referendum on Saturday in areas hit hard by the

The vote to approve a new constitution is the first in Myanmar since a general election in 1990, when opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party won in a landslide but she was placed under house arrest.

The first round was held one week after the storm hit. The regime said 92 percent then voted in favour of the charter, which would ban Aung San Suu Kyi from ever holding office.

City, municipal bodies

FROM PAGE 16

or if that person continues to run the organisation despite having the registration cancelled, the person will be punished with a fine of Tk 25,000," the new ordinances stipu-"If the person does not stop

running the organisation after

being fined, he or she will be pun-

ished with imprisonment for not

more than two years and a fine of Tk 1,000 a day for the delay in implementing the order," the laws If registration of a private business organisation is cancelled on grounds of irregularities like running the organisation without paying annual fees or without

chance to remedy the situation. The caretaker government decided to widen the tax nets of city corporations and municipalities following recommendations of a high-powered committee on strengthening the local government system. The committee headed by MM

Shawkat Ali, who later joined the

interim cabinet, made the recom-

mendations in November last year.

being registered, it will get only one

FOR BETTER UTILITY SERVICES **INCITIES** According to the new city corporation law, top officials of different government agencies in the country's six city corporation areas will start attending the meetings of the corporations for proper coordination of their activities, aimed at ensuring better services to city residents. Chiefs of government agencies

dealing with power, gas, water,

telecommunications, healthcare,

housing, roads and highways, and

metropolitan police will attend the meetings of respective city corpo-The government officials however will not have voting rights as only elected representatives to the city corporations of Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna,

Barisal and Sylhet may vote in corporation meetings, the law says. The government believes direct involvement of service providing government agencies' in city corporation activities will enable the corporations to improve services.

The coordination will also

largely meet the need for metropol-

itan governments in the cities. In a bid to smoothing the services to city residents, mayors of different city corporations have been demanding formation of metropolitan governments for long to ensure proper coordination among government agencies working in corporation areas. According to the new law, city

corporations may ask chiefs of share business. government agencies to attend meetings of the corporations regularly to help make coordinated plans for providing services.

have also raised retirement age 60, and include various changes. Retirement

executives from officer level to assis-

sell their defaulted loans to the company for recovery. Besides, it will conduct other activities including

Prices of coarse varieties peaked

after May 10 as farmers, hoarders and businessmen started to stockpile the grain in anticipation of rise in prices again. The government's riceprocurement programme also border guards, the smugglers fled