#### Global markets Barclays looks to ME European Central Bank and the for \$11.7b cash boost Bank of England could follow suit next week with fresh rate cuts.

AFP, London

British bank Barclays said yesterday it will raise 11.7 billion dollars (9.3 billion euros), mostly from oilrich investors in Abu Dhabi and Qatar, to bolster its finances amid the global credit crunch.

The fresh capital means that Barclays will not have to get extra funding from the British government, unlike some of its competitors, as it grapples with the fallout from the worst financial crisis in decades.

"The board of directors of ingrisen sharply. Barclays today announces a proposal to raise up to 7.3 billion pounds of additional capital from existing and new strategic and institutional investors," the bank said in a statement.

The cash injection would see Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Mansour Bin and the owner of English Premier League football club Manchester City, owning as much as 16.3 per-

cent of Barclays.

The Gulf state of Qatar, meanwhile, could ramp up its stake to 15.5 percent from the current level of8.1 percent.

The announcement ensures that Barclays meets higher capital targets which were set by Britain's Financial Services Authority earlier this month.

In reaction, however, Barclays stock lost more than a fifth by the close of trading, finishing at 163 pence on London's FTSE-100 index of leading shares after earlier hav-

Analysts said the drop in the bank's share price was down to concerns over the terms struck with the Middle East investors.

Barclays, which last month bought the US investment banking arm of now collapsed Lehman Brothers, also issued a trading Zayed Al Nahyan, a new investor update in which it said that pre-tax profits for the first three quarters of 2008 were "slightly ahead" of the same period last year.

## EC in trouble

goes to court challenging the decision, the registration process might be delayed further," observed an EC official adding, since a large number of parties will be denied registration there is a good chance that some of those will challenge

the rejections in courts. And just when the EC could do without any additional hassle, it find itself in a dilemma over registering some other Islamist organisations, especially Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), as despite being an alliance of parties it applied for registration as a single party.

"IOJ's application put us in a difficult situation," a commission official told The Daily Star adding, the expert committee evaluating the applications decided not to consider any alliance for registration.

Commission officials said either the constitutions of almost all 22 applicant Islamist parties' are contradictory to the country's constitution, or they failed to fulfill other requirements for registration demanded by the Representation of the People Order (RPO), but the EC 'cannot just reject them outright'.

The matter of IOJ is entirely different as it applied as a party despite being an alliance of parties, while two of its five components -Nezam-e-Islami Party and Islamic Morcha -- also applied separately

Falzul Haq Amini is the chairman of both IOJ and Islamic Morcha while Abdul Latif Nezami is the secretary general of both IOJ and Nezam-e-Islami Party.

"We are still assessing the applications of the components of IOJ, the EC official said, hinting that only one of the alliance compo-

nents might get the registration. Meanwhile, the commission in an official letter to IOJ asked the Islamist alliance to amend its constitution as it contradicts the principles of the country's consti-

tution, but no reply has yet come from the alliance. The EC, however, had invited IOJ to its recent electoral dialogues, saying back then that the alliance had fulfilled the registration crite-

The commission is also finding problems with the applications of Bangladesh Jatiya Party's (BJP) two factions -- one led by Andaleeb Rahman Partho and known as BJP

the EC secretariat on October 30.

However, at last slight existence

of the party was found on Railroad

in the town yesterday. Visiting the

area, a signboard of the party was

seen hanging on the first floor of a

three-storey building -- Rabeya

house, said one Mashiur Rahman of

Shankarpur rented a single room on

October 25. Mashiur's brother

Ahsan Kabir Hasan told him over

phone they need the room for their

to be the party coordinator of the

upazila, said Hasan will contest the

upcoming polls from Jessore Sadar

constituency. Hasan had submitted

nomination form as an independ

ent candidate in the withheld elec-

tion and went into hiding after the

Zia Uddin is the chief and Sirajul

Alam Khan is the adviser of the

the signboard of Railroad office

reads "Pledge to build politics of

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

which mentioned Airport Road,

Jessore as its district and sadar

office. During a visit to the men-

tioned office yesterday, it was

learned that former minister

Nazimuddin Al Azad owns the

house. Neighbours said he visits the

office once in a week and only then

Through an open window, only a

sofa set and a bed were seen in the

two-room office. No-one lives in the

his followers show up.

house.

Shamsur also claimed Maj (retd)

The party's slogan inscribed on

Almost same was the case with

Shamsur Rahman, who claimed

Siddigur Rahman, owner of the

FROM PAGE 16

party office.

1/11 changeover.

new dimension"

Hard to find

faction is led by Abdul Matin -- as

both are seeking separate registra-

parliament member in 2001 with

BNP-led alliance ticket and BNP's

symbol, his election cannot be

considered as his party faction's

win. And according to the new

electoral law a party must have

won at least one seat in the parlia-

ment since the country's inde-

pendence to be eligible for registra-

tion." said a member of the five-

member expert committee for

asked to appear before the EC at

11:30am today to resolve the mat-

evaluated all 107 applications and

found only about 30 as eligible for

registration while the rest either

exist only on papers or failed to

fulfill the criteria for registration set

some 14 major parties including

Awami League and BNP, as those

parties were found eligible for

registration in line with the new

the site while the first unit is under

first unit met with an accident

while it was being transported to

ship from the GE's manufacturing

contractors Bharat Heavy

Electricals Limited (BHEL) returned

the gas turbine to the manufactur-

engage the world famous UK-based

Lloyd's Register as a third party

inspector to conduct the inspection.

already conducted its inspection

and issued an acceptance certifi-

Development Bank (ADB) is fund-

ing the project as part of its finan-

cial assistance programme for

cate on October 15, 2008.

Bangladesh power sector.

ing plant for thorough inspection.

Following the incident, plant

The EGCB asked the BHEL to

The officials said the Lloyds

Sources said the Asian

In the registration form, LDP

offices were mentioned in

Nawapara in Avoynagar,

Bagharpara Super Market in

Bagharpara, Gadkhali Bazar in

Jhikorgachha, Bandar area in

Sharsha, Mashiurnagar in

Chougachha, Rajganj Road in

Manirampur and Keshabpur bus

through its investigation only found

offices in Nawapara and Keshabpur.

found in Manirampur, while no

office of Jatiya Nagorik Party was

seen in Bagharpara, said sources in

officers did not find any office of

Bangladesh Kalyan Party (BKP) and

Bangladesh Peoples' Party in

Shah Alam, district election

officer, said they did not find the

district office following the

addresses the parties mentioned on

registration forms, reports A corre-

He said they sent a report to

District election office sources

said BKP mentioned Baruda,

Gazipur municipality as the address

of its district office, while

Bangladesh Peoples' Party men-

tioned Nilerpara, ward-6, Gazipur

municipality, as its district and

Quoting Shawkat Ali, who veri-

fied the addresses, Alam said the

Kapashia upazila office of

Bangladesh Peoples' Party, he

existence of district offices of the

They did not find the address of

Meantime, the district election

But the district election office

The office of Gono Forum was

stand in Keshabpur.

district election office.

spondent in Gazipur.

sadar upazila office.

parties was not found.

Dhaka yesterday.

Gazipur.

plant in Hyderabad of India.

They said the gas turbine of the

Siddhirganj

process of installation.

The EC so far decided to register

by the amended RPO.

Both factions of BJP have been

The expert committee already

evaluating the applications.

ter, he added.

electoral law.

"Since Naziur was elected a

this year, signalling tough times ahead for Japanese automakers which are being hurt by the weak global economy and a stronger Japan's top two banks, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial and (Monju) after his late father Naziur Rahman Monju, while the other

FROM PAGE 16

The fear is that the action may

be too late to prevent a global

recession. Japan's central bank

said Asia's largest economy will

Japan's economy "is still in a

difficult situation," said Hirokazu

Fujiki, a senior analyst at Okasan

The mixed performance came

after the Dow Jones ended up 2.11

percent on Thursday, despite

news that the US economy con-

tracted at a 0.3 percent

annualised pace in the third

The yen rose sharply after the

smaller-than-expected Japanese

rate cut. The dollar fell to 97.31

yen, down from 98.76 overnight

in New York. The euro dropped to

123.61 yen from 127.22 and to

The weak economy continued

Nissan Motor Co. warned net

profits would plunge two-thirds

1.2709 dollars from 1.2881.

to squeeze major companies.

barely grow this year.

Securities.

quarter.

Mizuho Financial, both slashed their profit forecasts due to the turmoil on world markets. In Seoul, Deputy Finance Minister Shin Je-Yoon said a currency swap deal between South Korea and the United

States had dissipated "ground-

less rumours" about the country

heading for a second financial "Strong economic fundamentals guarantee there will be absolutely no financial crisis," he said

in a radio interview. In Australia, the deputy governor of the central bank said the country was well placed to handle the current financial turmoil and was on track to avoid following other economies into a reces-

### Protests go on

environment for art and culture in the country.

The activists called on the government to adopt a policy on the recommendation of a proposed specialist committee comprised of painters, sculptors, urban planners, architects, archaeologists and historians, to erect sculptures in

took part in the procession, told reporters that she could not hold concerts in a few places because of threats from fundamentalists, adding that cultural activities in the country would peter out if such strangulation is allowed to con-

Kendria Khelaghar Asar, a children's organisation, called for immediate reinstallation of the sculptures in front of Zia

International Airport. They, at a rally at Central Shaheed Minar, demanded that the government name the roundabout 'Lalon Chattar'.

#### Fair polls

FROM PAGE 1

Demanding withdrawal of the state of emergency, she said free and fair elections are not possible under the emergency.

She said according the constitution, re-demarcation of parliamentary constituencies has to be done before preparing a voter list but the EC has done the re-demarcation after completing the voter list.

Criticising the EC for formulating electoral laws, Khaleda said it is not the duty of the commission; it is the duty of the parliament.

DELWAR'S STATEMENT BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday asked Chief Election Commission (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda to provide evidence in favour of his claim that the 2001 elections were not free, fair and neutral.

"The sort of irresponsible remark by the CEC about previous elections will only create confusion about future elections," he said in a

The CEC on Tuesday strongly criticised the role a number of deputy commissioners played in the 2001 parliamentary elections. He said he has anecdotes about how dangerous deputy commissioners can get in an election environment. "But I do not want to mention those and do not want to see repeats," he said.

The CEC's speech expresses his willingness to hold a 1970-like election and this was unexpected. said Delwar.

#### Mojahid sees

Jamaat leaders principal Ali Alam

and Abdul Latif, among others,

Mojahid will attend separate rallies in Ullapara, Kamarkhand and Belkuchi upazilas during his two-day visit to Sirajganj, party sources said.

## Global financial crisis

and coordinated global institutions," he said on tackling the adverse impacts of global climate change, saving Asian economies from the negative trends of global economic crisis and cross border conflicts.

In recent period, people have witnessed diverse sets of global factors, which have precipitated food insecurity, energy crisis, commodity price boom and currently, financial meltdown, he said. At the same time, multilateral trade talks remain at bay and flow of overseas development assistance show declining trend, he added.

"Given the emerging global economic situation, I think the envisaged brainstorming is very pertinent particularly for developing countries like Bangladesh. For Bangladesh especially, this conference comes at a very important moment of its democratic transition as the country prepares for national election," the chief adviser said.

and Industry (DCCI) organised the conference with the slogan "The next 15 years, a vision for growth" to mark the chamber's 50th founding anniversary.

Finance and Planning Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, Commerce and Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman, UNCTAD Secretary General Supachai Panitchpakdi, and International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B) President Mahbubur Rahman also spoke at the inaugural session.

Mirza Aziz said the indomitable private sector of the country is helping a lot in achieving the millennium development goals within next decade or earlier.

The government has already formed Bangladesh Better Business Forum and Regulatory

Reforms Commission to facilitate businesses, he added.

Adviser Hossain Zillur urged businessmen to work confidently to face the crisis of global financial turmoil although he said the time may be hard for businessmen in two contexts--the global financial recession and the upcoming parliamentary election.

Terming the global financial recession a "crisis of confidence", he said the dream of economic graduation of the country becoming a mid-income country is possible if everybody works confidently.

He said the nation is eagerly waiting to hold a general election as a transition to the democratic process. "As we face risky times, we should not forget to pick the opportunities from the risks," said Hossain Zillur. ICC-B President Mahbubur

Rahman said, "In the path of development for the next 15 years, we will have to keep in mind three issues--the current financial crisis and its impacts on the economy, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce the emerging role of Asia and the possible niches for countries like Bangladesh." Asia is the new centre of gravity

> adding that Bangladesh with its rapidly growing economy has weathered many challenges, emerging even stronger from each experience. "Against all odds, and despite inadequate supportive infrastruc-

of the global economy, he said,

ture, our private sector has matured and become globally competitive," Mahbubur Rahman said.

Earlier, in his welcome speech DCCI President Hossain Khaled narrated a brief history of the DCCI.

The chief adviser signed a commemorative stamp released on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the DCCI.

# All eyes set

FROM PAGE 1

Missouri once again proves itself to be a battleground state," say McCain spokeswomen Wendy Riemann. Echoing the same view Obama's

state spokesman Justin Hamilton

said, "We obviously think Missouri is in play. We are in a good position to win with our ground game."

On Thursday, members of both tickets flew in for a flurry of stops in Missouri signifying the importance of the state in the race and also underscoring the state's continued toss-up status.

In a sudden visit to Missouri, Obama held an outdoor rally Popular singer Mamataj, who around 9:30pm in Columbia on the campus of University of Missouri.

Thursday morning Republican vice-presidential nominee Sara Palin kicked off her day with a rally in Cape Girardeau. Palin's Democratic rival Joe Biden also held one in Arnold at Fox High School that morning to energise supporters ahead of the November

"Barack Obama will be the next president of USA if he wins Missouri. The same is also true for McCain," said Jack Cardetti, spokesman for the Democrats in Missouri.

Thursday's tight presidential campaign schedule in Missouri came as most polls show the state's voters almost evenly split between McCain and Obama. Recent poll of likely voters put Obama at 48 percent and McCain 47 percent. Such divided sentiment of

people in the state and the 11 elec-

toral votes at stake explains why both candidates and their running mates have been in Missouri within the last couple of weeks.

In 2004, George W Bush won the state's 11 electoral votes by a margin of seven percent with 53.3 percent of the votes.

Out of 538 electoral votes, 270 electoral votes are required to become the president of USA. To ensure a victory, in Missouri, Democrats set up 45 campaign offices in the state against McCain's 12.

"People of Missouri never witnessed so many offices in presidential election," said Jack Cardetti.

Democrats and Republicans have been knocking door to door, sending SMSs and e-mails requesting voters for their votes.

Supporters of both parties and analysts believe this election is expected to have a huge turnout as election organisers and school authorities are concerned with building security and parking. More than half the schools in St Louis county will not hold classes on Tuesday, election day. It is believed to be the first time St Louis county board of election commissioners asked schools to consider cancelling classes.

According to news reports published in local dailies, the Missouri secretary of state's office is predicting a 76 percent turnout or 3.2 million voters. The record turnout in the state is 77 percent in 1992 but the percentage translated to 2.3 million voters.

# UN chief due today

cial talks with the foreign adviser at Hotel Sonargaon. UN-funded development programmes in the country and Bangladesh's UN peacekeeping missions are expected to figure prominently in the talks. Ban will then attend dinner to be hosted by Chief Adviser

UN secretary general will hold offi-

Fakhruddin Ahmed today in honour of the UN chief. Ban went to Nepal yesterday from India as part of his fournation South-East Asia tour--the

Philippines, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. According to officials, the secretary general will also visit a

Grameen Bank's micro-financing project in Bogra and see for himself the UN-funded disaster-reduction and climate adaptation activities in Sirajganj before heading back to New York tomorrow (Sunday). He will spend a very busy schedule throughout Sunday with a

series of meetings and visits outside Dhaka. He will also visit the National Mausoleum at Savar to pay homage to the martyrs of the Liberation War tomorrow. He will call on President

Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed tomorrow. BNP and Awami League leaders

will meet him separately tomorrow where he is expected to enquire about the current political situation and the upcoming general elections, UN officials here said. He will meet the United Nations Country Team and staff and offi-

cials of the UN peacekeeping mis-

sion in Dhaka. There will be a pre-

sentation on UN peacekeeping

operations by Bangladesh in different parts of the world. He will be accompanied by his

wife Madam Yoo (Ban) Soon-taek, and other senior UN officials. His wife has a different tour schedule. Ban Ki-moon of South Korea, the eighth secretary general of the

United Nations, brings to his post 37 years of service experience acquired in the government and on the global stage. Lankan jets

## took control of Jayapuram, a rebel-

held village in Kilinochchi. The latest military successes came a day after the rebels' rudi-

mentary air force bombed a power station on the outskirts of the capital and an army base in the north, injuring three soldiers. The bombings, which showed that the rebels retain the ability to carry out startling attacks on the government, were a huge morale boost for the reeling guerrillas and an embarrassment for the military. With reporters banned from the war zone, the media must depend

trolled by ethnic Sinhalese.

been killed in the violence.

on government and rebel stateprevious records, he alleged. ments for most information about the war. It is difficult to contact many well-intended moves of the rebel officials for comment caretaker government failed due to because most communication its lack of experience. lines to their territory have been severed. The Tamil Tigers have fought since 1983 to create an independent homeland for ethnic nothing new in political history of minority Tamils, who have suffered the country.' marginalisation at the hands of

successive governments con-More than 70,000 people have also there, he added.

#### Hannan Shah

FROM PAGE 1

permission from the authorities. Hannan flew to Matlab in a chartered helicopter that landed at Ahmadiya Madrasa ground. He then went to the meeting venue at Lodhuya High School field in motorcade with leaders and workers of local BNP and its front organisations.

Addressing the public meeting, the BNP leader said, "I have come here not to make any political speech. But I have to say that many of our former ministers, lawmakers and leaders went into hiding when the government sent our leader Khaleda Zia to jail."

Seeking blessings from Hannan, Jalal Uddin said at the meeting, "I have been working for the poor for the last 20 years, and I will continue to do so in future."

Asked about the public meeting later, Hannan said he just attended a family programme, and did not make any political speech. "I along with my family members visited a relative's house, but what could I do as people came to me."

Contacted, Sheikh Salauddin, officer-in-charge of Matlab North Police Station, said, " I was not informed about public meeting."

He however said they provided police security as they came to know that 'something' would be distributed.

#### Withdraw all

FROM PAGE 1 Condemning the statement of Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid on 1970 national election, Zillur said only the Razakars, Al-Badr and Al-Shams who collaborated with Pakistani occupation forces in genocide and looting could make such statements.

#### 10 killed

FROM PAGE 1

Sariakandi upazila, Mohammad Milon, 28, of Bil Chapil village, Farid Mia, 35, of Biswaria village and Nurul Islam, 35, of Paigati village under Dhunat upazila of Bogra.

Police sent the injuredrickshaw-pullers Mantu Mia, 40, of Shanta village in Kahalu upazila, Bogra and Abdul Latif, 35, of Chandaikona village of Raiganj upazila, Sirajganj--to Tangail General Hospital.

Mantu Mia told The Daily Star that the driver was drunk and was driving recklessly from the start. "We requested him to drive carefully after narrowly escaping an

accident at Gabtali. He gave a hoot to our request," Abdul Latif added. Mantu said they got on the truck from Karwan Bazar at around 1:00am, at a fare of Tk 50 per person.

The passengers, mostly rickshaw-pullers, hail from different upazilas of Bogra and Sirajganj.

The unidentified bodies were kept at the hospital morgue. Police seized the truck but the driver and helper managed to slip

## Two criminals

FROM PAGE 1 Rab later found Ruhul and Nayan lying dead on the spot. They also

gunshots.

recovered five revolvers, two oneshooter guns, seven cocktails and 12 rounds of bullet from the scene. Locals said panic gripped the residents as they heard over 70

Nayan had long been involved in extorting money from bus counters in the area. They were also professional killers. Family members however claimed that the deceased were

innocent and there were no cases

Rab sources said Ruhul and

and general diaries against them. One relative said Ruhul was a timber trader in Bakerganj upazila of Barisal, adding that Rab arrested him in Jessore three days back.

Nayan's aunt Swapna Begum said he worked at a mobile servicing centre at Metro Shopping Plaza in Dhanmondi. Rab arrested him at Shewrapara of Mirpur on October 6, she added.

#### Caretaker govt FROM PAGE 1 Stressing that election must be

held on December 18, Anisul asked the government and the Election Commission to resolve the issue of re-demarcation. The JP leader said the state of emergency should continue in

order to ensure voters' safety dur-

ing the election. He however viewed that all the election-related restrictions should be relaxed. Referring to 1/11(promulgation of the state of emergency), he said it proved that a corrupt government could not run the country properly He hoped that 'lessons' from 1/11 would change the political culture

He admitted that there was very limited corruption in some sectors during the eight-year rule of his party. But corruption during the BNP-Jamaat alliance rule broke The acting JP chairman said that

in the country.

On the much-talked-abou 'minus two' concept, he said, "Theory of minus two or three is

Asked about his post of acting JP chairman, Anisul said it is not in conflict with the party constitution. The post of party chairman is

# Obama, McCain step

FROM PAGE 1 "He's been sitting there in the passenger seat, ready to take over, every step of the way," he told a crowd of more than 60,000 supporters on a day-long blitz though the battleground states of Florida, Virginia and Missouri.

"It is time to change drivers. It is time to have somebody else at the wheel." In an interview with NBC News,

Obama said the job facing the president-elect taking office on January 20 had gotten much harder as a result of the financial crisis. "It's going to be a lot tougher. I

don't think there's any doubt about that. We know that the next president is likely to inherit a significant recession," Obama said, while sticking to his list of big-spending priorities. McCain, 72, has struggled to

policy as polls show the issue remains the overwhelming concern for voters. The latest national poll by the New York Times and CBS News

gave Obama a yawning lead of 11 points among likely voters -- 52 percent to 41 for McCain. On Thursday McCain wheeled out Ohio tradesman Samuel J.

Wurzelbacher, better known as

"Joe the Plumber," to buttress his

since 1960, and Obama is ahead in

case in a state that he must win if he is to take the White House. No US president has been elected without winning Ohio

McCain was to call on former movie star turned California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to campaign alongside him in Ohio on Friday, before heading to Pennsylvania.

Obama was enlisting former

vice president Al Gore to campaign for him in Florida, where the antiglobal warming crusader suffered his agonising loss in the 2000 election to Bush. After his Iowa event, the

Democrat was to break for a Halloween visit to his two young daughters in Chicago before heading to an evening rally in Highland, Indiana, just over the Illinois border. Obama has a decisive polling

lead in Iowa, which was won by Bush last time. Conservative Indiana has rarely been friendly territory to Democratic presidencompete with Obama on economic tial aspirants, but McCain is barely ahead in polls there. The Democrat's vice presidential running mate, Joseph Biden, is

> using the seasonal festivities to hammer McCain's portraval of himself as a "maverick" who is out of step with the unpopular presi-"I know that Halloween is just

around the corner. But folks, John McCain dressed as an agent of change, that costume just doesn't fit," Biden said late Wednesday at a joint rally with Obama in Florida.

"Not when he's bragged about voting with George W. Bush 90 percent of the time."

## Death toll in Assam

FROM PAGE 16 The group has not been active for

the past eight years in Assam, where more than a dozen militant be the focus of investigations. groups are campaigning for demands ranging from outright homeland to greater autonomy. The announcement came as the

national government announced in New Delhi that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and some of his senior cabinet colleagues will visit Assam today. A total of 12 explosions -- all

within the space of an hour -shook the insurgency-hit northeastern state on Thursday, six of them ripping through crowded areas in the main city of Guwahati, killing 77 and injuring hundreds. Police speculation had focused

on the rebel United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa), which has been fighting for an independent homeland since 1979. A senior police official said

headway in their investigation. "We should be able to zero in on the people or groups involved," said the official, who did not want

Friday that detectives were making

to be named. Preliminary investigations showed some of the bombs had been strapped to bicycles and packed with incendiary material to

trigger fires.

of their injuries overnight, taking the death toll to 77, of whom 43 were killed in Guwahati. Three other districts in western Assam were also targeted by the bombers. The total number of

Assam Home Commissioner

Subhas Das said 15 people had died

injured stood at more than 300. The powerful blasts, including one in front of the Guwahati District Magistrate's Court, reduced nearby vehicles to heaps of twisted metal.

UN Secretary General Ban Kimoon, in New Delhi on an official visit, condemned what he called an "act of terrorism targeting civilians," while Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh vowed to bring the bombers to justice. "Such barbaric acts targeting

innocent men, women and chil dren only highlight the desperation and cowardice of those responsible," Singh said. Hajj pilgrims

#### FROM PAGE 1 Religious Affairs Adviser Hassan

Ariff and Chief Adviser's Special Assistant for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry Mahbub Jamil were present. A total of 48,561 pilgrims,

including 7,474 under government

management and 41,087 under

private management, are scheduled to go to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj this year. Biman will operate 42 hajj flights to carry some 29,000 pil-

grims, officials said. The hajj flights will continue until December 2. The post-hajj

flights will start on December 11 and continue through January 12, 2009.

#### Khagrachhari FROM PAGE 16 killed by poison on July 11 this year

in the capital. Anupam's wife Alpona Tripura filed a case with Khagrachhari Police Station on July 14 charging JSS leader Shanti Bikas Chakma, Parendra Lal Tripura, Kulanath

Baishnab, and Mohammad

Mosharaf Hossain with murder.

Later, police arrested all the four accused. Following the confessional statement of prime accused Shanti Bikas, Khagrachhari Police requested the Tejgaon police to arrest Monindra Lal for his alleged involvement with the murder.

Home Minister Shivraj Patil visited Assam on Friday, but refused

"We don't want to divulge details of who could be responsible, but we are sure we can deal with the situation firmly and nab those involved," said Patil, who visited some of the injured in hospital. The attacks came six weeks after

New Delhi was hit by a series of bombs in crowded markets that left more than 20 dead. Those blasts were claimed by a group calling itself the Indian Mujahedeen. The emergence in recent years of an indigenous Islamist militancy

has posed a fresh challenge to the Indian government, which has routinely blamed neighbouring rival Pakistan for organising attacks on its soil. In the immediate aftermath of Thursday's bombings, the authori-

ties slapped a curfew on Guwahati as local residents -- blaming lax security for the attacks -- took their anger out on police vehicles and threw stones at fire engines that were trying to battle a series of fires.

By Friday morning, the curfew

had been lifted and there were fresh

clashes as around 200 protesters

confronted police in the city centre.

Other residents gathered around the blast sites to survey the "We are not going to be cowed by terrorists," said pensioner Jiban

"We need to go about our normal work or else the terrorists will get the upper hand," he added. In the past two decades, more

than 10,000 people have lost their

lives to insurgency-linked violence

in Assam, which is known for its

tea, timber and oil reserves. In January 2007, police blamed the Ulfa for a wave of attacks in which 62 people were killed, many of them

Hindi-speaking migrant workers. Attacks have continued since peace talks between the Ulfa and

the government collapsed in 2006.

## Jamuna Bridge

a ditch by the highway at Pouli in

FROM PAGE 1 yesterday as the truck plunged into

Kalihati upazila after the driver lost control over the vehicle. On April 19, at least 18 people were killed as a bus skidded off the highway and fell on the nearby

railway track at Hatia.

dent, about 17 cloth traders were killed in a collision between a bus and a train at Rajabari rail crossing. Earlier, 20 people were killed as a bus plunged into the Pouli river breaking the railings of the Pouli

Just three days before the acci-

bridge in Kalihati upazila on April Besides, about 21 day-labourers were killed after a cement-laden truck carrying them swerved off the highway and fell into a ditch at Ashekpur the same year.

The Jamuna bridge was inaugurated on July 23, 1998. Since then around 5,000 vehicles including buses and trucks have been crossing it to and from 16 northern and five southwestern districts every Although highway police had

been deployed to ensure safety on the highway, there are allegations that they do not perform their duties properly, Tangail transport owners' association sources said. Highway police sources, however, told The Daily Star that the accidents are on the rise on the

for the movement of huge number of vehicles. There have been allegations that although drivers run vehicles

highway, as it is not wide enough

recklessly on the highway flouting traffic rules, no actions are taken against them most of the times.

# to be drawn on which groups may