# Economy to get worse before it improves: Obama

AP, Washington

President-elect Barack Obama said the economy seems destined to get worse before it gets better and he pledged a recovery plan "that is equal to the task ahead."

Obama also said in an interview broadcast yesterday that the survival of the domestic carmaking capacity is important, yet any bailout must be "conditioned on an auto industry emerging at the end of the process that actually works."

Less than six weeks before he takes office, Obama said that help for homeowners facing foreclosure is an option as part of his plan. He sidestepped a question about when he plans to raise taxes on wealthy Americans.

Obama's interview on most extensive since winning the White House more than a month ago.

In the intervening weeks, the economy has showed clear signs of worsening. Employers said they eliminated more than 500,000 jobs in November alone and retailers reported disappointing holiday-season sales.

## Nurul Islam

on Thursday while his son was burnt alive.

He was laid to rest at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Mirpur on Friday evening.

Meanwhile, fire brigade's three-member inquiry team vesterday submitted final report to the director general of the Fire Service and Civil Defence citing electrical short circuit as the cause of the fire.

The party leaders said a section of the officials, who are investigating the incident, are not delving into the incident and giving their personal opinions.

They called upon the officials to be more careful about the investigation and demanded preservation of the pieces of evidence collected from Nurul Islam's residence.

Party's advisory committee member and former general secretary Mohammad Afzal joined BNP. was selected as the party acting president at the meet-

Meanwhile, qulkhwani of Nurul Islam and his son Tamohar Islam Puchi and a milad mahfil were held at the Dhaka University Central Mosque after the Asar prayers

yesterday. Leaders and activists of Ganotanri Party, politicians, teachers, journalists, and relatives and family members of Nurul Islam attended the milad mahfil.

"The economy is going to get worse before it gets better," he said twice in the early moments of the interview, taped Saturday

The president-elect announced on Saturday he would call for the most massive spending on public works since the creation of the interstate highway system a half-century ago. In a word of caution to powerful lawmakers, he said the first priority would be "shovelready" projects those that could create jobs rights away.

"The days of just pork coming out of Congress as a strategy those days are over," he added.

Obama said repeatedly that his economic advisers are at age, but he has largely stayed out of the public debate over bailout aid to the Detroit NBC's "Meet the Press" was his automakers. Congress and the on a plan for roughly \$15 billion for General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler LLC. Congressional leader hope to pass the measure this week.

### BNP asks EC

election.

"Discussions will continue

if the draft manifesto is not approved tonight."

Khaleda Zia will not be able to visit every constituency due to time constraints. Demanding withdrawal of

said, "Otherwise, we'll not take part in the election." BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain,

RA Ghani, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Moudud Ahmed, among others, were at the meeting with Khaleda in the chair. Meanwhile, former foreign

Chowdhury and former inspector general of police MA Qaiyum yesterday met Khaleda Zia and formally

Earlier, a group of intellectuals met the former prime minister and discussed the overall political situation.

Former chief election commissioner MA Rauf, former Dhaka University vicechancellor Emajuddin Ahmed, Prof Mahbubullah, and journalists Reazuddin Ahmed, Sadeq Khan, Golam Tahabur and Amanullah Kabir, were among them.

"We must stand beside the

underprivileged and that will

from the society and contrib-

ute to the welfare of the

## All roads lead

Billal Hossain, a worker at a printing press in the capital's

islands in the capital will be decorated with banners inscribed with the words 'Eid Mubarak.

The main Eid congregation will be held at the National Eidgah on the Supreme Court premises at 8:00am. Besides, five Eid congregations will be held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 7:00am, 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am and at 11:00am.

In case of inclement the Baitul Mukarram to be held at 8:00am will be the main congregation, said a PID handout.

Ahmed, Chief Adviser Jewsalike. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and other political leaders yesterday gave separate messages greeting the people on the occasion.

matic mission in the capital also greeted the Muslims on the holy Eid.

In his message, the president urged all to be imbued with the spirit of love and sacrifice demonstrated by Azha. Hazrat Ibrahim towards the Almighty and work together to establish peace and amity.

The chief adviser greeted the day. the nation on the occasion and called upon all to strengthen the efforts to build a peaceful, tolerant and welfare-oriented society.

AL Chief Sheikh Hasina also greeted the people on the occasion. She however expressed concern over the price spiral of essentials saying that many will not be able to celebrate the festival in a proper way because of the high prices of essentials.

in Chicago.

work on an economic aid pack-Bush administration are at work

FROM PAGE 16 manifesto for the upcoming

Nazrul said Chairperson

the state of emergency, he

secretary Shamser Mobin

make the Eid meaningful," she Pallabi, said he had to pay Tk added. 250 for a Dhaka-Bhola ticket Greeting the people, BNP previously sold for Tk 150. Chairperson Khaleda Zia said, The main streets and road "We must rectify ourselves to uproot hatred and selfishness

nation. She will exchange greetings with foreign diplomats from 10:00am to 11:00am and with party leaders and activists and eminent citizens from 11:00am to 12:00noon at Dhaka Lady's Club auditorium in the capital's Eskaton.

UK's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth weather, the congregation at Affairs David Miliband in a message said Eid-ul-Azha commemorates the sacrifice and steadfastness of the prophet Abraham, forefather President Prof Iajuddin of Muslims, Christians and

> "These two qualities are ones that must guide what we do in our families, communities and in how we act in the world," he added.

State-run Bangladesh Betar and BTV along with Heads of different diplo- private television channels will broadcast special programmes on the occasion.

The national dailies have also brought out special supplements today highlighting the significance of Eid-ul-

at jails, orphanages, vagrant centres and dormitories on

The Shishu Park at Shahbagh will remain open from 3:00pm to 8:00pm tomorrow and from 11:00am to 7:00pm for three consecutive days following the Eid day, said a press release of Dhaka

law enforcement agencies have been deployed at various points in the capital to ensure safety and security of passen-

## Bogra RO ignores

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A source in the election office said freedom fighter Anisuzzaman Mintu on December 3 submitted a written complaint to RO cum DC Humayun Kabir against BNP leader and candidate for Sariakandi-Sonatola constituency Shokrana.

Mintu said Shokrana in his affidavit provided some information about his involvement in crimes in the past but concealed that he served in jail when he was sentenced to life term imprisonment on charges of killing Mintu's brother Kibria.

In the affidavit he also hid the information that he was a charge-sheeted accused in the freedom fighter Anwarul Kadir Anu murder case. He also did not disclose the information that he was convicted under the Arms Act and in connection with illegal

earning. District election officials claim that Mintu in his allegation regarding six cases against Shokrana filed between 1974 and 1975 did not provide necessary papers, but Mintu trashes the claim.

"I have submitted all papers required to prove my allegations," he said.

Shokrana however revealed the concealed criminal records in a supplementary affidavit that he submitted on December 1 -- one day after the deadline for nomination filing expired.

Such additional affidavit is not supposed to be accepted by the RO unless it is accompanied by the court order. Shokrana did not provide any court order but had explained to the RO that he "forgot" to mention these facts.

An election official admitted the supplementary affidavit proves that Shokrana had concealed information in his affidavit.

A source in police said many necessary papers regarding cases about which Shokrana concealed information were collected from record room and sent to the returning officer.

## Jukta Front

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165 of them for 160 seats considering their qualifications and popularity," said Major (retd) Abdul Mannan, secretary general of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB), at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city.

The candidates of the alliance comprised of five political parties will use three separate electoral symbols'Kula' (winnowing fan) of BDB, 'rising sun' of Gano Forum and 'wristwatch' of Bangladesh Kalyan Party. Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) and Bangladesh Forward Party-- two other components of the front -- will use the symbols of BDB and Gano Forum.

Badruddoza Chowdhuryled BDB, Dr Kamal Hossainled Gono Forum, Maj Gen (retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim-led Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi-led PDP and Mostafa Amin-led Bangladesh Forward Party formed the

front. The BDB secretary general said a joint manifesto of the alliance would be announced

on December 11 or 12. "We have fielded more than one candidate for seven parliamentary seats while Badruddoza Chowdhury, Major Ibrahim and I will contest the election from three constituencies each, Mannan said.

Gano Forum Acting Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury and Presidium Member Pankaj Bhattacharya, Kalyan Party Secretary General Sadek Khan and PDP Vice Chairman Delwar Hossain, among others, were present at the press confer-

## raiu

FROM PAGE 1 three blankets and utensils as allotted for a prisoner", the jail official said.

The jail authorities earlier seized an i-pod from Falu's possession while he was in the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Falu was shifted to Kashimpur jail in Gazipur and brought to DMCH for treatment purpose.

Jail officials said Falu denied the allegation of holding any meeting or visiting anyone.

Joint forces arrested Falu, also former political secretary to ex-premier Khaleda Zia, from his city residence on corruption charges on February 5 last year.

# Build economy

FROM PAGE 1

companies and banks go bankrupt. This is the result of ignoring Allah's rules. Muslims must abide by Allah's rules, and build their economies accordingly," Sheikh told the faithful.

Banks operating under Islamic Sharia rules avoid charging interest on loans, seen as usury by many Muslims. Instead they preferred shared ownership and splitting of profits.

Sheikh also called for the Muslim world to unite in the face of terrorism to preserve stability. "The world must

criminalise terrorism... we must be cautious of terrorism and fight hostile criminal gangs that destroy countries and people," he said.

For the second day of the hajj, which lasts four days or more, the male pilgrims wore two pieces of unstitched cloth, serving as a shroud, while the women were entirely covered apart from face and hands.

Closely monitored by security forces, the crowd chanted the phrases: "Here I am in answer to Thy call, Lord, here I am. There is no other Allah but Thee. Praise be unto Thee.

"This is a day of great joy," one man said before breaking down in tears on his arrival at Arafat, overwhelmed with in 1990. happiness on taking part in the hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam which the Quran says least once in their lives if they are well enough and can afford

Dasuqi, a 50 year-old Egyptian woman, called for "the victory of Islam and a tightening of the ranks of Muslims," praising the hajj for uniting the faithful of different races and colours, and from all continents.

along, sometimes delayed by the awkward movement of hundreds of buses carrying offered meals and drinks, handed out free by volunteers.

A highlight comes in the middle of the day when pilgrims join in collective prayers

Mohammed (SM) prayed while making the pilgrimage. They spend the rest of their time on Mount Arafat praying and beseeching God for his

to move towards the valley of Muzdalifah, a few kilometres (miles) away, to spend the

On Monday, participants return to Mina, where the pilgrimage began on Saturday with a day of prayer and contemplation.

Once back in Mina, they sacrifice an animal, usually a sheep, to recall Hazrat Ibraham's willingness to sacrifice his son on Allah's order. This ritual marks the start of the Eid-ul-Azha feast.

They then spend another two days in Mina for the stoning of Satan, the last and most dangerous rite, which has left many people dead in previous years after stampedes broke

The authorities have built bridges at three different levels on the site in a bid to avoid the trampling that caused the death of 364 people in 2006, 251 in 2004 and 1,426

has been recorded," according to Prince Khaled al-Faisal bin Muslims must carry out at Abdel Aziz, the governor of Makkah. The Saudi interior ministry

has assembled 100,000 stew-Just as emotional, Suad ards to ensure safety during the hajj and the health ministry has supplied 11,000 of its medical and paramedical staff along with 140 first aid points and 24 field hospitals containing a total of 4,000 beds.

As the vast crowd edged Saturday that 1,728,841 pilgrims from abroad, the highest ever number, had entered the kingdom. They joined the pilgrims, the faithful were hundreds of thousands of Saudi citizens and other residents participating this year.

Muhammad Imaduddin.

He said if the government

provides a Tk 3,200 crore fund

according to its pledge over a

period of seven years and

increases the price of gas that

Petrobangla purchases from

Bapex to at least Tk 50 per unit

from Tk 7, then Bapex will

become a self sufficient com-

in the current fiscal year's

budget announced allocation

of Tk 3,200 crore for reviving

the activities of Bapex over a

new drilling rig and other

equipment as most of its

drilling equipment including

two rigs have become anti-

the company will also require

Under a new strategic plan

Energy Secretary

Mohammad Mohsin

Ahmed, and Bangladesh

University of Engineering and

Technology Professor Nurul

Islam also spoke at the sympo-

Ecnec okays

development project of

Naryanganj link road (Tk 56

crore), construction of three

bridges on Patuakhali-

Kuakata road (Tk 130 crore),

Shirintek to Gabtoli Bridge

link road (Tk 39 crore),

Patukhali-Kuakata road (22

KM) construction (Tk 57

crore), Airport Road-Rokeya

Sarani link road construction

crore, establishment of

Rangpur University (Tk 99

crore), Scientific instrument

procurement for development

Universities (Tk 227 crore)

establishment of Public

jects are establishment of BAF

Shahin School and College (Tk

36 crore), Greater Chittagong

Power Distribution

Rehabilitation Project (Tk 108

crore - Tk 78 crore as project

assistance), Pre-paid Metering

Southern Zone Chittagong (Tk

137 crore), 2nd city adminis-

tration and infrastructure

development (Tk 1149 crore

Tk 876 crore as project assis-

tance), Re-enforcement

Renovation and augmenta-

tion of 33/11 KV sub-station

under DPDC (revised) costing

Tk 134 crore - Tk 90 crore as

project assistance, and devel-

opment of power distribution

in 10 cities (first revised) cost-

ing Tk 611 crore - Tk 352 crore

as project assistance).

The other approved pro-

Universities (Tk 138 crore).

(first revised) costing Tk 33

Imad said Bapex needs a

period of seven years.

facilities, he added.

sium among others.

The caretaker government

# Fuel price review

pany

quated.

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Tamim told the journalists. situation. If prices of oil continue to dip on the internaprice reduction," he said.

Tamim observed that the

standard. need, the next government Bapex, so it may become a self

experts and academics also sufficient funds to Bapex for turning it into a company of global standard.

have remained minimal due to a lack of funds. Bapex can't support itself with only its own profit," said the company's Managing Director

## Eid cattle sale

FROM PAGE 16

A big cow on sale at Kamalapur was priced at Tk 5 lakh. Seller Ainal Sheikh of

has set up 13 cattle markets, including the permanent cattle market in Gabtoli, in the city this year.

## FROM PAGE 16

Up to 75 percent of supplies for Western forces in landlocked Afghanistan pass through Pakistan after being unloaded from ships at the Arabian sea port of Karachi. Nato is already seeking an alternative route through

The attack at the Portward Logistic Terminal reduced a section of the vast walled compound to a smouldering

forgiveness, as a symbol of the wait for judgement day.

night.

The ministry said on

"We are observing the tional market, we will take a decision regarding further

International price of crude oil plummeted to \$39.74 a barrel on Saturday. Even in neighbouring India the prices are lower than that of Bangladesh.

next government should not backtrack from providing funds to Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company (Bapex) for transforming it into an exploration and production company of international

"For our country's energy should provide funds to sufficient company in seven years and doesn't need any support from the government

anymore," he said. At the symposium energy recommended providing

"Our exploration activities

The number of medium-size cattle in the markets is small compared to larger cows.

Natore claimed he has been offered Tk 3 lakh so far for the of education of Public Dhaka City Corporation

## US, Nato supply Peshawar and could choke the

supply route through the famed Khyber Pass.

Central Asia. junkyard.

## at the Namera mosque, built on the site where Hazrat

said from a moral viewpoint it is not acceptable that an aspirant lawmaker shall not submit income tax return. According to the present Election Commission rules

FROM PAGE 1

the 865 is small. Most of them

belong to small political par-

ties or are independent candi-

having TIN for a lawmaker is

not mandatory. The Election

Commission should make a

law in future to the effect that a

person standing in the elec-

tion must have TIN, the NBR

spot and injuring 15 others.

The deceased were

Jahangir Hossain, 22, son of

Poran Ali of Italukanda village,

Shamer Uddin, 25, son of

Mohammad Ali of Shaheber

Alga village, Kafil Uddin, 18,

son of Shamed Uddin of

Shantir Char village, Hamed

Ali, 20, son of Abdul Khaleq,

and Abdur Rashid, 25, of Char

Kajaikata village in Raumari

workers went to Tangail for

jobs from different villages of

Raumari upazila some days

ago and they were returning

home ahead of the Eid festival

when they met the tragic

to Mymensingh Medical

College Hospital in a critical

Raumari thana Officer-in-

Charge Akbar Hossain told the

Daily Star that sand under the

road at a place was washed

away during the flood and the

driver of the truck unwittingly

drove along, causing the

2 more milk

The accused include Md

Saidur Rahman of Brac milk

collection centre at Nakalia

Md Kabir Hossain of Akiz Food

The injured were admitted

Local sources said the

high official said.

5 killed

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upazila.

accident.

condition.

accident.

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However, the NBR official

At sunset the faithful start

So far this year "no incident

Ltd at Panchakola village and milk supplier Md Helal Uddin of the same village. Earlier four cases were filed with the same court against the Brac and Pran milk collection centres and two milk suppliers on December 4 on

> the same charge. The complainant said the test on the samples, collected from the Brac and Akiz milk collection centres and the milk supplier, at Public Health Laboratory in the capital confirmed that the milk did not have the required propor-

> tion of fat. "At least 10 percent of fat needs to be there in milk. The test reports said the collected milk samples contain only 3 to 3.5 percent fat," said District Sanitary Inspector Md Nazrul

### Islam. Govt appeals

FROM PAGE 16 the court resumes after Eid-ul-Azha and Christmas holidays. "I will present arguments on behalf of the government

against the HC verdict during more manpower and training the hearing of the appeal, Salahuddin said. However, he refused to make any comment on the HC Petrobangla Chairman Jalal verdict since he has not received any copy of the judg-

Upon a writ petition, the HC on December 4 declared its decision on Emergency Power Ordinance (EPO) and EPR. These deny a number of rights to the accused includ-

ing obtaining bail. The HC verdict declared illegal the provisions suspending HC jurisdiction to stay the convictions handed down by trial courts against the accused during proceedings of appeals. It also declared illegal the denial of people's right to move to the courts against the government actions under the ordinance

The same court also cancelled the provisions empowering the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to transfer the cases filed under EPR to other courts. Sources, however, said the

appeal may be held on December 11. Abul Ahsan

hearing of the government

## FROM PAGE 16

project for Distribution made immense contributions

and rules.

in accelerating the activities of Saarc as the first secretary general of the South Asian regional forum. President lajuddin also

prayed for the salvation of the

departed soul and conveyed

sympathy to the members of

the bereaved family. Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury also expressed his deep shock at the sad demise of ambassador Abul Ahsan.

## Appeals of rivals 35pc aspirants

FROM PAGE 1

nominee Dr Enamul Haq in Rajshahi-1 constituency, alleging that three years have yet to elapse since Haq's retirement

from government service. Acceptance by the EC of BNP's nominations of Abdul Hannan in Chandpur-4, Nurul Huda in Chandpur-2, Shafiq Ahmed Chowdhury in Sylhet-3, Abul Khayer Bhuiyan in Laxmipur-2, Motiar Rahman Talukder in Borguna-1, Mozahar Ali Prodhan in Joypurhat-1, Mizanur Rahman Minu in Rajshahi-2, Abul Hossain Khan in Barisal-6, Barrister Ziaur Rahman in Dhaka-20, and of Hasina Ahmed in Cox's Bazar-1 were

also challenged. Complaints were also lodged against the acceptance of AL nominations of Imran Ahmed in Sylhet-4, Maj (retd) Jasimuddin in Bhola-3, Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury in Sylhet-2, Nilufar Zafrullah in Faridpur-4, Khaja Shamsul Alam in Joypurhat-1, Nuruzzaman Ahmed in Lalmonirhat-2, and of Abu Syed

AL Mahmud in Joypurhat-2. Ershad-led Jatiya Party's nominations of Zafar Iqbal Siddiqui in Nilphamari-1, Fakir Ashraf in Netrakona-2, Mostafa Jamal Haider in Pirojpur-1, and of AKM Mohidul Islam in Kurigram-3, which had been accepted by the EC, were also challenged by rival candidates.

Meanwhile, the commission heard the appeals of disqualified applicants in the last two days to settle the disputes regarding a total of 557 rejections. The hearings will continue till December 10. Till late last night the com-

mission adjudicated 170 appeals against the rejections out of a total of 391appeals. Thirty seven of the rejected applicants were reinstated as candidates through the hear-

The reinstated candidates among party nominees are Advocate Fazle Rabbi in Gaibandha-5, ASM Firoz in Potuakhali-2, and Harunur Rashid in Laxmipur-2 of AL, Mobashsher Alam Bhuinya in Comilla-10 of BNP, Shakil Ahmed in Dhaka-2, Tajul Islam in Hobiganj-4, Tofazzal Hossain in Naogaon-2, Abdul Mannan Talukder in Sunamganj-1, Quayum Uddin in Naogaon-1, Abu Belal Hossain Jewel in Naogaon-6, and Kazi Shaheen in Gopalganj-1 of Jatiya Party, Omar Farooque Liton in Munshiganj-3, Mohiuddin Majhi in Munshiganj-1, Alterday. Amin in Comilla-1, Abdul Karim in Hobiganj-3, and ATM Hemayet Uddin in Dhaka-5 of Speaker Bangladesh Islami Andolon, FROM PAGE 16

Liaqut Ali Khan in Munshiganj-3 of Islamic Front, Sultan Mamunur Rashid of Bikalpadhara in Naogaon-3, Golam Mostafa Sentu of Tarikat Federation in Munshiganj-1 AHM Zahir Hossain Hakim and Enamul Haque Enam of National Peoples Party in Laxmipur-2 and Chittagong-8 respectively, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League's candidates irrespective of Mohammad Shafiullah in Sherpur-1 and Dr Md Hassan Ali Talukder in Sirajganj-5, Kalyan Party's SM Afzal Hossain in Gopalganj-3, Waliullah of Khelafat Majlish in Comilla-7, Oikkabaddha Nagorik Andolon's Amir Khan in Dhaka-4, Zaker Party's Molla Giasuddin Ahmed in

Mitra in Natore-4. Independent applicants whose candidacies were electioneering.

Shariatpur-1 and Bimal Kumar

### okayed upon appeals are Ushatan Talukder in Rangamati, Jalaluddin in Chandpur-2, Abdul Aziz Molla in Jaipurhat-1, Masudur Rahman (Mohon Raihan) in Sirajganj-2, Syed Rafiqul Haque in Sunamganj-1, KS Ong in Bandarban, Abdul Kader in Dhaka-15,

Jessore-4, and Zayedul Islam Zahid in Kurigram-4. The commission will also meet today to decide the fate of BNP nominee Sadeque Hossain Khoka who filed for candidacy in Dhaka-6, and of AL nominee in Jhenaidah-3,

The EC had accepted their

Nazimuddin Al Azad in

nominations, but the High Court later declared them disqualified, as Khoka is holding the post of Dhaka mayor while Azam is an elected municipality chairman. Meanwhile, the EC decided

Shafiqul Azam Khan.

to start hearing from today the appeals of applicants disqualified on grounds of loan and bill defaults, and criminal convictions by courts. Atotal of 2,460 applications for candidacy were filed with the EC

for the upcoming parliamentary

election, a record low since the

1991 national election, according

### to commission sources. UN climate

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sideration for discussion. "The parties could not settle the agenda... that does not mean it has been cancelled, it will be discussed at the minister-level meeting later on at the last part of the conference," said Nasiruddin, a member of Bangladesh delegation, adding "international migration issue" will

also be discussed. Meanwhile, International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) arranged a seminar on "Community-Based Adaptation" at the Sheraton Hotel in Poznan.

Mazharul Alam Babu, research fellow of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), presented community based adaptation concept where Richard J Klein of Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Jian Liu, Bubu Pateh Jallow from UNEP, and Mazoe Gondwe of Malawi

were present as panellists. All official meetings of the conference were closed ves-

received from the speaker on December 2.

Sircar wanted to know whether he would be able to use his government vehicle, flag and other facilities while in constituency. The letter answering the speaker's queries says that

constitutional or government status are bound to adhere to the electoral code of conduct. According to the code, after announcement of election schedule, political parties or their candidates and independent contestants cannot use government transport or facilities and cannot engage

government employees in

# McCain warns

to Pakistan, the Republican senator said a worsening of relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbours would be a victory for the

One of the major goals of

the outrageous attacks was to

reverse the trend... and the

perpetrators of the attacks.

progress that has been made in the Indian and Pakistani relations," he said late Saturday, according to Pakistan's APP news agency. "If the terrorists succeed in confounding relations

aim. We cannot let that hap-McCain, along with fellow US senators Joe Lieberman and Lindsay Graham, held talks with Prime Minister officials demanding the Yousuf Raza Gilani on relations with India and the security situation in Pakistan.

between these two great coun-

tries, they will achieve their

Their visit came on the heels of one last week by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to keep a lid on tensions between India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars since 1947. It also came as Pakistan's

ambassador to Britain said

officials feared India was

planning a military strike after

saying that all of the Mumbai

attackers, who killed 172

people in a three-day siege, had come from Pakistan. Gilani told the US senators that Pakistan was determined to maintain good relations with India, the government

said in a statement. He also called on Pakistan's allies to help with its efforts to root out extremism and terror-

Meanwhile, India's foreign minister on Sunday denied manner.

placing a call to Pakistan's president at the height of the Mumbai siege, which led to its air force going on high alert, saying the reports were an attempt to divert attention from the fact the attack came from Pakistan. Pakistan said President Asif

Ali Zardari received a "threat-

ening" call during the crisis,

apparently from Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee. The back-and-forth over the call, while appearing farcical, underscores the dangers of the poor communication and deep mistrust between the nuclear-armed

India's investigation into the attacks was running into similar theatrics, with security release of one of only two men arrested so far, saying he was actually a counterinsurgency police officer who may have been on an undercover mis-

Indian authorities believe

the banned Pakistani-based

militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, which has links to the disputed Kashmir region, trained the gunmen and plotted the attacks that left 171 people dead after a three-day rampage through Mumbai that began Nov. 26. "I had made no such telephone call," Mukherjee said in

a statement Sunday, reacting for the first time to the reports. On Saturday, Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported the

alleged hoax and said it prompted Pakistan to put its air force on high alert. A security official later said a man pretending to be Mukherjee had spoken in a "threatening

Special meals will be served

City Corporation. Additional personnel of