

## Dhaka refutes US report on human rights

UNB, Dhaka

A foreign ministry spokesperson yesterday said the US report on human rights in Bangladesh is neither reflective of ground realities nor substantiated by adequate and up to date information.

The US report said Bangladesh government's human rights record remained poor with numerous human rights abuses continuing.

When asked to comment on the US State Department's reference to Bangladesh in its 'Country reports on Human Rights Practices 2002', the spokesperson said Bangladesh is fully committed to uphold internationally accepted standards of human rights and is a signatory to all international instruments on human rights.

"Bangladesh's commitments to these international standards are amply reflected in her national priorities. The country is on its way to consolidating democratic institutions, upholding democratic values, promoting rule of law and ensuring economic development and emancipation of the poorer sections of the society," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson also said that Bangladesh's achievements in the socio-economic sectors for the advancement of women, children and minorities as well as her contribution to the global fight against terrorism are acknowledged and appreciated by the international community.

The spokesperson referred to a recent assessment of the US administration where Christina Rocca, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia in the Congressional Hearing held on 20 March 2003, termed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Extortionist hurt in bomb blast in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An extortionist was injured as a bomb he was carrying exploded at Islampur in Kotwali area yesterday.

The victim have been identified as Arif.

Arif and his associate Nantu had gone to an under-construction building to extort money from its owner at around 11:45am, police said.

In the process, the bomb went off leaving Arif injured, witnesses said. Arif was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and Nantu was kept under police custody at the Kotwali Police Station.

Both Arif and Nantu were arrested and four bombs recovered from their possession.

A case was filed against them.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
April 3		6-15 pm
April 4	5-48 am	
Prayer Timings		
April 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-15
Maghrib	6-20	6-27
Esha	7-35	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		



Suicide bombers, vowing to blow themselves up to resist the US-led invasion of Iraq, shout anti-US slogans; and a coalition tank, right, races toward Baghdad as the American-British troops, reportedly within 19 miles south of the Iraqi capital, are moving forward.

## Many American blacks in war oppose, yet fight

AFP, Washington

Michael Waters-Bey knew as soon as he opened his front door and saw three Marines officers in front of him that they were bringing bad news about his son in Iraq.

Kendall Waters-Bey, a 29-year-old staff sergeant in the Marines, was crew chief on a helicopter that crashed on the second day of the war in southern Iraq, killing all four Americans and eight British marines on board.

The father, carrying a picture of his son, appeared before televisions cameras at his family home in northeast Baltimore to express his bitterness.

"I want President Bush to get a good look at this, really good. This is the only son I had, only son," said Waters-Bey.

"The US government owes me an explanation," he added in an outburst on the motives for the US invasion that shocked many Americans for the

strength of the attack on President George W. Bush.

The dead man's sister, Michelle, said: "It's all for nothing, that war could have been prevented. Now, we're out of a brother. Bush is not out of a brother. We are."

Waters-Bey was expressing anger that many American Blacks feel about the war. While about 75 percent of white Americans support the war, according to a recent survey, 61 percent of blacks are against.

Prominent black figures ranging from Congress members to rappers and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) have spoken out against the war.

"Black Americans are routinely told that there's not enough money for housing, medicine, education and rebuilding the inner city, but ... considerable sums can be raised for war and

rebuilding Iraq," said Ron Walters, a political science professor at the University of Maryland, told the Washington Post.

Many poor blacks joining the army as a means of getting a professional qualification or help getting through university so blacks make up a disproportionate amount of the 300,000 US forces in the Gulf.

While African-Americans make up 12.7 percent, according to latest government figures, but make up 22 percent of the 1.4 million strong military: 26 percent of the US Army and 18 percent of the US Navy.

But they are less likely to go for frontline jobs. About 32 percent of the navy's 'administrative specialists' are black.

David Segal, a sociologist at the University of Maryland, said that blacks preferred a job they could use

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## O', A' level, IELTS tests in time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The British Council will take all examinations including O' and A' level and IELTS as per schedule, an official said.

He said all examinations including O' and A' level and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) under the General Certificate of Education (GCE) will be held as per schedule.

The British Council in Dhaka has suspended all English classes and other services for an indefinite period after the US-led war on Iraq began on March 20.

The regular activities of the British Council will remain suspended until further notice, but examinations will be taken as per schedule.

British Council examination service will arrange for taking those examinations. "Maybe the venue of the examinations would be changed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Talks in Tokyo

## Ties to grow further, aid to continue

UNB, Dhaka

Japanese Foreign Minister Mrs. Yoriko Kawaguchi assured continued assistance and cooperation of her country in economic and infrastructural development of Bangladesh.

The assurance came during an official meeting between Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and his Japanese counterpart in Tokyo Tuesday.

Khan sought Japan's cooperation in building physical communications linking Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand.

He requested the Japanese FM to undertake a feasibility study for construction of a bridge over the Karnaphuli.

The FM thanked Japan for giving loan to Bangladesh for Paksey Bridge project's phase-2.

Over the issue of DAP-2 project, Morshed Khan assured that Bangladesh government would look into the matter so that it is resolved to mutual satisfaction of the two countries. He said Bangladesh would meet all "contractual obligations" in this respect.

On the Iraq war, Kawaguchi explained Japan's position supporting the US-led invasion of Iraq. Khan said Bangladesh opposed the war but added that Dhaka understood the "Japanese compulsions" as seen in the context of North Korean decision to develop nuclear weapons.

The two Foreign Ministers expressed satisfaction at the excellent bilateral relations and hoped that it would continue to grow in future.

They discussed possible visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Japan. Kawaguchi said such a visit was

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

## Frenzied cops beat up visitors at Sangsad Bhaban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police went on a frenzy and indiscriminately beat up two people on Sangsad Bhaban premises on Tuesday night, witnesses said.

They said a young man, his cousin and Mahbulul Kabir, an NGO activist, were among the victims.

Policemen clad in lungi and armed with wooden sticks swooped on the young pair suspecting them as mug-gers, striking terror into other visitors.

Kabir, an official of Actionaid who was present on the scene along with his wife and two-year-old daughter, came forward to the rescue of the pair. But the frenzied policemen started beating him to the protest of hundreds of visitors.

They dragged Kabir to the Sangsad Bhaban police box, grappled him on the floor and kicked him savagely in front of his wife and child. The man tried to draw the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## Gram Sarkar polls July 1 to Aug 14

BSS, Dhaka

Elections of Gram Sarkar will be held from July 1 to August 14.

Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO) or their nominated first class officers stationed at the upazilas concerned will conduct the elections, said an official release in Dhaka yesterday.

The UNOs concerned will inform the voters about the date, time and place of the formation of Gram Sarkar.

The UNOs will make arrangements for administering oath to the members of the Gram Sarkar a day after its formation in his office in phases.

The elected Union Parishad members of their respective wards will be the chief of the Gram Sarkars in the 15-member committee while elected female members for the reserved seats will be advisers.

## 2 cops jailed for 3 yrs in extortion case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two police personnel have been convicted of extortion and sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment.

The convicts are sergeant Zakir Hossain and constable Nasrul Islam.

Al-Mamun, magistrate of the Speedy Trial Court (West), Dhaka, yesterday found them guilty and give the verdict.

In the case filed with Tejgaon police station, it was alleged that the Rapid Action Team (RAT) arrested the policemen while they were demanding Tk 100 from a truck driver near the Film Development Corporation (FDC) on February 19 this year.

The truck driver Abdul Hossain filed an extortion case accusing the two the same day.

The investigation officer submitted a charge sheet against them on February 27.

Nine out of 13 prosecution witnesses were cross-examined during the trial.

Court Sub-Inspector Siraj Uddin appeared for the state while Advocate TM Akbar for the accused.



PHOTO: STAR

Leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal march in protest against the Anglo-American strike on Iraq. The socialist party brought out a procession from Muktangan in Dhaka yesterday.

## Fish resources deplete fast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Natural fish resources are depleting at an alarming rate although overall fish production has almost doubled in the last 10 years.

Over fishing, habitat alteration, water pollution, poor water management and indiscriminate filling up of water bodies are mainly causing the decline in natural fish population. Replacement of natural fisheries (capture fisheries) by culture fisheries is neither possible nor desirable.

This was the view of participants at the inaugural session of a three-day workshop on "National Planning on Fisheries Research and Development"

in the city yesterday.

A large number of experts from home and abroad are taking part in the workshop, jointly organised by the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI) and the World Fish Center. The workshop is being held at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.

Director General of the BFRI Dr MA Mazid told the workshop 'restoration of bio-diversity' through strict enforcement of relevant regulations is a must to save the natural fish habitats.

Managing Director of the Grameen Bank Prof. Muhammad Yunus said fisheries sector has tremendous potential as Bangladesh possesses six per cent

of the global water resources, the second highest in the world.

Despite this, fishermen are living in extreme poverty due lack of institutional support for procuring necessary fishing equipment like nets and boats. As a result, they are exploited by those who supply the equipment, Yunus said.

"Our fishermen are skilled and willing to work hard but we have failed to provide them institutional support," he added.

He said if the financial organisations come forward to give them loans to buy their own fishing equipment, their condition would greatly

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3