

**STANDING BODY MEET
BNP may
decide Oli's
fate today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national standing committee of BNP will meet today instead of Thursday as announced before by the BNP high command and is likely to decide on the committee member Col (Retd) Oli Ahmad issue.

The much-talked-about meeting is going to be held after over four years and it is anticipated that the committee will discuss the issue of Jatiya Party chief Ershad's joining the coalition as well, sources said.

There is also a possibility of filling up three posts of the standing committee, which have been

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**No decision
yet on sending
peacekeepers
to Lebanon**

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said Bangladesh has not yet taken any decision on sending peacekeepers to south Lebanon.

"We haven't taken any decision, we haven't received the rules of deployment... Nothing is clear to us," said the foreign minister while talking to the reporters at his office.

In reply to a question, he said the decision and the size of troops will be determined after carefully examining the UN mandate for peace-keeping in Lebanon and assessing Bangladesh's capacity and capability.

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**India's 'shehnai'
maestro Bismillah
Khan no more**

REUTERS, Lucknow

Bismillah Khan, one of India's best-known musicians and a master exponent of the wind instrument 'shehnai', died of heart failure at the age of 90 on Monday, doctors and his aide said.

A one-day national mourning was declared in honour of the legend who had the rare distinction of playing the 'shehnai' as the Indian flag was unfurled at the historic Red Fort in New Delhi to mark the country's independence from Britain in 1947.

On Monday, flags flew at half-mast at government buildings while schools and government offices were closed in Uttar Pradesh, where Khan lived and

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**Prayer Timing
August 22**

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

**Country under serious
environmental threat**

Experts tell Nagorik Committee consultation meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Increased population, more urbanisation, economic growth and natural disaster will pose serious environmental threat for Bangladesh by 2021, experts said at a consultation meeting yesterday.

Stressing the need for initiating measures that would help increase productivity and reduce inequality, they said it is necessary to build effective public sewerage systems, mandatory industrial waste water treatment plants and a well-functioning public transport system.

The Nagorik Committee 2006 organised the seventh expert group consultation meeting on 'Vision 2021 for Bangladesh: Goal 7: To be environmentally sustainable' at Cirdap auditorium in Dhaka. Prof

Abdullah Abu Sayeed, president of Bishwa Shahitya Kendra and M Hafizuddin Khan, former advisor of the caretaker government, jointly chaired the meeting.

There has been economic development in the last three decades but at the same time environmental degradation has taken place, Prof Abu Sayeed said.

It is possible to make the environment sustainable for the human ass well as the industries, he said, adding that it has become essential for the civil society to come forward and facilitate in the development process as dependence on the government will not work.

Emphasising decentralisation of urbanisation and focusing more in the upazila and district level, Prof

Nazrul Islam, chairman of Centre for Urban Studies, said, "We need a strategy that will help us to increase productivity and reduce inequality at the same time."

Around 25 per cent of the total population now lives in the urban areas, which was only eight per cent in 1972, he said, adding that roughly 38 per cent of the population will be living in the urban areas by 2021.

Prof Aynun Nishat, country representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Bangladesh, said foreign buyers will not be interested in buying Bangladeshi garment, frozen food, leather and other products if the production

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**Grenade attack
perpetrators
not captured as
govt involved**

Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said perpetrators of the grenade attack on the Awami League (AL) rally on August 21, 2004 are still at large even after two years because the government itself was involved in the heinous attack.

"The culprits of the August 21 grenade attack cannot be brought to justice under this government because the government itself was behind it," AL President Hasina said in a commemorating rally at Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday.

Hasina reached Bangabandhu Avenue at 11:23am under unprecedented security measures and placed floral wreaths at the memorial plaque built in memory of the 24 people killed on there.

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Bits and pieces of chicken are stored in a refrigerator along with medicines in Techno Diagnostic Centre in Mohammadpur, Dhaka yesterday. A mobile court sealed off the centre as it had failed to provide a number of required certificates.

**Saddam refuses to plead
as genocide trial opens**

AFP, Baghdad

Ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein defiantly refused to enter a plea at the start of his trial Monday on charges of genocide over a brutal crackdown against Kurds that left around 100,000 people dead.

A grey-bearded 69-year-old Saddam was led into the Iraqi High Tribunal in his dark business suit, along with six co-defendants accused of leading the savage 1987-88 Anfal campaign against Iraq's Kurdish minority.

The strongman, who maintained his claim to be "President of the Republic of Iraq", refused to enter a plea and the judge ordered that one of "innocent" be entered in the record.

Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, who became notorious as "Chemical Ali", also refused to plead

and was recorded as pleading innocent.

The start of the case was marked in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq by five minutes of silence on behalf of Anfal's victims, while Iraqis across the war-torn country tuned in to television coverage of the historic trial.

"I urge you to listen carefully to the details of these events... It is difficult to fathom the barbarity of such acts," chief prosecutor Munqith al-Faroon said as he began to lay out his case.

"Thousands of people were displaced across Iraq. Infants were looking for fathers, while families were looking for youngsters. But there was no hope. Women were transferred to detention centres, raped and tortured," he said.

Prosecutors showed the court photographs of mass graves --

including one in which the body of an infant child still sucking a milk bottle was buried next to his mother -- and detailed the eight stages of the Anfal campaign.

Beginning on February 22, 1988, the Iraqi airforce began firing chemical weapons into the Juid Valley outside the northern city of Sulaimaniyah. This was followed up with an artillery barrage, the court heard.

Over the next eight months troops were sent into Kurdish regions, repeatedly using poison gas, as whole villages were isolated and attacked, he said.

"Women, children were transferred to detention centres made in advance. Detainees suffered harshly. Camps had no basic services. Detainees were exposed to

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**Tk 19cr spent
on voter list
updating**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday said it has allocated Tk 18.84 crore to meet the expenditure for the month-long field level task of updating the voter list that ended on Sunday.

The amount, however, does not include the cost of printing voters' application forms, purchasing other materials and compiling the received information for updating the existing voter list.

The EC Secretariat will have to spend more money to print the updated voter list, officials said.

The EC earlier prepared and published a draft of a fresh voter list with a cost of Tk 43 crore. But the Supreme Court on May 23 declared the draft list illegal as it was prepared ignoring the High Court directives that asked the EC to update the existing voter list.

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**Regrouped JMB files
case against witness**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Activists of the banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) have not only regrouped in Islampur-Bakal area in Sathkira but they have also filed a case against Rawshan Ali, a key witness of an August 17 serial blasts case.

Meanwhile, criminals launched two attacks on Rawshan's house in Islampur of Sadar upazila.

Rawshan claimed the perpetrators were active members of JMB and they attacked his home to take revenge as he had identified JMB activist Nasir Uddin Dafadar, who blasted a bomb on August 17 last year on Sathkira court premises. Rawshan had helped police arrest other JMB militants following the August 17 attacks.

He, while talking to journalists yesterday, alleged that the JMB activists filed three cases, including

an extortion case, against him only to harass him.

Rawshan said criminals led by Mostafa Don and Mazid Mollah attacked his house twice until yesterday and tried to beat him up.

He said Mostafa had filed an extortion case against him. He said Mostafa is an active JMB member.

On contact, Officer-in-charge (OC) of Sathkira Police Station Shahjahan said he heard about the incident and gave assurance of proper measures after an investigation.

It is alleged that JMB activists have regrouped in the area and resumed their activities taking advantage of the leniency of police. Many of the suspected militants, who fled after the August 17 last year, have reappeared in the area.

Rawshan was a pickpocket by profession. He used to maintain his livelihood by stealing from

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**HC stays
Rupali
sell-off**

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed the sell-off procedure of state owned Rupali Bank.

It issued a rule upon the government to explain why the activities to sell off the bank should not be declared illegal. The rule is returnable in three weeks.

A division bench comprising Justice M Joynul Abedin and Justice Mushtaq Hossain Ahmed issued the rule upon a writ filed by ABM Abu Taher, an employee shareholder of the bank.

Employees of the Rupali Bank hold 6.26 percent of its shares and the rest by the government. Its assets as of December 31, 2005 stood at Tk 1.07 billion with 493 branches across the country.

The petitioner submitted that the Privatisation Commission has initiated the process of selling off the bank to private entrepreneurs

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**Israeli warplanes
roar over Lebanon**

AP, Beirut

Israeli warplanes roared over Lebanon's northern Mediterranean coast and along its border with Syria yesterday, after the Lebanese defence minister warned rogue Palestinian rocket teams against attacking Israel and provoking retaliation that could unravel an already shaky ceasefire.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said countries that don't have diplomatic relations with Israel should not be permitted to contribute troops to an international peacekeeping force for southern Lebanon. That would eliminate

Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangladesh among the only countries to have offered front-line troops for the expanded force.

Olmert also ruled out peace talks with Syria as long as it supports "terror organisations." Earlier Monday, a top government official suggested it was time to resume talks with Syria despite its support for Hezbollah.

With concern mounting over the fragile truce, Israel sent war planes Monday over the coastal city of Tripoli, some 35 miles north of Beirut, and over Baalbek, scene

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**Indigenous
woman hurt as
forest guards
open fire**

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh**

An indigenous woman was bullet-hit when forest guards in Tangail opened fire on village women collecting wood yesterday.

Shishiria Shingsung, 25, wife of Niranjan Shingsung, a day labourer of village Satashia at Gabtali of Muktagachha upazila, was admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) in a critical condition.

Local people said Shishiria along with eight others of village Sataria went to Hayetkura area of Madhupur Jatiya Uddyan to collect firewood in the early hours.

While they were taking rest on their way home, the forest guards allegedly shot them from behind, leaving Shishiria critically injured. The rest managed to escape unhurt.

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Construction materials are kept on a pavement on Rokeya Sarani at Sheorapara in the capital putting pedestrians in harms way by forcing them to walk on the road.

**Egyptian train
crash kills 58
people**

REUTERS, Qalyoub

A train crash killed and injured dozens of people in a Nile Delta town north of Cairo yesterday in Egypt's worst rail disaster for four years.

Casualty figures varied widely. Egypt's health minister put the toll at 58 dead and 143 injured. A security source had earlier said up to 80 had died. An investigation was underway.

State news agency Mena said the accident happened early in the morning when a train driver apparently ignored a signal and one commuter train plowed into the rear of another.

The head of the state railway authority blamed "human error" for the crash, Mena reported.

"The first train was stopped. We looked and saw the other train coming from behind, screeching," said Khalil Sheikh Khalil, who had

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