ground floor, they went up to the third floor with the lock picking kits. They bore a hole on the steel gate there using a flame gun.

Video footage recovered form close-circuit television camera (CCTV) recording shows five thieves cutting through the steel shutters, then the collapsible gates and the glass-doors of Parma Jewellers, Konica Jewellers, Preyoshi Jewellers and IK Jewellers with the flame gun.

The thieves used candles, torch lights and the flame gun to light the rooms during the heist.

"One of the thieves was wearing a protective jacket while cutting through the gates. They clearly appear very professional," Emran Chowdhury, owner of IK Jewellers told The Daily Star.

The surveillance footage shows the burglars bagging the ornaments kept on the showcases at the display sections of all the four shops. threw the empty boxes on the floor.

The thieves emptied all the showcases of the shops and attempted to break four safes of IK Jewellers. They managed to break two, and looted the gold ornaments that were in the safes.

After looting the ornaments, the thieves broke the cashboxes of all the four shops and looted the "It appears form the video footage

that the thieves were holding candles and torch lights and also were using the light emitted from the flame gun during the robbery,"

According to the owners of the burglarized shops, the thieves made off with gold ornaments weighing about 2,450 tolas and Tk 1 lakh in cash from IK Jewellers, gold ornaments weighing 3,466 tola and Tk 2 lakh in cash from Konica Jewellers, gold ornaments of 1,205 tola and over Tk 1 lakh in cash from Parma Jewellers, and gold ornaments of 700 tola and Tk 1 lakh in cash from Prevoshi Jewellers. The heist that began at 12:14am continued till 3:30am.

The shop owners said although the whole incident was recorded on the CCTV tape, they could not identify the thieves because the images are hazy.

When security guard Kamal Hossain and his supervisor Mozammel Haq went to relieve guards Salahuddin and Monjurul of their duties at 5:45am, they found both of their colleagues lying unconscious.

"It seems the thieves dragged Salahuddin from the backside of the building to the main entrance and placed him in a way that he seemed to be sitting there totally conscious," said Mozammel.

On information, the owners of the shops rushed there and police rescued the two unconscious guards. Police recovered two screw drivers, a wrench, pliers, a pick, two empty bags and seven candles from

Protesting the heist, shop owners and employees of Mascot Plaza kept their shutters down yesterday. They also brought out a procession and held a rally there before blockading Dhaka-Mymensingh highway

They vandalised four minibuses as

The blockade was withdrawn around 4:00pm after police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) inter-

pany SMS's manager, Siraiul Islam for interrogation.

The shop owners said security

The law enforcers could not arrest any of the burglars nor could they recover the looted gold or cash filing of this report at 7:30pm

Meanwhile, members of police, CID (Criminal Investigation Department) and Rab interrogated security guards Monjurul and

"It is quite strange that no one could sense anything although the thieves continued the heist from 12:14am to 3:30am." said Anwar Hossain. He also demanded arrest of those responsible for planning security for the complex.

He said 29 jewellery shops have been burglarized in the city since 2001. In the second biggest heist, thieves made off with gold ornaments weighing about 6000 tola from Karnaphuli Garden City in 2004. Gold ornaments of 4,500 tola were stolen from Navana Tower in Gulshan in 2005.

In a recent big incident, security guards of Holland Centre Shopping Complex at North Badda apparently helped burglars to steal ornaments, cellular phone sets, accessories, and cash worth over Tk 86 lakh on November 26 this year.

#### President asks

Bangabhaban yesterday.

Other members of the delegation are Advocate Khondokar Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Barrister Nazmul Huda, Justice Habibul Islam Bhuivan, Barrister Aminul Hague, Barrister Shahiahan Omor, Barrister Abdur Razzak and Advocate Shah Khosruzzaman.

According to a Bangabhaban statement, the members of the delegation expressed their deep concern over the recent vandalism at the Supreme Court and termed it part of a "plot to destroy the highest iudiciary'

ment to those responsible for the /andalism"

formation a larger bench, they said the chief justice can order the hearing of "any case at a larger bench

They said the chief justice took initiative to form a larger bench according to the petition of the attorney general, the top law officer of the country.

"The law will take its own course," the president told the delegation of the pro-BNP lawyers. He sought cooperation of all in holding a free and transparent

### Judges skip work

On the other hand, Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) demanded withdrawal of those.

yesterday sent the two sedition the cases were registered as regu-

Keeper Rafiqul Islam filed the sedition cases with the CMM and Shahbagh Police Station on Monday and Tuesday.

lawyers including Rokanuddin Mahmud, Enayetur Rahim, Subrata Chowdhury, Sheikh Awsafur Rahman and outsiders of vandalising the offices of the attorney general and the chief justice as well as for creating disturbance in court

proceedings on November 30. The lower court earlier directed the Shahbagh police to investigate the matter and take the case as a regular case if they find the allega-

tion to be truthful. After the initial probe, police yesterday registered both cases as regular ones and made Sub-Inspector Akhtar Morshed the

investigation officer (IO). The SC keeper brought charges against 200 lawyers including Dr Kamal Hossain, Rokanuddin

Mahmud, Amir-Ul Islam and Tania Amir, their assistants and outsiders. Meanwhile, lawyers loyal to both alliances -- the four-party and the 14-party -- continued demonstrating

on the SC premises pressing their respective demands. A group of Jatiyatabadi Ainiibi

Police picked up security com-

guards Harun Mia and Enayet Kabir -- who have been missing since the incident -- were on duty from 10:00pm Tuesday to 6:00am

vesterday.

They also demanded punish-

Referring to the option for the

anytime" within his lawful authority.

election in the country

Forum led by former law minister

Moudud Ahmed yesterday submit-

ted a memorandum to the President

and Chief Adviser to the caretaker

government lajuddin Ahmed

requesting his intervention in the

also demonstrated vesterday on the

court premises and again urged all

ings until the vandals of the

November 30 incident are pun-

hand, said at a rally on the court

The SCBA leaders, on the other

The four-party loyalist lawyers

Syed JR Mudassir Husain stayed the proceedings of the petitions.

Pro-BNP lawyers yesterday submitted a memorandum to the president and chief adviser requesting him to take action against the perpetrators of the November 30

not to carry on the court proceedvesterday condemned the filing of sedition cases against eminent lawyers of the country and Meanwhile, Shahbagh police

premises that the cases were filed to cases to the court of the Chief divert the focus of public attention. Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), as They also urged the judges to return to their offices and start court pro-Barrister Omar Sadat and SC Meanwhile, Bangladesh

Supreme Court Ainjibi Sahokary Samity, an association of the SC lawyers' assistants, also demonstrated and held a rally yesterday on Barrister Sadat accused eminent the court premises demanding withdrawal of their names from the case filed by the SC keeper.

The Samity decided to submit a memorandum to the SC registrar demanding removal of Rafiqul Islam, the SC keeper. They would go for tougher programmes if their mand were not met.

Meanwhile, officials of the attorney general will stage a token hunger strike today in protest at the November 30 vandalism.

Sammilito Ainjibi Samannay Parishad condemned filing of sedition cases against prominent lawyers including Dr Kamal Hossain, Amir-UI Islam and Rokanuddin Mahmud falsely. The Parishad also demanded lajuddin Ahmed's resignation from the chief adviser position of the caretaker government and decided to observe 'Protest Day' today by organising lawyers' rallies and processions all over the

#### Kabila sworn in as DR Congo

president

**BBC** Online

Joseph Kabila has been sworn in as president of the Democratic Republic of Congo in front of excited crowds and heads of state in the

He is DR Congo's first freely elected leader in 40 years having defeated Jean-Pierre Bemba in a tense run-off presidential election in

The 35-year-old took power in 2001 after his father was assassi-

He headed a transitional government during the past three years after a peace deal to end a five-year

Thousands of guests were in the garden of State House just near the nuge and powerful Congo river.

Many people were shading themselves under umbrellas in the national colours of blue, red and Several African leaders attended

the event including South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki and the Angolan leader, Jose Eduardo dos Santos. But Bemba did not attend the swearing-in ceremony yesterday. President Robert Mugabe of

Zimbabwe is also not attending -

despite being a close ally of Joseph

Last month, the Supreme Court rejected a legal challenge by Bemba, who claimed the run-off vote was rigged.

#### Light finally FROM PAGE 1

hinted that the dates for completion of different stages of the electoral process including filing of applications for candidacies, scrutiny of those and the polling date, will be re-fixed.

According to the previously announced official election schedule. December 10 is the last date for filing applications for candidacies. while December 11 is the date for scrutiny of the applications by returning officers. The deadline for withdrawal of candidatures is December 19. The EC sources said, the new election schedule will add on an average ten days to each of the earlier dates, and will defer the polling date by one or two days.

"The date for polling is likely to be deferred by one or two days from the earlier date of January 21," a senior official of the EC Secretariat told The Daily Star. "The date of polling may be fixed for January

The EC now hopes the new schedule will end the crisis and will also help the move to correct the mistakes on the updated voter list, the field level task of which will start from Friday. While leaving his office in the

ate evening yesterday, acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, who had declined to talk about an election schedule on November 27, however told reporters this time that he will talk to the media about refixing the election schedule today.

After a late night consultation with the president, the EC in a surreptitious and hasty move on November 27 morning announced the current election schedule pushing the country into further political turmoil.

Awami League (AL)-led 14party coalition and some other political parties rejected the election schedule outright and launched a boisterous movement demanding cancellation of the schedule while BNP-led four-party alliance kept demanding holding of the election

as par the announced schedule. Finally, the council of advisers initiated a move to resolve the crisis on Friday and after holding a series of meetings with the political parties they came up with a package proposal on Monday that includes rearranging the election schedule. reconstitution of the EC, correction of the voter list and transfer of some

#### Security

The police, however, could not arrest anyone in this connection as of 7:00pm yesterday.

They closed the road adjacent to the Bangabhaban boundary wall at Dilkusha end and the road from Gulistan to Rajuk Bhaban, setting up barbed-wire barricades. The police said two street

urchins first noticed the five "obiects" wrapped in red tape in a bush at the southeast corner of Paltan Maidan around 3:00pm and informed the on-duty policemen. The law enforcers then called in the Rab explosives experts.

Zakir Hossain, deputy assistant director of Rab bomb disposal wing, told The Daily Star that the bombs are very much like crackers and made up of sulphur and stone If exploded, the bombs could

harm people within the 15-20 yard radius of explosion, Zakir said. Earlier on November 20, a driveby bomb attack was carried out near the south gate of Bangabhaban. Two homemade bombs were exploded in the highly secured area although no one was

# Rise above personal

violence must never be seen again." In a joint statement, they demanded that those responsible for the November 30 events must be identified through an open and impartial inquiry and brought to book. "We have a shared responsibility to the nation and to our future generations to preserve and pass on a glorious heritage, and not to damage it by seeing it in the context of a partisan contest in which some may inflict damage on others and claim victory," they said.

Dr Kamal, an architect of the country's constitution. Amir. president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, and Rokan, vice chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, urged the judges and lawyers to recognise that there are moments in their life and that of the nation when they need to rise above personal differences and concerns.

"Without any doubt, we all cherish the supremacy of the constitution, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, " they

"This is the heritage built up over many decades, which surely is our sacred duty to protect. We will have failed to discharge this duty if we do not act together without delay to move away from the path of partisan confrontation," the joint statement

"If our institutions are damaged and values are lost, we all will be losers, and history will judge us harshly," the renowned jurists observed

At the same time, the judges and lawyers must unitedly take an initiative to objectively diagnose and identify the causes of the malaise that has afflicted the functioning and practice of the Supreme Court, they suggested. They went on, "May we not appeal to and count upon the former

chief justices to guide us towards

adopting timely corrective mea-

sures, after conducting an in-depth

inquiry among both judges and

lawyers, in order to arrive at a true

diagnosis of the prevailing situa-The inquiry would need to conand expressed for some considerable time but ignored, the jurists

They questioned if the judges and lawyers are paying the price for failing to take timely corrective action, and instead allowing the virus of partisanship to infect our

"Can we not appeal that the inquiry should identify the reasons behind actions taken departing from established practices and precedents, bearing in mind that our judicial and legal heritage has been built upon respect for precedents and past practice? "Should this not lead us to ask

why a series of unprecedented actions have led to serious grievances, some of which are the subject matter of pending writs?" the three legal experts questioned. They said these include whole-

sale non-confirmation of judges and wholesale appointments without effective consultation, to the extent that six appointments are reported to be of persons who had never practised in the Supreme Court, and one of a person whose qualifications raised serious questions. Promises of corrective action

remain unfulfilled and the mode of abruptly withdrawing powers from a bench and assigning cases to particular benches have been unprecedented, they said. The exercise of this power in several cases is perceived as striking at the root of the independence of the judiciary, as was the case of the 'stay' of a hearing before a rule was issued. "All these called for urgent corrective action," they noted.

"Let us strive together to shun the path of divisiveness and confrontation, correct mistakes and affirm our resolve to work together so that our Supreme Court can discharge its constitutional duty to do justice, without fear or favour." said the statement by the eminent

## Drastic changes

different ministries on deputation. The council of advisers had also kept under the package proposal the secretaries to the Election Commission, information and law ministries, and the Local Government Division, but these changes are vet to be made.

sources said. According to establishment ministry circulars, Cabinet Secretary M Abu Solaiman Chowdhury was given forced retirement while his post was given to Ali Imam Majumder, principal secretary to the chief

Md Abdul Karim, chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR), was appointed the establishment secretary, his NBR post being given to Establishment Secretary AFM Solaiman Chowdhury.

Home Secretary SM Jahurul Islam was transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Forest as its Secretary Mohammed Haider Ali was made officer-on-special-duty (OSD) at the establishment ministry.

The government appointed Planning Commission Acting Member ATM Sarwar Hossain as a full member of the commission,

under the president's quota. The government was yet to

appoint a secretary to the establishment ministry as of filing of this report at 8:45pm last night. Meanwhile, the reshuffle at the highest level of the administration created rancour among its top

brass. A few officers expressed

their embarrassment and shock at

the transfer under a package deal. "I really feel embarrassed and insulted for being brought under the package deal. I never served any quarter or favoured anyone during my 25 years' government ÁFM Solaiman Chowdhury told reporters at his office after receiving the transfer

He said he may opt not to join the NBR for the remaining 15

working days of his career. "I will go on a leave for five days and consult with my family members whether I should join the NBR or resign from government service. I may not make significant contribution to an important and technical place like the NBR in only 15 days," he said.

Cabinet Secretary Abu Solaiman said he took voluntary retirement "for the greater interest

### Khulna BNP

Similar situation was observed earlier over the nomination in Khulna-3 constituency where on Monday, Khulna City Mayor Sheikh Tavebur Rahman at a press conference announced that he would consider alternative actions if the party nominates former lawmaker Ashraf Hossain as the candidate for Khulna-3.

Leaders of Khulna-4 including Digholia, Rupsha and Terokhada thanas organised yesterday's press briefing expressing their support for Majedul Islam. They also vowed to resist any other candidate nominated by the party high command.

Syed Mohammad Shahidullah and Sheikh Parvez Sazzad Babla. president and organising secretary of Digholia thana BNP, Chowdhury Kawsar Ali and Sheikh Mezbahul Alam, president and general secretary of Terokhada thana, S M Shahiahan, Khan Saiduzzaman and Enamul Kabir, president, joint general secretary and organising secretary of Rupsha thana BNP, were present at the briefing. Syed Mohammad Shahidullah

possible to win in Khulna-4 again without Majedul Islam and we will do anything in protest if the BNP (high command) fails to understand the Rupsha Thana BNP President SM Shahjahan said the BNP chair-

person promised the people in our

constituency during her visit in 2001

that Majedul Islam would get the

said in his written statement, "It's not

nomination in 2007 election and he hoped that she would keep her

The local BNP leaders expressed their resentment over the activities of Azizul Bari Helal, Chhatra Dal central president, and said Helal recently upset locals when he declared himself as the four-party candidate for the constit-

#### Jubo Dal

FROM PAGE 16 accused are District Juba Dal General Secretary Abu Hasan Masud, Joint Secretary Monir Hossain. Vice-President of JCD District Unit Khairul Alam Golden. Organising Secretary ZH Khan Manik, Joint Secretary Masud Haider Tipu, JCD leader Kazi Ilvas Shah Hamidi. Jubo Dal leaders Abu Bakar, Lutfor Rahman and Rafigul

could not be known Police in the charge sheet stated

The name of the other accused

that the accused damaged the Chakdevpara mahalla residence of Alamgir and set it on fire on October 26. Later, they set ablaze the pickup van of Alamgir's younger brother and former president of Raninagar upazila BNP Anwar Hossain Bulu.

Nurunnahar Kabir, wife of ex-BNP leader Alamgir Kabir, filed a case with Naogaon Sadar Police Station on November 3 against the JCD and Jubo Dal men.

### Hasina slates filing of cases against lawyers

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday protested the filing of cases on sedition charges against renowned lawyers, including Dr Kamal Hossain, M Amir-Ul Islam and Rokanuddin Mahmud, following the November 30 incident on the Supreme Court premises.

In a statement, Hasina alleged that the cases were filed with a view to tarnishing the image of the noted

Expressing concern, Hasina, also the former prime minister, observed that the current events at the apex court are pushing the country into a "deep crisis", which is not desired by any citizen.

Seeking immediate withdrawal of the case, she called upon all concerned to uphold the image of the highest Judiciary

#### No scope FROM PAGE 1

of Raishahi division today

On yesterday's discussion between the caretaker government advisers and 14-party leaders, Bhuiyan said, "Everything must happen within the constitutional provisions. We will give our opinion after getting the government's decision as we do not know what they mean by reforms.' In reply to a question, he said, "I

think it is not necessary to hold another meeting between the advisers and us as we have already informed them of our views. On the latest changes in the

administration, Bhuiyan said, "We do not oppose the transfers because we believe the government officials will perform neutrally during the election. **ASPIRANTS' INTERVIEW** 

A lot of supporters of the aspirants

gathered on the Hawa Bhaban premises yesterday. They brought out processions and chanted slogans in support of their leaders. According to the shifted schedule, the interviews of aspirants from Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts

will be taken from 11:00am today while interviews of nomination seekers from Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Bogra, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon and Rajshahi districts will be held from 3:00pm The BNP in its press release asked the nomination seekers not to

take part in processions and bear

banners and festoons and chant

slogans while coming to attend the

### Inflation

**FROM PAGE 16** 

interview.

Tk 5,000 crore borrowing from banks by the government between July and November of the current

A BB high official said the biggest

challenge at the moment is to keep the inflation rates under control despite the satisfactory state of macroeconomic situation. The finance adviser has discussed with the Bangladesh Bureau

of Statistics (BBS) officials to review

the factors that led to the recent rise

in inflation, a finance ministry source The adviser has also taken steps to reduce government expenditure in order to reduce government

borrowing from the banking system. Besides, an inter-ministerial meeting is being arranged to discuss ways to bring down the prices of essentials, the source added.

#### Tax ombudsman

FROM PAGE 16

accepted, the press release said. Tax Ombudsman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury last night told The Daily Star that in case of trivial complaints, taxpayers can directly approach the NBR for a solution. If there is a substantial complaint, a hearing will be arranged and necessary steps will be taken, he said.

They will seek to resolve each case within six months, he added. The ombudsman will present an

annual report to the president three months after a calendar year ends and it will then be presented in parliament, according to the Tax Ombudsman Act. The report will include instances

tion and management, and to

reduce taxpayers' harassment.

the tax ombudsman's request to take action on complaints. The office of the tax ombudsman was created in accordance with the police said. Tax Ombudsman Act, enacted in 2005, to ensure transparency and Mansur district gunmen attempted accountability of the tax administra-

### France for quick

countries--France, Britain, Germany, Russia, China and the United States--were unable to agree a draft UN resolution at a meeting on Tuesday and France said several key differences remain

between the West and Russia. "Are we in a hurry or not?" French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said at a news conference. "Yes, because I believe, as someone said earlier, that the credibility of the United Nations Security Council is at stake.

Iran denies Western charges that its nuclear programmeme is a cover for an atomic weapons programmeme but was ordered by the Security Council to freeze enrichment for failing to convince the world that its nuclear programmeme is entirely peaceful.

'My opinion is that we will find a common solution to be united within the framework of a Security Council resolution," he added. A European diplomat said on

Tuesday that France, Britain and Germany, who drafted the original sanctions proposal, told Russia they wanted a resolution to be passed by the end of the year so as to preserve the UN body's credibility.

Douste-Blazy did not, however, say when he expected agreement to be reached. He also said before Tuesday's meeting that he thought all sides were ready to reach a deal. A diplomat from the 'EU3' said

much work remained. "The gap between the Russian and U.S. positions is still huge," an FU3 diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity. The goal had been to have a resolution before Christmas, but it now appeared that would not be the case, he said.

After forcing the Europeans to water down their sanctions plans over the past weeks and spurning tough measures against Iran, the Russians indicated a compromise might be possible, prompting Tuesday's hastily arranged talks. TELEPHONE TÁLKS

The Russians agreed to export bans on more technology and materials that could be used in Iran's nuclear or ballistic-missile programmes but little progress had been made on financial sanctions against people and organizations linked to sensi-European diplomat said.

The sanctions would be a first

phase of punishment against Iran

for its failure to comply with an

August 31 U.N. deadline to suspend

uranium enrichment, which can

plants or for bombs

France, Britain and Germany decided at the meeting that the time had come to move their negotiations back to the United Nations in New York in a last push to broker a deal.

As a first step, foreign ministers would hold discussions, probably by telephone, Douste-Blazy said on Wednesday.

"We will certainly have at least a telephone meeting," he said, adding that they would speak "very soon."

EU diplomats say the sanctions called for in the text will be largely symbolic but that unanimous approval of even mild sanctions will send a strong signal to Tehran that the world is determined to stop Iran obtaining nuclear arms

#### AL activists

FROM PAGE 1

apprised the 14-party leaders of their decisions about the voter list correction process, rescheduling of the polls schedules and bringing necessary changes in other sensitive positions in the administration related to the election.

that the 14-party will have to participate in the next election within the constitutional provisions, within the 90 days' tenure of the CG. Highly placed sources in the AL said the party high command has taken the 'positive' decision for

taking preparation for the next

But the advisers set conditions

general election. But the party high command is still waiting for the rmal decisions of the CG. After the more than two-hour meeting. Abdul Jalil told newsmen. that they had reiterated the demands for cancellation of announced polls schedule, updating of voter list after reconstitution of

police administrations. Advisers Dr Akbar Ali Khan, CM Shafi Sami, Justice Fazlul Haque and Mahbubul Alam were present at the meeting. After the meeting the advisers rushed to Bangabhaban to hold a meeting with President and

the EC, and reshuffling the civil and

Chief Adviser lajuddin Ahmed. The meeting was going on as of

10:00pm. On behalf of the 14-party, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Kazi Zafarullah, Rashed Khan Menon, Haider Akbar Khan Rono and HT Imam attended

## Saddam appears

were killed.

'I will not accept being offended continuously by you and others," Saddam wrote to al-Khalifa. "Therefore, I ask to be relieved of attending the hearings in this new comedy and

Saddam and his co-defendants

have pleaded innocent to charges of

war crimes and crimes against

vou can do whatever vou want."

humanity arising from their role in a military crackdown on Iraq's Kurd population. Saddam and one other defendant are also charged with genocide for the campaign, code-named Operation Anfal, in which the prosecution says

180,000 people, mostly civilians,

Saddam's army allegedly destroyed hundreds of villages and killed or scattered their inhabitants in a scorched earth campaign against separatist guerrillas. On Nov. 5, Saddam was convicted in a separate trial in the

slaying of 148 Shiite Muslims,

including children, following an assassination attempt against him in the town of Dujail in 1982. He was sentenced to death by hanging. A lawyer for Saddam said Tuesday he had appealed to an American court in an attempt to win a stay of execution in the Dujail

case, arguing that the deposed

leader's rights had been violated by

But a U.S. district court judge in the District of Columbia rejected the request because the Italian lawyer is not a member of the D.C. bar. If an Iraqi appeals court upholds

be hanged early next year, according to Irag's chief prosecutor. Even if a U.S. court were to rule in Saddam's favor, there is no indication that the Iraqi judiciary would apply the decision and stay the

the death sentence, Saddam could

execution. On Sunday Saddam's lawyers formally appealed in Iraq the death sentence for the Dujail case, a court spokesman said.

Under Iragi law, death sentences are automatically appealed before a higher court within 10 days of their passage. But defense lawyers must file a formal appeal within 30 days, detailing the legal grounds for their action and presenting new evidence that could support their clients' claims of innocence. The lawyers

could also make a plea for leniency. Saddam's chief lawyer, Khalil al-Dulaimi, said two lawyers on the defense team had submitted the papers. He complained that defense lawyers had not received copies of the verdict until Nov. 23,

controlled ministry of higher educa-

Yesterday, Irag's higher educa-

tion minister Abed Dhiab al-Ujaili

met the families of people kid-

napped last month from his minis-

trv's research building and said that

fate. The ministry has not stopped

working to secure their release," a

ministry statement quoted Ujaili as

One police officer was also killed

delaying the appeal process.

tion, but only killed his driver

### At least 20 killed

area, a security official said.

American troops.

Four people were killed in a suicide bombing on a bus in Baghdad's Shiite district of Sadr City. The dead included two women while 12 others were wounded.

On November 23 a series of car

bombings in the impoverished area killed 202 people in by far the biggest attack in Iraq since the 2003 war to topple Saddam Hussein. In the southern city of Basra, a British patrol clashed with members

of the Mahdi Army, a Shiite militia

according to witnesses and a British

Three Iraqi civilians were wounded in the clash, an AFP correspondent said, while one British soldier was hospitalised with where the NBR does not respond to a "serious injury", according to the spokesman. In another attack four people

military spokesman.

were killed when a bomb went off in a shop near a bus station in the town of Iskandiriyah, south of Baghdad, In western Baghdad's upscale at least 56 of the hostages are still missing. "The fate of 56 of their sons is still unknown. The families appealed to the government to investigate their

and two other policemen wounded when gunnen shot at their patrol in Hawiia, west of the northern oil city of Kirkuk, police said. The US military also announced

that Insurgents killed a US soldier in Baghdad during combat operations on Sunday, bringing the military's losses in Iraq since the 2003 invato assassinate Brigadier General sion to 2,902 according to an AFP Mohsen Qassim, the head of the security force of Iraq's Sunnicount based on Pentagon figures.