### **Flood forecast**

Heavy rains since June and poor drainage system have aggravated the situation, leaving a vast area of the country under water, particularly the coastal districts and the lowlying areas of Satkhira, Khulna, Jessore, Barisal and Noakhali districts, sources at the Water Development Board said.

Already, the meteorological department has forecast at least 20 per cent more rainfall than average during July. The forecast given by the Indian meteorological department said that more than average rains are likely in the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins

Sources said heavy showers are causing rise in water levels of the country's three main river basins of the Padma, Jamuna and Meghna. On July 9, waters in the Surma and Meghna basins at Sunamganj and Kanaighat were flowing near the danger level. Padma was also flowing near the danger level at Bhagyakul, Aricha and Goalondo. The danger level of the Jamuna remained 66 cm and 81 cm respectively at Bahadurabad and Serajganj until July 9.

The sources explained that the three major river systems of the Ganges-Padma, Brahmaputra-Jamuna and Barak-Meghna basins are spread across a vast area of India Nepal Bhutan and China Seven per cent of the basin areas of these rivers, roughly estimated to be about 1.6 million square kilometres, are in Bangladesh. Waters of these three river systems rush down into the Bay of Bengal through

(ADB) -- both small portfolio holders

of the Lafarge Surma Cement

project.
"They (IFC and ADB) may give

five per cent investment, but it will

tour to Saudi Arabia, Saifur said

many bankers showed interest in

investing in Bangladesh. "But their

only condition is to create congenial

nance. Bangladesh is a good desti-

nation for investors and has invited

foreign investors, he said. "Bangla-

desh is a country where you can

make a lot of money through your

both from home and abroad, of all-

out supports for industrialisation

and appropriate measures for the

target, he underscored employment

tee to look into the allegation of

mustering wealth through unfair

means like tampering with meters

levelled against Mahbub. The

committee came up with curious

conclusions, giving Mahbub a clean

chit. There was no complaint of

irregularities against the meter

reader, the committee said in its

case against Mahbub under the

Passport Act on June 18 for trying to

travel overseas on forged docu-

authorities at the Zia International

Airport detained Mahbub as he tried

to fly to Singapore with his family.

faking his identity as businessman.

However, he was charged under

Section 54 of the Criminal

Procedure Code and not under the

Immigration Act. Produced before

the court, he was freed on bail 24

investigative report captioned

"Murky way to millions", describing

how a lowly meter reader became a

millionaire within a few years

that Mahbub handpicked the mem-

bers of the probe body. Besides, he

allegedly enjoys blessings from an

Energy and Mineral Resources

AKM Mosharraf Hossain publicly

On June 9. State Minister for

However, there are allegations

On May 15, The Daily Star ran an

hours after his arrest

through meter tampering.

influential cabinet member.

On April 27, the immigration

The Airport police have filed a

To reach the poverty alleviation

Mahbub still clean

The minister assured investors,

investment in a short time."

much-needed reforms.

Despite problems in gover-

environment.

Referring to his just-concluded

cause a 10-year delay," he said.

Saifur to turn

Severe flooding occurs in Bangladesh due to simultaneous heavy rains in these three river basins. All the floods in the country over the past 60 years have been due to this reason. During normal flooding over the monsoon period. about 25 to 30 per cent areas of Bangladesh go under water. But in case of severe floods, 50-70 percent areas of the country are submerged. Normally, the seasonal floods occur during the period between the last fortnight of July and the first fortnight of September, the sources said.

Meanwhile, our correspondent from Laxmipur vesterday reported that the flood situation in the lower portion of the district remained unchanged and the Meahna erosion continued unabated. The situation was worsened following intermittent rainfall and rise in the water level of the Meghna and Rahmatkhali rivers during the past two weeks. Several feet of water at Sadar Upazila worsened the situation in Digholi Charshahi and Kushakhali unions. People are marooned at their homes and facing food shortage.

The Daily Star correspondent from Pahna reported that due to rise in water level of the Padma, floodwaters have engulfed six villages at Nazirgani and Satbaria unions Hundreds of people have taken shelter on embankments after losing their homes to erosion. The rains continue to add to their miser-

### **Bodies formed to check fitness of** launches, seize unregistered ones

Against the backdrop of some major launch accidents in the last few months, the government has finalised an action programme to ensure safety of waterway passengers.

A high-level meeting at the ministry of shipping yesterday formed three committees to check fitness of all the 2,750 registered passenger launches in the country within three months

Chaired by Shipping Minister Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain, the meeting also directed the authorities concerned to seize all the unregistered passenger vessels within seven days after serving a public notice in this regard.

According to official statistics 2.714 people were killed in 272 waterway accidents in the country from January 1976 to May 2002. Faulty construction of passenger vessels, overloading of passengers, natural calamities and poor navigating skills are, among other things. held responsible for the waterway accidents.

The three inspection committees, each comprising four members a naval engineer, a marine architect, a master mariner and a magistrate will check whether a passenger vessel is built according to approved design and its master and driver are trained properly and it has sufficient lifesaving equipment.

on July 15 at three inspection centres at Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal river ports.

Owners of passenger vessels of Dhaka-Narayanganj and Khulna and Barisal regions will be served notices to bring their vessels to their respective inspection centres on a fixed date. If any vessel fails to come and get checked by the inspection team, its license will not be renewed further, the meeting decided.

It directed the committees to complete the inspection by October 14 and submit individual reports on every passenger vessel by November 1. The shipping ministry will review the reports at a meeting on the day. The committees will work under

the supervision of the department of

Shipping, which will provide them with administrative and logistic supports. They will meet every month at the department for an interim review of their activities. If any fault is found with a passenger vessel during the checking,

some time for correction. The team will go for final report after the expiry of the deadline Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain at the meeting directed the BIWTA authorities to circulate a public notice asking the owners of unregistered

passenger launches to report to the

authorities concerned.

the inspection team will allow it

days of the circulation of public notice, the unauthorised vessels will be seized and confiscated. Cases will also be filed against the owners of the vessels, the minister said.

Shipping Secretary Ghulam Rahman, acting Chairman of Department of Shipping Ahsanul Azim. Chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) M Shahidul Islam Chowdhury, and Chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation advocate Shamsui Rahman Shimul Biswas, among others, were present at the meeting.

It also came up for discussion that many passenger vessels now plying in the rivers are not built according to the BIWTA approved design. The vessels were built first and then some papers relating to designs were collected in exchange for money, the meeting was told.

The shipping minister, however directed the officials to check irreqularities. To get the design approved, the said, a passenger launch must have to obtain route permit first.

To avoid accidents from natural calamities like cyclone and tornado the minister asked the Shipping Department to take steps to bring the passenger launches, particularly those running at night, under radio network so that they can receive messages from the department concerned.

### WorldTel deal

generation projects that, he said will automatically alleviate poverty. Managing Director of the Lafarge Surma Cement Yong Ngai Chan said the project would help Bangladesh save foreign exchange

of US\$ 40 to 80 million a year, contribute around Tk 500 crore to the national exchequer and generate a should be the first priority. value addition of Tk 332 crore. But three members objected to It would promote a large-scale

domestic utilisation of gas and generate around 500 direct and 5,000-6,000 indirect employment opportunities, he said "This is a unique project. It has taken Lafarge almost four years to reach this stage," Yong Ngai Chan said before signing the contract with

the Kobe Steel Limited. French Ambassador in Dhaka Michel Lummaux and Manzurul Islam of Islam Group, an equity partner (three per cent) of the project, also spoke on the occasion.

the city and criticised the media for

carrying reports against the meter

"We have come to learn that the

reader was

The Special Branch of Police has

He also confessed to have made

several trips abroad without taking

leave from his office or prior permis-

sion from the government, a manda-

tory procedure for any public

that Mahbub has been to

Switzerland, Italy, the United States,

the United Kingdom and Singapore.

to have been detained on May 27,

documents. Also, the Bureau of

Anti-corruption has not yet taken

any step to find out whether Mahbub

has mustered his fortune through

Special Branch investigation.

The investigation also shows

However, there are some factual

meanwhile found out that Mahbub

has misrepresented his and his

father's names on more than one

occasion.

the Titas Gas for six years. He might

have made fortune through hard

work during those years." he had

reader and union leaders.

Gas body

The report suggested that all current gas discoveries be set aside for domestic energy consumption. Pipeline export should be considered in future only if a new gas field

is discovered and supply saturation is there. Export may be incrementally targeted and energy security for domestic consumption

this suggestion. Among them, two professors of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) maintained that to develop the gas sector the country could not depend entirely on internal financing, which is why limited export should be encouraged to attract foreign investment.

They also argued that oil companies would be discouraged by such a national policy and it would also threaten the interest of the shareholders of oil companies. A member then said that it was not the concern of the gas committee to protect the interest of the shareholders of the oil companies...the committee's concern was to protect the interest of the country.

The committee headed by former energy secretary Azim Úddin Ahmed comprises Petrobandla Director (finance) SR Osmani. Petrobangla Director (operations) Dr M Ismail, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Chartered Accountant MA Hafiz, BUET Chemical Engineering Department professors Prof. M Tamim and Dr. Ijaz Hossain and Prof. Momtajuddin Ahmed of Dhaka University. Another member, BIDS Research Director Dr KAS Murshid, was absent in vesterday's meeting as he was on a tour

### Cannabis

Blunkett was expected later

Wednesday to announce that he was downgrading cannabis from a class B to a class C category. That would put cannabis in the

misrepresentations in the case filed against Mahbub on the basis of the same group as steroids and antidepressants and that possession of For example, Mahbub is shown small amounts would no longer be an arrestable offence. Police would be limited to handing out penalty Besides, he has not been tickets to users. charged for faking identity and

Hellawell was a police chief constable before his 1998 appointment by Prime Minister Tony Blair as Britain's anti-drugs coordinator, or

He left that post last year, but has remained a part-time advisor.

He said the cannabis plan was "a personal initiative of David Blunkett. "I don't know where he got his advice from, he certainly didn't get it

from me," he added. Hellawell said a Home Office report had admitted cannabis was "a dangerous substance" and linked use of the drug, which is increasing

among young people, to a progres-

sion to harder narcotics such as

heroin and cocaine. "So why on earth, when there are these problems, we change our message and give a softer message. I do not know.'

Blunkett was due to announce his move in a statement to parlia-

He was expected to counter claims of going soft on drugs by announcing that maximum sentences for dealers in class C drugs would increase from five years to at

The package was also likely to place a new emphasis on drug treatment, but to rule out separate proposals to downgrade ecstasy from a class A to class B drug.

The BTTB takes installation fee

the WorldTel make the payment. The consultant, which was on the pay roll of WorldTel, was also given the task of evaluating the latter's financial proposal. This has damaged the country's interest, according to the BAC's first information report (FIR) in the case. The commission would investi-

gate eligibility of the company to go on with the project," a key official of the BTRC told this correspondent. If the probe finds the company on the right track, the commission

might ask it to continue the project, he added. Under the deal, the exchange having modern equipment and technology is to be set up by the WorldTel in three years on the basis

of build, own and operate (BOO). The registered demand for fixed phones with the BTTB is more than 1,50,000. Sources in it said the underlying demand is significantly higher' and the waiting time for a phone may be even up to 13 years.

of Tk 18.400 for every telephone connection with a phone set, which is one of the highest in the world The high fee is also used as a 'mechanism to check registered demand,' one source said. As per the contract, the WorldTel

is likely to invest at least 300 million US dollars for the project with 10 per cent free equity to the government. The company would also give 10 million dollars in two phases to the government before starting their networks and the government would also get 2.5 per cent of revenue earning from licence fee and frequency fees. The BTTB would also get 60 per cent charges of the nationwide and international calls. The company won the deal in

November 1998 competing with two other foreign bidders -- China Telecom Construction and Pak Telecom Foundation-- and two local

### Thai PM spends busy day

Shah Amanat ® International Airport and its commercial prospects, important tourist spots at Cox's Bazar and Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the life and culture of the tribal people through a multimedia presentation. They watched the presentation with keen interest.

Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin told the distinguished guests that the development of the airport, the sea port and other infrastructure was aimed at promoting regional trade.

The airport ceremony over, Premier Thaksin and his entourage drove to the Bhatiary Golf and Country Club in a motorcade.

School children standing at various points on both sides of the road greeted the Thai prime minister waving miniature flags of both Bangladesh and Thailand.

Portraits of Khaleda Zia and Thaksin Shinawatra along with the national flags of the two countries were placed at different points on the road.

During his daylong stay, Thaksin Shinawatra visited the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) and

Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE). He left for Chiang Mai in Thailand late in the afternoon ending his

Earlier, the Thai prime minister was given a hearty send off at Zia International Airport as he left for the port city of Chittagong yesterday morning.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia saw

Premier Shinawatra off at the tarmac of the airport. A tiny tot presented the distinguished guest with a bouquet. Earlier, a smartly turned out contingent drawn from the three

services gave the Thai prime minister a guard of honour. He took salute from a decorated dais and inspected the guard. The national anthems of the two countries were played at the time.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia led Premier Shinawatra to the presentation line and introduced to him the members of her cabinet, diplomats and high civil and military officials

Before seeing him off, Khaleda Zia exchanged pleasantries with him and members of his entourage. She waved him farewell as the special Royal Thai Airforce aircraft carrying him taxied along toward the

## **Human clone on cards**

monplace by year 2010, said Jung Yung Pyo, sales director at BioFusion

Despite a promise on the company's website that it would present partial results of its cloning process at the fair, Kaenzig, a Swiss native and Raelian follower, declined to say how far the group is from bringing the first human clone into the world.

Kaenzig said, however, the company had created "a few hundred" human blastocysts and "you know what the next step is" Clonaid argues its cloning tech-

nology will help people suffering from infertility as well as single and gay people who want genetic offspring. Thanks to reproductive cloning, they can fulfil their dreams," Kaenzig

said. Cloning of one person would cost about 200,000 dollars, he said. "After the first (cloned) baby is presented, people will see it's OK. It is

a reproductive technology. Why are we launching this product (RMX 2010) here? We felt Asian countries are more open to new technologies," Clonaid had faced strong resis-

tance in Western nations, especially by "conservative Christian groups,

The Raelians, who claim 55,000 followers worldwide, believe that life on Earth was established by extraterrestrials who arrived in space

ships 25,000 years ago and that

humans themselves were created by

According to the Clonaid.com website, Raelians believe humans can attain eternal life by creating clones and transferring memory data to the clones Earlier this year, Clonaid revealed

that a 59-year-old man with a terminal illness had asked Raelians to clone him. Inspectors from the US Food and

Drug Administration raided the Raelian's secret laboratory in West Virginia, and seized documents. "We pulled out of the United

States," Kaenzig said, although he declined to disclose the location of the new headquarters or where it is conducting the cloning project, adding only that it was in a nation that allows human cloning. The movement's founder, Rael

the former French journalist Claude Vorilhon - describes himself as a prophet in the line of Moses or Mohammed. Many scientists are repelled by ethical questions posed by human

cloning, and many governments,

including Japan, have raced to ban reproductive cloning. Yet it has not prevented a race among scientific mavericks to

become the first to clone a human. One of them, Italian gynaecologist Severino Antinori, told the French daily Le Monde in an interview published in May that three women were pregnant with clones.

Opposition MPs FROM PAGE 1
day and the PM could have allotted

time to show up in the House to answer questions. He added that they should have been notified of her absence earlier.

In the seventh parliament, former nrime minister Sheikh Hasina, now the leader of the opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad, introduced the halfan-hour question-answer session of the prime minister once a week. The former PM used to answer the lawmakers on Tuesday. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia now takes questions on Wednesday.

The PM's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, speaking on a point of order, said the PM's question answer-session was not included in the rules of procedure. It was introduced in line with a decision of a business advisory committee meeting during the AL rule. Later on, a notification was served.

He said the question-answer session was also excluded from the day's order as the former prime minister had busy state schedules. Al lawmaker Suraniit Sengupta

expressed the opposition MP's frustration at the prime minister's skipping the session. He said. "We have many things to know from her. And I hope she would answer guestions from the opposition lawmakers

He also thanked SQ Chowdhury for acknowledging that the introduc-tion of PM's question hour was a positive step of the previous govern-Law, Justice and Parliamentary

Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed assured the opposition lawmakers that they would get plenty of opportunities to ask the prime minister questions if they continue in the Senior AL legislator Abdus

Samad Azad said the PM should let the parliament and the people know about the unceremonious exit of president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury

Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim urged the chair to revoke the proceedings of a motion censuring the opposition leader as he found it contradictory to

### Laden alive

FROM PAGE 12

Soviet occupation Ayman al-Zawahri, who is considered al-Qaeda's number two, and the network's spokesman Suleiman Abu Ghaith, have in recent months relayed the same message of bin Laden's fitness through videotapes to Arab satellite channels, notably Qatar's Al-Jazeera and MBC. "These declarations are a way of

proving the survival (of al-Qaeda officials). It's a message to say: 'We are still here'," said Śaudi researcher Turad al-Amri, who heads the independent Riyadhbased Said al-Amri centre for strategic and security studies "The al-Qaeda network has

some sleeping cells from which it was cut off (during the war in Afghanistan) and these statements carry a message addressed to them," Amri said.

### Press coverage FROM PAGE 12

Press Information Department (PID) here earlier sent a list of 41 journalists to the Special Branch (SB) of Police with a recommendation for ssuance of security passes to them. But the SSF rejected outright issuance of any security pass to local reporters without showing any specific reasons, the sources said.

The SSF had manhandled a former deputy commissioner (DC) of Chittagong during the visit of Princess Anne here last year.

#### Army promotions FROM PAGE ment of an officer.

The selection board, which sits twice a year, held its meeting in normal time frame this year.

Last year, the board met ahead of schedule on June 10-13, a few weeks before the then government left office. Its three-day meeting was extended to four days.

Ahead of that meeting, three brigadier generals were promoted to the rank of major general The selection board's meeting

this time was inaugurated on July 8 by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Army Headquarters. She asked the board members to consider promotions only on the basis of profession alism, talent and patriotism. The board in its first sitting rec-

ommends promotion of officers of the rank of lieutenant colonel to that of colonel and those of the rank of colonel to that of brigadier general Its second meeting is due on July 20 The meeting will consider promotion of officers of the rank of major to the rank of lieutenant colo-

#### Jolting omen FROM PAGE 1

He warned that about 90 per cent buildings in Dhaka and Chittagong might collapse in case of a major earthquake -- measuring 6 to 7 on the Richter scale -- as most of those were not 'designed to withstand

He pointed out that old buildings in the two cities are 'vulnerable to even a moderate earthquake.' He stressed creating awareness among the people about the need for 'evolving engineering designs for construction of earthquake resistant buildinas'. It may be recalled five persons

were killed as a five-storied building collapsed at Hamiarbagh in the port city in an earthquake in November 1997. The quake measuring 6 on the Richter scale had its epicentre 247 km north east of Chittagong. In 1999, several hundred kutcha houses collapsed at Maheskhali in Cox's Bazar in a tremor measuring 5.5 of this scale.

## Why, asks PM

compensation issue at the parliament earlier this week -- along with other questions about the government's position on gas exports.

The State Minister for Energy Mosharraf Hossain blamed the Awami League government for making the Magurchhara issue complicated by shelving it and said the AL government had acted dubiously with the probe committee report. He even named the then secretary Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowhdury in this connection.

Hasina on the other hand blamed the previous BNP government and said that her government could not place compensation claims as the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) with Occidental -- signed by the previous BNP government -- did not have any provisions to deal with compensation in case of a disaster In addition, Hasina blamed the BNP or signing the PSC with the company in 'secrecy'.

The government has so far dealt

with the Magurchhara issue very Although the blow-out took place

in June 15, 1997, Petrobangla could not demand compensation as the past Awami League government had shelved the official probe report, keeping it as a 'classified' document. Occidental was allowed to work

without any monetary penalty and was given an extension of the terminated Production Sharing Contract (PSC) under which it worked. It was finally allowed to sell its Bangladeshi concerns to Unocal and leave Bangladesh in 1999. In late 2000, the then

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy raised the issue of the report of the Magurchhara probe committee that was formed with the energy ministry and Petrobangla officials. A tug-of-war followed between the former energy secretary and the Standing Committee leader, former AL lawmaker Imran Ahmed. The secretary refused to submit the probe committee report.

Petrobangla could not take any action in the form of compensation

claims in the past as the then energy secretary argued that Occidental had agreed to a compensation

through a supplementary agreement when its PSC was extended in However as per the official documents, the supplementary agreement was not signed as a

compensation for damages of the gas structure. Finally with the intervention of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the probe report was given to the standing committee and

Petrobangla in early 2001. With the probe report in hand, Petrobangla started processing the compensation claim slowly After the BNP came to power in October, Petrobangla sent a draft compensation claim to the energy ministry for its approval.

The ministry followed a go-slow policy over the draft and returned it earlier this year. As the issue implied diplomatic and political sensitivity, Petrobangla again sought the After getting approval twice, Petrobangla was about to issue the

claim to Unocal in mid-May when the state minister for energy intervened and stopped it in the pretext that the claim should be scrutinised by foreign PSC experts. But after a month, the minister surprisingly backtracked by sending

a letter to Petrobangla claiming no instruction was given to stop it (Petrobangla) from filing the claim. Petrobangla responded by filing the claim last week and after two days, Unocal refused to pay up. Occidental had begun drilling in the spot on June 2, 1997. It was its first drilling since it signed a PSC on

January 11, 1995. This PSC was naturally terminated in January 11, 1998 for failing to fulfil the minimum work commitment. However the government 'extended' the contract eight months later adding some new clauses. When Unocal took over

Occidental's concerns it automatically inherited the latter's liabilities.

Mojibur Rahman, additional

superintendent of police of CID.

Dhaka, filed a rape case with the

same police station accusing seven

people including Shahid after six

months of investigation into the

Accused Shahid, Hasan, Badal,

Shazneen murder case.

### Shazneen case domestic help at his residence, on

FROM PAGE 1

Rahman said the telephone line was snapped immediately. Abed then called another number and a man received the call. He (Abed) requested the man to give the receiver to Shazneen's father and nform him that she was screaming. The man replied that he would not be able to do so. Afterwards, Abed had his friend

Shakib call his (Rahman's) residence to inform someone that Shazneen was in danger, Rahman continued. But Shakib's telephone call was also received by an unidentified man who also refused to hand the receiver over to Shazneen's mother as requested by Shakib During the call, Shakib also heard Shazneen groaning, Rahman said.

Ahed and his friend Shakih narrated this to him at his residence separately two days after the incident. Rahman added Rahman filed a murder case with

the Gulshan Police Station accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a

Shani Ram, Minu and Parvin were present in the court during the hearing yesterday. Special public prosecutors Arfan Uddin Khan, ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahbub Ahmed, advocates Saima Khanam, Mohammad Ali

appeared for the complainant. The Shazneen Murder Case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka was earlier stayed by the High Court (HC). The HC order will remain valid till disposal of the

Hossain and Anisur Rahman

rape case. The trial of the rape case began at the special court on July 9, 2000.

### Lavish perks for MPs

FROM PAGE 1 the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker from Tk 250 to Tk 750. I also proposed a 50 per cent rise in discretionary grant for both, from

two lakh to three lakh taka. Ministers, Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 2002 proposed a rise in monthly house rent for ministers from Tk 17,500 to Tk 25,000 and for state

and deputy ministers from Tk 15,000 to Tk 20,000. The bill also proposed that the ministers be entitled to a daily allowance of Tk 750 instead of Tk 225 at present and the state and deputy ministers Tk 600, three times what they get now.

Moreover, it provided for an annual discretionary grant of Tk 3 lakh for each minister, a 50 percent rise.

Similarly, state and deputy ministers would also be entitled to enhanced discretionary grants of Tk. 2 lakh and Tk. 1.5 lakh respectively. Currently they get Tk 1 lakh The bill proposed that in addition

to an official car, maintained at

government expenses, ministers.

state ministers and deputy ministers

larly for official tours outside Dhaka. In case the departments, directorates or corporations of the ministries and divisions concerned cannot provide the additional transport to ministers, state and deputy ministers, the finance ministry will

allocate necessary fund for procure-

essential official business, particu-

ment of vehicles. The Members of the Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) Amendment) Act, 2002 proposed á 100 per cent increase in MPs' sump tuary allowance from Tk 1.000 to Tk 2.000.

It also proposed a 300 per cent increase in office allowance for MPs from Tk 1,500 to Tk 6,000 while their constituency allowance from Tk 1,500 to Tk 5,000. Increase of Tk 25,000 in discre-

tionary grant, in place of Tk 75,000 a

year, was also proposed for each As per the bill, each lawmaker was to be entitled to a monthly telephone bill of Tk 6,000, instead of

Tk 4,000 now. Besides, enhanced travel allowance was also proposed - Tk 6 per kilometre instead of Tk 1 per mile

receives its entire daily requirement

of 90,000 barrels of Iraqi oil at pref-

erential prices under a deal

approved by the United Nations.

which imposed sanctions on Iraq

## Jordan: Use of force

motives to attack the United States

with weapons of mass destruction and must be dealt with before he No specific U.S. plans for depos-

ing the Iraqi leader have been put forward and a military strike remains just one option. Other logical launching pads for an attack on Irag beside Jordan are Kuwait and Qatar, where the U.S. military already has facilities, troops and hardware.

Adwan said King Abdullah II has been "doing his best" through continuous regional and international contacts to "prevent any military attack against" Iraq.

Abdullah returned Tuesday from talks with President Vladimir Putin in Russia, where Foreign Ministry Spokesman Alexander Yakovenko said his country was convinced that negotiations with Saddam was the only way to solve the crisis and repeated Russia's opposition to any nilitary action against Iraq. Jordan stands to lose vital trade

with Irag if it was seen by its neighbor to be agreeing or facilitating the use of force against Baghdad. Official figures show that Iraq was Jordan's largest foreign trade

million.

after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Political considerations also figure high in Jordan's tough public stance against a strike on Irag. Jordan's predominantly Palestinian population is suspicious of the United States and views its Middle East policies as biased in favor of Israel Jordanians also are sympathetic toward Iragis, whose govern-

killed tens of thousands. But King Abdullah can't afford to anger the United States. Washington shunned Jordan in 1990, when Abdullah's late father, King Hussein, refused to join a U.S.led multinational coalition that chased Iraq out of Kuwait after a seven-month occupation. The United States is a major aid

ment claims the sanctions have

donor to impoverished Jordan. Official figures show that the United States also is one of Jordan's main trade partners, importing goods worth nearly \$400 million. Washington's annual military

partner last year, importing and economic assistance is Jordanian goods worth about \$700 expected to increase by \$100 million to \$325

# **Settling for less**

target twice from \$7.17 billion to \$5.95 billion and then again to \$5.85

"In view of the present global trend, we want to set a realistic target for the current fiscal. Roughly. we want to keep the new target only seven per cent higher than last fiscal's revised target," said a highly placed source in the commerce ministry. The country's exports fetched

\$5409.98 million during July-May period of FY02. The earning was 17.69 per cent less than the original target of \$6572.50 million for the same period and also \$459 million short of the earning during the same period of the previous fiscal (FY01). "We have finalised the export figures till May and are finalising the figures for June," said an EPB official. Earlier, export targets were set

on the basis of sectoral performance. But the process has now

been changed and targets are fixed on the basis of market performance.

illegal means or not.

The country's overseas missions monitor trade performance and send the information to the foreign and commerce ministries. The export target is then set based on the information "So far, we have not received the

necessary information from the missions. But we have to set the target keeping in mind the performance of last fiscal," the EPB official maintained. This fiscal's export target for readymade garment sector may be

fixed at \$3.31 billion, accounting

for 53 per cent of the total target

and the target for knitwear may be

set at \$1.45 billion, 23 per cent of the

The target for frozen food sector may be set at \$280 million, leather sector \$220 million, jute goods \$260 million, raw jute \$60 million, chemical products \$70 million, tea \$22 million and handicrafts \$7 million.