

Stone lifting from hills banned

UNB, Dhaka

The government has imposed a ban on stone lifting from hills to protect country's ecological balance. The decision was taken yesterday at an inter-ministerial meeting on "procuring stone, sand and mineral resources from different areas" at the Environment Ministry with Minister Shajahan Siraj in the chair, said an official release. A committee, with joint secretary of the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry as its convener, was formed in the meeting to solve the legal complications in leasing of stone, sand and mineral resources in different areas and demarcation.

Other members of the committee are representatives from the Land Ministry, Water Resources Ministry, Forest Department, Environment Department and Soil Resources Development Institute. Another five-member committee was constituted to solve the problem arising out of lifting stones from Jhinaigati in Sherpur district. Deputy Commissioner of Sherpur was made convener of the committee. Other members are Mymensingh Divisional Forest Officer and representatives from Department of Environment, Mineral Resources Bureau and Soil Resources Development Institute. M Mahmudul Huq MP will act as the advisor of the committee. Both the committees will submit their respective reports within next one month.

State Minister for Mineral Resources AKM Mosharrar Hossain, State Minister for Environment and Forest Zafrul Islam Chowdhury, Whip M Zahed Ali Chowdhury, MPs of Sherpur-1 and 3 constituencies, Chief Forest Conservator Anwar Faruq and officials from Cabinet Division and other concerned ministries were present.

Flag meeting

FROM PAGE 1 and local people started fleeing their houses for safety. Nearly 200 people including women and children were trapped in the no-man's land, guarded by the BSF, at Lalmonirhat border. The BDR along with the VDP (Village Defence Party) was on high alert there. Our Kushtia correspondent reported that the BDR foiled several attempts to push into Bangladesh some 70 Bangla-speaking Indian nationals through at least three border points in Kushtia and Meherpur.

JS session

FROM PAGE 12 injured in the drive, styled Operation Clean Heart. The main opposition Awami League, which boycotted the first day's proceedings in protest at placement of the ordinance and the presidential speech, is expected to join the House today. Inside sources said the party would strongly protest if the bill was tabled and might walk out. The AL has submitted at least 36 notices seeking disapproval of the controversial ordinance. The second-largest opposition party, the Jatiya Party, has also decided to protest the bill, party sources said. Meanwhile, the treasury bench is expected to move a thanks-giving motion on the presidential speech besides the question-answer session and call attention notices on issues of urgent public importance.



Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina speaking at a meeting of party sub-committees at its Dhanmondi office yesterday.

Trap for lane

FROM PAGE 1 limit the impact of such collisions. His third device is a rickshaw wheel-cap. Fixed in the centre of the spoked wheels, it prevents injury to legs. Jehan showed off his rickshaw trap on the Press Club road from morning till evening. Several rickshaws tried to jump lanes onto the motorway. But the trap stopped them.

Haggling

FROM PAGE 1 Rakib Siddiqui, a journalist. A Dhaka University resident who had to seek police intervention to force a CNG auto-rickshaw driver to accept metered fare spoke in rather strong terms. According to official Iraqi newspapers, Saddam told senior military aides that if war happens: "The enemy will not enter Baghdad's suburbs because he will die. Even if they send a million soldiers, our boys will kill them." The ratcheted-up rhetoric overshadowed efforts by several countries to push for a peaceful solution. Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreu, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, is to begin a tour of several Arab countries from Sunday, while Russian officials will hold talks Monday with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. With the clock ticking, chief UN arms inspectors have said they would accept an invitation to Baghdad to discuss their demands for greater cooperation only if Iraqi officials assured them the talks would be fruitful. Chief UN inspector Hans Blix, told reporters Friday he would "certainly" agree to meet Saddam if he were invited to do so, but diplomats said that was extremely unlikely. General Amer al-Saadi, an adviser to Saddam, has written to Blix and the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, saying that "ideally" they should visit Baghdad before February 10 - four days before their next update to the UN Security Council. A spokesman for Blix said a response was being considered. "We are seeking assurances that such a meeting would lead to something fruitful," he said. Next Wednesday, US Secretary of State Colin Powell goes before the UN Security Council to lay out what Washington says is fresh evidence that Iraq is defying disarmament demands. Newsweek magazine, quoting US officials and intelligence experts, said Powell would be providing damning electronic evidence that Iraq has lied to UN inspectors and hidden weapons from them. Electronic intercepts made by the National Security Council (NSC) "prove that Iraq has repeatedly lied to UN inspectors, plotted among themselves about how to conceal weapons material and even appeared to boast afterward about their success," Newsweek said. Iraq said late Friday it wants a send a top official to the Wednesday meeting to observe the evidence Powell is

Push for Iraq strike

FROM PAGE 12 to present. Several contentions Washington has put forward as a premise for war have been challenged by the UN inspectors, other countries and independent observers. Blix told Friday's New York Times that he has seen no evidence backing US claims that Baghdad has ties to the al-Qaeda network, nor that Iraqi agents were posing as scientists. The Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reports in its Monday edition that there was also no evidence that Iraq intends to blow up its oil wells if the United States starts a war - a tactic used in Kuwaiti oilfields during the 1991 conflict. US special forces are reportedly preparing to seize the oil wells at the start of a conflict to prevent such a scenario. The increasing likelihood of war has prompted a flurry of recent warnings from the US government to its diplomats and citizens abroad. In the latest, the US embassy in Saudi Arabia yesterday urged the 30,000 Americans in the Gulf state neighbouring Iraq to consider leaving. The Philippines president, Gloria Arroyo, made a similar appeal to her estimated 1.4 million nationals in the region ahead of a hastily arranged visit to Kuwait Sunday. "As we pray that there will be no war, let us say that if there is a war, it will be a swift one," Arroyo said.

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12 hurt as Jubo Dal factions clash in Narsingdi

UNB, Narsingdi

At least 12 people were injured, four with bullets, in a clash between two factions of Jubo Dal at Sreerampur in Raipura upazila yesterday. The clash ensued between the supporters of thana Jubo Dal president Maniruzzaman and vice-president Mohammad Nuruzzaman at around 10am over opening of Jubo Dal office at Sreerampur.

Road accident kills three in C'nawabganj

UNB, Chapainawabganj

Three people were killed and nine others injured in a road accident at Akandobaria in Sadar upazila yesterday morning. Police and witnesses said the accident took place at about 11am when the truck hit the Chapainawabganj-bound bus coming from Shibpur, killing three bus passengers on the spot. The bus was badly damaged. Two of the dead were identified as police constable Shafiqul Islam, 42, and Derasuddin, 70. The injured were admitted to Sadar hospital. Of them, eight were identified as Abuzar, Ibrahim, Mostafa, Islam, Kamrul Islam, Rezaul Karim, Mohsin and Shishir. The truck driver and helper managed to flee the scene. A case was filed.

Graft case Former DU VC Prof Azad gets anticipatory bail

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to former Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University Dr Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury for eight months in a graft case. The court issued the rule asking the government to show cause in four weeks why the petitioner (AK Azad Chowdhury) should not be granted anticipatory bail in the case. A division bench comprising Justice Syed Amirul Islam and Justice Mirza Hossain Haider passed the order. A corruption case was filed against Dr Azad Chowdhury on January 26 with Ramna police station. The case is now pending with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka. Barrister Shafique Ahmed moved the petition on behalf of the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Syed Shahidur Rahman stood for the state. gator failed to find their complicity in the bomb attack. And as no witnesses could be found against the accused, they were all excluded from the list, the report mentioned. Army explosive experts identified the bomb as high-powered and made of iron splinters, but they failed to determine if it was remote-controlled or had any timing device. Abul Kalam, son of Halima Khatun who was killed in the bomb blast, lodged another case with Sadar thana accusing 57 people, including Shamim Osman, Nasim Osman and Selim Osman. The case is still under investigation.

Columbia crashes

FROM PAGE 1

Columbia was launched January 16 amid extremely tight security amid heightened concerns since the September 11 attacks in the United States and due to the presence of Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon. Ramon, the son of an Auschwitz survivor, is a 48-year-old air force colonel who as a fighter pilot took part in several missions against Arab targets in 1973 and 1982. He was Columbia's payload specialist. The Space Shuttle Columbia was commissioned in 1988 and was on its 28th mission. The Columbia crew, divided into two teams, worked around the clock for 16 days to complete more than 80 experiments on the effects of weightlessness on human physiology, on the growth of crystals and proteins, and on combustion. The experiments were drawn from proposals made by research centres, universities and private businesses, as well as suggestions sent by students from schools in Australia, China, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein and the United States. It was almost 17 years to the day that the Challenger shuttle exploded on January 28, 1986, killing all seven astronauts on board. NASA would say only that it had declared a "contingency" and that

search and rescue units had been scrambled to search for any wreckage.

Citizens in the Dallas-Fort Worth area were warned not to approach any wreckage they might find. NASA mission control in Houston said, "Any debris that is located in the Dallas-Fort Worth vicinity should be avoided and may be hazardous due to the toxic nature of propellants used on board the shuttle and should be reported to local law enforcement authorities." In Palestine, Texas, a city southwest of Dallas that could be on a flight path that would turn up debris, police spokesman Steve Petrovich said, "We've gotten numerous calls throughout the city of some type of sonic-type boom and people seeing vapour trails." There were numerous eyewitness reports of the shuttle apparently breaking apart, with several trails seen as it headed toward Earth. Dan Archer told local television from Waco, Texas. "I kept tracking the shuttle and then it appeared to be breaking up." Another witness told CNN: "We heard a rumble. It eventually got to where our house was shaking ... it lasted for about a minute and a half. It felt like you lived with a railroad in your backyard." Weather forecasters had predicted clear skies and light winds at the Kennedy Space Center. NASA headquarters said there had been no reported difficulties from the shuttle before it lost contact with ground control.

Young man stabbed to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified miscreants stabbed one youth to death in the city's Lalbagh area yesterday. Dadan Bepari, 25, was stabbed him in the chest and abdomen while he was going to a restaurant he used to work with at 5:45am on the Kamalbagh embankment, witnesses said. Dadan ran to a nearby shop and asked for help. People rushed him to the Mitford Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries within minutes of arrival. A murder case was filed with the Lalbagh Police Station, but no-one was arrested till last night. Meanwhile, a middle-aged man was burnt to death when fire gutted five rooms in a market at Pallabi yesterday morning. Erfan Ali, 45, was caretaker of the market. He was sleeping when the fire, originating from unidentified source, engulfed five rooms near the Raun Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity at avenue 5, Pallabi, at 3:45am. Erfan's body was discovered in the ruins in the morning. The fire also burnt down valuables said to be worth Tk 80,000 before the firefighters extinguished it at 4:25 am.

Diplomats of Muslim countries meet Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

A meeting between opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and diplomats of Muslim countries yesterday discussed bilateral, national and international issues. During the meeting at Hotel Sonargaon, the Awami League chief urged the envoys of the Muslim countries in Dhaka to import more manpower to their countries from Bangladesh. "We have a large number of skilled workers and you can contribute to Bangladesh's economic development by importing manpower to your countries," she told the diplomats. Hasina, however, voiced concern over the mounting tension in the Middle East and stressed peaceful political solution to any problem. She also referred to the role of Bangladeshis against international terrorism and said all countries should work unitedly against terrorism. Hasina recalled that Bangladesh became an OIC member in 1974 under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman consolidating the relationship of Bangladesh with the Muslim countries. She emphasised the importance of further strengthening the OIC and bolstering relationship with the member countries for mutual benefit. Awami League leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Mohammed Abdul Jaill, SAMS Kibria, Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Syed Abul Hossain were also present at the meeting.

Students of fine arts put admin offices under lock and key

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitating students of the Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday kept all the administrative offices of the institute under lock and key to press home their four-point demand. Their demands include the complete cancellation of the admission test for first year admission in the Bachelor of Fine Arts programme. The students also demanded a renewed admission test and the punishment of the teacher of the institute allegedly involved with the revelation of admission test questions. On January 30, the institute authorities cancelled a portion of the admission test held on January 25. The students said administrative activities would remain at a standstill until their demands are met. The institute students will stage a sit-in front of the director's office today and bring out a procession on the campus. Petroleum Act 1974 to be amended to make it pragmatic UNB, Dhaka

Bomb blasts at Mongla: One injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three powerful bomb explosions at Mongla on Wednesday and Thursday left one person seriously injured. Police and eyewitnesses said two powerful bombs went off in the house of labour leader and pourashava commissioner Shahjahan Shikary at about 9:00pm Thursday. The commissioner was not home and none was injured in the explosion which created panic in the neighbourhood. Earlier on Wednesday night, a man identified as Phul Mia, 45, was seriously injured in a bomb explosion in Madrassa Road. The injured was admitted to the Thana Health Complex. Police could not arrest anyone. Shahjahan Shikary filed a general diary with Mongla thana seeking protection. A state of panic prevailed in Mongla Township. Police and Mongla Port Authority have been put on high alert. JS committees FROM PAGE 12 practice in the last parliament. The committees would be formed keeping the posts for AL members vacant. They would be included in the bodies as soon as nominated by their party, a top leader of the BNP said. But he mentioned that despite repeated requests, the AL was yet to give the names of its members.

Seminar on Iraq

FROM PAGE 12 Council, were nothing but satellite pictures, tapped phone calls, intelligence reports etc. "These could not be the basis for a war against a sovereign country," he noted. He said if the US's goal is to disarm Iraq, the UN arms inspectors should be given the time they need to do the job. If they find some hidden things they can always take them out and destroy them to ensure disarmament, he said. On the other hand, Iraq should provide all the information to the arms inspectors regarding weapons of any sorts, Muslehuddin said. Prof. Rehman Sobhan said the US invasion in Iraq would lead to a lawless world. "The immediate causality of the war will be the United Nations and the international laws will cease to be effective." He said democracy as a whole would be in danger in the event of a war because the majority of the people in the world do not support the war. The CPD chairman said should a war erupt it would heavily affect the world economy.

"It will bring about negative impact on oil, jobs and the daily life of all countries, specially countries dependent on remittance," he said. Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam also spoke on the occasion. Barrister Sigma Huda of the Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) and a member of the Bangladesh chapter of the SAHR, moderated the function. WTO rules FROM PAGE 12 Chowdhury was present. Amir Khosru said once the TRIP agreement is fully implemented, price of agriculture input and the cost of the farm production would surely shoot up. "A national committee on plant genetic resources has prepared two drafts on the Bio-diversity and Community Knowledge Protection Act within the guidelines of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and TRIP," the minister said. "The flexibility available under the CBD and TRIP were used to the optimum level to ensure the farmer's rights over their own biological and national resources in making these draft laws," he added. But other speakers were not so sure that the farmers' rights would be adequately protected. Jafrul Islam said the issue of farmer rights is of national interest and importance as agricultural sector contributes to one third of the gross domestic products and accounts for two-thirds of the labour force. He said Bangladesh has signed international treaty on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in recognition to the importance of bio-diversity in public life and the roles of the farmers in protecting such bio-diversity. Jafrul further said certain arrangements of the WTO are not in absolute conformity with the needs and capacities of the least developed and developing countries like Bangladesh. Farhad Mazhar and Farida Akhter of Bangladesh, Suman Sahai of India, Hiramani Ghimire of Nepal, and Dr. Syed Wazid Pirzada of Pakistan presented five separate keynote papers at the workshop.

Girl abducted

FROM PAGE 12 rescue the girl. As the cab sped away, her mother ran after it in tears. Minutes later, a police team arrived and took Sufia and Mozammel to the Motijheel Police Station. Sufia filed a case.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 12 Maruf, former joint secretary Mohammad Hossain Semriabat and Unique Group Managing Director NurAli. Charges against Brigadier General (ret'd) Ittehar-ul-Bashar and former deputy secretary Hasan Mahmood Delwar were dropped on ground of insufficient evidences. Later, charges were brought against the former army chief, the air commander, the former joint secretary and the businessman as the enquiry suggested their involvement in the scam. Earlier, former Air chief Jamaluddin Ahmed and ex-secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain were granted ad-interim bail by the High Court.

Bank directors

FROM PAGE 1 notifications of any regulatory body would also be barred from becoming bank director. A bank board would have a maximum of 11 members and the Bangladesh Bank (BB) can appoint two of them from a panel of depositors. A committee headed by the BB governor would prepare the panel of depositors. A bank cannot have more than one member of a family on its board and a director can hold the post for a maximum six years. They have to keep away from the board for at least two years to be reelected. A person cannot be chairman of a bank for more than three years and would need a two-year break to be reelected. The bank directors will have to inform the Bangladesh Bank and the their boards annually about the enterprises in which they have business interests. Moreover, they will have to submit an annual undertaking stating that they have not defaulted on loans taken from any bank or financial institutions.

Launch fare

FROM PAGE 1 The meeting also decided to ensure safety and security at the terminals, remove traffic jams on the roads leading to these to save the passengers from harassment. The owners agreed to introduce more launch services for home-bound passengers during the Eid vacation. Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Chairman Shahidul Islam Chowdhury, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) Chairman Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, Director General of the Maritime Transport Directorate Commodore Golam Rabbani and leaders of the Launch Owners Association and police administration attended the meeting. "We don't get enough passengers year-round, except Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha vacations," Mohammad Kolimullah, president of the owners association, told The Daily Star. "Fuel price hike made it even more difficult for us, prompting us to demand a 20 per cent fare increase." The BIWTA chairman refused to make any comment.

Janatar Mancha

FROM PAGE 12 election commissioner Shaifur Rahman, former director of Narcotics Control Department Syed Bazul Karim, former students relationship officer in the Ministry of Education Abu Alam Shahid Khan, former Joint Secretary in the women's affairs ministry and incumbent member of the Public Service Commission Sirajuddin Ahmed, senior assistant secretary (now OSD in the establishment ministry) Rabiul Alam Mohammad Abaidul Muktadir Chowdhury, former DIG of police Prokriti Ranjan Chanda (PR Chanda) and former president of Secretariat Karmachari Sangjukta Parishad Syed Mohiuddin. Mohammad Saifur Rahman, the officer-in-Charge (OC) of Ramna thana filed the section case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka on April 8, 2001, accusing Dr Alamgir and six others. Later, the IO of the case included the name of PR Chanda in the chargesheet as investigation revealed his involvement. In the case, it has been alleged that the accused had erected a Janatar Mancha (People's dais) in front of the Jatiya Press Club in March 1996 and instigated the government officials and employees to join the agitation against the then BNP government. Fifteen people were shown as prosecution witnesses in the chargesheet. All the eight accused are now on bail.

N'ganj AL office blast 27 FIR-named people relieved of the case

UNB, Narayanganj

CID police recently submitted the final report in the first case of the sensational bomb blast at Awami League office at Chashara in the town after 19 months of lengthy investigation. Assistant Police Superintendent of CID Aminul Islam submitted the final report before a local Magistrate court on January 27. Thirty-one men including 27 named in the FIR have been relieved of the case. Twenty people were killed and over 50 injured in the blast on the night of June 16, 2001. Advocate Khokon Saha, general secretary of Narayanganj town AL, filed a case with Sadar police on June 17, 2001 accusing 27 people, including BNP leaders advocate Taimur Alam Khandaker, Nurul Islam, Momin Ullah David and Badiuzzaman Badu. CID had taken over the case from the then local ASP of 'KA' region Atiqur Rahman who was initially investigating the case. The CID report exonerated 31 people, including Advocate Taimur Alam Khandaker, Jahangir Alam, Anisul Islam Chani, Nurul Islam Sarder, Badiuzzaman Badu, Momin Ullah David, Shaoukt Hoshim Shaku, Kamal Uddin Miridha and Alauddin Al Azad, from the case as the investi-

gator failed to find their complicity in the bomb attack. And as no witnesses could be found against the accused, they were all excluded from the list, the report mentioned. Army explosive experts identified the bomb as high-powered and made of iron splinters, but they failed to determine if it was remote-controlled or had any timing device. Abul Kalam, son of Halima Khatun who was killed in the bomb blast, lodged another case with Sadar thana accusing 57 people, including Shamim Osman, Nasim Osman and Selim Osman. The case is still under investigation.