



(From left) A US armoured vehicle loaded with shells bursts into flames near Karbala in central Iraq; Iraqis unload sacks of flour at a food distribution centre in Baghdad; a satellite view of President Saddam Hussein's palace, 90 kilometres outside Baghdad, raided by US troops; and Palestinian gunmen shoot their weapons as they stand behind portraits of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (L) and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in the northern West Bank town of Jenin yesterday.

Balu river bailout on way

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Plans are underway to enliven the Balu river in the eastern part of the city and start a Dhaka Circular Waterway comprising five more rivers. A Task Force, formed to protect the rivers, visited the Balu and Sitalakhya rivers yesterday and later held a meeting on a BIWTA survey vessel. Eminent citizens, ministers and top officials saw to what extent the water of the 22.5 kilometre Balu was polluted. The water, emitting unbearable stench, looked like discarded engine oil. Chaired by the Minister for Shipping Col (ret'd) Akbar Hossain and attended by members of the Task Force and top government officials, the meeting discussed various problems of the

whole scheme. The government is planning the 110-kilometre comprising Buriganga, Turag, Tongi Khal, Balu, Sitalakhya and Dhaleswari rivers. The BIWTA has already started installing pontoons at different spots of the rivers for water vessels to ply. The meeting discussed how permanent navigability could be brought back to these rivers along which millions of people live. A hydrography chart of Balu was completed in 1991 and the authorities are now in a position to demarcate the whole area and protect it from encroachment. They said LGED's bridges over Balu have been built without considering navigability. They said during flood

season, passage under the Demra bridge becomes so narrow that navigation becomes impossible. The under-construction bridge at Isapur in Khilkhet will also cause such problem. The Task Force decided to ask the LGED to change the plans of the bridges as per BIWTA specification. The meeting was informed that the Chief of Army Staff had formally requested the Ministry of Shipping not to evict army structures along the river shore at Ali Baharer Char until the case is resolved in court. The Task Force however decided to invite the Defense Secretary and the Chief of Army Staff to a meeting and solve the problem through discussion. Officials said that the water of Balu has been extremely polluted as

untreated industrial and human wastes flow into it, threatening not only public health but also the ecology. To contain the pollution, Dhaka WASA and all the industrial units will be given ultimatum to set up lagoons or treatment plants, they said. Land Ministry officials pointed out that while surveying the river shores in three different moujas in Keraniganj area, they came under resistance from local people, who claimed ownership of the lands and showed "proper documents of tax payment". The Task Force decided to involve the local lawmaker to solve the problem. They said the Task Force will ensure a minimum river channel of 100 meters under any circumstances.

Lankan minister in city

BSS, Dhaka

Tourism Development Minister of Sri Lanka Ranjith Mad-oumabandra arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a four-day visit to Bangladesh. State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin received the Lankan minister at Zia International Airport. He was accompanied by the director general of Sri Lankan Tourism Board. Managing Director of Bangladesh Biman Lutfor Rahman, Chairman of Bangladesh Civil Aviation Authority Zahid Qudus and Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Harun ur Rashid Bhuiyan were present.

4 awarded death penalty for throwing acid on 2 sisters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Four people have been awarded death penalty for throwing acid on two sisters at village Singa in Harinakundu upazila of the district. Mohammad Hossain Helal, Additional District and Sessions Judge-2, gave the verdict yesterday. The convicts are Salok alias Sahidul, son of Moslem Mandal, Atiar Rahman, son of Abu Bakar, Bari Mandal, son of Borhan Biswas and Nur Alam, son of Sanaruddin of the village. The court also fined them Tk 50,000 each and directed the district magistrate to put their property on auction and give the money to the victims as compensation. According to prosecution, the accused entered the house of Jalal Mollah on the night of January 6, 2002 and threw acid on his daughters -- Rubina Khatun and Rojina Khatun. Milan Mandal, elder brother of the victims filed a case against the accused with Harinakundu police station the following day. Police after investigation chargesheeted the accused. The two sisters received severe burn injuries in their faces. They were rushed to local health complex and then shifted to Dhaka. After a few days, a human rights organisation sent the acid victims to Spain for better treatment.



Schoolchildren form a human chain in Dhaka yesterday to protest the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. Like any other country in the world, Dhaka is today a city of protests.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

This is not a war ravaged structure but a college building. The commerce building of Patuakhali Government College is now in such a dilapidated condition that it may crash down anytime. But students attend classes, oblivious to the danger.

Traffic snarl peaks as access through cantonment blocked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Serious traffic jam has reappeared on the Farmgate-Banani road via Mahakhali rail crossing as the cantonment road (Jahangir gate to Banana gate) has been made off-limits to certain vehicles for certain hours. There were snarl-ups and vehicles were stranded for hours on the road yesterday. Since Wednesday, movement of small vehicles through the road is

allowed only from 7:30 am to 12:30 pm and from 3:30 pm to 7:30 pm. Suspension of traffic through the cantonment road for certain hours create long traffic jam on the Farmgate-Banani road, sources in the traffic department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said yesterday. Sources in the Road and Highways Department (RHD) said the decision was taken by the cantonment authorities.

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Power cuts leave city sweating

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Frequent power disruption and low voltage with no signs of improvement in the situation have left the city dwellers in a miserable condition this summer. Their sufferings mounted yesterday as temperature rose to 33.6 degree Celsius, the highest this season. The worst affected areas included Uttara, Basabo, Dhanmondi, Lalbagh, Motijheel, Karwan Bazar and Khilgaon and different parts of the old city. Officials of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) said the usual demand for power in the city is 1200 MW and

there is a shortage of at least 60 MW everyday. Sometimes they have to snap power supply to 'save transformers from damage' as the transmission system is 'overburdened'. Besides, ongoing repair or installation of transformers cause low voltage of power at times, they said. The officials hoped that power supply in old parts of the city, especially Lalbagh and its surrounding areas, are likely to improve with the completion of repair of two 'circuit points' today. DESA Chairman MA Rab yesterday said the overall power supply

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SHAZNEEN CASE

Friend of victim's father cross examined

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Cross-examination of Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, ninth prosecution witness in the Shazneen rape case and a friend of the victim's father, by lawyers of five of the six accused ended yesterday. The cross-examination took place at the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka. Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah then adjourned the hearing till tomorrow. Mahbubur Rahman was earlier cross-examined by lawyers of principal accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid. Lawyers of the five other accused -- Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- cross-examined the ninth witness for about two hours yesterday. Mahbubur Rahman recalled what he had told the investigation officer (IO) of the case. He said Humayun had told them that he had hit Shazneen with a chisel and Shahid stabbed her with a kitchen knife. Parvin grabbed Shazneen by the hair and pressed her hands against the bed. Then the three pulled her down from the bed in an almost unconscious state. Shahid raped her in this condition. The witness also identified the chisel, brought before the court as alama (evidence). It was recovered from the roof of servants' bathroom at the Gulshan residence of Shazneen's father Latifur Rahman on May 27, 1998. Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their residence on April 23, 1998.

Jobs on contract get down to lower tier

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After going for contractual appointments at the top administrative posts, the government has now started appointing lower-tier officials on contract. Official sources said on March 24 the government appointed Senior Information Officer Abul Khaier Saleh Ahmed on contract for one year, cancelling his leave preparatory retirement (LPR). The post of senior information officer is equivalent to that of senior assistant secretary. Sources said there was no contractual appointment below the deputy secretary level in the civil

service before. The move has sparked resentment among the government officials. Sources at the Ministry of Information said Saleh Ahmed had been working as information officer of the State Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism. "There is no instance of contractual appointment in the low level of government service," said a high official of the information ministry. Sources said the information ministry did not initiate the file on contractual appointment of the information officer. Rather, it was

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Cop shunted out for irking top brass

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A junior police officer was transferred from the capital to one of the remotest areas as a top brass became mad at him on a trivial personal ground. An assistant superintendent of police (ASP) was transferred to Betagi under Barguna district from the Immigration Department at Zia International Airport (ZIA) by a top police official due to an 'error' which had nothing to do with his job, sources said. Sources at both the police department and airport immigration said a man claiming to be a friend or relative of the top police official flew in at ZIA on March 28 noon from London. The man gave the ASP a bouquet and told him to hand it over to the official, as he

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
April 4		6-15 pm
April 5	5-47 am	

Prayer Timings		
April 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-30
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-45	5-15
Maghrib	6-20	6-27
Esha	7-35	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation